Making the Transition
Work for Women
in Europe and Central Asia

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Foreword

The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit of the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Region is launching a series of publications focusing on the gender impact of the socioeconomic and political transition taking place in Europe and Central Asia. The series is intended to fill a gap in the knowledge of gender issues at the World Bank by publishing the proceedings of conferences and related discussion papers that address the changes affecting women and men in the region. These and future papers are by definition a work in progress, and it is hoped that they will promote discussion on a broad range of gender issues and encourage further analytical work.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions of these publications are the authors' own, and should not be attributed to the World Bank, its Executive Board of Directors, or to any of its member countries.

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Last but not least, we would like to thank the authors for their patience and cooperation in putting this volume together.
Introduction

This collection of papers was selected from the proceedings of the World Bank conference “Making the Transition Work for Women in Europe and Central Asia,” held on June 7-8, 1999 in Washington D.C. It was the first time since the collapse of socialism that the World Bank had brought together women from the region, from Western Europe, and from the United States to identify the effects of the transition on gender and to debate possible remedial action. Sponsored by the recently established gender program of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, the conference underlined the importance of gender as a factor influencing change during the shift from a command to a market economy. The timing of the conference was propitious as it preceded by a few weeks the release of UNICEF Report No. 6, “Women in Transition,” and a UNDP Human Development Report on the transition. These two reports confirmed and reinforced the analyses made by speakers at the conference.

The conference was organized in part to address the limited Bank knowledge of gender issues in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). The Bank’s perceptions of the impact of the transition on women have been off the mark. Women’s complaints about loss of employment, sexual harassment, violence, poor enforcement of the law, poor political representation, and poor health care have been met with skepticism and have been frequently dismissed.

There are several reasons for this misperception.

- First, economists feel that the sheer magnitude of the changes taking place in the region has forced them to focus their attention on developing the macroeconomic institutions necessary to carry through the transition. Thus, gender issues are seen as secondary at best.
- Second, the Soviet legacy means there is a tendency in the ECA countries to seek self-justification in often misleading comparisons between themselves and countries of the South. Some key education and employment indicators, for example, put the ECA countries ahead of those in the South and ahead even of some West European countries. In addition, there are many women in occupations traditionally deemed male and there are others who hold conspicuously visible managerial positions, thus lending credence to the notion that gender inequality is not an issue worthy of concern. This attitude stems from an overvaluation of the Soviet legacy. Socialist philosophy saw the unequal standing of women as the Achilles heel of bourgeois capitalist society, and sought to give men and women equal access to education and equal opportunities in employment. In reality, the state’s commitment to women as workers on a par with men first and foremost answered political and economic imperatives. There was no profound transformation of gender roles. Instead, women workers provided the Soviet state with an ideological weapon for the Cold War, and a prop to support its claim that socialism sought the emancipation of the oppressed. The state established quotas for women in parliament and in the membership of the Communist Party, and took spectacular measures to make women visible in the world of work. In rural areas, for example, the 1930s “tractor girls” made headlines as tangible evidence that under socialism women can do everything a man does. Economically, the use of female labor in unskilled rural work enabled the state to divert its resources from agriculture to industry, simultaneously satisfying the political requirement of maintaining full employment and the economic imperative of working the land at low cost.
Third, the Soviet legacy of large female employment serves also to delude observers into believing that there is gender equality in the region. As Gáspár Fajth points out in his summary of the UNICEF report, there is a male–female wage gap throughout the region, and occupational segregation is the norm. Under the Soviet system, as women entered the labor force in large numbers, men moved upward in the occupational structure or assumed new specializations. Certain sectors such as health, education, light industry, and agriculture consequently became feminized, albeit predominantly at middle managerial and low skill levels. Women also typically earned less than men: the Soviet economy in effect paid for female labor in kind, by providing free social services—including child care for working mothers—and farm aid for rural workers. A generous maternity policy and an early retirement age succeeded in making work for women palatable, if not altogether attractive.

The Soviet family policy nonetheless was founded less on the objective of achieving gender equality in employment than on the primacy of the woman's role as mother. The state compelled women to go out and work but did little to transform the traditional division of labor within the family, which remained the preserve of women. The resulting double burden that women had to shoulder was exacerbated by the chronic lack of labor-saving domestic appliances. The double standards of Soviet policy were clearly illustrated by the fact that women were not permitted to work night shifts and were barred from a whole range of occupations deemed hazardous to their health. Ironically, despite these measures that were clearly attentive to women's family responsibility, Mikhail Gorbatchev, the champion of Perestroika, denounced the Soviet state for its neglect of the family and for having compelled women to work outside their homes.

Fourth, a number of governments in the region are aware of neither the gender dimension of the transition nor of the lasting impact of Soviet policies on gender relations. As a result, they are seldom prepared to consider gender issues in lending or nonlending programs. This attitude has a potentially discouraging effect on Bank staff who would otherwise hope to bring gender issues to the attention of policymakers. The perception is that no action will be taken unless it can be proven that gender inequities have worsened or that they are the direct result of economic policies, yet achieving this proof is exceedingly difficult. Gender is an issue that cuts across social, economic, and political boundaries, and it does not lend itself to a simple analysis of cause and effect. At the same time, existing statistical data do not reflect the complexity of the social changes that have taken place in the region, and they do not always capture emergent problems such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and ethnic discrimination. While these problems may seem secondary, they have the potential to threaten the stability that is essential to successful transition.

Fifth, lack of funding and shrinking budgets mean gender is an increasingly unattractive issue for integration in country department work programs. This problem is reinforced by the fact that addressing gender issues requires an expertise that often seems arcane, given its relative newness in the region.

The June conference was meant to draw attention to the breadth of the gender issues that have emerged since the economic restructuring of the region began. The conference brought together women from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Kyrgyz Republic, Armenia, Roma-
nia, Poland, and Hungary to speak directly to the Bank about their problems and to make suggestions for action. The conference also invited scholars from the United States and Britain to express their views on the gender dimension of transition.

A consensus emerged during the proceedings that the transition is taking place without the input of women, who are consequently suffering from the change. Participants further agreed that where men have also suffered, their troubles have led them to engage in domestic violence, thus causing additional problems for women. As we attempt to help restore these societies to equilibrium, we must therefore examine the circumstances of both women and men.

The participants at the conference pointed out that the transition has set in motion changes that reach far beyond simple economics to include the family, culture, law, politics, health, and education. The most vulnerable groups were identified as:

- the elderly whose pensions are in serious arrears and/or are too small to enable them to survive;
- young people, especially those living in rural areas where sociocultural and employment opportunities have declined;
- women aged 35 who experience systematic sexual harassment, are deemed too old to enter jobs in the private sector, or cannot be hired for fear that they might be eligible for maternity leave should they become pregnant;
- women aged 50 and above who are perceived as redundant and thus cannot hope to receive training.

The feminization of poverty and trafficking in women were also identified as new problems that demand to be addressed. Despite the pressing nature of these problems, however, the participants advised that reforms were necessary but should proceed with caution. The freedom of association and the opportunities for private enterprise that the new economic system makes available will ultimately assist reform, but the participants agreed that the benefits of the system will be realized only when women are fully integrated within it as agents of change.

The papers in this selection cover a number of issues, including law, employment, pension reforms, reproductive health, and violence.

The keynote speaker, Ludmila Zavadskaya, spoke from her experience as a lawyer and former deputy Minister of Justice in Russia about the necessity to debunk the myth of gender equality during the Soviet era. She singled out a labor market issue that has yet to be explored: that the formerly feminized sectors of insurance, financial and banking institutions, catering, and retail trade are gradually becoming male, as traditionally male employment sectors contract. Zavadskaya emphasized that Russian women now constitute 64 percent of the unemployed, with the situation still deteriorating: It takes a Russian woman 9.1 months on average to find a new job as compared to 8.5 months for a man. Zavadskaya noted that economic reforms must reflect an awareness of this gender asymmetry, and called for greater participation of women in the state Duma, where only 48 out of 450 deputies are women, and in the Federation Council, where women comprise just 351 of the 3,324 deputies. In analyzing the draft of a new Russian Civil Code, Zavadskaya noted that although the draft acknowledges the principle of equal rights and opportunities and prohibits sexual harassment, the old protective regulations have been retained.

Sue Bridger, a British scholar writing on Soviet and post-Soviet agriculture, paints a telling picture of the state of disarray in which the rural population finds itself. Privatization has yet to benefit those who work the land. Organizational inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of interest
means that the large agricultural joint-stock companies have failed to meet their goals. In the mid-1990s, the joint-stock companies accounted for just 3 percent of agricultural production, compared with the 46 percent produced by family plots. Although men contribute some time and labor, these plots have traditionally been and remain the responsibility of women, and are of increasing importance in an environment of growing unemployment and wage and pension arrears. More and more, women are obliged to work on the land now cultivated intensely as well as in the home and at any outside employment they may secure. Well-designed programs are badly needed to provide farmers with credit, extension services, and promote cooperation among them. Bridger casts doubt on the popular notion that Russian rural families can sustain themselves on these household plots, emphasizing that this form of farming is tenuously supported by women’s hard labor, endurance, and good health. Programs of credit, agricultural inputs, and cooperation are necessary to assist this form of farming into the future.

Rural women pensioners in particular are particularly affected, and their plight is compounded by a dysfunctional pension system. Marina Baskakova, a Russian economist specializing in pension reforms, argues that the situation of the elderly is an expression of the feminization of poverty. Under the Soviet system, women’s pensions were only 60 to 90 percent of those of men, but the system exacted no penalties for maternity or child care leave and permitted mothers of five children or more to retire early. The new pension system, in contrast, appears to sideline women who do not hold full-time jobs or do not receive a wage. Pension reform has made no allowance for the unequal impact on women of changes in the labor market; it disregards the fact that women have a longer life expectancy than men and that their pension must therefore be spread over a greater number of years; and it provides no additional support for divorced women who may have sacrificed years of earnings to raise a family.

Ludmila Zavadskaya points out that labor legislation played a crucial role in eliminating the paternalistic regime that defined women as weak wards of the state. Sonja Lokar, a Slovenian regional coordinator for the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, advances this point by revealing that labor laws are now at odds with the flexibility and mobility required by the new markets. Responsible for their family’s welfare and saddled with domestic chores, married women are at a disadvantage in the new market economies, with private-sector employers in particular skeptical about recruiting a worker who may one day require paid maternity leave. (It should be noted that while the law also makes provision for paternity leave, it is seldom taken. Potential male employees are therefore not regarded in the same light.)

Lokar documents changes in the proportion of women in the labor force throughout the region, noting that it has declined in the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, and increased slightly in Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Poland. Opportunities in the informal sector are helping some women through the transition, but the wage gap remains: in Hungary, for example, women in 1992 earned on average 20 to 25 percent less than men. Hungary is considered one of the advanced economies in the region. Lokar argues that the wage gap does not reflect differences in education, experience, or performance on the job.

Focusing on Slovenia, a country that has experienced a relatively successful transition, Lokar points out that women initially fared better here than in other ECA countries due to the peculiarities of the country’s restructuring. The first reforms targeted male-dominated industry, with the female-dominated sectors of the economy lightly affected and in some instances actually prospering. As reforms have spread, women have since suffered employment losses and discrimination from the private sector; the most striking impact of the transition, however,
has been a dramatic decline in political representation, to just 7.8 percent participation. Lokar’s prognosis for the future is pessimistic, although she believes that women are, in fact, the “survivors” of the transition.

Echoing Lokar, Katalin Koncz, a Hungarian labor economist, argues that traditional gender roles relegate women to a secondary position in the labor market. Occupational segregation restricts women to unskilled, low-status, low-income work. Although women’s educational levels are often higher than men’s, their lack of vocational training aggravates this situation, and the division of labor in the family curtails their mobility and flexibility. As is the case in neighboring countries, the informal sector in Hungary has emerged as a niche for women who cannot secure a job in the regular sector or who need extra work to supplement their income. The increasing numbers of women who run their own retail business underlines this point. As in Slovenia, the decline in women’s participation in politics is perhaps the best measure of the setbacks that women have experienced since Hungary regained its independence.

Most countries in the ECA region have witnessed a revival of traditional gender roles, but the phenomenon has been most striking in the Muslim countries of Central Asia. Cultural traditions and a conservative interpretation of Islam have reasserted themselves after years of Soviet aggressive secularist policies. The rise of Islamism has reinforced the stereotyping of women as the repository of cultural identity and family integrity. In addition, Anara Tabyshalieva, a Kyrgyz social scientist, identifies polygamy, early marriage, high fertility, and bride kidnapping as examples of cultural or religious practices that have reemerged since independence. The Soviet policy to induct women into the rural labor force has also aggravated the situation, as women now find themselves burdened with work in the fields on top of their responsibilities to bear and raise children. Independence has further compounded their lesser role in society as the new states have entered a race to repopulate, with the result that women are compelled to seek abortion, the only readily available means of contraception.

The decline in the provision of social services is another common problem throughout the region. Wanda Nowicka, a member of the Polish Federation for Women and Family Planning, confirms the findings of the UNICEF report that indicate high rates of maternal mortality in several countries, especially Romania and the countries of Central Asia. Abortion, often free of charge, continues to be the predominant means of contraception, and HIV-AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases are on the increase. Compounding the problem, gynecologists and other health providers lack supplies and resources, they lack understanding of women’s reproductive needs, and they lack the training that would enable them to help women make informed decisions about their health.

Two papers focus on the specific and related issues of gender violence and trafficking in women. Laryssa Kobelyanska, head of the League of Ukrainian Women Voters, points out that although domestic violence existed during the Soviet era, it is only since the Beijing Women’s Conference in 1995 that it has become a public issue. The myth of the harmonious Soviet family and the belief that only “bad” women are beaten—therefore deservedly—by their husbands continue to cloud the public’s understanding of the causes and consequences of gender violence. Kobelyanska points out that violence comes hand-in-hand with the pauperization of large segments of the population, and affects children, parents, and grandparents. She identifies alcoholism and drug abuse as the main triggers of physical violence against women, but notes that sexual harassment, the excessive use of abortion, and sex trafficking must also be seen as expressions of violence against women and need to be addressed.
Stanislawa Buchowska, a Polish representative of La Strada, an NGO devoted to the fight against trafficking in women, describes the scope of trafficking in Poland. She identifies the causes of this problem as including abusive marriages, a shortage of well-paying jobs, heavy involvement of women in the unregulated gray economy, and the generally low status of women in society. Buchowska analyzes the impact of prostitution on women, and assesses what must be done to enable their reintegration into society.

In her comments on the UNICEF report, Gail W. Lapidus calls into question the validity of statistical data generally used to rank and compare countries in the region. Not only has corruption compromised the capacity of states to collect accurate statistics, but changes in the structure of the labor markets have compounded the problem. Indeed, hidden employment and unemployment, and widespread substitution of barter for wages, especially in the Russian Federation, make aggregate data necessarily incomplete. Clearly the issue of data can only be expected to have different outcomes for women and men. Lapidus advocates the use of in-depth qualitative studies to capture emergent trends and better interpret large-scale data. She recommends that we document and give special attention to the plight of pensioners, declining educational institutions, and the provision of child care. She also advocates the transformation of the role of the state to support the burgeoning women’s movement within the context of greater participation of NGOs in political decision-making.

Last but not least, Barbara Einhorn questions the concept of the transition which she sees as static, misleading, and ideologically loaded. It assumes an unwarranted positive outcome. She suggests that “transformation” be substituted for “transition.” Einhorn also questions the concept of rights which she proposes to replace with “entitlements.” Women in the region have rights, but they are unable to attain them. What they need is equality of opportunity. Einhorn argues that the use of the concept of “entitlement,” points to the linkage between the state, the market, and the individual household without which women’s citizenship status cannot be improved.

These conference papers reinforce the findings of the UNICEF report but also provide insight into the unique conditions prevailing in individual countries. Cumulatively, they paint a picture that reveals a number of trends:

- Despite their cultural and historical differences, the countries of the region are facing similar problems as a result of the transition they are each going through. It is unclear if this is because of the collapse of the common socialist system that they shared, because of their use of the same market economy model, or both.
- In all countries, including those where the transition has been more or less successful, women are facing new barriers to entry into the labor market. They are also facing widespread sexual harassment and violence.
- In all countries, a revival of traditional gender roles has taken place, affecting women in all spheres of life but especially in their participation in politics. Before the range of gender issues that ECA countries are dealing with can be fully understood, however, it is essential that the myth of past gender equality be first exploded. There are continuities and discontinuities with the past that need to be clarified before the changes can be made that will equally benefit both women and men—and those changes must be grounded in a thorough knowledge of the socialist economy and Soviet social institutions as well as in an understanding of the gendered impact of the transition.
This publication has given women the opportunity to voice their concerns. It is hoped that it will stimulate discussions of gender issues in ECA, encourage more research, and lead to the inclusion of gender considerations in the work programs of the region.

Marnia Lazreg
Gender Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia
Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit

Notes


Gender Paradoxes of the Transition Period

Ludmila N. Zavadskaya

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me express my gratitude to the World Bank for giving me the opportunity to address this Conference. I consider it a great honor to open the Conference with my report.

We have gathered here to discuss some burning issues that have arisen for women as a consequence of the transitions taking place in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These concern the position of women in society, but they are not just issues of concern to women, they are important political issues that concern everybody. The way that women are treated in society is evidence of how well the democratic principles of equal rights and equal opportunities are applied in that society.

In 1993, I had the honor of participating in the Constitutional Assembly of the Russian Federation. I represented women’s nongovernmental organizations. The assembly lasted several months, and resulted in the draft Constitution that was voted upon in the December 1993 referendum. The aim of my participation was to ensure that the principle of equality of men’s and women’s rights and opportunities was spelled out in the Constitution. Given the realities of the situation in Russia, my task was not to persuade participants that men and women should be treated equally; it was paradoxically to destroy the 70-year-old myth that equality had been achieved.

It is clear that real equality is possible only when freedom exists. In a totalitarian society that denies freedom of the individual, equality cannot exist. It was a distinguishing feature of the Soviet system that the state played a patriarchal, patronizing role with respect to women, pursuing a policy based upon a system of sexism and an ideology of privileges, prohibitions, and compensations. The state maintained the patriarchal-totalitarian concept of the division of social functions between man and woman, and succeeded in convincing everybody that equality had been achieved. I had to fight this delusion at the Constitutional Assembly. After a series of long discussions, the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women was fixed in Article 19 of the Russian Constitution.

In my opinion, the issues we are going to discuss are of great interest for everybody—for people who have always enjoyed democracy and freedom as well as for those who have taken only their first steps in this direction. We have gathered at this conference to try to learn which way we should now go and how we should get there. Each country has its own experiences, problems, and tasks. But we are united by a common task: we are building a new society based on freedom and equal opportunity for everybody. We are building a free market economy. The reforms we make must be aimed at improving everybody’s life—men’s and women’s.

We are living in a society of transition. Reforms are underway, but they are being made with difficulty, and at great social cost. These reforms are leading the transition from one type of economy to a different one—from a planned socialist economy to a market economy; from tough state management to the freedom of the market—and the transition is changing the
whole of society. Within 10 years we have come from a society where just three classes—workers, collective farmers, and intelligentsia—were represented to a society of a much more complicated structure. The new social groups have very different characteristics: there are the rich and the poor, those who own property and those who do not, and employers, employees, and finally the unemployed. The embryo of a middle class has appeared. This is the new reality of our developing society.

These economic reforms have given rise to new gender issues. The level of women’s involvement in the economy has fallen. For example, there has been an obvious decrease in the number of women in their traditional fields of employment—in the retail trade, public catering, insurance, and in financial and credit institutions. These fields are becoming predominantly male, for a clear reason: work here has become much more highly paid. By contrast, the jobs and professions that have been feminized since Soviet times are those in which wages are very low, with the result that women’s wages are now 30 percent lower than men’s. The gap between the ranks at which men and women qualify for work, however, has not lessened. Women’s qualification ranks are two to three grades lower than are men’s. Gender asymmetry has also penetrated into unemployment: women now account for 64 percent of all the unemployed. These factors have led to the feminization of poverty and to the desocialization of women.

Statistics also show that in 1998 it took an unemployed woman 9.1 months to find a job, on average; it took an unemployed man 8.5 months. The length of time that it takes a person to find a job is evidence that the economy is stagnating. The difference in the search time for men and women is determined by a variety of factors, one of which is that there are fewer jobs created for women than for men as the military-industrial complex converts to civil enterprises.

One more factor should be taken into consideration: In the course of the reforms, the skills of women with higher education are being lost. There is a clear tendency for women with higher education to shift into fields where there is no demand for special professional knowledge—particularly into the service industry. Indirectly, this trend is reflected in the statistics for unemployment: 67 percent of women with higher education are among the registered unemployed.

The reforms taking place in Russia have also caused a differentiation between men and women with respect to the degree of freedom they enjoy; specifically to their access to property, private business, and financial and credit institutions. In 1998, only 7 percent of Russian women had income from private property or business activity, and only about 40 percent of Russian women were able to take advantage of financial and credit services. The remainder were part of the group of employees for whom the only source of income is their low wage. Women are isolated from the process of accumulation of capital, from access to wealth. The reforms taking place in Russia have done nothing to encourage women at work.

The freeing of market forces in Russia has enabled one clear conclusion: Women with no access to property or finances are not active in economic life. Their contribution to the establishment of a market economy is not proportionate to their abilities.

From the gender point of view, what needs to be done? First of all, it is necessary to prepare women for the changes that economic reform brings. State support is necessary. Education is also necessary. It is impossible to advance our economic reforms until this is done.

One feature of the market is that it is indifferent to gender. Paradoxically, this indifference has resulted in women paying a higher price for the consequences of the reforms than do men.
Reform in Education

The gender aspects of education reform in Russia are of great concern. In spite of the reforms, the traditional gender asymmetry still exists, and this may be storing up problems for the future.

Statistics indicate that men and women have equal access to education, and the number of students in higher education has recently increased. But traditional ideas about what are appropriate careers for men and for women continue to influence the gender profile of classes in higher education. The humanitarian professions remain mainly female, while science and technology are predominantly male. Sixty-eight percent of students at humanitarian universities are women, but 69 percent of the students at technical universities and institutes are men.

Education instructs the form that society takes, it shapes the social mentality, it determines the level of humanity in a society, and it establishes the moral basis of a society. Women's higher education is generally humanitarian, and as their influence on society and history is shaped by their education, it seems true to say that the humanitarian sphere will bear a female mentality.

By contrast, the majority of men in Russia get a technical education—they are not given the knowledge of the world that we call humanitarian. This asymmetry in the education of men and women is dangerous. As our knowledge of science and high technologies progresses, will we see a parallel, increasing rejection of humanitarian knowledge among men? There is a danger that asymmetry in education will lay the basis for an imbalance in the structure of society and of the public mentality.

Constitutional Reform

During the last decade, a new political system, based on democratic principles, has been formed in Russia and in the countries of Eastern Europe. From the ruins of communist totalitarianism a civil, independent society has been born.

The new state of Russia is young, and has no experience of a democratic social order, but it is founding itself upon the principle of separation of legislative, executive, and judicial power, and is laying the foundation of other reforms. It is very important that these reforms be directed at the development of a society of equal rights and equal opportunities for both sexes.

I have already spoken about my participation in the Constitutional Assembly of the Russian Federation, where I was charged to uphold the principle of equality. The assembly has become part of history, but issues of inequality still remain. Where do they manifest themselves? I believe the political reforms have not taken into account the principle of equality, which is such an integral part of the democratic process. I speak from my experience as a member of parliament—I was a deputy of the State Duma of the first convocation—and from my experience as Deputy Minister of Justice of the Russian Federation. The principle of equal rights and equal opportunities remains no more than a declaration. The Russian legislation does not contain any discriminatory provisions, but nor is it able to assure equality of opportunity.

The political reform of Russia needs special analysis from the gender point of view. During 1994–95, electoral legislation was reformed in Russia. New legislation was passed, but it does not protect women from discrimination. It is absolutely democratic and contains no provisions that discriminate against women, but at the same time it is not oriented toward achieving
gender symmetry. It does not contain any provisions that would provide equal opportunities for both sexes.

The new legislation also has failed to change the course of electoral campaigns. The results of the last elections to the Russian parliament speak for themselves: There are only 48 women out of 450 deputies of the State Duma, the lower chamber of parliament, and in the upper chamber of parliament—the Council of the Federation, where all the subjects of the Russian Federation are represented by the heads of their legislative and executive bodies—there is only one woman among 177 men. There are 351 female deputies and 3,324 male deputies in the legislative bodies of the Russian Federation. The gender asymmetry is enormous, and it has upset the balance of representation of women’s interests.

What can be done to remedy this situation? I believe political decisions, not legislative measures, can restore gender symmetry—or at least near-symmetry—in electoral campaigns. The political parties must make political decisions on selecting female candidates for deputies. If they do not, women voters will not be represented by women parliamentarians.

There is one more problem that must be taken into account. Women parliamentarians may have the experience of lobbying for women’s interests, but this does not necessarily imply that women’s interests will be represented during the final stages of political decision-making. The principle of consolidation voting is used by most parliamentary factions, and regardless of her point of view, a woman parliamentarian has to follow the majority decision of her faction. It is usually difficult for women to push a decision through Parliament, even with the support of a women’s lobby. There can be only one conclusion: political decision-making is based on techniques that disregard women’s political interests. Women are in a minority in Parliament, and are therefore unable to influence the development of the legislation that governs political reform. The result is that the policy of reform has a purely masculine character.

Analysis of the transition period in Russia from the gender point of view allows us to make the following conclusions:

- Achieving gender symmetry has not been an aim of the reforms.
- From the very beginning, the reforms taking place in Russia did not take into account the principle of equal opportunities for both sexes, and as a result have actually caused serious inequality. A great number of women have been deprived of the chance to become active participants in the reforms.

It is necessary to amend the reforms so that they incorporate the policy of equal opportunities for both sexes. Achieving gender symmetry must be an aim of the reforms. It is vitally important to combine the policy of reform with a policy that equally represents men’s and women’s interests.
Gender Aspects of Employment and Unemployment in Central and Eastern Europe

Sonja Lokar

The Rationale for Investing in Women in the CEE Region

In the executive summary of the document "Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development," the World Bank includes the following rationale for investing in women:

- Improving women's productivity can contribute to growth, efficiency, and poverty reduction—key development goals everywhere.
- Women's participation produces significant social gains: lower fertility, better household nutrition, and reduced infant, child, and maternal mortality.
- Studies show that income controlled by women is more likely to be spent on household needs than income controlled by men.

Most of the transition states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) committed themselves to the UN Beijing Plan for Action in 1995 and took part in the World Summit of Social Development in Copenhagen, also in 1995. There they committed themselves "to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen, productive employment and work." They also pledged to "urge the promotion of social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe, and just, and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as [on the principles of] nondiscrimination, tolerance, respect of diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of persons."

In the CEE region before 1989, women were nearly half of the full-time workforce, and in many countries were better educated than men. The female work force was concentrated in light industries, agriculture, administration, childcare, health care, social care, and education, and also in banking and the judiciary. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the gap between men's and women's earnings diminished: In Hungary, for example, women's earnings improved from 65.5 percent of men's earnings to 72.8 percent. In addition, infant mortality fell slowly but steadily through the 1980s. The economic position of women was a major factor behind the very low incidence of poverty in the households of the CEE.

These and other human development achievements in the pre-transition CEE generally support the World Bank rationale of investing in women.

The first question is thus how, if at all, did the World Bank and CEE transition strategists account for women possibly becoming one of the most valuable assets in improving the bad economic performance of former socialist societies?

Subsequent to the oil crisis of the early 1970s and the continuing failure of the communist elite to reverse the growing inefficiency of the command economies, the implicit social con-
tract between the communist leadership and their people started to fall apart in the 1980s. “Solidarność,” “perestrojka,” and the “singing” and “velvet” revolutions and “Slovenia spring” began in the CEE as political movements for the sovereignty of the smaller CEE nations, for democracy and human rights, but they also represented a political movement for a better life. The push for democracy and for a change to a market economy in these countries was borne on the illusions, hopes, and aspirations of millions of men and women. Nearly all of them were betrayed in the most unexpected way.

Some important rights—the right to private property, to economic initiative, to freedom of speech, to political and religious choice; even the precious right of each nation to self-determination—were exchanged for the bitter loss of other social, economic, and political rights, naively taken for granted. These included the rights to socially protected work and security of employment, security of pensions and social assistance; the rights to health care and education for all; the rights to motherhood and to free abortion; and the rights of citizens of all ethnic groups to equality. In some extreme cases, such as in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, the transition meant also the loss of peace, of family, of home and homeland, of human dignity, and even of life itself.

In retrospect, it seems that the strategies for transition did not seriously take into account either the gender-friendly principles of the World Bank or the solemn commitments of the CEE governments to support all human rights and to strive for gender mainstreaming, social integration, and the creation of a stable, safe, and just society.

Some General Impacts of the Transition Crisis

Statistics show that in nearly 10 years of transition, the CEE countries have suffered inordinately from the negative effects of globalization:

- **Changing patterns of trade.** The flow of CEE imports and exports has returned to the developed market economies, predominantly of the European Union.
- **Changing trade profile.** The CEE countries have become exporters of cheap commodities, raw materials, and labor, of clandestine economic migrants, forced prostitution, and refugees. They have become importers of capital, unsafe technologies, and of cheap consumer goods and disposable commodities.
- **Falling employment.** Only Azerbaijan showed an increase in employment in the period 1989–97, of 0.7 percent. In all other countries, employment has fallen, as follows: Bulgaria, 24.7 percent; Croatia, 28.1 percent; Czech Republic, 7.6 percent; Estonia, 23.0 percent; Hungary, 27.4 percent; Kazakhstan, 16.9 percent; Poland, 11.7 percent; the Russian Federation, 13.5 percent; Slovenia, 23.4 percent; and Ukraine, 11.5 percent. Labor surveys in 1996–97 established the following unemployment rates: Bulgaria, 13.7 percent; Croatia, 9.9 percent; Czech Republic, 5.2 percent; Estonia, 10.5 percent; Hungary, 8.7 percent; Poland, 10.2 percent; Russia, 9.0 percent; and Ukraine, 8.9 percent.
- **Falling GDP/NMP.** With the exception of Poland, all CEE countries recorded a lower GDP-NMP index in 1997 than in 1989. In 1997, Eastern Europe had a GDP measured at 92 percent of the 1989 level; the figure for the Baltic states was 63.5 percent; and for the CIS countries, 56.3 percent. The figures for the two most populous states, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, were 58.6 percent and 40.2 percent, respectively.
Wealth inequality. Huge differences have appeared in wealth and earnings. Real wages are falling in Bulgaria and Ukraine, and in Russia and Estonia, wages are at 65 percent of the 1989 level. Real wages have increased only in the Czech Republic, where they are 103.2 percent of the 1989 level. The Gini coefficient of net per capita household income, which provides a measure of income inequality between rich and poor, has increased dramatically in all CEE countries where it was measured (Table 1).

Table 1. Index of Income Inequality (Gini coefficient, in %).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>23.0</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>27.5</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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The translation of these figures into the facts of everyday life indicates that the societies in transition have not only become much poorer, but also much more unequal, more unsafe, and socially unjust. The most hard-hit by these changes are the economically inactive, families with several children, and workers with little bargaining power. Women are in the majority in all these groups. A UNDP report warns that: “The exclusion of people from social and economic participation [has begun] to reduce human potential,” potential that is sorely needed for future social development.

From a gender perspective, this situation raises some important questions:

- How have the economic activity, employment and unemployment, incomes, and workers' rights of women changed during the 10 years of transition?
- How has the transformation from the full employment of the command economies to the uncertain employment of the new market societies affected women in comparison with men?
- What are the economic, social, and political consequences of this development?
- What should be done to reverse the most dangerous negative trends?

Women in the CEE Labor Market

Each CEE country has had a different experience of transition, even if their starting points were very similar. Generally, however, the reorientation to new, more demanding markets, incurring privatization and the liberalization of imports, and introducing the need to control domestic prices, reduce budget deficits, and stabilize domestic currencies, triggered sharp declines in real wages, profits, and ultimately in the demand for labor. Subsequent developments in each national labor market depended on many factors, including the market's initial economic structure and stability, the speed of reforms and type of privatization, the proximity of developed Western economies, entrepreneurial traditions, the inflow of foreign direct investments, and the political situation.

The development of the CEE labor markets differed from the development of the countries of the former Soviet Union, including the two Baltic states. The CEE countries experienced a fall in profits followed by a decline in domestic demand for consumer goods and investment goods. This was a consequence of the loss of traditional markets and increased competition.
from foreign goods, and of privatization, restrictive monetary and fiscal policies, and reduced subsidies, both direct and indirect. The effects on the labor market were twofold:

- **Shrinking employment.** Initially, workers over retirement age were forced to withdraw from the labor market. Labor legislation was then changed, simplifying layoff procedures, reducing the requirement for advance notice, and introducing severance pay. Employers started to make "less productive" workers redundant, such as inexperienced youngsters, workers from ethnic minorities, women with small children, and disabled workers. Open unemployment started to grow.

- **Unemployment.** Unemployment rates quickly reached double digits, before starting to decline in 1993–94. A slow recovery followed through 1998, and in most of these economies unemployment has stabilized near 10 percent. In many cases, however, this apparent fall in unemployment has not meant an increase in employment—it is instead the result of the expiry of unemployment benefits. Many of those without work have been forced into premature retirement, into economic inactivity, or have taken socially unprotected work in the informal sector.

In the case of the former Soviet Union countries and the two Baltic states, enterprises in the pre-privatization period tried to retain their full work forces through a series of short-term measures, which began with wage reductions and a rejection of high-capacity production processes. Subsequent measures included the partial sale of assets and the closing or transfer to local authorities of social services previously provided free-of-charge to their workers; another option was to charge for these services, which included hot meals, health care, child care, and housing and recreation facilities. Following privatization, employers retained redundant staff in order to avoid paying severance, and to continue receiving state subsidies. Workers were forced to work shorter hours or were sent on unpaid administrative leave and, finally, employers started to delay their wages.

In January 1998, wage arrears in Ukraine were equivalent to the six-month wage bill of the entire country; in the Russian Federation, they amounted to more than US$10 billion; and in Kazakhstan in mid-1998, they were equivalent to 40 percent of the country's GDP. In 1994–95, 38 percent of private and 28.6 percent of state-owned enterprises in the Russian Federation reported a surplus of labor. The equivalent numbers for Ukraine were 44 percent and 35.5 percent, with an average reported surplus of around 10 percent.

Long-term unemployment in the region is high, and in many cases is increasing. In Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, male and female long-term unemployment is around 65 percent and 28 percent of all unemployed, respectively. In Poland and the Russian Federation, in contrast, women’s long-term unemployment is much worse than men’s. The hardest-hit are middle-aged women with higher education and young women with small children. Once unemployed, the prospects for these two groups of getting formal employment again are very slight. Among the unemployed in Slovenia, 57.4 percent of women and 54.4 percent of men are long-term unemployed. The comparative figures for Hungary were 48.7 percent for women and 56.4 percent for men.

The share of women in the shrinking employment is linked to the destiny of industrial branches, changes in pension policy, and the scope and modality of restrictions in budget funded sectors of human services. It also changed in time.

In Hungary in the first part of the 1990s, women proved to be more successful in retaining their jobs than men, and proportionately fewer were unemployed. In the latter part of the
decade, the situation reversed. Men’s employment started to increase, in contrast with that of women, whose employment position in the labor market is still worsening.\textsuperscript{7}

Of the CEE countries, only the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Hungary escaped serious deindustrialization. In all other countries, the defense industry, textiles and clothing; the leather, wood, and metal processing industries; and mechanical and electrical engineering and construction suffered the biggest job losses. Mining, metallurgy, energy production, and food processing suffered less and recovered faster; and some extraction industries even increased production and employment.

Another gender aspect of employment is illustrated by the example of the light industries. As they started to recover, the strong global competition meant that light industrial enterprises could not offer good wages. Typically, women have increased their employment in this sector, by proving willing to work long hours for minimal wages, often under conditions openly violating their worker and maternity rights.

The development of the agricultural labor market has also proven controversial. In Central Europe and Estonia (but excluding Poland, where heavy state subsidies protect farms against imports) total employment in agriculture has rapidly declined. Subsistence farming has consequently become a buffer against unemployment for many of the people who have lost their jobs in large agricultural enterprises or in other economic sectors.

Table 2\textsuperscript{8} illustrates the rates at which male and female employment have changed in the CEE countries since 1989. There are significant gender-related differences: with the exception of Poland, female participation rates in paid employment have fallen more than male rates, suggesting that women workers hold a weaker position in the labor market than men. In

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Decline of Participation Rates by Gender.}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{Source} & \textbf{Year} & \textbf{Both Sexes} & \textbf{Men} & \textbf{Women} \\
\hline
Bulgaria & Balance of labor force & 1989 & 89.3 & 87.8 & 90.6 \\
& LFS (wage) & 1993/Q3 & 75.2 & 76.4 & 73.8 \\
& LFS (w.age) & 1996/Q4 & 71.3 & 72.7 & 69.7 \\
Czech Republic & Population census & 1991 & 66.6 & 71.8 & 60.9 \\
& P.wage & 1993/Q3 & 85.0 & 85.9 & 84.0 \\
& LFS & Winter '96/7 & 61.1 & 71.2 & 51.9 \\
& P.wage & 1996/Q4 & 77.4 & 83.7 & 70.4 \\
Hungary & Balance of labor force & 1990 & 66.7 & 72.5 & 61.4 \\
& P.wage & 1996/Q4 & 84.1 & 83.7 & 84.4 \\
& LFS & average 1996 & 55.6 & 61.2 & 50.6 \\
& P.wage & 1996/Q4 & 69.5 & 71.0 & 68.0 \\
Poland & Population census & 1991 & 65.3 & 74.3 & 57.0 \\
& P.wage & May 1997 & 81.3 & 87.2 & 73.9 \\
& LFS & 1997/X & 57.7 & 66.0 & 50.2 \\
& P.wage & 1997/X & 72.5 & 77.8 & 67.0 \\
Russian Federation & Balance of labor force & 1990 & 89.9 & X & X \\
& LF (labor force) & 1993/Q4 & 77.6 & 79.1 & 76.0 \\
& LFS p.wage & 1996/Q4 & 76.4 & 79.7 & 72.9 \\
& LFS p.w.age & 1996/Q4 & 76.8 & 80.6 & 73.5 \\
Ukraine & Population census & 1989 & 85.0 & 86.3 & 83.7 \\
& LFS p.wage & 1995/X & 76.8 & 80.6 & 73.5 \\
& LFS p.15-70 & 1997/X & 70.8 & 75.5 & 66.8 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\footnotesize{Note: Economically active population divided by working-age population. Ratio of economically active population to population aged 15 and over, in \% (LFS=Labor Force Survey, \textit{w.age} = Working Age; Pop.= Population; \textit{p.w.age} = Working Age Population).}
\end{table}
particular, women are disadvantaged because of the pressures of maternity and childcare. The situation is described by Anna Nesporova:

In the past, women in the CEE enjoyed certain privileges: fully paid maternity leave for up to six [in Slovenia, 12—S.L.] months and partially paid extended maternity or parental leave for up to two or even three years after childbirth, and return to their previous job was granted by the legislation. Night work and work under harmful conditions were forbidden for women. Pregnant women and women with small children could not be sent on business trips. Single mothers with preschool children or children of school age could not be made redundant, etc.

Under the new labor market conditions, where greater flexibility and mobility of the labor force is expected, these “privileges”—which enable women to combine a waged job and family life—are regarded by employers as too restrictive and as an insupportable increase in the cost of female labor.

The governments of the region have reacted in very different ways to the impositions that private enterprise has placed on female labor. Some have supported a return to the traditional role of woman as mother and housekeeper, and have promoted women’s withdrawal from the labor market by offering extended, although badly paid, maternity leave (Hungary before 1992). Some governments refused to guarantee that a woman’s job will remain open through her maternity leave or funded “professional motherhood” for mothers of large families (Croatia after 1994). Budget constraints have meant that these particular regulations were changed or never implemented, however. In Hungary in 1992, a new law reduced maternity rights with the justification that “overprotection” of women could, in practice, be seen as gender discrimination. The government instead advocated positive discrimination measures that would defend not only motherhood, but also parenthood and the interests of the newborn child.

In Slovenia, some gender-related legislation was changed for the better, with new rulings protecting the rights of the child and defining as equal the rights and duties of the mother and father. The new legislation provides generous financial support throughout the mother’s compulsory three months of maternity leave and the subsequent eight months of childcare and protection leave. The latter can be claimed by the mother, father, or other person taking care of the newborn. The total financial package amounts to 100 percent of the average salary of the 12 months preceding the start of maternity leave, and cannot be lower than the minimum wage. Uninsured mothers and fathers of a newborn baby who lack other income are entitled to a parental supplement in the amount of 52 percent of the minimum wage. The costs of both parental entitlements are borne by the state, and not the employer.

Discrimination on gender and parental grounds, nonetheless, remains strong. In 1998, the Women’s Policy Office of Slovenia published an analysis of typical work-related cases of gender discrimination. The cases were identified through calls to a labor-discrimination hot-line. Thirty-nine percent of all calls were related to the violation of lawful rights of pregnant women or of women with a small baby. Thirty-four percent of callers reported that they could not have a baby because their employers denied them anything other than a short-term job contract that would not be renewed after childbirth.
Table 3. Women As a Percentage of the Economically Active Population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Share</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Balance of labor force, 1989</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1996 Q4</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Balance of labor force, 1989</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS winter 1996–97</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Balance of labor force, 1990</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1996 average</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Population census, 1988</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>+0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1997 Q2</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Balance of labor force, 1989</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1997 Q1</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>LFS 1993 Q4</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1996 Q4</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Balance of labor force, 1989</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1997 Q1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>LFS 1993 Q2</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>+0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LFS 1996 Q2</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(LFS = Labor Force Survey)

Table 3 shows that changes in the composition of the work force by gender have been small since 1989. The tendency is for a decline in the proportion of women in the work force, although this is not true for all transitional countries. In summary:

- Marginally more women than men have been added to the growing economically inactive population of working age.
- Women have retained almost the same share of formal employment as they held before the transition.

Table 3 reveals an anomaly in gender-related unemployment rates in the CEE. Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Slovakia show higher rates of women’s unemployment than of men’s, but Hungary, Slovenia, and Russia show the opposite. The reasons are both structural and cultural. In Hungary from 1992 to 1997, the direction of the growth or the decline of unemployment is the same for men and women, and the difference between male and female unemployment rates is stable. The reasons for this are a combination of the willingness of women to leave the formal labor market for work in the informal sector or simply to become inactive; the relatively high absorption capacity of a quickly growing tertiary sector; and an

Table 4. Unemployment Rates by Gender (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Both Sexes</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>average 1992</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996/Q4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Spring 1998</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter 1996/97</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>average 1992</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>average 1996</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>May 1992</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 1997</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1994/Q1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997/Q1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>1993/Q4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996/Q4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1993/QIII</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997/Q1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1992/Q2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996/Q2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
employer culture that is less gender-discriminating toward women than that in the Czech Republic or in Bulgaria, for example. In Slovenia, the main reason is the predominance of women in the tertiary sector, which has been the sector least hit by redundancies. Jobs in this sector include health and social work, education, financial intermediation, tourism, and wholesale and retail.

The tertiary sector, in fact, has been the repository of many of the hopes of the CEE countries for recovery from the problems of transition. The fast development of the service sector, of self-employment, and of small and medium-sized businesses is hoped to absorb many of the workers who have been made redundant, as well as the newcomers to the labor market.

In Central and Southeastern Europe and in the Baltic States, work in financial and producer services, state administration, trade, tourism, and other consumer services has increased rapidly. Education and health care have also mostly maintained their share of total employment. However, the increase of employment in these areas has not yet proven big enough to replace the massive loss of jobs in the primary and secondary sectors. And in the CIS countries, developments have been even more disappointing. With the exception of the financial sector and state administration, there has been little gain in jobs. In many of these countries, the tertiary sector has even lost some of its share of total employment.

From a gender perspective, it is also clear that there is a tendency that the demanding jobs in well-paid new services are dominated by men, and that the badly paid, mostly unskilled jobs in small enterprises rely on female labor. In many cases, women are employed on short-term civil contracts, as informal help in their husband's firms, or in the black market. None of these offer employment or social security.

### Self-Employment and Women's Entrepreneurship

Women are in the minority among private employers and in the majority among workers assisting family members. The average size of firms owned by women is smaller than that of firms owned by men—mostly because women lack the support of state and financial institutions—but many are successful. As an example, in Slovenia, small enterprises owned by women are typically not intensive in capital; they mostly work in the service sector; they have much lower net losses than male-owned enterprises; and they are mostly very successful. Despite these facts, the number of women entrepreneurs is falling. Low wages in their domestic markets means there is also little domestic demand, and without this most important source, the small enterprise sector is stagnating or even in decline in the CEE.

### Table 5. Women Employers and Women Assisting in Family Businesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Women employers</th>
<th>Percentage of Women Assisting Family Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Winter 1996-97</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>average 1996</td>
<td>28.9*</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>May 1997</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1997 Q1</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1996 Q1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>1997 Q1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All self-employed
Another type of independent employment offers even less security. Women whose work is to help family members are in probably the most unfavorable situation: They have no formal employment status, and risk serious problems should either the family firm or their marriage fail.

**Gender Wage Gap**

Prior to the transition, women’s mean earnings in the CEE averaged 70-75 percent of men’s. The difference was due mainly to the unequal access of men and women to higher levels of education, to occupational segregation, and to the wage system. Female labor dominated in badly paid light industry, agriculture, and in poorly regarded segments of the public sector, such as finances and communications.

At the beginning of the transition period, this misallocation of labor actually worked to the advantage of women, particularly those in the relatively secure areas of finance, administration, communications, and the judiciary. Men have since started to migrate into these sectors from the worst-paid jobs, and the feminization of financial and business services, tourism, and communications has been reversed. At the same time, the feminization of poorly paid public services such as childcare, education, health care, and personal and household services has further increased.

A comparison across countries reveals that the gender pay gap is similar for all CEE countries. Studies show that the pay gap is primarily caused by the simple fact that male and female workers are paid differently for doing the same job.\(^1\) Education, experience, and ability are apparently not factors behind the difference.

In Hungary in 1992, women earned on average between 20 and 25 percent less than men performing the same work. In the best-remunerated sector, finance, the average wage of women was only 63.6 percent of that of men; in 1996, this sector was dominated by women.\(^2\) In Slovenia in 1996, the average mean women’s earnings were 19.1 percent less than the average mean earnings of men.\(^3\)

For comparative purposes, the average hourly earnings of women in Sweden are 84 percent of the average earnings of men; in France and Spain, they are 73 percent; and in the United Kingdom, 64 percent. The earnings difference between men and women with comparable educational backgrounds in the same occupation and industry are: Sweden, 13 percent; France, 22 percent; Spain, 23 percent; and the United Kingdom, 25 percent.\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Women’s Average Monthly Gross Earnings As a Percentage of Men's, by Level of Professional Attainment, Slovenia 1992-97.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary professional degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower professional degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly skilled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Glass Ceiling Descends

Since transition, it has become much more difficult for women in the CEE to attain high positions in any of the economic, cultural, or political spheres. Women appear to be hitting the glass ceiling much sooner than before.

In Hungary, women account for only 10 percent of general managers, around 25 percent of deputy managers, and 30 percent of top executives. The bigger the enterprise, the fewer women are in top positions. In Slovenia in 1997, women accounted for only 9.2 percent of directors of small, medium-sized, and large companies. By contrast, in the highly feminized sectors of the judiciary and state administration, women held 63.1 percent and 46 percent of top managerial positions, respectively.

Politics provides the paradigm for the situation of women. In the mid-1980s, only five of the democratic West European states had more than 20 percent of women parliamentarians, compared to at least nine states in the CEE region. In 1999, the average proportion of women parliamentarians in the EU is greater than 20 percent—in the last 15 years, all of these countries have made a substantial step forward. The opposite is true in the CEE. In 1997, the average proportion of women parliamentarians in the first 10 CEE countries to seek integration with the EU was only 12 percent. Five of these 10 countries had no women government ministers.

The tendency toward improvement shown from the first to the second multiparty elections in the CEE has failed to materialize. In Slovenia, the share of women parliamentarians has also fluctuated, from 11 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 1992, and to 7.8 percent in 1996. In the first post-socialist government, Slovenia had 8 percent of women ministers; in the second, 6.7 percent; and in the last one, none. Fluctuations in the proportion of women among higher administrative workers in state administration are also informative (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Percentage of Women Holding Higher Administrative Positions in State Administration in Slovenia, by Title.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State under-secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser to government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser to director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Impact of Minimum Wage, Income Taxes, and Cuts in Social Benefit Systems

The CEE governments in the transitional period have typically taken a hard line to try and stabilize their economies by lowering real pensions and real wages, eliminating some entitlements, and by cutting the real value of social benefits. The minimum wage became the basis of tariff systems in the public sector and for state-owned enterprises, and also the basis of social bargaining in private enterprises. Social benefits were established as a percentage of the minimum wage.

Minimum wages were not linked to inflation or subsistence costs, but were established on each government's discretion. They have very quickly lost their economic and social rationale. Income-related benefits for unemployment and maternity and parental leave have been re-
placed by flat, low social security benefits. Health and education budgets have been reduced, supported by partial privatization. State unemployment and social security benefits, formerly based on general taxation, have been transferred to employers and employees through the introduction of compulsory state and private insurance. The egalitarian communist social state—light in benefits but heavy in service—has been replaced by a badly designed "social safety net.”

People are already falling through the loopholes: the long time unemployed, the new working poor, first-time job seekers, single mothers, families with several children, the poorest of pensioners, and people working in the informal sector who have no maternity, health, unemployment, or disability benefits. Women are predominant in all these groups.

The state governments have become the biggest violators of women’s rights to equal pay and social security. Women account for more than two-thirds of all civil servants in childcare, health care, education, social welfare, and administration. Working conditions in these public sectors are below average and earnings are extremely low. The net effect of female predominance in these jobs is disguised occupational discrimination by occupation; worse, it also serves to set a standard of earnings and working conditions for the whole female population.

Women’s Strategies of Livelihood in Transition

The pattern of transition clearly shows that the level of gender equality attained prior to 1989 failed to provide a starting point for long-term sustainable growth, improved social welfare, or political stability. Instead, the movement toward gender equality has been harmed by the transition, which has both deepened existing discrimination and introduced new forms of discrimination. Through their policies on abortion and other family issues, for example, the governments of Poland, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have displayed the intent to address unemployment by removing women from the formal labor market. Wage, welfare, and other employment policies have also made the situation more difficult for women than for men.

Women have responded to these challenges in a number of ways. Some of those who have been pushed out of formal economic activity, including women with small children and young pensioners, have reemerged in the informal sector, working in subsistence farming, family businesses, or in the black labor market. Families and small communities provide solidarity nets for these women, although others have been lost to forced prostitution and pornography, which has flourished in the transition countries. Others, particularly middle-aged, strong, educated women, have started their own small businesses.

The collapse of state social welfare compelled women to develop their own not-for-profit services for disadvantaged social groups, including children, the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed, refugees, and victims of violence. Financial support came first from external sources, but later also from the national authorities.

Women have generally showed greater willingness than men to learn new things, to train and retrain, and to adjust to changes in their situation. Their eagerness to return to the formal labor market means they are often prepared to accept positions for which they may be overqualified, to work for low pay under difficult and even humiliating conditions, and even to endure violations of their lawful human and workers’ rights. They have also made other sacrifices:
asked to withdraw from public life to the household, cradle, and church, many have answered by postponing or giving up marriage and children.

The determination of women to remain in the labor market has often changed the traditional distribution of labor in the home. Encouragingly, men are starting to do their share of the unpaid household and family work. A recent survey of household activities in Slovenia provides evidence of this change (Table 8).

**Table 8. Household Activities in Slovenia.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household chore</th>
<th>Percentage of households where the man and woman share the chore, in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of daily meals</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum cleaning</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping the household budget</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing the dishes</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping children with homework</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after the children when ill</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with the children</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Make the Transition Work for Women**

- Instead of shock therapies and the blind dismantling of the social welfare state, the CEE countries need economic policies that balance economic growth and social justice. For women, perhaps the most important change would be the introduction of policies, focused on the needs of most disadvantaged strata of population, to boost domestic demand. It is important that high wealth and wage differences be diminished: The first steps to achieve this should include increases in the minimum wage and minimum pensions, and the raising of social benefits to at least subsistence level.

- New policies are necessary to foster the transformation of the informal economy to formal status. Taxes should be kept low, but enforcement should be total.

- The state welfare systems of the CEE countries need to be reformed around national standards of social rights. They should combine greater compulsory social insurance with public and private social services and goods, and with nonprofit and informally organized services. Reform of childcare services and care for the elderly is particularly important.

- Legislation must be passed that supports equal opportunities for all children and equal rights and duties for men and women in the family and at home. The legislation should focus on harmonizing the family and professional life of both parents. This issue needs to be openly discussed at the state level and among employers and employees: it is one of the most important problems in the realm of social partnership, and must be resolved.

- Governments must seek to eliminate all gender discrimination by establishing a national mandate for equal opportunity legislation and other tools to fight gender discrimination, including gender-disaggregated databases, to enforce the rule of law in the fields of economic, social, and personal rights.
• Governments should invest more in adult education and vocational guidance, and should introduce policies specifically aimed at helping women with special labor market difficulties find work. These groups of women include first-time job seekers, women with small children, and older women. Part-time employment should also be developed, but in a way that prevents it from becoming a new discrimination and poverty trap for women.

Successful implementation of these changes would require profound changes to the politics of transition.

The first phase of the transition focused on fundamental political freedoms, including the right to private property, free-market economics, and the emancipation of nations. The second phase brought the appropriation of state property and the battle for economic, cultural, and political power. Preoccupied by these issues, politicians neglected the concerns of the individual, including workers' rights and women's rights and the needs of children and the elderly.

Following the shock of the first parliamentary elections of the transition, which seemed to override the interests of the individual, women began the search for political ways to improve their situation. At the beginning of the transition, many of them were suspicious about the role of the state in social and family policy, and many resisted the quotas that the newly formed political parties sought, fearing that they would once again end up with false representation. Many women also felt that their place was not in "dirty" politics, but in nonpartisan civil organizations. The national women's movement drew suspicion, raising memories of bad experiences with earlier women's umbrella organizations. "Feminism," too, was a dirty word, plagued by stigma.

Today, there is a broader understanding among women that politics shapes their lives and the lives of their children. They may decide they do not like politics, but they know that if they want to be considered in the decision-making process, they must join a party and speak up.

The transition period has not so far led to a better life for all people or equal opportunities for both sexes. The reform of the socialist states has not led to greater social security, more justice, or more harmony between the professional and family lives of women and men. The pattern of political change has not led to individual empowerment or to the adherence of human rights.

Given these realities, the women of the Central and Eastern European countries have become interested in not only entering politics, but in radically changing it. And democracy based on gender equality is not simply one of their goals; it is their first goal and the most important one.

Notes

1. The burden of housework also fell upon women, however. In 1989, women in Slovenia contributed at least 80 percent of household income but between 80 and 64 percent of them were mostly unaided in cooking, cleaning, dish washing, and caring for children and helping them with their homework. (Cernic, M. 1995. Rodnost v Sloveniji. Preliminary report. Ljubljana: SAZU.)


12. Source: Labor force surveys and national employment services


Transitional Period and Labor Market Characteristics in Hungary

Katalin Koncz

Hungary, in common with several other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is facing an historically unparalleled task. Since 1989, the country's political and economic systems have been undergoing simultaneous change, from communist dictatorship to democracy and from a state-centralized to a market-oriented economy. The changes are taking place under difficult internal conditions and at a time of international market turbulence. They are also taking place at a time of social catharsis, as Hungary contends with the release of tensions that have been accumulating over the course of decades.

The political, economic, and social conditions of the country are being fundamentally transformed, and the changes are deeply affecting the situation of women and men, their roles in public life, in work, and in family relations. The traditional roles of the individual have become irrelevant, and people are being forced to adapt to unfamiliar and uncertain circumstances. Each person adapts differently, and his or her success or failure to adapt bears no relation to gender. There are nonetheless a few markedly obvious consequences that affect women or men in a greater or lesser measure.

The most important elements of the transformation taking place in Hungary are:

- The democratization of society, the goals of which must be to ensure equal opportunity for both genders and to develop the institutional system necessary to achieve this.
- The transformation of property ownership from public to private control. Private property ownership operates according to the profit motive, and cost sensitivity should in theory ensure the efficient use of resources. But the need for efficiency demands that superfluous resources be eliminated—and these may include "unstable" labor resources such as married women with small children.
- The transition to the rules of the market economy, which took place in an historically unparalleled short period of time. The most important characteristic of the market economy is competition. Although in principle the labor market is open to men and women alike, women are in practice at a disadvantage because their previous social roles have not prepared them to compete in an open labor market.

Quantitative Labor Market Characteristics of Female Employment

The position of women in the labor market can be characterized quantitatively by the level, the structure, and the forms of employment and unemployment.

The level of female employment. One of the goals of state socialism was to establish full employment. This was achieved very rapidly. In 1980, 82.0 percent of women and 87.9 percent of men were in employment or associated with cooperatives. From 1980 to 1989, however, the number of women in work grew continuously, with the expansion of employment forced from
both the supply and from the demand side. The low level of wages and the fact that holding paid employment was a precondition of entitlement to welfare compelled even pensioners to find jobs. Due to these conditions, the two-earner family model quickly became the standard in Hungary and in the other Eastern and Central European countries.

From the other side, employers also contributed to the growth in employment by exhibiting an unrestrained demand for resources, derived from a disinterest in operating costs. The results were overstaffing and low productivity.

This two-sided economic process led to the full allocation of available human resources and left no room for alternative forms of employment. The situation arose whereby the maximum women’s economic activity (85.8 percent) exceeded that of men (84.7 percent)—which was unprecedented even by international comparison (Table 1).

Table 1. Activity Rates by Gender in Hungary from 1980 to 1998 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Until 1998</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980 82.0</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 83.3</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 83.6</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 83.9</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984 84.1</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985 84.9</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 85.1</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987 85.6</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 85.1</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 85.8</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 85.7</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 83.8</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 82.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 79.7</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 75.8</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 72.2</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 69.9</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 68.9</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 69.1</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to concept used until 1998: persons on child care leave were included.


The labor market has undergone a dramatic change since 1989, with the employment situation for women in particular becoming unfavorable—the level of employment has fallen and the level of unemployment has risen. From 1986 to 1997, the number of active earners fell by 1.28 million, 52 percent of whom were women. By 1998, women accounted for just 44 percent of those in employment.

The decline in female employment has been felt both by women of working age and by those of retirement age. In 1989, 85.7 percent of women were active earners (including those on childcare leave). This figure fell to 72.2 percent by 1995 and to 69.1 percent by 1998. There are many reasons for this change, including the introduction of measures deliberately aimed to reduce the work force. Early retirement has been introduced; mothers of three children or more are allowed to stay at home with a modest income; childcare allowances are designed to protect women from unemployment; and an increasing number of young people are staying longer in the educational system. All these factors have contributed to the decrease. Another
major change to the statistics on female employment has been the displacement of female pensioners from the labor market. The number of employed female pensioners was 223,000 in 1986, but only 66,500 in 1997. The change has been even greater for male pensioners, with the number in employment falling from 245,000 in 1986 to 50,000 in 1997.

In the European Union (EU), by contrast, this period was marked by strong growth in female employment. Women account for an increasing proportion of the labor force in the EU and claim the majority of new jobs being created in the member states. In 1996, the proportion of women in employment in the European Union grew to 57 percent (Table 2). Women have accounted for all of the growth in the labor force in the last two decades.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The level of employment among women aged below 25 years and over 59 years of age is also significantly lower in Hungary than in the world’s highly industrialized countries (Table 3).

Table 3. Employment Rates by Age and Gender in the Highly Industrialized Countries and in Hungary, 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Europe15</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>16.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>61.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>44.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>73.3**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Age group of 55-59.
** Cannot be compared, because of the different working age groups.


Hungary has applied for membership of the EU, which brings an added dimension to the country’s problem of female unemployment. The fact that the employment rate among women aged 25–49 is lower in Hungary than among other candidate countries for accession to the EU may prove a stumbling block, given the EU’s emphasis on equal gender opportunities. Hungary has much work to do to meet the EU criteria.

The structure of female employment. A positive structural reorganization took place in Hungary between 1990 and 1998, resulting in an employment structure by sectors similar to the average of the European Union (Table 4). The proportion of women in agriculture dropped from 14.8 percent to 4.4 percent mainly because of the privatization process: agricultural small
businesses rely on minimal labor. Female employment in industry has also dropped, although to a lesser degree than in agriculture. Matching international trends, the proportion of women in the service sector has increased, to almost three-quarters of female active earners. This indicates a strengthening of the feminization process within the tertiary sector.

Forms of female employment. The form of employment both of women and men has changed little in Hungary. Most positions are full-time—there is little part-time employment, and other forms such as job-sharing are rare.

Part-timers among working-age active earners have always been marginal in Hungary. The number of part-timers peaked in the 1980s, when labor was in short supply, but even then part-time workers accounted for only 3 percent of the work force. Most part-time workers were pensioners, the proportion of all part-timers (including that of pensioners) was less than 9 percent in percentage of all active earners (Koncz, 1984).

The low proportion of part-time work is one of the most significant differences in employment characteristics between Hungary and the countries of the EU. Almost one-third of women in the EU work part-time, compared to a figure of only 7.6 percent of female workers in Hungary that work less than 35 hours a week. In 1995, 24 million people in the EU member states worked part-time. In addition, most new jobs created over the last few years have been part-time positions, including 71 percent of jobs created for men and 85 percent of those created for women. Part-time work nonetheless remains an employment form mainly of women: statistics show that only 5 percent of men work part-time.7

Table 5. Women Employed Part-Time, Average of Countries of the European Union 1991-1996 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>As % of All Employed Women</th>
<th>All Part-Time Employed People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Communities, 1997, pp. 120-121.

A study of part-time jobs and the motivation of employees and employers suggests that there are no legal barriers in Hungary preventing this form of employment, nor is there resistance from either the demand or the supply side. The survey in fact indicated that both employers and employees acknowledged the importance of part-time work.

The gap between the apparent desire for this type of work and the reality of the situation may be explained by the likelihood that the real attitudes of respondents differed from their given
responses. This phenomenon was emphasized by research conducted in France in the early 1980s. The ready supply of labor in Hungary means that employers can easily and cheaply fill any vacancies with full-time workers—in such a situation, the creation of part-time positions merely implies extra and unnecessary work. From the worker’s point of view, the generally low level of incomes influences attitudes against part-time jobs. The high inflation rate and low real wages mean women need a full salary to achieve even a low standard of living; additionally, because of the high unemployment rate in some regions of Hungary, women are the sole earner in many households. Because of these factors, women tend to take part-time jobs only if they have no other option. Increasing flexibility of the workplace may in future enhance the appeal of part-time work as an alternative to full-time employment.

Table 6. Unemployment Rates by Gender in Hungary from 1986 to 1998 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female Until 1998</th>
<th>Female Since 1998</th>
<th>Male Until and Since 1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to concept used until 1998: persons on child care leave were included.


A new phenomenon: Unemployment. Large-scale unemployment was unknown in Hungary in the four decades of state socialism. It emerged only with the transformation of the economy: In January 1990, the number of unemployed was negligible; it then grew rapidly through 1994, since when figures have stabilized somewhat.

In 1998, 11.1 percent of the labor force was unemployed, a figure marginally lower than the average of the EU member states (Table 7). Another significant difference is that the unemployment data for the EU show a substantially higher unemployment rate for women than for men; the opposite is true for Hungary, where in November 1998, only 44 percent of all registered unemployed were women.

The situation in Hungary can be explained mainly through examination of the structural reorganization that took place after 1989. The post-1989 reduction of work forces sought by

Table 7. The Unemployment Rates of Women and Men in the European Union 1991–1996 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

employers was realized primarily in those sectors where the proportion of female workers was low, such as in heavy industry. It is also worth noting that the anomaly is not consistent across all employment sectors: women account for 45.5 percent of unemployed young people looking for their first job, for example, and in some regions actually represent a majority of the unemployed. In Budapest, for example, women account for 52.2 percent of the registered unemployed, and in Fejér County, 54.8 percent.

While salaries of Hungarian men and women differ greatly, unemployment benefits are much more equitable—despite being based on income. The average monthly benefit for women is 96.5 percent of the average benefit for men. This figure falls to 95.7 percent for the long-term unemployed (more than 180 days).

**Qualitative Labor Market Characteristics of Female Employment: The Position of Women in the Labor Market**

One legacy of state socialism is that the important social preconditions that would enable large female employment—for example, schools and other children's institutions—are already in place in Hungary. Other social policy measures have also contributed to the improvement of the labor market for women. Despite these advances, the position of women in the labor market remains worse than that of men. The socio-political reality of life in Hungary, which includes the persistence of traditional views of the woman's role in society and within the family, continues to prevent women from achieving equality with men. The difficult transition to a market economy has decreased the demand for labor, driven unemployment upward, and pushed social aid into the background: in balance, the social position of women has actually worsened in recent years.

Both the former communist and the current democratic constitutions state that women and men must have equal opportunities, and that discrimination based on gender is illegal. In practice, these provisions have not been enforced—and there are in fact no penalties for discrimination. Theoretically, women may turn to the constitutional court for redress, but as yet none have. In practice, discrimination against women is being perpetuated both openly and covertly in the spheres of politics, the economy, culture, and the family. The duality of legally declared equal rights and the lack of equal opportunity is striking.

The position of women in the labor market has at all times been unequal to that of men, and it has worsened during the transitional period. The disadvantages of women manifest themselves in various ways:

- Female labor plays a secondary, or reserve, role in the labor market. The employment levels of women are thus closely related to the prevailing economic situation: The harsh employment environment of the transitional period, for example, is reflected in the worsening situation for women. This phenomenon also gives rise to extensive hidden female unemployment.
- Women are often forced to interrupt their career for the birth and upbringing of their children.
- Promotion opportunities for women are more limited than for men.
- Segregation of the labor market lowers the prestige of female posts and leads to an unfavorable counter-selection.
Women's wages and incomes are generally less than those of men, and women are employed at lower levels of the income hierarchy.

- The means by which women might defend their interests are weak, and have worsened in the transitional period.

**Discrimination in Hiring: Unfavorable entrance conditions.** Women are at a disadvantage from the moment they enter the labor market—even though the educational level of women in employment is actually higher than that of men. One explanation of this phenomenon is that the labor market does not recognize educational levels, but only professional training and qualifications. In this sense, women are less qualified than men, since they receive only general schooling. This obviously puts them at a disadvantage when seeking work.

Women are also disadvantaged by their traditional role of raising children, both through the child’s dependent years and in the case of illness. Although childcare allowance and childcare assistance is available, employers are often reluctant to hire female labor because of the possibility of interruptions and because of the perceived fewer hours that women are able to work compared to men. Given these perceptions, the integration into the labor market of older women and women with children will remain nearly impossible while employers continue to discriminate by age and gender.

**Discrimination in Promotion: The glass-ceiling effect.** Women are also disadvantaged in obtaining leadership positions, both by policy and by economics. In issues of promotion, they suffer unequal treatment compared to men. The traditional division of labor within the family—which means the woman alone must contend with interruptions to her career—and insufficient aid for household duties combine to prevent the equality of women in paid work. Women tend to be limited to entry at the lower levels of the labor market, where opportunities for promotion are scarce and hard to achieve. The female employment structure is pyramidal, with high concentrations of women at the lower levels of the employment hierarchy and low concentrations at the top. In 1998, one-third of women in white-collar jobs held a leadership position. The proportion of men in leadership roles was one-half.

**Women in political decision-making posts.** The participation of women in political institutions, political parties, trade unions, and other interest groups is inadequate, particularly in terms of leadership. Greater participation of women in these institutions is extremely important, since these are the bodies that determine and defend the interests of women and choose candidates for public office. At the moment, women tend to abstain from participation in decision-making processes, primarily because of the perceived masculine nature of decision-making and the lack of provision for their participation. It is therefore necessary to change women's attitudes to encourage the desire to participate in decision-making, and it is important also to educate both men and women, through political institutions and the media, about the advantages of the participation of both sexes in all social spheres.

A precondition for democracy is the assurance of equal opportunity for both genders. A paradox of the democratizing of Hungarian society is that women have been pushed into the background in the political decision-making process. The participation of women in parliament is strikingly low. The first free elections in 1990 gave seats to 27 women, or just 7 percent of parliament. Only six European countries in June 1991 had a lower proportion of women elected to power. The second elections in 1994 returned 43 women to parliament (11.2 percent), but that figure declined to 32, or 8.3 percent, in the 1998 elections. There are also very few female office holders in Parliament. Between 1994 and 1998 there were two female Deputy
Speakers of the House in office, but there is now only one. There is only one woman among the presidents of the parliamentary commissions.

Women obtained suffrage in Hungary in 1945. The number of female members of parliament grew steadily until 1980, when women held almost one-third of the seats in the National Assembly. This proportion was among the highest in the world. The numbers of women members of parliament began to decline in 1985, and that tendency continued after the change of regime in 1989 (Table 8).

Table 8. The Proportion of Women Among MPs from 1945 to 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Elections</th>
<th>Number of MPs</th>
<th>Proportion of Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The low number of women parliamentarians in Hungary is not typical of today’s developed democracies. There is only one country in the EU, Greece, which has a lower proportion of women in parliament than Hungary. The North European countries have the highest proportion, with women holding a share of one-third and more of the available seats (Table 9).

The change in the political system made little difference to the way that the gender issue is handled or to the opportunities for women to enter parliament. The boundaries have remained much the same. But it is unrealistic to make a direct comparison between today’s developed democracies and the young democracies of Hungary and other countries of the

Table 9. Participation of Women in the National Parliamentary Assemblies of the European Union Member States, and of Norway and Hungary, and in the European Parliament, 1997 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries/Proportion of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria 23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium 16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark 34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany 25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland 33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland 14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy 10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg 18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

region. It takes a long time to develop a democracy to maturity. The levels of female parliamentary membership may be high in the democracies of the EU, but the rights of women to vote and to be elected in these countries were realized in the decades after the turn of century. The initial steps toward female involvement in government were extremely modest in these countries, too, and the gains made were cumulatively embedded in the social process.

In Hungary, as elsewhere in the world, the opportunities for women are greater at the local than at the national level of government. Personal contacts at this level make it easier for women to overcome prejudice and be successful. In the 1980s, between 27 and 32 percent of local and regional council delegates in Hungary were women. In and after the 1990 local elections, the proportions of women candidates and women officials elected to municipal assemblies dropped to 14–16 percent. Women fared better in small towns than in major cities, winning 16 percent of seats compared to 13 percent, respectively.

The statistics for municipal elections further illustrate how women are at a greater disadvantage when running for high-profile offices. In 1985, only 6 percent of town mayors were women; in 1990, this figure fell to 3 percent. In smaller towns, 10 percent of mayors were women. The "pyramid principle" of female opportunity is evident here: The more prestigious the post, the less chance a woman has of winning it.

Women's underrepresentation in government is conspicuous in Hungary. The government has no women's policy, and gender issues are not included in governmental programs. In 1990, there were no women ministers. Today, women are represented by just one minister, in the Ministry of Justice; by two state secretaries; and by three undersecretaries of state. There are hopes for improvement, however: following the Fourth International UN Conference of Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the Equal Chance Office was created within the Ministry of Labor, and was given responsibility—and limited power—for female issues within the government.

In the practical matter of the exercise of power, party leaders are more important than the rank-and-file membership they represent. For lack of Hungarian data, I estimate the female proportion an average of one to five women, which refers to the international average. The number of women in leadership roles in trade unions is also low, although they are better represented here than in the political parties. Prior to 1990, 45 percent of trade union leaders were women, but the statistics hide the fact that female leaders tended to work at lower levels: 55 percent of shop stewards were women, for example. Female participation in the top leadership was negligible. The new, independent trade unions are still fledgling in the post-1989 multiparty system, but there remain only two or three women in the top ranks.

The limited participation of women in decision-making processes is a result of their underprivileged position in society. This disadvantage can be explained by historical reasons, specifically by the traditional division of work between the sexes. There is a serious conflict between the woman's traditional role within the family and her desired role of participation in the decision-making processes, a conflict that is compounded by the lack of social services available to her. This conflict prevents the participation of women on an equal basis with men in both the political and the economic decision-making processes. Social conditions must change if women are to achieve equality.

Women in business. There are no reliable, up-to-date statistics on female entrepreneurship in Hungary. The statistics that do exist tend to contradict each other. What is certain is that women are in a minority among entrepreneurs. I estimate that of the 734,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Hungary, 38 percent are run by women (Table 10).
Table 10. Number and Proportion of Female Entrepreneurs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprises</th>
<th>Number of Women (thousands)</th>
<th>Proportion of Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companies and partnership</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole proprietors</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contribution that women can make and the skills that they can bring to business have the potential to be very positive for society as a whole. Running their own business both provides women with employment and enables them to create further jobs.

The small business sector is increasingly important for women. In 1993, more than 20 percent of all earners worked in small businesses, including one-person businesses. In 1988, women accounted for less than one-third of workers in full-time businesses in the competitive sector; this proportion rose to almost two-fifths by 1993.11

In 1993, there were 213,000 one-woman businesses in Hungary, accounting for more than 40 percent of all sole proprietorships. Another 37,000 female proprietors were registered in partnerships, representing 30 percent of the total. Many women are in business only as a sideline activity, however; only 37 percent of full-time sole traders are women. Women account for 56 percent of sole proprietors on pension.12

Women typically run a different style of business from those owned by men, often creating very small companies in difficult sectors, such as the service sector. They prefer businesses that involve limited capital investment and low risk, such as property leasing and retail trade, other than shopkeeping. They are also active in catering, where family resources can be used. Where women do operate as shopkeepers, they tend to set up in low-risk areas that offer the potential of growth, suggesting that a safe livelihood is more important to them than high profits. According to a 1998 survey of entrepreneurs by the Hungarian Small Enterprises Society, women are more cautious than men about making investments and about increasing the size of their firm. They also tend to be more pessimistic about the future of the Hungarian economy and of their company.13

According to a study conducted on the development of women entrepreneurs,14 companies set up by women are more successful than those of men in combining professional life and family. Most are in the service sector, and seek to develop local potential. They tend to be labor-intensive. The study found that the educational level of female entrepreneurs is higher than that of the average earner. Most were employed in the state sector before changing their employee status to entrepreneurship, and the majority made the change in the belief, often unrealized, that entrepreneurship would be the most important defense against unemployment. More than 50 percent of women entrepreneurs started their own business because of the threat of unemployment.15

The study also records that 82 percent of respondents said their lives changed completely after they started their own business. Sixty percent, however, said that the division of labor within the family did not change. One quarter of respondents continued to do the household chores alone.16

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**Educational Level and Qualification of Women**

The educational level of women in Hungary has increased significantly in recent decades, to a point approaching that of men. In 1996, 23.6 percent of women and 27.4 percent of men aged 18 and older had finished secondary school (Table 11).
Table 11. Distribution of People by Educational Qualification of Population and Sex, 1 January 1996 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population groups</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years old and older with no schooling</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years old and older completed at least 8 grades of primary school</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years old and older completed at least secondary school</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years old and older with third level education completed</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Among the employed segment of the population, women actually record higher levels of education than men. In 1997, 40.3 percent of employed women and 27.3 percent of employed men had finished at least secondary school (excluding three-year apprentice school); 16.4 percent of women and 14.1 percent of men had third-level education (Table 12). Of the women with third-level education, 54.4 percent were college graduates and 38.7 percent university graduates. There were also significant differences by generation: the educational level of young women exceeded that of young men.

Table 12. Distribution of Active Earners by Highest Qualification and Sex, 1997 (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 8 grades of primary school</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice school</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third level education</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The relatively strong educational background of women might be expected to favorably influence their situation in the labor market. But educational achievements do not readily translate into occupational attainment or economic security for Hungarian women.

Only 44 percent of women have any kind of skill qualification, compared to more than three-quarters of men. This is reflected in the breakdown of women engaged in manual labor, where the majority are either semiskilled or unskilled workers (Table 13). This is in part because girls typically choose grammar school education (two-thirds of grammar school students are girls), while boys opt for apprentice schools (almost four-fifths of students are boys). There is also marked segregation by gender within the different school systems. 1997 statistics for apprentice schools show that girls accounted for 91.3 percent of students studying the textile industry, 98.1 percent of those studying the clothing industry, and 77.5 percent of those studying trade. At vocational secondary schools, girls were 91.9 percent of the students in the hygiene courses, 80 percent in postal, and 74.2 percent in commerce. In third-level teacher education, women accounted for 96.4 percent of the students training to be kindergarten teachers, 92.7 percent of teachers for handicapped children, 87.8 percent of lower-grade teachers, 71.0 percent of higher-grade teachers, and 92.2 percent of the students studying on sanitary courses. This
segregation by gender in the school system is repeated in the labor market, reinforcing the feminization of certain trades and professions.

**Income Differences**

Earnings and income differences for men and women can be analyzed from two perspectives:

- The position of women in the income hierarchy.
- The difference in remuneration for men and women in the same position, performing the same work.

Most women are occupied at the lower levels of the income hierarchy. Three-quarters of women earn less than the average income, compared to one-third of men. In 1989, women in white-collar work earned 55 percent of the salary earned by men; women in blue-collar work, 67 percent. The gender gap is tending to decrease, however: In 1998, women's gross incomes were 73.3 percent of those of men in manual jobs, and 63.6 percent of those in non-manual jobs (Table 14).

**Table 14. Income Differences by Gender in Hungary (by average gross income), 1998 (%).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprises by Size</th>
<th>Less Than 30,000 HUF*</th>
<th>More Than 100,000 HUF</th>
<th>Income % of Women/Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 11 employees</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 51 employees</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 51 employees and public sector together</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 300 employees</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual workers</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-manual workers</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*HUF = Hungarian Forint

*Source: Calculation on the basis of Hungarian Statistical Office, 1998c, 12-70p.*

The limited opportunities available to women and the persistence of tradition mean that women's wages and incomes lag behind those of men throughout their professional careers. In addition, the differences grow with the time spent in work. Objective factors, such as the quantity of the work done, the requirement for vocational skills, and the structure of female employment, and subjective factors, such as discrimination against women and performance evaluations, all find expression in this pay differential. The current system of wages sets a higher value on men's capabilities, and wage differentials reflect the undoubtedly worse working conditions that men endure as well as reward men's presumed greater knowledge and experience. Public opinion still reflects an acceptance of this, and workplace collectives—and often even women themselves—are inclined to overestimate the value as breadwinners of men's work compared to that of women.
Feminization of Professions

The proportion of women employed in feminized sectors has fluctuated since the beginning of industrialization. The first available statistic indicates that in 1891, the feminized sectors had a workforce that was 88.1 percent female. This proportion declined to 42.8 percent in 1949, before rising again to 65.5 percent in 1990. The segregation of the labor market is considerable: recent statistics showed that 79.9 percent of female active earners worked in feminized sectors, and 76.9 percent of male workers in masculine sectors.\textsuperscript{18}

It is broadly accepted that the character of female employment changes as the female labor supply adjusts itself to the prevailing demand for labor. But female labor also plays an essentially more important role in the transformation of the employment structure.

The employment structure changes continuously as a consequence of technical, economic, and social development. New skills and new occupations are born, and old ones are transformed or die out. The hierarchy of professions also changes, creating opportunities for working people who are in advantageous positions to apply for and hopefully to obtain jobs of higher social prestige. In most instances, those working people are men.

When these changes occur, both male and female workers are regrouped to accommodate partly new entrants, partly reallocated employees. The more mobile workforce—again, usually men—may take the opportunity to change to a better job. The conditions of mobility are better for men than for women: a greater proportion of men are skilled, and men are more likely to have the qualifications that would enable them to cope with the higher requirements of new technology. Free of the burden of household obligations that often limits women, men are also better placed to undertake further education and training; to take on work farther from their place of residence; and to tackle new responsibilities and adjust to new circumstances. For women, however, few of whom have professional qualifications and many of whom enter the world of paid work directly from the household and work close to home, the best opportunities for job advancement are usually in the professions where conditions are less favorable. It is ultimately for want of a better alternative that they move toward such jobs.

Changes in the employment structure are transferred back into the labor-market mechanisms. As a result, the sectors employing a relatively large proportion of women will offer below-average wages and unfavorable career prospects, and vice versa. The feminization of a career thus begins when the social prestige of that career begins to fall.

Occupational segregation is maintained by the mechanisms of the labor market and reinforced by the socialization process. The occupations employing a large proportion of women—that is, the feminized careers—become fixed in the social consciousness as occupations that are the proper preserve of women. The process is self-sustaining: despite intensive vocational guidance, it is the experience of both Hungary and the international community that most girls tend to choose occupations traditionally held to be feminine.

Combining Work with Household Duties

In past decades, the mechanisms of the Hungarian economy provided incentives for the unlimited creation of employment, with the consequence that the family model of two wage earners quickly became common. The socially organized sphere encouraged full-time employ-
ment, and the need to earn money made it a reality. Both adult members of the nuclear family were commonly withdrawn from the household for the major part of the day.

Neither the socially organized nor the household sphere adjusted to the changed conditions. Even today, workplaces operate as though the household takes care of itself. Business and industry continue to function assuming the precondition of a male work force working full-time and with no external distractions or obligations. And in the service sector, working hours rigidly conform to an eight-hour day, failing to reflect the realities of demand. There has been no adjustment to the possibilities and requirements of the two wage-earner family.

Under circumstances like these, the balance between the society and the household sphere, which had supported one another, has collapsed. Neither sphere could fully satisfy the demands made of it. The result has been the exposure of inefficiencies in the social infrastructure and increasing tensions and problems both for families and for society as a whole.

For women who are also mothers, the spread of female employment has doubled their work. If women are to fill the roles of both worker and mother, they will need help: society must develop childcare services and household help, and provide modern labor-saving tools and equipment for the home. At present, most women carry too great a burden to achieve their full potential. Including time spent commuting, their workday alone may be 12 to 14 hours long. Filling the roles of worker and mother can be accomplished only at the expense of the woman’s free time, and at the cost of neglecting the role she could play outside the home.

Hungary provides an inadequate system of support for women trying to fulfill this double social role. Given the economic obligation to work full-time, the lack of flexible employment for women with small children, lack of help with household chores, and high prices makes it increasingly for women to reconcile both roles. Although the variety of labor-saving household equipment has greatly increased in recent years, the decline in living standards in Hungary has put much of this equipment out of the reach of many people.

The greatest need of women who work is help for child rearing. Mothers are entitled to 24 weeks of maternity leave with full salary. A system introduced in 1985 had permitted women to continue on maternity leave beyond 24 weeks, on a wage-adjusted childcare allowance of 65 and 75 percent of salary. This scheme was subsequently withdrawn, but may be reintroduced under a recent government plan. A program introduced in 1967 then granted a flat-rate child allowance, payable after the child’s second birthday. The allowance for a second child was significantly less than for the first. The system of child allowances is still in place, but has been modified from a flat-rate system to an income-dependent system.

After the child reaches three years of age, the role of institutions becomes more important. In 1997, 9.6 percent of children of nursery age went to a crèche (down from 14.8 percent in 1980) and 87.4 percent of eligible children would spend the day in kindergarten. The conditions of institutional childcare are worsening, however, and crèches and kindergartens are closing down because of financial problems.

For school-age children, after-school day-care centers play an important role in supervising children for the remaining hours that their parents are at work. By age 14, however, only 27 percent of schoolchildren are in day-care centers; 39 percent are latchkey children, without supervision after school. Other problems for families include the fact that falling living standards mean some families are unable to pay for school lunches. Help, notably from the Soros Foundation and from local communities, has brought some temporary relief from the problem.
The entry of women into the labor market has been an asymmetrical process. For the majority of women who have joined the labor force, their responsibilities at home have not been reduced proportionately. Men do not take an equal share in the housework or in raising their children—women spend three times longer per day than men do engaged in work around the home. As much as 40 percent of the work done by women cannot be measured, is not remunerated, and is not reflected in statistics.

In the past, tradition inhibited changes to the division of labor within the family. More recently, economic stagnation and deteriorating living standards have stifled the slowly developing democratization of the family—men have been compelled to work overtime whenever possible, and household work and child rearing have again become primarily the responsibility of women. This situation is strengthened by the conservative views of Hungarians regarding the roles of men and women: Public opinion still holds that the traditional division of labor between the sexes is founded in innate differences between women's and men's abilities.

**Consequences: Female Employment In Perspective**

It can be seen from the nature of the problems listed that a successful employment policy must be founded in a coordinated system of social, demographic, education, and family policies. All of these must in turn have as their central objective the social reproduction of the population and the efficient use of labor. In a market economy, the employment both of women and of men is determined first and foremost by the demand for labor. To prevent these market forces from overriding the principle of equal opportunity of gender, a flexible employment system must be put in place, one capable of adjusting with the least amount of tension.

An environment must be created that allows women to make the choice between work within and work outside the socially organized sphere. This can be achieved through the development of a system that both provides social benefits and offers a variety of forms of employment and sources of income, and which thereby makes possible the reconciliation of work inside and outside the home.

The real possibility of choice assumes:

- The guarantee of socially organized work for those who want it. This requires as a precondition the coordinated provision of schooling, retraining, and childcare and other services.
- An alleviation of the economic pressure to undertake work felt by women that have children. Welfare policies are required that give more effective support to families with children. The proper level of support would enable the true possibility for choice.

The extension of flexible forms of employment—for both sexes—is necessary to enable a redistribution of labor that meets the diverse demands of the economy and of the family. Current barriers to this form of employment must first be removed, and employers and employees alike must demonstrate a willingness to explore the possibilities of flexible employment. The nature of part-time jobs in Hungary must also change. They are currently discriminatory. They reinforce the segregation of the labor market, they are perceived as low-status, and they offer low levels of remuneration, few promotion opportunities, and a low level of social protection.

Unemployment is an inevitable phenomenon of a market economy, and new policies are also required to protect and assist the unemployed. In addition, it is important to change the trend toward early retirement.
Notes


9. Now known as the Secretariat for Woman’s Policy, in the Social and Family Issues Ministry.


15. “Vállalkozó Nok a Mai Magyar Társadalomban,” op. cit.


Rural Women in Russia: What Does Private Farming Mean?

Sue Bridger

The question of land and farming reform has been one of the most bitterly contested in Russia’s economic transformation since 1991. The core issue of the relationship between the individual and the land continues to excite the passions of legislators, farming lobbies, and media commentators, and is perhaps best summed up in Boris Yeltsin’s famous 1990 remark: “The land is like your mother; you don’t sell your mother.”

The legacy of Stalinism has long been evident in the widespread popular antipathy toward any hint of speculation in such a fundamental and precious resource—so much so that the pioneers of the agricultural leasing system introduced under President Gorbachev, and which later became the precursor of private peasant farming, were frequently the target of harassment and even arson attacks. The situation did improve, however, and by the time of Russia’s independence it was widely assumed that these leaseholders and the private peasant farmers (krest’ianskie khoziaistva or fermerstvo) that followed them would become the major engine of reform and the standard-bearers of efficiency and productivity in the post-Soviet rejection of socialized farming.

Matters on the land, as elsewhere in the Russian economy, have not developed according to plan in the 1990s, however. The initial wave of enthusiasm that greeted private peasant farming and that catapulted the numbers of officially registered businesses from 30,000 to 270,000 in just two years failed to translate into a more durable movement. Private peasant farms remained a tiny minority, despite continuing official support. In the increasingly difficult economic climate, a slowing of growth in new business registrations was accompanied by waves of bankruptcies or simply the abandonment of land by those who had been unable to make their venture a success. By 1994, the Russian government was officially admitting that expectations of this sector of private farming had been unrealistic.

The vast majority of the employed rural population, some 25 million people, remained on the former state and collective farms, most of which were transformed in 1992-93 into joint stock companies. This rural privatization process in fact brought little substantive change to most farm employees—other than to give their former managers greater authority—and the deep depression in large-scale commercial farming was soon creating a critical situation for many rural households. The severe economic problems faced by the newly privatized farms led to cuts in crop acreages and livestock herds, closures and cuts in rural processing plants, and a marked shrinkage of rural services, such as nurseries and cultural facilities that could no longer be funded either by the struggling joint stock companies or by the local authorities to whom they might be handed over. The impact on rural households of job losses, nonpayment of wages, and the loss of services was evident as early as 1993. By 1998, a staggering 82 percent of agricultural enterprises across the country were reported to be loss-making.

This depression in large-scale commercial farming and the failure of officially registered private peasant farms focused attention on a neglected sector of private agricultural production. By the mid-1990s, “private subsidiary agriculture” (lichnoe podsoobnoe khoziaistvo)—the pri-
Private household plots of former state and collective farm employees—accounted for 46 percent of Russian agricultural production, compared with the mere 3 percent produced by the much-publicized private peasant farms. Private subsidiary agriculture produced 90 percent of the country's potatoes, 76 percent of vegetables, 55 percent of meat, and 47 percent of Russia's milk. While the significance of this sector was inflated by the huge fall in output of the large-scale commercial farms, it is clear that families across rural Russia had significantly increased production on their household plots to offset the loss of income from waged employment.

This phenomenon has given rise to much debate both on the future of this type of farming and on how its present role should be evaluated. Many people consider this form of production to be no more than a primitive type of subsistence farming enjoying a temporary renaissance in a situation of crisis. Using family labor and with the limited goal of securing household food supplies and a measure of cash income, it is seen as fundamentally regressive. On the other side of the debate are those who see these private operations as genuine commercial smallholdings that, with encouragement and assistance, could form the basis of a small-scale but efficient cooperative sector on the lines of initiatives developing in regions such as Pskov and Belgorod.

The aim of this paper is to examine the gender and the agricultural implications of these developments. The two are inescapably intertwined: as much development literature has demonstrated, the neglect of rural women's needs and interests may not be in the best interests of food production. In the specific case of Russia, the experience of the last two decades of Soviet rule clearly demonstrated how easily agricultural investment programs could be thwarted by a failure to take into account the concerns of women.

Farming Household Plots: Why Is Female Labor Predominant?

Women were the mainstay of private subsidiary agriculture in the USSR. The question of how much time men and women actually spent working their household plots in the late Soviet period is, however, an extremely complex one. The answer depends inevitably on such factors as the nature of their employment, the distance to the market, and the profitability of local crops. Sociological surveys and time-budget studies have consistently estimated that women contributed between 50 and 75 percent of the work involved, but these figures are almost certainly conservative. They do not take into account work such as the processing, preserving, and bottling of produce, which is regarded as an element of the housework and exclusively the responsibility of women.

The reasons why women are so dominant in this sector of production are based on a variety of economic, demographic, and sociocultural factors. Many of the tasks involved in this form of private farming were traditionally seen in the pre-collectivization village as women's work. Tending vegetables, caring for poultry, processing and marketing produce, and, above all, milking cows—around which there were significant cultural taboos—all fell into this category. The issue of milking is particularly important for its effect in intensifying the workload for women. While men in the pre-collectivization Russian village were prepared to feed and clean out livestock, they characteristically regarded the task of milking as something only a woman should do. A major Soviet ethnographic study of the 1950s charted how these attitudes persisted despite the upheavals of collectivization. One man, described by the study's authors as "extremely typical," is quoted as saying, "Some men can milk cows, but if you take me for
example, I wouldn’t milk cows for anything. There’s nothing better than milk, but that work—I just wouldn’t do it. That’s women’s work.”

Throughout the period of socialized farming, women provided almost 100 percent of the staff employed to milk cows on state and collective dairy farms, a situation that was challenged only on farms where state-of-the-art technology allowed the work to be reclassified as that of a “machine operator”—the archetypal male profession on a Soviet farm. One of the most intriguing aspects of gender segregation in the Soviet rural workforce was the habitual presentation of work with machinery—despite state attempts to recruit women into this area—as heavy work from which women needed to be protected. Milking, by contrast, was presumably viewed as “light” work: this despite the fact that the nonseasonal nature of the work and the Russian practice of milking three times a day, quite apart from the associated burdens imposed by inadequate technology, ensured that dairy women worked some of the longest and most unsocial hours in the entire Soviet economy.

All of this continues to have significance for women in an economic climate in which the acquisition of a cow has become a logical step for a rural household to take. In the course of the Soviet period, private subsidiary agriculture experienced the effects of both official encouragement and official discouragement. Under Khrushchev, for example, attempts were made to dramatically restrict private household production. At one point, cows kept on private plots were forcibly sent for slaughter by state and collective farms attempting to meet overoptimistic targets for meat production. This is still remembered with some distress by elderly rural women. Despite a subsequent reversal of this policy, working private plots was always viewed as intrinsically antisocialist and evidence of a “money-grubbing peasant mentality,” despite its evident economic benefits in feeding the rural population. Farms frequently refused to supply their workers with animal feed or to allow them to gather hay, and sporadic crackdowns on those deemed to be spending insufficient time working for the state and collective farms took place even into the Gorbachev era. In such a climate, it is not surprising that the numbers of people keeping cows dwindled.

The demise of the USSR ended these ideological constraints, and with the dramatic impact of market reforms on rural employment, the numbers of households keeping cows began to increase substantially. In two neighboring villages I visited in the summer of 1993, the number of cows kept privately had grown in just 18 months to 46 from a total “you could count on the fingers of one hand.” The village women, who could not afford to pay a cowherd, had set up a rota to tend them at pasture, a task that ran from the first milking at 5 a.m., through the midday milking, to the third and final milking at around 7 p.m.

The point of this example is to demonstrate the impact of traditional attitudes on women’s work. In all of this activity, the only men in evidence were two who turned up at midday to swat flies with twigs as the cows were milked. It is probable that this state of affairs was informed by the persistence of negative attitudes toward milking cows: indeed, in the summer of 1997, the oldest-established Russian women’s magazine, which has a predominantly urban readership, devoted an entire page to a psychologist’s response to an exhausted reader whose husband refused point blank to go anywhere near their cow.

A further important factor in the time rural women spent on their private plots during the Soviet period was that of relative income. Generally speaking, low wage earners were the most likely to keep large plots and greater numbers of livestock. Women’s average pay throughout
the Soviet era was substantially less than that of men, and the pronounced occupational segre-
gation of farming further served to depress female earnings. The household plot was therefore
an important source of subsistence, especially in female-headed households. Surveys from the
late Soviet period nonetheless indicate that even women with good average earnings, such as
dairy women, were likely to be working substantially longer hours in private farming than men
on similar incomes. This fact would appear to underline the points made above about the
domestic division of labor.\textsuperscript{11}

The advent of redundancies and the nonpayment of wages in the post-Soviet period have
substantially changed the situation. Women in the cities have been reluctant to register as
unemployed due to the scant levels of benefits and assistance on offer, and women in rural
areas, often confronted by a costly and time-consuming trek to a distant employment center,
have even less incentive to do so. Nonpayment of wages is becoming a common strategy to defer
the collapse of a business, and for women caught up in such losing enterprises work on the
household plot is likely to be an increasingly attractive alternative to the uncertain future of
redundancy or the continued withholding of pay. Women provide the majority of workers in the
rural service sector and in livestock farming, and both these areas have suffered substantial
cutbacks since 1992. Whether or not they register as unemployed at the one extreme or remain
officially employed by an institution that does not pay them at the other, the results are likely to
be much the same in terms of forcing them back into a reliance on subsistence farming as a
means of feeding their families.

An issue which cannot be left out of the equation when looking at women's responsibility for
this form of private farming is that of alcohol abuse. As data on health problems and, notably, on
male life expectancy bear witness, the transition period has given rise to a substantial increase
in the abuse of alcohol. In recent years, Russian commentators on demographic developments
have been much given to observing that the unpopular and much-maligned anti-alcohol cam-
paign of the Gorbachev years did, in fact, succeed in temporarily reversing trends in male
mortality. By 1992, however, alcohol abuse had returned to become the major contributing
factor to an alarming drop of five years in male life expectancy. Throughout the years since the
collapse of the USSR, the rural press has been full of anxious letters from readers that chart the
effects of alcohol abuse in terms of child welfare, domestic violence, and family breakdown. It is
significant that these concerns now being voiced come from a rural community that has a long-
standing familiarity with male alcohol abuse.

The extent of the problem in the tightly controlled, pre-glasnost era can be gauged from
studies carried out by Soviet rural sociologists. Once glasnost arrived, the rural press was sud-
denly awash with letters, features, and interviews in which women finally expressed their exas-
peration at the impact alcohol abuse was having on their domestic lives.\textsuperscript{12} Since 1992, the
extent of the problem has increased to the point where it is discussed with near-despair by rural
health practitioners and teachers. The scale of alcohol abuse cannot help but affect the divi-
sion of labor on the private household plots. Many rural men have taken to heavy drinking as a
way to escape the changes taking place in their lives, and their contribution to the traditionally
female sphere of work on the home farm has if anything lessened. In the villages cited above,
this pattern of behavior had become ingrained within two summers of Russian independence.
One woman summarized the situation by saying, "The women take absolutely everything upon
themselves. The men are all alcoholics, they won't do anything."\textsuperscript{13}
Finally, there are also demographic issues that reinforce the predominance of women in farming household plots. In the Russian countryside, there are a great many households that are headed by women. As in urban areas, the vast majority of single-parent households are headed by women, but the impact of emigration from the countryside has also produced a disproportionate number of women pensioners.

By the time of the final Soviet census in 1989, the steady loss of young people to the cities over the previous 30 years was clearly reflected in published statistics and its impact had become highly visible in many Russian villages: In the 15 central Russian regions, between 30 and 40 percent of the rural population were pensioners. Even before the catastrophic post-Soviet drop in male life expectancy, there were three times more women than men of pensionable age in the Russian countryside. Between them, these factors produced the phenomenon of literally thousands of dying villages in which virtually all the inhabitants were women pensioners.

These demographic factors combine with the impact on employment of the post-Soviet transition, alcohol abuse, and cultural attitudes and traditions to ensure that women carry the major responsibility for the high levels of production on household plots.

**The Intensification of Production: What Does It Mean for Women?**

As the impact of rural unemployment and nonpayment of wages began to make themselves felt by 1993, the pressure increased on rural households to develop their resources to secure food supplies and, potentially, cash income. Families increased the area under crops, diversified their crops, and in particular increased their livestock holdings. What this has meant for many rural women has been a substantial increase in what can only be termed self-exploitation. While much of the work, other than the care of livestock, is seasonal, it nonetheless demands a high and constant input of overwhelmingly manual labor.

The following three comments come from the two villages cited above, and are illustrative of women’s attitudes when the fear of either unemployment or nonpayment of wages was first making itself felt. All of the women I spoke to in this area had significantly increased their levels of cultivation and their holdings of livestock. What was particularly telling was that concern over care of the plot had become a major preoccupation even when the plot owner was still receiving a wage. The following comments provide an interesting illustration of what this form of private farming entails, even for those women apparently well equipped to carry it out. All three women were in their thirties, all were in full-time employment, and all were married with working husbands. They appeared to be fit and healthy and coping well, but their enormous sense of responsibility and the levels of stress they were experiencing came across very clearly both in their words and in their tone of voice as they spoke:

"Everything’s expensive. Without my plot I couldn’t live. It’s absolutely essential. I have chickens but lots of people have started to keep cows now. I work on the plot from morning till night. It ties you . . . These days we try and do everything we possibly can for ourselves, as much as possible. But the weather’s been bad, the potatoes are rotting. We’re being punished for something."

"I’m tied by the plot through the summer, so I can’t take a holiday. I’ve had a month’s leave and I’ve managed to get to town twice. You can see why—look, I’ve just finished preserving all
these jars of cucumbers. There are 42 of them. The plot is a lot of work and I can’t leave it now. I never stop.”

“People have bigger plots than before and keep a lot more livestock because of the economic situation. They try and rely on themselves as much as they can. I have no free time at all. I teach and I have three children and a large plot. And I don’t manage. I don’t manage. And it upsets me a lot. The only good thing about it is that the main work on the plot happens when there are school holidays, so it is possible to do something.”

Comments such as these inevitably beg the question of how long these women will be able to go on working this way, absorbing the stress involved; and just as crucially, of what happens to those who are unable to provide for themselves in this manner.

There is an assumption, regularly reiterated in the Russian media, that there is no excuse for anyone who lives on the land and fails to provide for their family. One recent, typical comment ran as follows:

To live in the countryside and ask for help is beneath contempt. You have to plant up your plot, get a cow or even two, or if you don’t want a cow, get a goat. . . . You should be busy all the time. . . . Those days are gone when you could thump the table, write a complaint, and someone would give you something.

This “new peasant” version of the enterprise-culture mentality arguably has a place in a country where self-help and self-sufficiency were for so long viewed with such suspicion, but it fails to take into account two fundamental requirements of the household farmer: reasonable health and at least a modicum of cash. The notion that the land and a beneficent Mother Nature can be relied upon to feed the people ignores the very real demands of agricultural work. For those who are old and infirm, for those who are disabled or in chronic ill-health, for those with very young or sick children, and for those who lack the support of able-bodied relatives, farming is a demanding and uncertain profession. The practical assistance of younger and able-bodied relatives is crucial for groups such as these, yet may not be available or forthcoming. The demographic developments of recent decades mean that many pensioners have younger relatives only in the cities. And the recent, soaring male death rate has begun to give rise to the phenomenon of elderly rural women outliving their sons.

Even where women are physically capable of working their plots successfully, a shortage of cash may prevent them developing their level of cultivation or increasing their livestock holdings. Access to land guarantees neither subsistence nor household income if there is no money to buy seed and basic equipment, or young animals to raise. Letters such as the following, commonplace in the rural press, give some indication of the severity of the crisis some households face:

We have been without gas for over a year because we can’t afford to pay for it. We can’t pay for lighting either. I’ve been racking my brains how to get hold of 150 roubles to buy a piglet, but it’s a fortune. I work in the school canteen and the conditions are awful—there’s no sewerage system and no water, . . . the floor has collapsed, and rats are getting in. Just tell me how we’re supposed to go on like this?
Mother Nature does not simply step in to pay the bills for households reduced to this level of poverty. The process of demonetization that has taken place in Russia is not something from which subsistence farmers are immune. It is a process that is particularly vicious in off-loading onto the household the financial problems of the state and private enterprise. On the one hand defaulting on payments of wages and benefits, sometimes for months or even years, enterprises and state organs simultaneously expect cash payment for rent, heating, light, goods and services, clothing, medicines, and transport. Agricultural wages are less than half the national average, and only one person in eight in rural Russia has an income above the subsistence minimum. The additional squeeze created by demonetization is stifling the very form of self-sufficiency on which rural workers might otherwise be expected to rely.18

The Limits of Self-Sufficiency: What Kind of a Future for Rural Women?

Given the high productivity levels of Russia’s household plots, the hope inevitably arises that this sector will develop from primarily subsistence farming into productive and profitable commercial smallholdings. But if the women who bear the major responsibility for this work are to develop it successfully, they must escape from the trap of the cashless economy: they need micro-credits that will enable them to take the next step. The development of these private plots is restricted by a lack of small-scale mechanization, such as mini-tractors or milking machines, and by difficulties in extending cooperation in the marketing of produce or in activities such as pasturing cows. Frequently, it is the lack of cash—for example, to pay for a community’s cowherd or to fund transport costs—which hinders the development of cooperation. The farmers must depend on their own resources, setting up rotas to handle pasturing but usually leaving marketing to individual effort. This makes massive demands on the women who farm these household plots, and it seems probable that the productivity of the plots under these conditions has already reached its upper limit. Cooperation is necessary to enable more efficient use of available labor and to provide a focus for the acquisition of credits. Agricultural credits carry an element of risk and are relatively long-term, but the productivity of this sector is such that there should no longer be any question that the granting of credits is justified. This form of private farming on household plots nonetheless continues to suffer in comparison with officially registered “private peasant farms.”

Unequal access of these two sectors to credits is one issue; another important issue is a legal distinction that has excluded those working full-time on household plots from pension and benefit rights. These two types of farming are showing increasing similarities: as the private peasant farms have tended to decrease in size, so the household plots have shown a tendency to increase; and in both cases, family members are likely to hold another job in addition to working their land. Given the higher productivity of the household plots, the legal and economic distinctions between the two sectors are increasingly difficult to justify.

The higher status of the private peasant farms is a legacy of the ideology that was dominant at the time of the USSR’s demise, when these farms were seen as the vanguard of the new entrepreneurial culture, but it undoubtedly also reflects a perspective on gender that disregards the realities of rural life in Russia. From the very beginnings of the leasing system in the
mid-1980s, when the term “peasant” was once more granted respectability, the image of the entrepreneurial private farmer has been overwhelmingly male. The language in which the initial campaign was couched—“making the peasant the master of the land”—betrayed a masculine bias that was reinforced by imagery depicting the farmer with his wife and children. To this day, and even from journalists consistently writing on the issue of household plots, this bias persists. The following is a typical example:

Last year Mikhail Morozov’s family kept four cows. Mikhail transported the milk to Ioshkar-Ola for sale. . . . Now the Morozovs have three cows. . . . Apart from the cows, they keep calves, pigs, and they’re even fattening bullocks. His wife, Zinaida, is in charge of all of this. Mikhail works as a driver.

The facts that women are so consistently seen as subordinate workers to male “farmers” or “heads of the family,” and that much of their work on the household plots is seen merely as an extension of their housework and not income-generating, cannot help but affect the status both of themselves and of the work they do. Given this climate, it is scarcely surprising that the question of legal rights remains unaddressed and that discussion of economic support has rarely been on the agenda.

Access to credits and the fostering of cooperation could potentially overcome the conditions of isolation and extreme self-reliance that many rural women face, and could develop genuine commercial smallholding into an attractive and profitable activity. Without some form of support, however, even those women with substantial personal resources are in danger of being overwhelmed. This form of intensified subsistence farming relies heavily on women’s endurance and on their continuing good health, and it cannot be viewed as a viable long-term activity. For most women, the enforced retreat into subsistence farming is not a genuine alternative to properly paid employment in large-scale commercial farming or rural services and industries—for most, it is less a conscious choice than a perceived necessity, and as a result, they may abandon or substantially reduce their work on the household plot as soon as other alternatives appear. For groups such as rural teachers, for example, a massive commitment to farming a household plot is not a rational use of their time.

Most importantly, it should be acknowledged that this form of farming is not and never could be a form of self-sufficiency capable of sustaining all rural families. The mere fact of having access to land should not be regarded as a factor that removes the need for state support to rural households, especially those headed by pensioners, the disabled or chronically sick, and single mothers of young children. Given the demographic situation and the levels of poverty in rural Russia, the regular payment of meaningful pensions and child benefits is likely to remain the most effective form of poverty reduction for the foreseeable future, for those able to farm a household plot as well as for those totally reliant on state aid. By the same token, the regeneration of rural services, especially health care, is critically needed in order that the productive capacities of rural households be sustained. The current retreat of the state is forcing rural households—in practice, this often means individual women—into a form of self-reliance that has gone way beyond the recreational cultivation of fruit and vegetables. The implications of this form of farming and of its gendered nature must be fully recognized if Russia is to alleviate the burden its women bear.
Notes


13. At the time this comment was made, the local doctor was describing alcohol abuse as “the number one public health problem in this area,” and noted the increasing number of cases of women drinking heavily in response to stress. For further comments by doctors and teachers in the rural press, see: Amelekhina, S. 1994. “Otkuda optimizm u sel’skogo doktora?” *Sel’skaia nov*, 5: pp. 16–18 and “Obshchaia nasha beda.” *Sel’skaia nov*, 4, 1994: pp. 7–9.


Revival of Traditions in Post-Soviet Central Asia

Anara Tabyshalieva

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave the unexpected gift of independence in 1991 to five new states in Central Asia—Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In common with other post-socialist countries, these states are currently going through a transition period characterized by serious and worsening social and economic problems. The 55 million people who live in the region are facing problems of overpopulation, a chronic decline in living standards, and ecological crisis. There has also been a revival of patriarchal traditions and a reversal of female emancipation: The combination of Soviet and Muslim components has led to an uncommon environment of gender discrimination, which has been accentuated by the economic and social crisis and by crude portrayals of femininity from the West.

During Soviet times, the Communist Party emphasized the importance of women as mothers and workers, and it is undeniable that great progress was made in many aspects of women’s life-healthcare, paid maternity leave, and numerous kindergartens all testify to this. There are other examples, too. In a break from tradition and Islamic norms, women gained custody of their children after divorce. Greatly improved healthcare meant that, for the first time, women made up more than 50 percent of the population. The literacy rate among women was almost 100 percent, and the majority of doctors, chemists, and biologists in Central Asia were women—a feature unusual even in developed countries. The high level of women’s employment was proclaimed as a supreme achievement of “developed socialism.”

However, there is also a darker side to the story. The employment of women in manual and heavy jobs—there seems no sense in women working in mines and heavy industry—the scant social benefits for mothers, the poor development of the social sphere, and the burden of housework, which remained a female preserve, put excessive pressure on women. Under the Soviet system, women were burdened with the triple roles of full-time employment, full-time mothering, and full-time domestic responsibilities. This trap was tightened by the tradition in Central Asia to sanctify hard work and the wringing of sweat, and to grant these almost ennobling qualities.

Tradition upholds that household chores are the sole preserve of women, and that women are responsible for the care of children, husband, and parents. Under the Soviet model, the housewife’s status was extremely low and she lacked opportunities and privileges. In the post-Soviet era, the burden of household labor—lowly, unpaid, and unrecognized—has become even greater. The Soviet system of social welfare has fallen into decline, placing responsibility for the care of children, the sick, and the elderly mainly on the shoulders of women and girls. The number of day-care centers has decreased precipitously: in Kyrgyzstan alone, the number fell by 75 percent from 1990 to 1994. According to surveys, only 27 percent of women with preschool children now make use of day-care centers; 45 percent simply cannot afford them. Many women, especially in rural areas, are compelled to leave their children without supervision.
And there are other kinds of labor discrimination against women in Central Asia. For example, the Soviet romanticization of the use of female and child labor in agriculture has led to a new stereotype taking hold, that only women should work in the fields. As a consequence, the traveler in post-Soviet Central Asia will still see only women's and children's backs in the fields. The Soviet authorities and their successors transformed the region into a machine for cotton production, and in doing so not only created an environmental crisis but also sacrificed the health and dignity of millions of girls and women.

The Impact of Ethnic Traditions

The traditional cultural values of Central Asia survived throughout the Soviet era, despite the many advances that were otherwise made in science, culture, healthcare, and politics. Women from Central Asian national groups were expected to lead a life of double standards: as productive, equal workers according to the Soviet system, and as obedient, second-class citizens according to their ethnic traditions.

The cult of fertility. Ethnic traditions play a very important role in the lives of all the indigenous groups of Central Asia. One of these traditions is the cult of fertility, which is based on the widespread belief that children bring good luck and are pleasing to God. The desire to produce many sons has also been rooted for thousands of years in more tangible social, economic, and environmental reasons, including high infant mortality and the need to maintain large families to support the natural economy and to wage war.

A woman's fertility or barrenness determined her status in traditional society in Central Asia. In the past, a barren woman among the Kyrgyz was derogatorily called kuu bash—"dried-up skull." Even today, women who have not borne children can be treated with scorn. The traditional preference for sons also remains strong, and examples of the custom of continuing to bear children until a boy has appeared are found all over Central Asia. Many women who have only daughters keep bearing until the birth of a son, often not only under the pressure of the husband and relatives but also because of custom. When a girl is born instead of the desired boy, she may be given a special name in the superstitious hope that this will make the next child male.

Some of the customs and traditions that grew up around the issue of a woman's fertility have proven harmful and counterproductive. The custom for extremely early marriages for women, for example, often led to premature sterility and contributed to the early death of women and prolonged lactation. The effect on the birth rate was obviously negative. The difference in spouses' ages, especially in polygamous marriages, similarly suppressed the birth rate. In pre-Soviet times, therefore, and despite the frequency of births, families often had a very small number of children because of the high newborn and infant mortality rates.

In the more favorable Soviet conditions, when child mortality was sharply reduced, tradition steadfastly continued to identify a woman's good fortune with her ability to produce many children. The combination of the traditional desire for large families and falling mortality rates—the result of better Soviet medicine and healthcare—produced an unprecedented increase in the population of Central Asia, creating a multitude of other problems.

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have the highest birth rates in Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, an average of 4.1 children are born to every woman of childbearing age, and approximately 700,000 children are born every year. The average birth spacing is 1.5 years, with 12 percent of women...
giving birth twice during one year and 80 percent twice during two years. This frequency of reproduction puts mothers and children at high risk—within the CIS, it is Central Asian mothers, mainly Muslim, who are most likely to bury their children. Tajikistan is the most vulnerable to infant mortality.

Substantial variations of fertility can be observed among the different ethnic groups of the Central Asian states. In the Kyrgyz Republic in 1996, the fertility rate for Kyrgyz and Uzbek women of childbearing age was 26 infants per 1,000 women; for Kazakh women, it was 17 infants per 1,000; for German, 18; and for Belorussian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Tartar women, 7-9 infants. Intergroup fluctuations are affected by many factors, including the level of education: women with a higher level of education, as a rule, have fewer children.

Abortion. Independence brought with it to the leadership of the Central Asian republics a desire to increase their ethnic group’s population and thereby their power, both within the state and within Central Asia as a whole. This political motivation to increase the population combined with the societal fertility cult have a huge negative impact on women in the region. For example, there is a chronic lack of access to contraceptives, to the point where abortion is the major form of contraception in the cities of Central Asia. In Tajikistan, abortion is the third most important cause of both maternal and infant deaths, despite the number of cases falling from 255.8 abortions per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 197.6 per 1,000 in 1996. These high rates of abortion do not correspond to higher levels of choice or independence for women-in most cases, abortion is the only option available.

This tragedy is compounded by the fact that in rural areas of Central Asia, abortion, like all contraception, is seen as sinful. According to both Soviet and Central Asian traditions, the woman bears sole responsibility for the prevention of an unwanted pregnancy: pregnancy is not considered to be a man’s concern. Abortions are thus easily condemned as a violation of tradition, with little attention paid to the potential harm they can do to the mother’s health. In the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, newspaper articles have labeled women undergoing abortion as child killers. In Uzbekistan, post-independence authorities quickly stilled a debate that began in 1988 between writers, journalists, and social scientists about issues of childbirth and reproductive rights for women. The authorities apparently saw the debate as potentially having a negative effect on the desired rapid population growth.

Early marriage. Throughout Central Asia, there is a tacit understanding that girls should marry early—in rural areas, traditionally at 16-17 years of age. A single woman over 20 is considered to have been sitting around too long and is derided as an “old maid,” with the result that many parents will rush to give their daughters away out of fear of not finding a suitable husband later. In certain rural areas of Central Asia it is considered that after the age of 20 an unmarried woman will only marry a widower, a divorced man, or an undesirable suitor. Even her bride price will be lower, such that a woman with a university degree will frequently have a lower bride price than a younger woman who has not completed secondary education. In the struggling economies of Central Asia, poverty is thus becoming a significant contributing factor to underage marriages.

Early marriages also increase childbearing. According to recent sociological research in Uzbekistan, 47 percent of women marry before turning 20, and the majority of women have children in the first year of marriage. The interval between marriage and the birth of the first child is usually very short. Among married women under 20 years of age, 37.5 percent have children, including 17.2 percent who have two children or more.
**Polygamy.** Discussions advocating the benefits of polygamy are becoming more common in Central Asia. Polygamy has been proposed as a solution for women who have difficulty finding a husband, as a means of alleviating poverty for widows and their children, and as a way to curb prostitution and the trafficking of women. Some politicians have also suggested that it may provide a way to achieve their important goal of increasing their indigenous population.

The national parliaments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have seriously debated polygamy. In Tajikistan, where civil war has left tens of thousands of women widowed and where there are numerous cases of polygamy, the calls are especially strong. Human rights and the quality of life of women have not featured in these discussions.

**Kidnapping of brides.** The subject of the kidnapping of brides has been sensationalized in some sections of the Western media. The phenomenon needs to be taken more seriously. In Central Asia, as in the Caucasus, two types of bride kidnapping traditionally exist. The first of these occurs without the agreement of the bride and her family; the second, also against the will of the family, but with the consent of the bride. A third type also occurs, although it is barely deserving of the term kidnapping: that is, when all parties agree to a staged abduction in order to avoid the extremely expensive traditional wedding ceremony.

Bride kidnappings are especially common among former nomadic peoples such as the Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and Kazakh. In the past, the custom was explained by socioeconomic factors. The bride was typically sold by her parents in a business transaction, and to avoid being sold into an unwelcome marriage some young women would agree to elope with their lovers. This type of consensual kidnapping could only take place if the groom’s relatives were sufficiently influential and willing to support him. The more heinous type of kidnapping, and one which is a quintessential form of gender discrimination, is the kidnapping of unwilling brides. During Soviet times, the frequency of this crime actually increased, despite the many laws that were passed to prevent it. It is still practiced in some former nomadic societies.

In post-Soviet times, the third type of kidnapping, the staged abduction, has become quite common. This can be considered a form of protest against the expense of traditional marriages, but also as a protest against the tradition that daughters should be obedient.

There has been very little research into the subject of bride kidnapping in the region. The real scale of kidnapping without the consent of the bride, especially in remote rural areas, is unclear. There are no programs to eliminate this practice, and discussion of it remains a taboo.

**Levirate.** A closely related problem among traditionally nomadic societies is that of levirate—the obligation of a widow to marry a brother or close relative of her dead husband. This practice was also forbidden in Soviet times, although it still occurred in remote areas. With the new vulnerability of women in the post-Soviet era, it seems the custom of levirate is continuing. It is rarer than kidnapping, but still exists as an under-researched problem.

**Revival of Islam**

As can be seen, some of the ethnic traditions of Central Asia are at least part-contributors to the violence against women that continues to thrive in the region. How these traditions also contribute to other forms of gender harassment is little understood.

In addition to the ethnic traditions discussed here, Islamic traditions are a growing influence on the lives of women in the region. The revival of Islam, as evidenced by the rapid construction of new mosques, is a major feature of present-day Central Asia.
Veiled women have begun to appear on the streets of the cities of Central Asia. Most of these women are young and from rural areas, and are strongly influenced by missionaries from the Middle East and Pakistan. While the restoration of pre-Soviet Islam may be seen as an affirmation of ethnic identity, the forms of Islam that are taught by the foreign missionaries tend to be extremely patriarchal, and at odds with the Soviet understanding of equality of the sexes. The result is increasing social conflict.

During the Soviet era, Islam’s intellectuals were repressed, and most progressive Muslim leaders were silenced or annihilated. The Jadidits, who tried to adapt Islamic principles to conform to the forces of modernization at the beginning of the 20th century, were rooted out. Central Asia was isolated from progressive Muslim thought, and the religion survived mainly in its ritual and traditional forms.

The need to modernize Islam in the post-Soviet republics is now more than obvious. Muslim leaders in the Central Asian states have rigidly ignored the Russified—or Westernized—Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks, as well as women. Raised in an environment of equal rights among the sexes, according to the Soviet model, the women of Central Asia are facing a return to pre-Soviet Islamic norms of family life. Politicians and other leaders have called for a restoration of polygamy and restriction of women’s rights. They have found support, too, from an unexpected quarter: Many newly emergent women’s groups—for example, the League of Muslim Women, Association Fatima, and Movement Rifakh in Kazakhstan—want a return to the patriarchal values of the traditional society.

Other women in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, searching for religious identity and finding only a male-dominated form of Islam, have converted to Protestant Christianity, Baha’i, and other religions that lack a traditional foundation in the region. In a male-dominated Muslim environment, the result, inevitably, is friction.

The Discrimination Trap

Central Asia’s women are today caught up in three rings of discrimination, influenced by traditions of patriarchy, Soviet ideals, and images from the West. The patriarchal system says it is shameful for women to stray away from traditions of obedience and seclusion. Values from Soviet times say that women make up half of the labor force, and should therefore work full-time—as well as do their household duties. And Western consumerism, to many in the region, portrays women as commodities or sex objects. Together, these influences condemn women to a lowly status in society.

Under the Soviet system, the women of Central Asia were granted broad political rights that left the women of many other Asian countries far behind. These political rights were weakly supported, however, both economically and socially, and were also undermined by the Soviet sanction and sanctification of a consumerist attitude toward women. Constrained also by the Central Asian tradition of patriarchal relations, women were unable to take advantage of the hypothetical opportunities that the Soviet system gave to them. Most now find themselves in an ambiguous situation: politically emancipated, but ethnically constrained, with child bearing, caring for husband and children, and keeping house traditionally their only roles. A desire to break free from these constraints brings its own stresses: today’s Central Asian society would regard a retreat from tradition as a manifestation of despised Russification or Westernization, and as a loss of ethnic identity.
Redressing the Balance

The net result of the revival of ethnic and religious traditions in post-Soviet Central Asia has, as can be seen, led to a reversal of female emancipation in the region. Efforts are being made on many levels to address this. For example, the nascent NGO sector in the region has a large and active gender component. In the Kyrgyz Republic, there are more than 70 women's NGOs, and there is also an active women's movement in Kazakhstan.

There are four types of women's organizations in the region. The first group comprises the successors to the Soviet women's committees, which follow Soviet working methods. The second group comprises women's rights organizations, which tend to be city-based, and the third comprises women's business groups, which encourage entrepreneurship. Fourth, and most powerful, are the organizations led by the First Ladies of the five republics.

These are early days for the movement, however, and problems are manifold. Turkmenistan, for example, has only one women's organization, which is state-run and named after the president's mother. There is also a lack of cohesion and coordination among the different NGOs, and there are very few umbrella organizations. More importantly, they are almost all concentrated in capital cities and there is very little awareness in rural areas of women's issues.

A strategy clearly needs to be developed to halt the decline in the status of women. There are many positive features to the revival of ethnic traditions, but the reappearance of prejudices and customs against women do not number among them. The search for ethnic identity has also manifested itself in the pretext of a struggle against outside influence and in self-glorification, and has caused many to reject the successes of the Soviet era. Many politicians have chosen to frame their policies on the image of medieval heroes, and appear keen to recreate medieval gender relations rather than forward-looking ones that respect the rights of women. In all Central Asian states, women are poorly involved in policy- and decision-making processes.

Within the Central Asian states, a legislative foundation is needed that provides for the coexistence of different ideologies and that does not contradict women's rights. International guidelines on human and women's rights should be adopted and followed.

Externally, international organizations must be sensitive in their advocacy of change in the region. The need to support indigenous efforts is extremely urgent, but great care should be taken to understand the peculiar combination of Soviet and traditional patterns of gender relations that determine the status of Central Asia's women today. Much can be learned from the experience of working with advocacy groups in other developing countries.

Gender equity in the region can only be achieved on the back of successful social and economic reform. The population is well-educated and skilled, but the obvious lack of long-term, cooperative projects has been a serious drawback in the first years of independence in the region. The Central Asian civil societies must work closely together in the 21st century to achieve their desired reforms, and will require international help if they are to develop the women's movement in a comprehensive, coherent and well-coordinated manner. Institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the UNDP, and others will also have an important role to play in this landlocked region.
Notes

1. Central Asia has limited natural resources. Along with the severe continental climate and the great variance in altitudes, this means that the basic energy costs required to maintain minimum living standards are unusually high.

4. Developed by Muslim intellectuals in the Soviet era, the Jadid movement began as an initiative to modernize education in Turkestan.
Urgent Legislative Measures and Gender Issues

(Provisions of the Draft Labor Code)

Ludmila N. Zavadskaya

The foundations of a new legislative system have been laid down in Russia: Between 1991 and 1998, the Russian Parliament enacted about 800 new laws, regulating many spheres of public life. The foundations of a new state system have also been laid down. Constitutional reform is leading the way to a new society based on the ideas of democracy and a free market economy, on separation of the state and society, and on the sharing of power.

A revolution has taken place in Russian legislation. During the Soviet period, the country was guided by the communist party and by government resolutions. Only 130 laws were enacted during this entire period, and many are now obsolete.

The country is consequently living through a legislative boom. On the heels of Russia’s constitutional reform, new legislation has been passed that is reforming the state system, the electoral system, the judiciary, local government, and public organizations. A new civil code, based on the idea of private property ownership, is also reforming the market economy. This we call the economic constitution of Russia. New banking and customs legislation is already in operation, and the first part of a new tax code has also been adopted.

Of all the sectors undergoing change, the social and labor spheres have proven to be the most difficult to reform. The social sphere in particular is hard to regulate, and the limitations of the state budget mean that proper reform of this sphere is at risk. The legislation in this field is contradictory, and does not take into account all social interests—including the principle of equality of rights and opportunities for men and women. We are still awaiting the legislation that will regulate and reform the social sphere in Russia.

Reform of the labor sphere has also yet to begin. A draft labor code has been under discussion since 1991, but, strange as it may seem, labor relations are still regulated by the code that was adopted in the 1970s—and this in the new conditions of a market economy. Some changes have been made to the code but it generally remains post-socialist. It is out of date, it is ineffective, but it is still in force and it is causing a lot of problems.

The labor code has a discriminatory character toward women. It includes a chapter dealing with the regulation of women’s labor, which takes as its basis a system of special privileges for women and of prohibitions against employing women to work in conditions the state considers to be potentially harmful. The principle of free choice of profession is therefore limited for women, and the code discriminatory, since the privileges and prohibitions stipulated in the legislation break the principle of equal rights.

The new draft labor code has been published for nationwide discussion, and is of particular interest from the gender point of view. The general provisions of the draft code lay the foundations for regulation, and these foundations take into account gender symmetry. The prohibition of sexual discrimination in the labor sphere; the right to equal remuneration for work; and
the principles of equal opportunities, rights, and freedoms are fixed in the draft code. There can be no discrimination in the labor sphere on the basis of sex. Distinctions, exceptions, preferences, and limits that are adjudged necessary by the state to aid persons who need particular social and legal protection are not regarded as discrimination. All of these provisions are contained in the general part of the draft code.

In addition, the draft labor code includes a chapter developing the constitutional principle of equal rights and opportunities in the field of labor. This is a positive step forward, and is the first time that special provisions laying the basis of gender policy in the field of labor have appeared in Russian legislation.

Gender symmetry must be secured by legal regulation. The draft labor code is the first step in this direction, and merits closer analysis. It is not, unfortunately, watertight.

The draft code does not contain any general provisions that would prohibit women from working night shifts. This is very important, as the woman herself should have the right to choose when she works. However, Article 246 prohibits women who have children of less than 14 years of age from working night shifts, and the code also stipulates the requirement that the woman’s agreement to work night shift must first be received before she is so employed. Both provisions are in contravention of the ILO Convention on persons with family responsibilities, which defines the status of the man and the woman—father and mother—as equal to one another. Russia ratified this convention, but these provisions clearly violate the principle of equality in labor regulations.

There is a further element of discrimination in the rules that would regulate women’s business trips, overtime work, and work on days-off and holidays. As in the case of night work, the draft labor code would require an employer to gain the agreement of a female worker to work an irregular schedule. As a result, women would not share the same employment opportunities as men. Regulations such as these are a burden on labor relations, and can be disadvantageous also for employers.

This sort of obsolete ideology is tangible in every article of the draft code. The titles of the articles support equal opportunities for both sexes but their provisions deny this principle. For example, the article dealing with maternity and childcare leave states specifically that a female worker is entitled to apply for childcare leave. No such mention is made of a similar right for a male worker. The gender approach to reform presupposes the equality of rights, which should therefore not be a matter for discussion. It is a constitutional provision that must be converted into the labor code.

The draft code also contains discriminatory provisions with respect to men. In an example of the patriarchal role that the state still assumes, the code prohibits women from working underground and in other potentially dangerous working conditions, but allows men to work in such conditions. This provision both violates the principle of free choice for the woman and discriminates against the man, by applying lower standards of labor protection for men than for women. Safety standards for the workplace should be equal for both sexes: this sort of gender asymmetry should not be supported.

While labor legislation is beginning to take into account considerations of gender equality, legislators still tend to hold onto strong traditional stereotypes of the Russian workplace. If the new labor code can help us to lay the foundations of gender symmetry, enable free choice of profession and of working time, and introduce equal standards in labor regulations, then it can be considered truly new.
The problem of legal regulation of men’s and women’s labor is of particular importance now, because it is the labor sphere that will determine Russia’s prosperity. Upholding the principle of equality is economically advantageous. The law may make exceptions to deal with the narrow range of issues connected with women’s reproductive rights, but in all other respects, the principle of equality must have no exceptions.
Gender Aspects of Pension Reform in Russia

Marina Baskakova

The feminization of poverty among the elderly is a global problem. Most pension schemes promote the interests of salaried, full-time staff members, and most of those people are men.

In Russia, this problem has its own distinctive character. In socialist times, the state monopoly of social and economic affairs made it possible to combine elements of pay-as-you-earn and state-funded pension schemes. Length of service, for example, which was a factor in the assignment of pensions and the determination of their amount, included maternity and child care leave, and mothers with five children or more were entitled to retire at an early age. This enabled the state to level out the discrepancy between the declared equality of men and women as regards employment and family policy, in which all the benefits intended for employees with family obligations were used only by women (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Worklife of Men and Women, by Age.](image)

Under the Soviet system, the average pension for a woman was nonetheless only 60–90 percent of a man’s, mainly because of wage disparity. The situation is much the same today (see Figures 2 and 3).

In the past few years, many countries have faced the need to adjust or revise their pension systems. There are a variety of reasons for this, but the main one is demographic—specifically, an alarming change in the ratio of persons of employable age to pensioners. As in other former socialist countries and in the former Soviet republics, the most distinctive feature of the situation facing Russia is that the problems that this demographic trend implies are magnified by a worsening economic and social situation.
The pension reform undertaken by the Central and Eastern European countries has introduced a multitiered, savings (accumulation)-and-solidarity system. The new pension system in Russia also comprises several tiers, and includes two components:

- Funded (state) pensions for those who do not have a long employment record.
- Pensions based on retirement savings. These comprise two parts—a national, defined-contribution system and insurance retirement savings proper—whose size will in both cases depend on the duration and size of insurance pension payments and the expected longevity of the person insured, as defined at the moment of retirement.

The reform of state pensions has been designed primarily to ensure that the size of an employee's labor contributions is directly reflected in the size of his or her future pension. Ideally, the system should make each person's pension commensurate with the results of their labor.

The economic justification for the new system is obvious, but pensions also have a social aspect that must be considered. If the correlation between labor contribution and pension size is too rigidly maintained, problems may arise, especially for elderly women. It is therefore
crucial that the savings principle behind the state pension system be supported by the principle of equal rights and opportunities. A pension system based on retirement savings can be fair only in a society where all employees enjoy equality, because such a system implies that the quantity and quality of work done depend strictly on a person's willingness and capacity for work. In reality, the sphere of in which job opportunities for men and women in Russia is shrinking.

Modern Russia is reverting to traditional gender roles, with the man regarded as the breadwinner (a "proper" worker, from an employer's viewpoint), and the woman as the "keeper of the hearth" (a second-rate worker, overburdened with family responsibilities). These gender standards and roles are affecting the position of women working outside the home: Studies show that discrimination against women in the sphere of employment is mounting, and that patriarchal traditions and the traditional gender division of labor associated with those traditions are spreading.

Given these conditions, and the shrinking earning power of women compared to that of men, the new pension system means that a woman's average pension, based on her retirement savings, will be smaller than that of a man. Although it was conceived as gender-neutral, the new system may in fact increase secondary discrimination against women pensioners.

In Russia, a woman's average salary is significantly lower than a man's, and the gap is widening. In the early 1990s, women's salaries were on average 60-70 percent of men's; by 1999, this figure had fallen to 56 percent.

The most important factors that determine this disparity gap are as follows:

- Traditional "women's jobs" are not as well paid as the jobs that are mostly held by men.
- The occupational segregation within industry is such that men usually hold the better-paid positions. Statistics indicate that this is true for almost all industries—even in those where women dominate the work force, their average hourly wage is lower than that of their male colleagues.
- There is a difference in remuneration for men and women doing the same kind of work. A study undertaken by the RF State Committee for Statistics of 14 different occupations revealed that in 11, women's salaries were lower than men's. The difference reached as much as 170 percent.

Under the new pension system, pension size will be determined not only by salary but also by the length of the insurance period. Over the term of an employee's working life, this period may be reduced should the employee take leave to look after a child aged under three; take leave due to illness or to look after a sick child aged under 14; take a training course that necessitates a temporary leave of absence from work, or do military service (Figure 4). Each of these circumstances incurs a temporary suspension of insurance contributions, and therefore affects the duration of the employee's pension insurance period.

Experience shows that there is a significant gender asymmetry to the way that these breaks are used. Russian government statistics show that there is in practice no such thing as "paternity" leave—it is mostly women who stay at home to look after sick children. And each employed woman who takes advantage of the three-year maternity leave has this time deducted from her length of service. If she has two children, she loses six years, and so on.

In order to make a quantitative assessment of the gender asymmetry inherent in the new pension system, we made actuarial estimates of Russia's pension system and determined the
strictly actuarial proportions of retirement savings and payments for men and women according to:

- educational standard (secondary school, vocational school/college, higher educational establishment, or post-graduate training);
- number of children (men and women with up to three children, including childless ones);
- military service;
- career type.

To determine the ratio of the wage at career beginning to career end, we considered a pessimistic, realistic, and an optimistic scenario for a career, assuming the worker’s wage remained constant before inflation, doubled, or trebled, respectively.

The estimates were made using one age cohort, whose careers will unfold entirely under the operation of the accumulation (national defined contribution) system—i.e., persons who will join the work force after 2000. The reason for this choice is to avoid the complication of including persons whose pensions will be established under the rules of the transition period.

Retirement savings were calculated assuming an investment income rate of 6 percent and an inflation rate of 4 percent a year. Retirement age both for men and women is taken as 60, because by the time of retirement of the selected age cohort, the incremental rise of the retirement age for women envisaged by the Pension Reform Program will be completed.

When calculating the size of pensions, Russian mortality tables for 1984–85 were used—i.e., for the years when expected longevity was the highest. This approach enabled us to obtain the most conservative estimates.

Another assumption, substantiated by research, is the stability of gender roles and stereotypes in Russian society and the stability of the legislative framework within which men and women will play out their career and family roles.
Our actuarial calculations showed that, all other factors being equal, a 30–40 percent difference in the size of the average salary of men and women would produce retirement savings for a woman equivalent to only 70–77 percent of the savings for a man.

When maternity leave is factored into the equation, the woman’s savings are reduced by 7–11 percent for one child, by 14–21 percent for two children, and by 21–30 percent for three. The retirement savings of a woman who uses one maternity leave would therefore be only 63–71 percent of those of a man of comparable educational qualifications, regardless of whether or not he has a child. If the woman uses two maternity leaves, this figure falls to 56–65 percent, and if she has three children, to 50–58 percent.

Detailed results of our comparative estimates of women’s and men’s retirement savings are presented in Table 1.

The disparity is even greater when the pensions are calculated taking into account the different life expectancies of men and women as differentiated purely on the basis of gender. The impact of external factors upon longevity is complex, as they are mutually dependent and differ in intensity depending on the social-demographic group. Under certain conditions, social factors may level out the biological distinctions in men’s and women’s longevity and even reverse their correlation. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation between male and female longevity has changed over time.

Table 1. Forecast of the Comparative Retirement Savings of Women and Men, According to Educational Standard and Number of Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Pessimistic</th>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Optimistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.580</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>0.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>0.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>0.588</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>0.608</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>0.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>0.548</td>
<td>0.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>0.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Graduate</td>
<td>0.537</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Baskakova and Baskakov

diff in intensity depending on the social-demographic group. Under certain conditions, social factors may level out the biological distinctions in men’s and women’s longevity and even reverse their correlation. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation between male and female longevity has changed over time.

In the past, female mortality was higher in practically all countries, and female longevity was much lower than was male. This can be attributed to women’s status in society, the hard work that was their lot, the high mortality rate among new mothers, and the fact that less care was lavished on baby girls, for example. The social and economic developments that have radically changed the status of women in society have weakened the influence on women’s lives of exogenous factors, and have changed the correlation between male and female mortality rates.
The scope of these changes has differed from country to country. Table 2 presents UN data on the expected longevity of men and women at their birth for the countries where these rates differ the most and the least. In a number of Asian and African states where the impact of exogenous factors upon women remains strong, their longevity is less than men’s or marginally exceeds it. Typically, in these countries longevity is generally low, in the range 50–55 years. Conversely, in Eastern Europe, where the impact of exogenous factors upon men is high, male mortality has risen and their longevity decreased. Men’s lives in these countries are shorter by 9–13 years than those of women—much more than can be accounted for by biological distinctions alone.

Table 2 shows that the difference in male and female longevity in Russia is large: at 12.8 years to the advantage of women, it is greater than anywhere else in the world. When calculating pensions, however, residual longevity from the age of 60 is a more important indicator than life expectancy at birth. In Russia, residual longevity is currently about five years, to the advantage of women.

When pension payments are calculated, retirement savings are distributed taking into account residual longevity. In Russia, this means that men’s larger retirement savings would be divided by fewer years than the smaller retirement savings of women. As a result, women’s pension payments would not be the 50–77 percent of men’s as indicated in Table 1, but would be 40–60 percent, as shown in Table 3.

If pension payments were calculated purely on these terms, however, some social-demographic groups would sustain large financial losses. Estimates show that if gender alone is taken into account when calculating insurance tariffs based on residual longevity, more than 20 percent of insured men and about 15 percent of insured women would ultimately draw less than 50 percent of their pension contributions. Exogenous social, cultural, and economic factors mean that a single figure for residual life expectancy cannot fairly be applied to all men or to all women. In the same way that longevity differs according to gender, it also differs according to social group, for example.

Another unsolved problem of pension reform is that in the case of divorce, the issue of documentation of a right to a pension has not even been raised. A pension system based on the savings principles might create a new problem for Russia, of very small pensions for divorced women who had long breaks in their careers.
Table 3. Forecast of the Comparative Annual Pension Payments to Women and Men, According to Educational Standard and Number of Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Career Type</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Post-Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Any career</td>
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<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>0.615</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.525</td>
<td>0.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>0.486</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>0.480</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td>0.467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the reforms of the post-Soviet era, the Russian population, especially women, has become less economically active. Ten million women have left employment, and the level of women's employment has gone down from 92 percent to 76 percent. Not all of these women voluntarily chose the status of homemaker. Those who have done are mainly from well-to-do families and are looking after pre-school-age children. Others are obliged to stay at home, deprived by economic reforms not only of their jobs but also of their hope of getting a job in the future.

Women who have done unpaid work at home for any length of time are likely to face serious material difficulties in old age. The short duration of their insurance contributions mean they will earn only a small pension, and their future prosperity will depend on the goodwill of their husbands or children. Similar problems will face women who work an incomplete day.

But the worst-off may be women who are divorced after a long marriage. Having sacrificed a career to devote themselves to their family, they will not have made sufficient contributions to earn an adequate pension. Nor will they have a husband to support them in old age.

Russian law says that, in the case of divorce, the spouses, regardless of the length of their career, are each entitled to half of the property obtained in the years of married life. The pension earned during this time is not redistributed, however.

The savings system of pensions assumes that every individual is able to plan their career, and is willing and able also to plan for their retirement. To do this, people should at least know how retirement savings are accumulated and how pensions are calculated. So far, however, Russians know very little about the substance of pension reform. A survey conducted in a provincial town showed that only one-sixth of the adults questioned have any understanding of how the reforms will affect them.

The same survey showed that more than 80 percent of people aged under 30—i.e., those whom this reform will affect first of all—know absolutely nothing about the current pension law and pension reform. Forty-five percent of the men and 34 percent of the women aged under 30 stated that they have no interest in pensions because their retirement age is so far away.

If the new pension system is maintained in its present form, and if public awareness of the system does not change, the consequences will inevitably be a further feminization of poverty among the elderly in Russia.
Note

1. The pension reform program also envisages supplementary, non-state pensions.
Reproductive Health and the Rights of Women

Wanda Nowicka

1999 marks the 10th anniversary of dramatic political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, which began with democratic changes in Poland, continued with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and concluded with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Central Asia that emerged from these events are officially recognized by the international community as "countries in transition" or "countries with economies in transition." They share a common post-communist and totalitarian heritage, and most share also similar problems resulting from their political and economic transformation. This paper deals with the shared problems that the women of the region must face, and specifically those problems related to matters of women's health.

Women in the Region

The position of women in the region differs significantly from that of women both in the world's developing and in the world's developed countries. Women in the CEE and Central Asian countries receive relatively high standards of education, for example, and literacy rates both for the overall population and for women are high.

There are signs in some countries, however, that the education system is being endangered by their economic collapse. The transition is also degrading the already limited opportunities for women to take proper advantage of their educational qualifications: although in most countries in the region women constitute roughly half of the labor force, there are very few who have attained managerial or other influential positions. Even the most highly educated women do not enjoy the same economic and political opportunities as men.

Nor has the active participation of women in the labor market succeeded in changing the patterns of family life. Women are still primarily responsible for household work and caregiving, regardless of whether or not they are professionally active. Coupled with the problems brought by a failing economy, this double burden of work has inevitably harmed women's health and well-being, and limited their options for a healthier lifestyle.

The transition to a market economy has caused the decline of social and public services and growing unemployment and inflation, all of which adversely affect the financial situation of families. Women in particular have been hard hit, as evidenced by the feminization of poverty and its effect on women's ability to afford health services.

Erosion of the State-Supported Social Infrastructure

The countries of the CEE region have traditionally provided a broad range of social benefits and maternity support. These have included prenatal and maternity allowances, paid maternity leave, and allowances for the care of sick children. Since 1989, however, state support of education, health care, and childcare has been seriously curtailed by all countries except the...
Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Few countries have made direct cuts in social welfare; instead, the reductions in social benefits are manifested in the decreasing quality of services, restricted access to free services, or simply shortages of supplies. The cost of social security is also increasingly being transferred from the state to the household, in part by the partial commercialization of services such as childcare, education, and health care.

The most serious losses have occurred in the area of child-support benefits and to childcare infrastructure. The real value of child welfare support has been falling rapidly in most countries of the region: In Russia, for example, allowances for children less than 18 months old decreased from 14.2 percent to 1.5 percent of the average wage between January 1992 and September 1993. At the same time, the state-supported system of childcare facilities, including crèches and kindergartens, has been so badly affected by the lack of funding that many of them have closed. In Poland, the number of crèches and kindergartens fell by more than 20 percent in the years 1989–93. In 35 regions of Russia, between 2 percent and 8 percent of children’s preschool institutions have closed, primarily for lack of funding. This erosion of family benefits and of the childcare infrastructure has significantly increased the responsibilities of women as caregivers, and thus their workload within the family.

The administration of the social infrastructure has additionally contributed to discrimination against women, both in the labor market and in public life. Because maternal benefits are granted primarily to the mother rather than to both parents, employers perceive women as expensive and unreliable employees. Given the choice of surrendering their entitlements or keeping their job, many women choose the latter. Not only is the social infrastructure shrinking physically; use of it is also in decline.

**Health Care System and Services**

The health care systems of the CEE region are finding it increasingly difficult to provide effective health care services. Historically, the governments of the CEE countries were responsible for health services, with health care financed from general revenues. In principle, the population received services free of charge in government clinics and hospitals. In practice, informal, under-the-table payments were common, and this is true to a growing extent today. As resources have become scarcer, health care services have become less efficient, damaged by staff reductions, over-investment in tertiary care, and neglect of essential services such as primary care and health promotion and education. In many countries, health facilities are outdated and in poor shape. Shortages of drugs, equipment, and supplies are common. In Moldova, for example, in 1994 it was estimated that 60 percent of the nation’s medical equipment is nonfunctional due to the lack of spare parts. Patients in hospitals are expected to bring their own syringes, medications, and bed linen.

In some cases, basic health care services are being neglected in favor of an excessive emphasis on high technology and expensive tests and procedures. Compounding this problem, in Poland and in other places, high-tech equipment is often under used or used mainly for “private” patients.

Health care services in the CEE region, medical and nonmedical, are predominantly provided by women. In some countries, women constitute a large majority of physicians. They are, however, seriously under represented in leadership positions in the health sector, and have
little influence on the structure and management of health services. A consequence of this is that female patients tend to be treated paternalistically, with health care services neither recognizing nor encouraging individual responsibility for decision-making in matters of health. Paradoxically, they will also often blame women for not taking better care of themselves.

This is an important issue, for health care providers as well as for patients. Studies, including those carried out among Latvian, Czech, and Slovak gynecologists, have repeatedly shown that providers need more education on reproductive health, in particular on family planning methods. It has been demonstrated that they often have misconceptions about the effectiveness, safety, risks, and benefits of hormonal contraception and intrauterine devices, for example. Others have proven strongly biased against some aspects of reproductive health and rights, including family planning and abortion. Poland provides an example where this is common.

There is also evidence that some medical schools and professional training courses fail to adequately address women’s basic health needs. Little attention is paid to patient satisfaction. Health care providers are seldom encouraged to develop partnership-based relationships with their patients, based on principles of informed choice, respect, confidentiality, and privacy, and patients are seldom consulted in decision-making about their treatment and care. This is a major source of patient dissatisfaction. Another reason for dissatisfaction is that little information is shared with patients about the causes of diseases and about the alternative ways of treating them.

Health Services for Women

Services developed specifically for women are essentially limited to those addressing their reproductive needs, especially childbearing. Services addressing other women’s health problems are underdeveloped, nonexistent, or inaccessible within public health care. Young girls, elderly women, the disabled, the unemployed, and other women with special needs all have limited access to medical services, but it is rural women who tend to be the most poorly served. Many rural areas suffer from severe shortages of health personnel, medical equipment, and other supplies, and women often must travel long distances to health centers.

The inadequacy of women’s health services is most clearly illustrated in the area of reproductive health, where family planning counseling and other services are usually nonexistent. Women in most countries in the region have easier access to free abortions (with the exception of Poland, where abortion on social grounds is illegal) than contraceptives; where contraceptives are available, they must usually be bought.

Maternity services, although often much better than other health services available to women, are also limited. Fathers are generally not allowed to be present during labor and delivery, and newborn babies are usually not kept with their mothers, but in nurseries.

Services for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are not integrated into the general range of services. Violence against women is not addressed by the health sector in any systematic way.

The range of services for the specific health problems of older women is also very limited. As elsewhere in the world, this segment of the population is growing, and women are living significantly longer than men. Community facilities for their support and care are usually lacking, and those that do exist tend to be overcrowded, short of sanitary equipment, and inadequate in terms of both medical care and humane treatment.
The most fundamental weakness of health care systems, however, is the lack of health education and health promotion services. Counseling and other services focused on disease prevention and health promotion are seldom available from either the public health system or from other sources. Women lack basic information about nutrition and breastfeeding, prevention of unwanted pregnancy, family planning, self-care during pregnancy, prevention of female cancers, and other health problems.

**Women's Health**

Since 1989, all societies in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the CIS, and the Baltic States have experienced a rapid deterioration in all health indicators. Studies have concluded that changes in mortality rates, life expectancy, and fertility rates show patterns not seen even under wartime conditions. In 1990, the average life expectancy for women in the CIS and in the CEE countries was six and five years less than the average for women in the EU, respectively. Female life expectancy in Poland fell from 75.6 years to 75.4 years in 1991, and in St. Petersburg dropped from 74.3 years to 74.0 years in 1992. The health gap between the CEE countries and the CIS and the rest of the European region widened in all respects between 1981 and 1990, and data for 1991-92 shows even greater disparities as the economic crisis deepened.

The two main causes of women's mortality in the region are cardiovascular disease and cancer. Most countries lack adequate screening and prevention services for breast and cervical cancers, which as a result often reach an advanced stage before being detected. Other health problems include a lack of community-based mental health services and a lack of drugs to treat serious illnesses. Suicide rates, in addition, are high.

**Women's Reproductive Health**

The problems of women's reproductive health include high levels of maternal mortality, a large number of abortions per woman and per live birth, poor availability of information and services for family planning, and the growing incidence of STDs. Teenage pregnancy, which has a serious impact on young women's education, has also increased.

Maternal mortality is still very high, with the highest rates to be found in the Central Asian Republics and in Romania. The situation in Romania, as well as in Albania, has improved dramatically since the legalization of abortion in 1989, although abortion remains a major cause of maternal mortality in both countries. The low availability of affordable contraception throughout the region means that abortion is still practiced as a main form of family planning and is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality. Abortion rates are among the highest in the world.

Other social phenomena, such as violence against women, increasing trafficking in women, and prostitution are also contributing to the worsening of reproductive health.

**Abortion**

Abortion was legalized in most countries of the region much earlier than in the developed countries. It has also been broadly performed in most countries, in large part because of the lack of family planning was not sufficiently popularized—in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, abortion remains the most common and most effective means of birth control. There have, however, been some attempts in the early 1990s to tighten up abortion laws, or at least to limit access to abortion services. The most extreme example of this is the case
of Poland, where social abortion has been outlawed after almost 40 years of being legal and widely available.

Prior to the transition, some CEE countries—notably Romania and Albania—tried unsuccessfully to increase birth rates by making contraception and abortion illegal. Instead of promoting motherhood, these policies led to extremely high maternal mortality. The policies have since been abolished and the situation has improved. While Romania in 1990 still had very high abortion-related mortality figures, the rate was actually a fall from earlier figures and the improvement appears to be continuing. Decreasing maternal mortality rates have also been observed in Albania since abortion was legalized in 1991. In Russia, abortion has been legal since 1956 and is widely available and performed. Abortion rates per 1,000 births declined steadily from 253 in 1970 to 170 in 1987, but rose again to reach 216 per 1,000 births by 1992. The number of induced hospital abortions is unknown. Considerable regional differences in abortion rates are believed to exist, with rates twice the national rate reported in some areas, including the far eastern areas of Russia.

**Family Planning**

A fundamental prerequisite for women to have control over their lives is that they should be able to maintain control over their reproduction. The issue of family planning in the region is overshadowed by broader demographic concerns, however—with population growth low, official support for family planning is also low. Many national programs do not recognize family planning as a priority. As a result, the options for birth control are limited: while abortion is widely available and often free of charge, contraceptives are seldom readily available, and when they are, must usually be paid for.

Those family planning services that do exist are generally not sufficiently integrated into primary health care programs; rather, they are provided by NGOs whose capacity to serve the needs of women is relatively limited.

The lack of sex education at schools and elsewhere also contributes to the insufficient use of contraceptives. A Romanian reproductive health survey reported that only 34 percent of women said their most recent pregnancy had been planned. Twelve percent said that the pregnancy was ill-timed, and 51 percent said it was unwanted. The survey also found that the proportion of unwanted pregnancies rose with the number of living children that the respondent had. Women with low education were more likely to say that their last pregnancy was unwanted.

In Russia, there is a tremendous need for family planning. The options available to Russian women were increased by the legalization of female sterilization in 1990, and the legalization of male and female sterilization on social grounds in 1993. Nevertheless, abortion still remains the main method of birth control.

**AIDS and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

Although the numbers of people with AIDS in the CEE countries and the CIS are small, they are rapidly increasing. For example, the incidence of AIDS in the Ukraine has increased by a factor of almost 50 during the last five years. There is little knowledge about the prevalence of HIV infection.
Greater understanding of the incidence of HIV and AIDS in the CEE countries and the CIS is being blocked by fear and denial, as well as by the simple lack of information. The apparent unwillingness of authorities to confront the issue is also a factor in the spread of the disease: Lack of sex education increases the risks of HIV transmission. Although the numbers of HIV-positive women are not high, the lack of services and programs for women and particularly for young girls may result in increased numbers of HIV and AIDS sufferers.

The incidence of other STDs has dramatically increased in recent years in most countries of the former Soviet Union, particularly in Russia, Belarus, and the Baltic Republics. In Russia, the rate for syphilis grew from 4.9 per 100,000 of the male population in 1989 to 92.0 in 1994, with a similar increase for the female population.2 Between 1995 and 1996, the rate increased by a further 10 to 30 percent.4 Similar trends are evident with relation to chlamydia and gonorrhea. In the Ukraine, syphilis among women has increased 16-fold in the last five years among women.5 Among girls of 16–18 years, the incidence of syphilis increased from 5.2 per 100,000 population in 1990 to 63.3 by 1996.

As stated earlier, women in Eastern and Central Europe generally enjoy higher social status than women in many other developing countries. They have the right to education, the right to work, the right to social benefits, the right to maternity care, and many others. But at the same time, women in these countries must contend with subtle and often complex gender inequalities that impact their health, the health services addressed to them, and the budgetary allocations for their health care. By their nature, these inequalities are difficult to quantify: comprehensive horizontal, intersectoral, and multiple analysis must first be made if they are to be properly identified and addressed in policies and programs.

Notes

7. Investing in Women’s Health: Central and Eastern Europe. op.cit.


15. Investing in Women’s Health: Central and Eastern Europe. op.cit.


22. Investing in Women’s Health: Central and Eastern Europe. op.cit.


Violence and Trafficking in Women in Ukraine

Larysa Kobelyanska

Ukraine is undergoing a process of change, from a culture of force to a culture of nonviolence. The end of communism has seen also the end of political authoritarianism, and has delivered an opportunity to create a society that respects the rights of the individual. Exposure to external influences, such as that of the United Nations, is helping Ukraine in this transition, but it must be understood that the changes are being made within a culture in which old stereotypes and ideologies that embrace violence still exist.

The notions of human rights, and specifically the rights of women, are nonetheless gaining support and attitudes toward violence are changing. In the case of Ukraine, however, violence against women has been so prevalent that it must be separated from the broader problem of violence in society and treated on its own terms. The Program of Actions developed by the Beijing U.N. World Conference on the Position of Women in 1995, stated that:

Violence in relation to women is one of the obstacles on the way of reaching the goals of equality, development, and peace. Violence in relation to women is a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women.

The Ukrainian Constitution of 1996 has absorbed this and other European concepts of social development and universal human rights. In doing so, it has distinguished itself from the four constitutions approved during the existence of the USSR, none of which embraced the concepts of natural and social rights. It has also created an environment in which, for the first time, the issue of violence against women is starting to be openly examined and discussed.

Historical Background to Violence Against Women

The silence that has historically surrounded the issue of violence against women means there are few official statistics to quantify the depth of the problem. It also means that the mass media is unsure how to approach the issue, that law enforcement agencies do not know how to settle cases of violence, and that Ukraine does not know how to involve the public at large in the quest to end violence. After 500 years of colonization, it is now critical that Ukraine teaches its citizens how to use the freedom they gained just eight years ago.

One of the first lessons to be learned is that violence against women does not only imply physical abuse or the use of force, but also coercion and the arbitrary deprivation of freedom, both in the social and in the private lives of women. Given this understanding, it is clear that at the root of much of the problem in Ukraine is the grave economic situation in which the country finds itself. An estimated 80 percent of Ukraine's 51 million population lives below the poverty line, defined by the United Nations as daily income per capita of one dollar. Fifteen million pensioners subsist on a pension of less than $15 per month, and 2.4 million disabled persons receive state benefits of only $4 to $10 per month. There are an estimated 1 million
mentally disabled persons in Ukraine, 1 million tuberculosis sufferers, and 1 million people suffering from cancer.

These statistics provide an indication of the violence inherent in the poverty in which Ukrainian women live, but less is known of the extent to which women are the target of physical and psychological domestic violence. The recorded incidence of such violence certainly represents no more than a fraction of the real figure, as a combination of personal shame and tradition prevent women from publicly admitting that they are victims of domestic violence. This in turn complicates the issue of how to protect them against further violence.

In addition, the official need to preserve the Soviet myth of the ideal family suppressed discussion of domestic violence prior to transition. Under Soviet rule, sexual harassment absurdly did not exist.

**Domestic Violence in Ukraine**

Efforts are underway to cast more light on the situation. Since 1997, the U.N.D.P. Gender in Development program has been involved in comprehensive research of the status of women in Ukraine, including research of the phenomenon of violence toward women. First results disturbingly indicate that domestic violence is on the increase, particularly among young families. Twelve percent of women under the age of 28 had suffered physical violence at home, with 2 percent the victims of frequent assault. One in five women interviewed held the belief that physical violence against women at home was a "very frequent" occurrence.

These figures may in part be explained by the economic crisis that is currently afflicting Ukraine. It is in the home, rather than on the street, in public, or in the workplace that people are most likely to give vent to their frustration and discontent. There exists a myth, however, that the situation now being exposed is a new phenomenon caused by the change in the social and economic circumstances of the Ukrainian family. This belief is groundless. Domestic violence toward women has a long history in Ukraine, and there is evidence that patterns of aggressive behavior are passed down from father to son.

In the past, the tradition to suppress acknowledgment of domestic violence gave rise to a second myth that domestic conflict occurred only between the poor and the uneducated: The only women who were beaten were the illiterate and the unskilled. The reality is that violence against women recognizes no such borders, but occurs across all social groups and layers. There is also a third myth about "bad women" who deserve to be beaten. Instead of asking why a husband beats his wife, this myth would ask what the woman has done that she is being beaten. The reality of the violence is ignored, and the act is suppressed as family taboo.

There is a fourth myth of marriage, which presumes that a woman who wished to leave her husband would do so: that she stays with him confirms she is content with him. Again, modern realities undermine the presumed logic of this argument. In addition to the responsibility they feel to their family, few Ukrainian women have economic independence: They have no home of their own, no resources to buy a home, and no means of making a living. Nor do they have practical legal redress to a claim on their husband's property.

The apparent acceptance of violence as a fact of family life in Ukraine characterizes it as an entrenched social problem engendered by traditional male and female stereotypes. There is still a part of society, too, that sees marriage as conferring a man with the right of ownership of a woman.
Ukrainian women who fell victims to violence were formerly protected by national legislation; specifically, Article 107 of the Criminal Code. As elsewhere, however, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies typically avoid involvement in family matters, and the Criminal Code contains nothing that envisages criminal responsibility for domestic violence. Rape within marriage, for example, is not recognized as a crime.

There is clearly an urgent need to change this situation, and there has been much debate in Ukraine on the need for laws that would curb domestic violence. Since August 1998, the League of Women Voters of Ukraine has been conducting an informational campaign entitled "The Society against Violence toward Women." This project is supported in Ukraine by the Eurasia Foundation and the Rule of Law Consortium, and is financed by a grant from USAID. It is clear the campaign needs to attract the official support of state agencies and public organizations, but progress has been made. Representatives of state and public bodies are supporting the campaign and have demonstrated their intent to draft not only the necessary laws but also a comprehensive program to prevent and eliminate domestic violence.

The necessity to introduce better legislation has been also reflected in a national plan of action to improve the position of women, which has the approval of the Ukrainian government.

**Violence Against Children**

The failing Ukrainian economy has also indirectly created an environment in which another component of domestic violence—that of juvenile and youth violence—has thrived. Parents who are understandably preoccupied with earning a living for their families have in some cases been obliged to neglect the traditional family function of educating their children. Shrinking education budgets also mean that the school system is in decline, and the number of institutions offering extracurricular activities in particular has fallen. A vacuum has been created in the lives of children, engendering the emergence of antisocial groups of teenagers, an increase in the number of school dropouts, and an increase in juvenile crime. In the last five years, the number of juvenile offenders and repeat offenders has increased 19 percent.

Drug addiction and alcoholism among young people are also rising. An estimated 17,000–20,000 young people are taking drugs, and surveys indicate that 17 percent of the fifth-grade pupils (aged 10 years), 25 percent of eighth-grade pupils (13 years), and 50 percent of eleventh-grade pupils (16 years) drink alcoholic beverages.

Annually, about 8,000–9,000 teenagers leave their families or drop out of school or other children's institutions, many to live as tramps. When caught, child runaways are put into shelters that are tantamount to receiving prisons. In recent years, the State Committee for Family and Youth Affairs has sought to establish shelters for runaway children, but as yet there is very little provision for the rehabilitation of these young people.

A survey conducted in Ukraine under a UNESCO initiative established the ratio of street girls to street boys at 1-2. The major risks endangering the girls include drug addiction, alcoholism, and prostitution. The incidence of venereal disease among these children is also increasing: in the last five years, the number of girls aged from 15 to 17 infected with the disease has increased from 106 to 1,720. Ten cases have also been diagnosed among girls under the age of 14. Most of the girls who have been examined or treated for venereal disease neither work nor go to school.

Another survey of girls under the age of 18 carried out by the All-Ukrainian Committee for the Protection of Children indicated that one girl in three had experienced sexual harass-
ment, one in five had experienced physical sexual abuse, and one in 10 had been raped. Young girls in fact account for a high proportion of all victims of sexual abuse. Fifty-five percent of the victims of registered criminal rape in Ukraine are juveniles under the age of 18, and 40 percent of them—or 22 percent of the total—are children under the age of 14. In 30 percent of the cases the victims were well-acquainted with their attacker, who in 13 percent of all cases was a relative or guardian.

It is evident that there is little public understanding of the true nature of crimes against women. A public opinion poll revealed that 48 percent of men and 36 percent of women believe that the behavior of the woman—wearing provocative clothes, returning home late—is a factor in sexual assaults. The woman, in other words, is partly to blame. The numbers of child victims of rape and the proportion of assaults by friends and acquaintances give the lie to this belief. If this kind of violent crime is to be reduced, it is essential first that stereotypes such as these are destroyed, and that the public come to understand that relations between men and women must be built upon the principles of equality and mutual respect. A massive public information campaign is needed.

The issue of sexual harassment is also a serious problem in Ukraine. Research shows that 50 percent of women have experienced sexual harassment, and 8 percent of women have been harassed “many” times. In some instances, the victim has felt obliged to quit her job, adding economic hardship to the humiliation of the assault. Ukrainian legislation contains no provisions that address sexual harassment in the workplace.

The same research examines sexual discrimination in the workplace. One in five women interviewed and one in six men claimed to have witnessed discrimination against women applying for work; 22 percent of women and 15 percent of men had witnessed discrimination against a woman seeking promotion. Discrimination is also common in job advertisements that specify requirements for the applicant’s sex, age, and appearance. This is in direct violation of Article 22 of the code of laws on labor, but the provision is very little known.

A final example of violence against women is that inflicted by another woman. Despite Ukraine’s claims to be an open society, this is a type of crime that remains a taboo subject, particularly in instances where the assault is of a sexual nature.

Again in contradiction of Ukraine’s claims of openness, law enforcement continues to focus on the blind pursuit of the criminal: the victim is left alone with her problems. Victim support in Ukraine is essentially the preserve of women’s organizations, which try to ensure that women receive the appropriate legal, medical, and psychological support and assistance, through crisis centers, hot lines, “trust phone lines,” and consultative centers.

**Sexual Exploitation of Women**

The sexual exploitation of women, including coercive prostitution and the trafficking of women on the international market, is also an urgent problem for Ukraine.

There are no statistics available on the numbers of Ukrainian women either engaged in prostitution or involved in illegal trafficking. Unofficial data collated from law enforcement agencies, social services, and public research indicate rapid expansion of both trades.

Ukraine has committed itself to implementation of the 1949 U.N. convention on “the prevention of trafficking of people and exploiting of prostitution by third persons,” and has sought
Table 1. Number of Registered Sexual Crimes and of Persons Prosecuted under Article 210 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (procuration, and keeping of bawdy houses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Crimes Registered</th>
<th>Persons Criminally Prosecuted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

Figure 1. Illustration of the Data Shown in Table 1.

The expansion of prostitution during the last decade in Ukraine is the result of many factors, including the following:

- The transition to a market economy has made the attainment of wealth the ultimate goal for many people, at the cost of other social, personal, and moral values.
- The impoverishment of a large part of the population has created an environment in which prostitution has flourished. According to data from NGOs, one-third of young jobless women in Ukraine have become involved in some capacity in the illegal sex business.
- The mass media have contributed to the creation of an environment in which the sex trade is able to grow, by using soft pornography in the war to win customers. Hard pornography and advertisements of sexual services are also increasingly visible in Ukraine—even to children.

While these factors are familiar also in other cultures, their potential impact on Ukrainian culture cannot be assessed from the standpoint of a Western culture. Their rapid emergence in Ukraine represents a serious challenge to moral values and is also encouraging a wave of criminal activity. Ukraine does not have any agencies experienced in dealing with prostitution, which makes its task of overcoming the problem so much harder. The sex trade is threatening to become a social disaster.

Accurate analysis of the extent of prostitution is obviously difficult because neither prostitutes nor their clients tend to be forthcoming with information. That the business turns over a lot of money is undeniable, and is evidenced by the vast number of intermediaries and hangers-
Table 2. Number of Registered Sexual Crimes and of Persons Prosecuted under Article 121 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (perversion of juveniles).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Crimes Registered</th>
<th>Persons Criminally Prosecuted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

Figure 2. Illustration of the data shown in Table 2.

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on who surround the business or control the women, and who take an estimated 80 percent of
the profits made.

The best research done thus far of prostitution in Ukraine has been that conducted by
public organizations such as the women's legal protection organization, La Strada. According
to one La Strada survey of prostitutes, all respondents stated that they were engaged in the
business only because of the impossibility of otherwise earning a living for themselves and their
children. All had faced serious financial difficulties prior to getting involved in prostitution.

Despite the widely held belief that the sex business is highly lucrative, only one of the
respondents characterized her financial position as above average. All others said their earn-
ings were either average or below average. Almost all of the women interviewed said they would
get out of prostitution if they had any other way of making money.

Research has determined the most widespread types of prostitution in Ukraine to be:

- Escort prostitution (i.e., call girls from underground agencies)
- Sex services in casinos, night bars, and striptease shows
- Sex services advertised discreetly in the personal columns in newspapers
- Sex services in saunas and massage parlors
- Apartment prostitution (illegal bawdy houses)
- Prostitution at the workplace (especially widespread in private firms)
- Prostitution in cars and other vehicles
- Prostitution "out of despair"
• Prostitution related to alcohol and drug addiction
• Bus and train terminal and street prostitution
• Family prostitution.

The attitude of society toward prostitution is split, as indicated by a poll of 30 experts (Table 3).

The most appropriate state policy on prostitution in Ukraine would be one of abolition, accompanied by a preventive campaign focused on raising the moral and ethical education of children. The reality is that these measures alone would not be enough, however; they would need also to be accompanied by the elimination of poverty and the restoration of human dignity that this would allow.

Table 3. Attitude of Experts Toward the Legalization of Prostitution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Legalization of Prostitution</th>
<th>Against Legalization of Prostitution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (%)</td>
<td>Total (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also another aspect to prostitution that complicates the issue of how to suppress it. According to data collected by Interpol and other international organizations, prostitution in all its forms is the third most lucrative international crime behind drug trafficking and the weapons trade. The eradication of prostitution in Ukraine is not a problem purely for the Ukrainian authorities.

The process of transition in Ukraine has opened up Ukrainian society but has not yet put in place a mature and functional democracy. The economy is in crisis, crime is rising, and there is mass impoverishment. In this environment, the trafficking of women—described by the U.N. as a gross violation of human rights and a form of contemporary slavery—has quickly emerged alongside prostitution.

The 1997 Hague Declaration defines the trafficking of women as:

Any action, aimed at legal or illegal importation, transit, staying, or exportation of women from a territory with the view of getting profits from their sexual exploitation; with using force, including violence, threats, and fraud; abuse of one’s official position or pressure of any other kind, as a result of which a person does not have true or satisfactory choice but for the choice to resign oneself to this pressure or other unlawful actions.

There can be no accurate data concerning the numbers of women involved in either forced trafficking or trafficking made with their consent, either in the Ukraine or on a global basis. The U.N. estimates, however, that about 4 million people are taken annually and forced to work in various forms of slavery worldwide. An estimated 500,000 women are sold yearly to Western Europe alone. The U.N. also estimates that profits from this global trade amount to about US$7 billion per annum.

Ukraine has become a supplier to this international business, sending women to countries that include the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Italy, Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the United States, and the Arab Emirates. The trafficking of women extends also to Japan and Thailand.

Deportations of Ukrainian women from these countries give an indication of the numbers involved. Between 1995 and 1997, 1,500 women were deported from Israel to Russia and Ukraine and an estimated 5,000 have been returned from Turkey. According to information
provided by the Consulate of Ukraine in Greece, about 3,000 young Ukrainian women are involved in legal and illegal prostitution in Athens and Thessaloniki.

The factors behind the trafficking of women are similar in many respects to those that cause prostitution, and can be categorized broadly into three types:

- **Economic.** These include the pursuit of profits encouraged by the new, free-market economy; the emergence of an unregulated, "gray" economy; the feminization of unemployment; and increasing levels of poverty.
- **Social and political.** These include the absence of legislation regulating the sex business and the lack of information and understanding of sexual exploitation.
- **Moral and spiritual.** These include the moral crisis facing society as a whole and the decay of spiritual values in particular. Influencing factors include the softening of standards in mass culture and the mass media evinced by the increased use of sexual imagery; the growing visibility of sexual advertisements; and the declining standards of moral and ethical education of children.

The growth of trafficking in Ukraine is fuelled in particular by unemployment and the feminization of poverty. Research conducted by the State Committee of Statistics indicated that in 1998, 65.3 percent of the total number of unemployed were women. More than 40 percent of unemployed women were less than 30 years old. Gender bias in the labor market is aggravating this situation: On average, in 1996, 1.9 job vacancies existed for each dismissed man, but only 0.29 vacancies for each woman. By 1997, the situation had deteriorated dramatically, to only 0.16 vacancies for each man and 0.02 for each woman.

Desperate for work of any kind, unemployed women are becoming increasingly easy targets for the sex trade. In addition, the changing environment inside and outside Ukraine has made trafficking much easier. The country's borders are open and the process of leaving has become simpler; the gray economy has become international and criminal organizations increasingly reach across borders; corruption of state officials in Ukraine and elsewhere is widespread; and many countries worldwide officially or unofficially tolerate prostitution.

**Fighting the Trafficking In Women**

In order to combat the problem of trafficking, it is first and foremost essential that the full extent of the problem be established. Official data do not accurately reflect the scope of the problem—according to these data, the number of Ukrainian women deported from the countries of Western Europe amounts merely to several dozen.

Unofficial statistics are more realistic, although also incomplete. These statistics, for example, indicate that at least 10 Ukrainian women are deported from Turkey every week. They also show that 3,000 prostitutes from the former Soviet Union are working in the Netherlands, and approximately 1,000 women from Ukraine are working in Serbia. This information comes from a variety of sources, including the public organizations, active in many countries, that provide assistance to the victims of trafficking. Women's NGOs such as these are performing essential work to combat trafficking, and the unification of these groups would represent perhaps the best opportunity to ultimately defeat the problem.

Other sources of official information include the Committee for the Guarding of the State Border of Ukraine. This committee conducted an analysis of the jobs for which Ukrainian
women leave the country. Many women aged 18–27 claimed to have been offered employment in nightclubs, with 80–85 percent of them expecting to take up work as waitresses or housekeepers. The reality for some at least would certainly be quite different, but whether or not they were aware of this remains open to question. Other women have knowingly and illegally tried to leave Ukraine to work abroad as prostitutes. In 1997, Ukrainian frontier guards detained 722 women who were subsequently proven to have had this intent.

The return traffic similarly gives an indication of the extent of the problem. Between January 1, 1997 and April 30, 1999, 436 women were returned to Ukraine via the Borispol airport alone. These women were deportees from Western and Central Europe and Turkey; almost half of them did not have any identification documents.

Ukraine is seeking acceptance and integration into the international community as a fully democratic state, and has undertaken to observe the rules of international law in the areas of human rights protection. Under standing Ukrainian law, prostitution is considered not a criminal offense, but an administrative one—an endangerment to the public order. It does not encompass the possible involvement of or provide for the prosecution of persons other than the prostitute herself. A new draft criminal code, however, incorporates amendments that would address the crimes of trafficking of women and violence toward them, and includes an article “On Coercion to Prostitution.”

On March 24, 1998, revised Article 124(1)—“Trafficking of People”—was drafted to the Criminal Code, establishing criminal responsibility for the trafficking of people. This represents a considerable step toward the elimination of the phenomenon; progress now depends on the successful cooperation between the legislative body, the state structure, and public organizations.

There is no specialized state service in Ukraine to combat the trafficking in women. Most work in this sphere is done by the State Committee on Family and Youth Affairs, the National Ombudswoman, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Internal Affairs, of Labor and Social Policy, and of Justice. A national plan of action to improve the position of women in Ukrainian society has been drawn up, however, and this addresses the necessity for changes in legislation to protect women against domestic violence, coercive prostitution, and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Ultimately, the defeat of violence against women and trafficking in women depends on cooperation and shared effort between NGOs and public organizations, between national state organizations, and between international public and state organizations.
The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has been followed by a period of change, officially recognized as a transition from an authoritarian system to democracy and from a controlled economy to a free market. People have much more economic freedom, and they have passports in their hands. But the introduction of capitalism has also caused problems, including some not known in the previous decades. In most countries of the region, GNP is now lower than before 1990: social benefits have been cut, unemployment has become a permanent and widespread social phenomenon, and a new underclass is being created.

In vast parts of Eastern Europe, the state has effectively abdicated control of the economy and even of the territory. The people of these areas have been left alone to face their problems. Some have found their answers in the informal economy; some have traveled abroad. The political transformation was initially perceived as the coming of hope for freedom of entrepreneurship and travel. For these people, it seems this dream has come true.

The Situation in Poland

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there has been an increasing number of women trafficked from this part of Europe to the countries of the EU. It is impossible to determine the exact number of women involved: the police, immigration authorities, and Western relief organizations can produce only fractional statistics. Nongovernmental organizations such as La Strada are convinced that the confirmed and published numbers represent merely the tip of the iceberg.

According to IOM estimates, about 500,000 women are trafficked abroad from the former communist bloc countries each year, including up to 10,000 women from Poland. The leading destination countries are Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Greece.

The situation in Poland has been changing constantly since 1990. Poland has assumed a triple function in the trafficking of women: it has become a country of origin, a country of transit, and a country of destination. Many of the estimated 500,000 women who are trafficked each year are transported from the former Soviet Union via the Polish eastern border to Germany, and forwarded from there to other West European countries. However, a large number of the women stay in Poland. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 migrant women are trafficked into prostitution or other forms of work in the sex industry. The leading countries of origin of these women are Bulgaria, Ukraine, Belorussia, Russia, and Lithuania. The largest group of migrant trafficked women in Poland is comprised of women from the Turkish minority enclave in Bulgaria. Police statistics estimate there are about 1,200 “Bulgarians” in Poland.
Reasons for Trafficking

The main factors contributing to this trafficking from Central and Eastern Europe are poverty and unemployment. Testimonies provided by some of the women involved confirm that one of the main reasons for migrating—and for being receptive to recruitment—is their urge to improve their economic situation. The development strategies implemented in Eastern Europe have paradoxically reduced women’s opportunities for paid employment, to the point where even well-educated women have difficulty finding jobs. Women are increasingly relying on the cash economy, and many have also been driven to seek new jobs and new lives abroad, either temporarily or for good.

Not coincidentally, there has been a tightening of migration laws and policies in many of the destination countries. Legal opportunities for international migration, especially to Western countries, have decreased. In addition, where opportunities for work abroad do exist, they are generally for men, such as construction workers, truck drivers, sailors, and seasonal agricultural workers.

These factors, combined with a lack of legislation protecting migrant women, discriminatory labor laws and policies, corruption, and the potential for large illegal profits, available to criminals have created an environment richly conducive to an increase in trafficking.

This picture should be supplemented with an important and often overlooked point about gender relations in the Eastern European countries. Sexual and domestic abuse and discriminatory social practices often compel women to leave home to seek employment and security elsewhere. Domestic violence is one of the strongest factors that drive women to seek job opportunities far from home.

As described, women are denied equal access to formal, regulated labor markets abroad. Abroad, therefore, as at home, they are generally relegated to the informal, unprotected labor sector—the gray economy. In this sector, sexual and domestic work are the two activities most open to women who need income to support their families or to finance their independence.

Trafficking in women must therefore be considered in the context of traditional female roles in society. The economic difficulties that have emerged in the transition period are contributing to the revival of traditional gender relations; to putting women into even lower positions than they held under communism. This is evident in the labor markets of the Central and Eastern European countries, where there has been a feminization of lower-paid professions such as teaching in elementary schools and nursing. The proportion of women in politics has also dropped, to well below 10 percent.

The worldwide feminization of the illegal migration of labor, particularly to the EU countries, where restrictions against legal migration have increased, should also be viewed as part of this genderization of the labor market. Trafficking in women is an extreme expression of this cultural pattern, and one in which the wielding of power by the dominating over the dominated has become clearly observable.

The most obvious effects of this phenomenon on migrant women—Polish women abroad as well as foreigners in Poland—are their increasing isolation, stigmatization, marginalization, criminalization, and vulnerability to violation. All of these effects are directly related to their status as illegal immigrants or as workers in an illicit business.
Combating Illegal Trafficking

The increasing scale of the traffic in women has impelled La Strada to develop a number of strategies to combat this criminal trade.

We aim first of all to provide information and lobbying campaigns. A 1998 survey indicated that 93 percent of Poles were aware of the problem of trafficking; despite this fact, 25 percent said they would like to take an illegal job abroad. The quality of the information is therefore of the utmost importance. Not only must the public be informed about the issue of trafficking, but also awareness of the problem must be raised among decision-makers, politicians, governmental representatives, and even the groups of professionals that deal with the problem on a daily basis. We have chosen to present in the mass media trafficking as an issue of human rights violation; as a serious social, economic, and labor problem; as a problem of organized crime; and as a problem of migration.

The power and quality of information are among our main weapons in a prevention campaign. The main groups at risk are girls over the age of 14. These include high school students, trading school students, and college and university students; dropouts from schools; and girls in dormitories, boarding schools, special schools, and orphanages. Other high-risk groups are unemployed women and low-waged women. We provide them with information about the labor market situation and the condition of migrants in different countries, but first and foremost about the risk of trafficking. Tools such as videos help put the information across at prevention workshops and meetings.

La Strada also maintains a telephone hot-line as an aid to victims of trafficking, particularly those making their first attempts to seek help. The victims tend to trust neither the police nor official institutions, and they are silent because of shame and fear. NGOs can thus play an important role by providing victims with a place to stay, and with medical, psychological, and legal help. In many cases, the NGO is the victim's only hope, as many women who return home are ostracized by their families and communities. Rejection by family and friends is a major cause behind the rising numbers of victims who submit themselves to a repeat of their experiences. Cases of repeated trafficking are being reported more and more frequently to help organizations all over Europe: When living and working conditions in their country of origin continue to prove inadequate, the women victims of trafficking increasingly return to their original destination country.

There are no official government programs in Poland to combat the illegal traffic in women. The leading role in this field is played by NGOs. It is critical that the government learns and understands that help must be provided for the victims of this crime. The following steps must be taken to prevent trafficking and to break the vicious cycle of repeated trafficking:

- All parties involved, in both the country of origin and the country of destination, must understand that trafficking is a shared problem that must be fought with common strategies. New, effective measures must be implemented to combat the problem.
- A return and reintegration program must be developed for victims of trafficking. This program must be multilateral, multidisciplinary, and multifarious. It should be developed using the experience of all parties involved.
- Government organizations should consult with NGOs when preparing a strategy to combat trafficking. NGOs have invaluable experience with this problem, and cooperation with them is necessary.
Programs to combat trafficking should consider including the following components:

- Provisions to enable women to press criminal charges and/or take civil action against their violators. Destination countries should provide a temporary visitor’s permit during criminal and/or civil proceedings, and should consider providing witness protection.
- Access for victims to competent translators, legal assistance, and legal representation.
- Access to adequate, confidential, and affordable medical, social, and psychological care.
- Access to legal compensation and redress.
- Assistance to women who want to return home.
- Protection for victims against possible reprisal from their violators, both in the country of origin and the country of destination. Protection should also be provided against repressive and discriminatory measures from the authorities.
- Access to education and job training for women returning to their country of origin, and to assistance in finding work.
Women in Transition: Themes of the UNICEF MONEE Project

Regional Monitoring Report No. 6- 1999

Gáspár Fajth

Introduction

The UNICEF Report investigates an important yet largely unexplored topic: the relationship between women’s rights and welfare and the democratization and market-oriented transformation of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The 150 million women and 50 million girls who live in the 27 transition countries are not a special interest group. Women represent half of the population, and their particular concerns affect fundamental social questions. Typically, when women are at the lower steps on the gradient of advantage, this is because of the demands of their role in providing and caring for the new generation. This socially established linkage, rooted in childbearing, reinforces the bonds between the well-being of women and that of children. Women’s experiences, however, also exert a tremendous influence on all of society, and women’s progress is a sensitive indicator of human development in general.

Through its Regional Monitoring Reports, UNICEF has been examining the ways in which the collapse of the communist governments has affected the lives of children. This Report asks: Did gender equality exist behind the egalitarian rhetoric of communism? How have women fared under the emerging market democracies? Is the actual and potential contribution of women to healthy change fully recognized and realized?

The answers to these questions provide particular insights into people’s lives in the transition countries, as well as into the links between development and gender equality. Indeed, women’s rights and human development have been two of the most prominent social issues of the 20th century. In this light, the premise of this Report is that the transition offers an historical opportunity for the countries in the region to exercise genuine leadership in addressing gender questions and that women’s broader participation is crucial if the social, economic and political targets of the transition are to be achieved.

Was There Gender Equality?

Discrimination against women blocks the development of nations just as it blocks progress for girls, women and their families. The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women . . . of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field.” All the transi-
tion countries are signatories of the Convention, as well as of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child: this is a noteworthy declaration of intent.

So, how are these countries measuring up? Analysis of human development indices shows that the transition countries have a relative advantage in terms of gender equity and child and maternal health compared to countries at a similar level of development outside the region. This comparative edge is widely attributed to the historical achievement of the former governments in securing universal access to basic health care and education services and offering paid employment to most women.

Indeed, the Central European countries spent relatively large amounts on health and education services, and the Soviet Union had a ratio of physicians to population comparable to that of the richest nations in the world. In contrast to the situation in many other countries, there is no evidence that unequal treatment of girls caused gender differences in child and adolescent mortality or in basic educational attainment. Moreover, in the Baltic States, Russia and Ukraine, for example, the gender gap in labour force participation rates was comparable to that in Sweden, the leader in this regard among Western nations. The workforce participation rates of women in Poland, Romania and Azerbaijan were comparable to or higher than those in the United States or France, with the notable difference that, in the planned economies, women generally held full-time jobs throughout their working lives.

The Report finds that women's wages relative to those of men and women's representation among professionals and economic decision makers compare favorably to the levels in advanced market economies. This is linked to the generally significant attainments in the education of women—an asset which remains important in the new market environment. Women in the workplace had access to an extensive state-run system of family and childcare supports, including lengthy paid maternity leave, family allowances attached to wages, and nursery, kindergarten and after-school services for children.

From Czechoslovakia to Albania, from the Baltic to Central Asia, there was considerable diversity in terms of cultural traditions, lifestyles and degree of urbanization. This certainly influenced the average number of children born to families and the strength of kinship systems. Yet, at the same time, in many ways women's roles in the family, including their contribution to and command over the household economy, were strikingly similar across the region. For example, the right of women to marry or initiate divorce was guaranteed in constitutions everywhere, despite traditions to the contrary in some places.

With a huge appetite for able labour, the state encouraged women to study, marry and have jobs and babies, and, where kinship support was weak, the state provided the means to help women manage the competing demands. These state-directed initiatives often favored concrete advancements among women. However, many other apparent achievements were superficial rather than genuine, and women's well-being and their opportunities were often compromised under communism. Significantly, the underlying process was authoritarian rather than rights-based; a semblance of equity which often came closer to uniformity than genuine equality was imposed from the top down. Human rights and fundamental freedoms were denied; civil society was suppressed, and the family was neglected or viewed with suspicion.

When communist rule collapsed at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 90s, it left behind many basic economic and national issues unresolved, including the issue of gender equity. People did not immediately realize that the paternalistic communist state, despite all
the proclamations, had actually failed to deal with fundamental questions of gender equality. These “missing achievements” were closely linked to the lack of market forces and the shortcomings in civil society—the same areas which the transition is supposed to address. Advances have, however, been slow or uneven and in many cases regression occurred since 1989.

The Missing Links

The thinness of the veneer of equality under communism is revealed most graphically in the representation of women in parliaments, where women often accounted for as many as one-third of the seats—a share matched elsewhere in the world only in Nordic countries. This remarkable female presence disappeared during the first democratic elections in the region. This attests to the profound failure of the communist governments to cultivate gender equality which is legitimized and sustained by citizens. (See Figure 1). The good news is however, that women hold a comparatively higher share at local councils, which may represent a building block for the future (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Share of Women in Parliament, 1945–1998 (%).

[Graph showing the share of women in parliament for Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary from 1945 to 1998.]

Source: RMP No. 6, Figure 6.1

The Report confirms the existence of additional weaknesses which must be dealt with.

- Women did not have equal career opportunities. They were poorly represented among party leaders and planners and among the directors of large state enterprises—the few top positions which really counted in these hierarchical societies. Occupational segregation—whereby women dominate in certain occupations and men in others—was considerable. Vertical job segregation is still a major issue as indicated by the low representation of women in senior government positions especially in the CIS countries (see Figure 3).

Moreover, the findings of this Report counter the frequent claim that the gender gap in wages in the transition countries does not reflect gender discrimination in the workplace. The
Figure 2. Share of Women Elected to Local Councils and National Parliaments (% latest elections between 1994 and 1998).

Source: RMR No. 6, Figure 6.6.

Figure 3. Senior Government Positions Occupied by Women, 1996 (%).

Source: RMR No. 6, Figure 6.4.

In-depth investigation carried out for this Report could attribute only a relatively small part of the 10–30 percent gap to differing job characteristics, skills, or experience.

- Health care was delivered by the state health care system. However, the returns were disappointing given the level of investment. For example, despite an emphasis on maternal and infant health care, there was large variance in maternal and infant mortality rates across the region, and the rates were often far above the targets of the World Health Organization. Health awareness and the need for healthy lifestyles were neglected, as evidenced by the widespread abuse of alcohol and the poor nutrition.

- Outside the context of work, there was little official social support for family life, and families functioned in isolation. Fertility rates among teenagers were high, often sev-
eral times higher than the corresponding rates in Western countries (see Figure 4). Services to help strengthen families and support women's capacity to prevent or cope with situations of risk were glaringly absent. The state applied too many last-minute, half-way measures: medical abortions rather than access to family planning services, or the separation of children from parents for placement in institutions instead of, for example, securing parental counselling.

Figure 4. Teenage and Total Birth Rates, Early 1990s (live births per 1,000 women in relevant age group).

Despite laws ostensibly guaranteeing equality between women and men within marriage, the gender distribution of power in families remained one-sided. By taking over the responsibility for certain areas of family life, the state did not help women and men share these responsibilities more equally. Instead, it contributed to the weight of the "double burden" borne by women—long hours on the job followed by unpaid work at home. Data show that the total workload of women in Central and Eastern Europe averaged close to 70 hours per week, about 15 hours more than the workload of women in Western Europe.

Another serious barrier to women's equality is the blanket of silence over violence against women that still covers the region. The evidence reviewed in this Report shows that violence against women is widespread, but that professionals in criminal justice, health care, social work, and education are largely untrained in recognizing and addressing violence against women, particularly domestic violence. This also represents an inheritance from the communist period.

These shortcomings confirm that the legacy of gender equality in the region is less robust than often assumed and raise concerns about whether and how these problems are going to be put on the agenda. By shattering the state monopoly over economic, social and political issues,
the transition has exposed women to an environment in which the conditions for equality have yet to be explored.

New Economic Opportunities and Risks

During the first half of the 1990s, GDP dropped by 15–25 percent in Central Europe, 35–45 percent in Southeastern Europe and about 50 percent or more (with a few exceptions) in former Yugoslavia, the Baltic States, the western Commonwealth of Independent States, and the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Economies have begun to rebound since then, but only Poland and Slovenia seem to have been able to surpass the level of output in 1989. Despite impressive growth in the private sector, many structural problems are still hindering economic recovery.

Market reforms and declines in output have led to large drops in real wages and pressure on employers to reduce the number of jobs. Losses in real wages—not infrequently larger than the falls in GDP—have been accompanied by considerable increases in wage differentials. The Gini coefficient, a common measure of the extent of wage inequality, has risen by one-third on average in Central and Southeastern Europe and by one-half in countries of the former Soviet Union. At the same time, governments have endured a huge drop in revenues, while their ability to raise taxes has not been adequately expanded.

Since 1989, an estimated 26 million jobs have been lost in the region—13 percent of the pre-transition total. Available data suggest that almost 14 million of these jobs were held by women. Nonetheless, in the formal economy, women have managed to maintain their share of employment in the 40–50 percent range. Although the incidence of part-time work (a choice desired by many women) has increased in several countries, more than 90 percent of employed women still have full-time jobs. Yet, in parts of the region many jobs exist only on paper, and even the meagre wages many jobs provide are paid out after considerable delays.

Registered unemployment has soared in the former centrally planned economies, from almost zero to more than 10 million. Women represent a higher share of these jobless; six million women were on unemployment registers in 1997. In addition, more and more women and men who are without work are being excluded from these registers and are ineligible for unemployment compensation. Labour surveys have confirmed that in several albeit not in all countries do women have a higher risk than men to be unemployed (see Figure 5).

Economic change has affected women within the workforce, but also in the household. The need for two incomes in a household is still being felt, often even more strongly than was the case under communism, but it is more difficult to satisfy. The fact that both women and men have lost jobs in great numbers has undoubtedly influenced the gender balance of power within families, shifting sometimes towards the woman, sometimes towards the man.

Jobless women are more likely to become economically inactive, while men find work in the “grey” economy. Nonetheless, as the Report reveals, women often have a crucial role in ensuring household survival. As state commitments to childcare have shrunk, women’s responsibilities within the family have curtailed their ability to seek and find work. Enrolment rates in nurseries (for children up to age 2) have fallen across the region, most noticeably in the Baltic and western CIS countries, and nurseries have practically ceased to exist in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The number of kindergarten places is also declining in many countries. (See Figure 6.)
The analysis finds that older jobless women and local communities have taken on a greater role in childcare. Meanwhile, falling fertility rates have reduced populations of young children by 10–50 percent in the region—a striking outcome. This can offer some immediate relief in economic and health terms to families and communities, but might generate several long-term economic and social problems.

There is evidence that in some countries employers are less willing to hire women and less willing to accommodate maternity and parental leaves. Analysis has found that, in Poland, because of their marriage status, unemployed married women, but not unemployed married men, are hindered from securing work.

Adequate, accessible and affordable childcare is crucial in the effort of families with young children to balance employment and household responsibilities. Government policy measures such as extended maternity and parental leave show some success in encouraging parents to stay at home to raise their children, but produce mixed results in terms of gender equity.
Because of the reduction in childcare services and income support, the gender gap in wages has become more acutely felt.

However, a striking finding of the Report is that this gap has remained stable despite significant increases in overall wage inequality during the 1990s. (See Figure 7.)

The gender pay gap has widened the most in Bulgaria (which has been slow to reform) and then only by 5 percentage points. It has stayed the same in many countries and even declined in some, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia. Detailed analysis reveals that the strong educational attainment of women is a key factor. There is also some evidence that occupational segregation by gender has lessened during the transition.

At the same time, there is now a risk that gender segregation in employment is becoming linked to the type of ownership exercised by the employer. Thus, while women continue to fill public-sector jobs, men are making greater inroads in the private sector. As many as three-quarters of the employees in education and health care are women, and these fields account for a significant share of all female employment. Analysis shows that gender is a determinant in access to private-sector jobs, even independently of other factors. Women are also less likely than men to be self-employed or employers themselves. Still, available evidence suggests that women have established or own about one-quarter of new businesses—a promising start, given the recent emergence of entrepreneurial freedom in the region.

**Women’s Health and Safety**

A shocking and unanticipated deterioration in life expectancy accompanied the early years of the transition. Of 23 countries for which time series are available, male life expectancy worsened in 22, and female life expectancy in 16. In many countries, the decline was small and only temporary; in others, the drop was large and more difficult to reverse. In Russia and Kazakhstan, the cumulative drop in life expectancy for men was 6.3 and 5.5 years, respectively, and among women 3.2 and 3.3 years. In 1997, life expectancy worsened or did not improve in Southeastern Europe, Estonia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and Turkmenistan—about one-third of the countries for which data are available.
It is increasingly recognized that women respond to health threats and medical treatments differently than men. This gender difference is apparent in the changes in life expectancy noted above, changes largely wrought by the strains of transition expressed through the poorer nutrition, unhealthier lifestyles, alcohol abuse, emotional distress, and violence which, according to some evidence, are more common among people with weak social networks.

The changes which have been triggered by the transition and which shape health have affected women both positively and negatively. In economic terms, women's health is influenced by lower incomes, greater income disparity and reduced funding for health care systems. Values and social environments are changing, and this is sometimes accompanied by healthier lifestyles, but not infrequently also by greater risk-taking behavior.

Some indicators of maternal health have improved, demonstrating that the transition can harvest the previous investments in the health and education of women. Data show that infant mortality rates have remained largely stable or have declined, while maternal mortality rates have decreased across most of Central and Eastern Europe.

However, maternal mortality rates in Albania, Romania and most western CIS countries are still above the WHO target for Europe (15 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), and the progress achieved in Russia during the 1980s has not continued during the 90s (see Figure 8).

More frequent birth complications and worsening health status among infants are evidence of the poorer health of women as well. For example, in Belarus, the rate of hemorrhage and eclampsia has almost doubled; in Russia, the incidence of birth complications has almost tripled, and in many countries the proportion of low birthweight babies has risen. These outcomes may in part be linked to demographic shifts, such as the higher share of births outside marriage, particularly to teenage mothers. However, women's poor nutrition and the erosion in access to services are also factors. In this regard, it should be noted that, in Central Asia, maternal mortality is still relatively high, often higher than it was in 1989.

Abortion remains common throughout the region, though the absolute number of legal abortions has declined in every country. Rates are especially high in Southeastern Europe (except Albania), western CIS and the Baltics (except Lithuania). The only countries where the number of legal abortions per 100 live births is around or below the European Union average are Poland (where abortion laws became much more strict in 1993), Croatia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan. In Russia, there are two abortions for every live birth, that is, about 2.5 million abortions in 1997. (See Figure 9.)

Though legal and usually performed by qualified health professionals, abortions still involve serious emotional and physical complications for women. Surveys show that around 70 percent of women feel depressed or traumatized by the experience. Abortion is a leading cause of maternal death, accounting for up to 20–25 percent of maternal deaths in some countries. The main reasons for persistently high abortion rates are inadequate access to family planning and little knowledge of reproductive health issues, especially among young women.

Young women are also particularly vulnerable to the increased incidence of "social diseases" in the region. There are indications that adolescent girls are catching up to both their male counterparts and Western European girls in alcohol and tobacco use. For example, evidence shows that the percentage of adolescent Latvian girls who smoke has doubled, as has the share of 15-year-old Polish girls who report having been drunk at least twice.

Some health threats are relatively new to the region, including drug abuse, HIV infection and trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The number of recorded HIV
Figure 8. Maternal Mortality Rates in 1989 and 1997 (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births).

Source: RMR No. 6, Figure 4.1.

Figure 9. Abortion Rates in 1989 and 1997 (legal abortions per 100 live births).

Source: RMR No. 6, Figure 4.6

Cases jumped from around 30,000 in 1994 to about 270,000 at the end of 1998, with an estimated 80,000 new infections in 1998 alone. This frightening surge is associated with intravenous drug use, which has been growing rapidly in parts of the region. About 70 percent of all HIV infections in Ukraine occur among drug users, and there is an important overlap between drug use and prostitution.
The booming sex industry across Central and Eastern Europe puts many women at very high risk. The negative impact of prostitution on the status of women in the transition countries cannot be understated. Prostitution affects perceptions about the role of women in society, places women in positions of economic and physical vulnerability and raises the risk to women of health problems and violence. There is evidence that the number of women from Central and Eastern Europe involved in street prostitution in many of the major cities of Western Europe is rising rapidly. Frequently, these women are forced migrants who have been coerced into prostitution through deception, kidnapping and intimidation.

There are also indications that violence against women, including domestic violence, is becoming more common. The culture of lawlessness seems to be spreading, and the rise in violent crime is alarming. Rape seems to be inadequately addressed through the criminal justice system, and cases of domestic violence do not even attract the attention of the courts. Indeed, domestic violence is not specifically recognized as a crime in some countries. In the weakened economy, women are more vulnerable to spousal violence, but also to sexual exploitation in the workplace. (See Figure 10.)

Figure 10. Prevalence of Assaults and Sexual Incidents Involving Women at Work, 1996 (per 1,000 women).

Source: RMR No. 6, Figure 5.8.

These risks call for urgent improvement in the capacity of health professionals, social workers, police officers, and judicial authorities to provide adequate remedies and promote prevention.

Particularly disturbing is the use of violence against women, including rape and forced pregnancy, as weapons of war in ethnic conflicts. Estimates of the number of women raped as part of a deliberate pattern of abuse during the 1992–95 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the former Yugoslavia, vary from 20,000 to 50,000. Women refugees and displaced persons—of which there are hundreds of thousands from Croatia to Tajikistan—are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. New waves of physical, sexual and mental violence against women have been generated by the struggle in Kosovo in the Balkans, a region which has already experienced the tragic outcomes of ethnic strife.
Making the Transition Work for Women

This Report makes clear that gender equality needs to be placed higher on the political agenda of the transition countries if they are to turn their impressive assets in human capabilities to full advantage. These countries face the enormous challenge of revitalizing civil society from the grassroots up.

It is critical that women act as agents of change in this process of linking political, social and economic reforms together into a foundation for development. The Report finds that, so far, female voices have been only faintly heard in the new democratic institutions of the region and that women politicians, ministers, ambassadors, and senior government decision makers are largely lacking. In most countries less than 10 percent of the parliamentarians are women, and the ratio of senior government posts occupied by women—11 percent in Central Europe and 4 percent in CIS countries—is also very low.

Empowering women to act as agents of change requires both immediate action and long-term commitment in order to build women's participation in society at all levels. As the authority expropriated by the communist state from communities, families and individuals is regained by citizens, parents and entrepreneurs, there is an historic opportunity—and endless numbers of individual opportunities—for the gender balance of power also to be reset. Certainly, a broad-based women's movement which acts in concert with other equality-seeking organizations, civil institutions, economic actors, and governments is a primary conduit for such a process.

Reducing the role of the state is a basic goal of the transition, but government has a vital part to play in promoting the gender balance in society. Ways need to be found to reform, rebuild and sustain public services, such as health care, social care and education. Tax systems need to be reformed so that governments can raise revenues to pay for these services. National machinery for the advancement of women must be established, as has been done in several countries in the region. Using gender-based analysis in the development of public policies—holding a gender lens to statistics and planning—is a recognized "best practice" which promotes equal outcomes for women and men. This involves paying special attention to issues particular to women and mainstreaming a gendered viewpoint.

The aim of this Report is to stimulate the development of national agendas and public policy frameworks for gender equality. The regional perspective offered by the analyses of the Report suggests that the following issues merit special focus.

- Mobilizing women and men within political parties to encourage women's participation in the democratic political process.
- Developing workplace policies and practices which expand the opportunities for women.
- Supporting women micro-entrepreneurs through business training and access to financing.
- Encouraging public discussion on gender issues and women's equality through grassroots organizations, the media and education and awareness campaigns.
- Developing a multifaceted strategy to deal with violence against women.
- Promoting a fairer sharing between women and men of responsibility for child-rearing.
- Targeting public support for single parents, most of whom are women.
- Maintaining and strengthening women's educational attainment.
• Reaching WHO and UNICEF targets for maternal and child health.
• Favoring a broader life-cycle and social determinants approach to women's health.
• Focusing on and involving children and adolescents in the effort to achieve gender equality within families and communities.

Importantly, the principles which underpin the transition—the expression of diversity and genuine political representation, economic development and the expansion of choice—are the same values driving the movement for women's equality. They are simply somewhat different perspectives on the same process. In this light, the bid for women's equality should not be set apart from the transition, but should be a part of the transition. Equality cannot be imposed as it was under communism, but equality also cannot thrive in the wild as those who champion an unfettered marketplace would claim. Equality is a civilized and civilizing influence which needs to be carefully and constantly cultivated in order to advance human development. It is not a static state to be achieved; it is a living process to be continuously attended to.

*MONEE project, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (formerly International Child Development Centre). Details of the project and its outcomes, including a public-use database "TransMONEE" are available from ICDC's home page at www.unicef-icdc.org.
Discussant’s Comments

Post-Communist Transitions: Magnifying Gender Asymmetries?

Gail W. Lapidus

Transitions As Troubled Transformations

The collapse of Communist regimes across East Central Europe at the end of the 1980s, culminating in the dissolution of the USSR itself in 1991, was widely greeted as a liberating event. Freed from the political domination of authoritarian regimes and the stifling effects of highly centralized and inefficient command economies, it was widely anticipated that the populations of the region would enjoy the benefits of political democratization and economic reform, unleashing a wave of entrepreneurial activity that would generate rapid economic growth, increased productivity, and with it a dramatic rise in living standards. While recognizing that enormous obstacles would have to be surmounted and that the process would be complex and not always smooth, there was nonetheless a widespread expectation among participants and observers alike that the new opportunities generated by the transition would vastly overshadow its costs. Virtually no one anticipated, in the initial euphoria, that gender issues would prove to be one of the most problematic aspects of the transition, and indeed that political democratization and economic reforms might significantly increase rather than attenuate the gender asymmetries, which were a legacy of Communist development.

Clearly, the transformation of Communist societies has proven far more difficult and protracted than was initially anticipated, the scale of disruption and hardship far more severe, and the economic, social and psychological costs infinitely higher. The scope of needed changes proved far greater than had been anticipated, and in Southeastern Europe and much of the former USSR, weak states with limited capacity have proven unable to cope with the multitude of new challenges. In Central and Eastern Europe the process of transition entailed radically transforming existing institutions, and even more importantly, altering attitudes and patterns of behavior. In the 15 new states of what had once been the USSR, the issue was not merely one of “transition”: new polities and economies had to be built virtually from scratch.

In attempting to generalize about the overall impact of the transition, it is important to note at the outset that the process of transformation has not been a uniform one across the entire region. Notwithstanding certain common challenges and patterns, significant differences in the starting point of change, in the political and economic context, and in culture and attitudes have resulted in growing differentiation both within countries and among them. Those states which enjoyed a favorable starting point, were most committed to and prepared for change, and which were most closely linked to Europe—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic states—after great initial hardships have begun to show signs of recovery; others, including Russia, Ukraine, and the Central Asian countries, are still experiencing severe economic decline and political instability and are facing a growing popular backlash against reforms.
The impact of these developments on women has been especially harsh. For reasons that are rooted in the distinctive features of economic and political development characteristic of Communist societies, the process of transition has in key respects exacerbated the prevailing gender asymmetries. This tendency has been largely obscured by the media and scholarly focus on economic privatization and political democratization, both domains in which males play a predominant role. This conference thus provides a welcome and timely occasion for a more comprehensive assessment of key trends across the region, for a review of the state of our knowledge about them, and for a discussion of strategies and recommendations that could help mitigate some of their most negative consequences for gender equity.

The Problem of Benchmarks

In attempting to assess overall trends in this region, and to place them in a broader comparative context, one of the key challenges is defining an appropriate benchmark for comparison and evaluation. Compared with other major regions in which the World Bank operates, this region is itself extremely diverse, ranging from the highly industrialized and urban countries of Central Europe and the Baltics to the relatively rural societies of Central Asia and the Balkans. These were, moreover, societies that were not so much underdeveloped as misdeveloped; on a number of indicators, including education and labor force participation, most of these countries ranked relatively highly. There is a real question to what extent economic and social indicators based on the less-developed countries in which the World Bank customarily operates should provide a benchmark for assessing trends in this region, and in what respects comparisons with the developed market economies of Europe and North America would be more appropriate. Moreover, from the perspective of the populations involved, perhaps the most immediately relevant indicators are those that measure the changes of the past few years against the baseline of their economic, political, and social positions just prior to the transition, and of the aspirations and expectations they brought to the process. It is of small comfort to a now-unemployed Russian university lecturer to know that her educational and professional attainments significantly surpass those of counterparts in much of Asia or Africa.

Indeed, the sharply negative popular attitudes toward the transition in most of the region, attitudes that are particularly strong among women, as numerous studies of public opinion make clear, are in large measure the result of such comparisons with a pre-transition baseline. The dismantling of Communist systems and the political and economic transformations of post-Communism created a highly competitive environment in which women found themselves severely disadvantaged in novel ways. Marketization and privatization, to take one particularly dramatic example, created conditions in which political-administrative power and managerial positions in the former Communist establishment could be readily converted into economic resources in the newly emerging capitalist economy. Because of substantial gender asymmetries in the structure of employment in Communist systems, these opportunities overwhelmingly benefited men. The widespread assumption that women's family responsibilities make them less productive workers, as well as the preference for retaining male "breadwinners" rather than women during downsizing, have reinforced the pervasive job discrimination against women.

Another feature of Communist societies that has significantly affected the position of women in the transition has been the authoritarian and paternalistic features of these systems. Not only
did these systems, with some exceptions in Central Europe, involve state domination and control of economic activity to the exclusion of a private sector, they also had prevented the emergence of civil societies based on the existence and activity of independent, non-governmental organizations. The absence of vibrant and autonomous women’s movements in a position to promote or sustain gender equity meant that with the collapse of Communism and the paternalistic arrangements associated with it, women were especially vulnerable and lacked adequate channels through which to defend their interests.

Also, these systems had addressed the issue of female equality by seeking to alter the boundaries between public and private domains rather than by addressing asymmetries in gender relations. To take just one example, provisions to sustain female labor force participation were created by state action rather than by altering attitudes and behaviors involving appropriate gender roles and discrimination. Indeed, open discourse on fundamental issues involving gender equity was largely suppressed, in the pervasive insistence that the “woman question” had been entirely “solved.”

In short, these distinctive features of the Communist legacy have had a substantial impact on the opportunities and risks that women confront in the post-Communist transitions. To successfully address their consequences requires distinctive patterns of intervention by the World Bank and other international actors.

### Assessing the Transition: Problems of Data and Methodology

One of the major impediments to an adequate assessment of the impact of the transitions on women’s position is the inadequacy of much of the existing data, particularly in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet state statistical agency, which previously collected national data, whatever its shortcomings, and the inability of the new governments of the region to create adequate functional equivalents, has placed much of the burden of data-collection and analysis on non-governmental or international actors. In the case of Russia, which inherited the former Soviet institutions and personnel, massive corruption has called into question the reliability of whatever data are being generated. Indeed, the head of the Russian state statistical administration was recently forced to resign after acknowledging that the agency had been producing falsified data that served the interests of various consumers in return for substantial bribes.

Moreover, important changes in the overall structure of employment, and the significant and still-growing role of the informal sector, in which women play a disproportionately large role, has added to the difficulties of capturing and registering changes. While a large number of workers continue to be formally registered as employees at their enterprises to safeguard pension and other benefits, and are therefore not treated as unemployed, their real employment status is often tenuous and ill-defined. Many work only irregularly, if at all. The inability of many enterprises to actually pay wages in practice has forced large number to seek alternative or supplementary sources of income. For example, the Russian Minister of Labor, Sergei Kalashnikov, acknowledged in a recent interview that wages currently constitute only 42 percent of workers’ total incomes. In addition, both individuals and enterprises have numerous incentives to conceal payments and underreport incomes, particularly in view of sudden and often unclear changes in the tax system.
Further complicating the difficulties of gathering reliable data is the fact that in the Russian Federation in particular, barter and other nonmonetary forms of exchange have substantially displaced the role of the ruble in financial transactions. Large numbers of workers are paid in kind, in coupons, or in local currencies that have no value outside a given region. In a situation where it is estimated that 50 to 70 percent of transactions do not rely on the use of the ruble as the measure of value, the challenge of measuring—not to mention comparing—incomes and living standards among different segments of the population in different parts of a country and among countries become enormous indeed.

The kinds of questions raised here cast doubt on the reliability and utility of much of the aggregate data on which assessments of changes in women's relative position rest. Not only are the data incomplete and inadequate; it cannot be assumed that any distortions it may contain operate similarly for males and females. The recent UNICEF MONEE project report on women and the transition, while admirable in its conception and scope of coverage, nonetheless inevitably raises questions about the adequacy of the data and methodologies that underlie some of its conclusions. Clearly, there is enormous value to the effort to collect large bodies of data using common definitions and criteria in order to be in a position to compare developments across the region as well as in relation to other parts of the world. At the same time, in view of the issues touched on above, some skepticism may be warranted in facing the spurious precision about such figures as purchasing power adjusted to per capita income, not to mention the charts that seek to present a numerical ranking of large numbers of countries within and outside the region on different indicators.

The complexities of the situation suggest the particular utility of small-scale, in-depth qualitative studies, including at the household and local level and making use of the work of local specialists, to more adequately capture ongoing trends and to improve the interpretation of large-scale data that are being collected. It would also be useful to attempt to analyze the changes in economic and social structure associated with the transition in an effort to assess newly emerging patterns of gender stratification.

Finally, there are three key areas that deserve particular attention and where better data could play an important role in shaping future policy. The first involves the economic and social position of pensioners, a predominantly female group whose vulnerability to inflation and to the collapse of the social safety net has been especially acute. Greater attention should be directed to assessing the nature and adequacy of various forms of support, including not only pensions and other transfer payments, but support from other family members in providing for basic needs, and to developing recommendations to address the serious problems they face.

The second area, which bears significantly on the opportunities that future generations will enjoy, involves access to and the quality of public education. Many of the states of the region are now living off the educational capital of the past, but are failing to invest adequately for the future. The sharp decline in real terms in state funding of education, including the payment of teachers' salaries, the growing scope of charges to families for such elementary educational needs as books and heating, and the increasing role of private education at the secondary level and beyond, have all tended to disadvantage poorer families and women and to erode both the scope and the quality of the education available. Moreover, enrollment statistics alone fail to capture adequately attendance patterns, dropout rates, and gender differences in educational attainment that may bear importantly not only on a widening gender gap in the present, but also on future employment opportunities.
Finally, because of the critical role that state-supported childcare institutions have played in supporting female labor-force and political participation, the development of alternative forms of affordable and quality childcare ought to be a key priority. Research efforts to track current trends and to identify and disseminate particularly effective strategies and approaches deserve to be energetically pursued.

**Mitigating Negative Impacts: The Role of Governments**

One of the greatest challenges of post-Communist transitions is to alter the role and the public perception of the state: to transform it from an instrument of oppression to a guarantor of human rights and the rule of law. This process is proceeding slowly and with considerable difficulty, but it is crucial to the promotion of genuine equality. Throughout the region, government officials and policies all too frequently perpetuate rather than challenge patriarchal stereotypes concerning the appropriate role of women. All too many lack real commitment to promoting women's equality, consider the issue a low priority in comparison to the pressing economic or foreign policy challenges they confront, and tend to view both local and international NGO's concerned with these issues as adversaries rather than partners. Across the region, with only minor variations, governments have failed to create new legal norms enshrining women's equal rights, to clearly define discrimination and promulgate and implement legislation prohibiting it, to establish governmental mechanisms capable of developing and enforcing appropriate policies and monitoring their impact, and indeed to actively involve women in the policy-making process.

Clearly, efforts to enhance the exceedingly limited role of women in positions of political leadership and influence deserve high priority. Particularly at a time of major economic and political transformations, when new rules of the game are being established, the absence of women from decision-making circles is highly consequential. Under the circumstances, efforts by international agencies and actors, including the World Bank, to enhance the visibility and influence of non-governmental organizations active on behalf of women's rights, facilitate their inclusion in discussions with governmental and business community representatives at the national and local level, and encourage their involvement in policymaking, implementation and monitoring are especially urgent. Indeed, such efforts would confer a measure of legitimacy as well as material support to the embryonic but promising women's movements in the region. And by enhancing the status, experience, and political contacts of women activists in the region, they might well also play a role in facilitating their entry into local or national politics.
Discussant's Comments

Barbara Einhorn

My remarks are not confined to the papers on “Law, Culture and Politics” delivered in Session 3, on which I was a discussant, but contain comments relevant to the conference as a whole, and indeed to the process of gender and transition in Europe and Central Asia.

Ludmila Zavadskaya’s paper on “The Implications of Emerging Legal Issues for Gender in the Russian Federation” built on her opening remarks to the conference. She distinguished between three spheres of new legislation in the post-Soviet period 1991–1998, which regulate respectively the governmental, economic, and social spheres. Her presentation went on to discuss in detail some of the ways in which the new Russian Labour Code, published in May 1999, in effect both violates women’s human rights and discriminates against men. Zavadskaya’s discussion of specific measures showed how the historical feminist debate between gender-neutral and gender-differentiated legislative approaches for achieving gender equality is still today a live debate, with no easy answers. The new Labour Code is the first government document to contain the word “gender” and its preamble prohibits discrimination and enshrines the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women. Yet Zavadskaya argued that in taking a paternalistic attitude by proscribing certain kinds of work for women, the government, through its Labour Code, was failing to propound universal labour standards and destroying both gender symmetry and individual worker choice.

In her paper on the “Revival of Traditions and the Process of De-Emancipation” affecting post-Soviet Central Asian women, Anara Tabyshalieva was right to stress the need to acknowledge historical and cultural specificities. She also pointed to the differences between countries undergoing transition, focusing in particular on the impact of re-Islamization on women. In her view, the legacy of prescriptive Soviet notions of women’s “emancipation” has been compounded by the revival of Islam and traditional cultural practices associated with it, to produce what she calls “an uncommon environment of gender discrimination, which has become accentuated by the economic crisis and crude portrayals of femininity from the West.”

In my remarks, I intend to draw out some of the issues raised by these two speakers, and integrate them with other issues discussed during the conference, focusing on the following themes:

1. Terminology of “transition”
2. Differences and shared features of the social, political, and economic changes
3. Aspects of the transition
   - Legislative change
   - Labour market opportunities
   - Political representation
   - Changes in political discourse
4. Rights versus entitlements as a basis for women to achieve equal citizenship status in the context of the transition process.
Terminology of "Transition"

I wish to question the use of the term "transition," which is universally applied to the processes of economic, social, and political change occurring in Europe and Central Asia since the end of the Cold War in 1989. It seems to me that this is a term coined by Western analysts which contains undertones of a triumphant discourse, implying as it does that these processes are going from somewhere (bad, the state socialist past) to somewhere (good, the Western market democracy model). In this way, the term suggests not only that we already know the outcome of the enormous upheavals being lived through by the people of this region, which seems to imply hubris, but also that this outcome is (ideologically) coded as positive (Western democratic, market-based societies based on a neo-liberal model). A more accurate term, it seems to me, might be "transformation," which indicates the fundamental nature of the changes occurring, but does not imply a single, or known, outcome.

Differences and Shared Features of Social, Political, and Economic Changes

On the issue of difference, there has been an interesting shift since 1989. For those of us who have worked on the ECA region for many years, it was always difficult to get across a view of individual countries and cultures that was at odds with the dominant (ideological) discourse about the “Soviet Empire” (to quote Ronald Reagan), or a monolithic and homogenous, “Communist bloc.” It is paradoxical that it is only now, since the end of the Cold War, that the considerable differences between individual countries and subregions in terms of history, level of economic development, social conditions, cultural traditions, and religion have been registered.

I wish to argue here, however, that above and beyond these differences, there is a remarkable level of commonality, influenced both by the uniform model of emancipation imposed by the state socialist systems, and by the particular model of democracy and marketization that have followed them. Both systems are characterized by gendered discourses and practices, with effects in the transformation process that hinder, or at least constrain women’s ability to exercise the legal, political, economic, and social rights they have attained. In other words, there are processes at work within the transformation that constrain women’s ability to attain equal citizenship status, thus impeding the development of a society characterized by gender equality.

To understand why this is so, we need to look at some of the economic, social, and political indicators as well as changes in the political discourse and social climate. These are in turn influenced by factors such as organized religion or the reemergence of cultural traditions.

Aspects of Transition

I will address briefly the four elements outlined above:

One of the main features of legislative changes has been the reintroduction of private property. The process of privatization tends to disadvantage women. In terms of land ownership, the original owners were, in most of these countries, likely to be men. Second, in the move from state enterprises to private enterprise, it is the managers of the large state enterprises who
had access to capital, and above all to information and networks, often enabling them to move sideways into roles as the new entrepreneurs. Third, the low level of female representation amongst new entrepreneurs is influenced by the fact that the majority of women were employed in administrative, caring, and service sector professions and occupations. Rather than demonstrating women’s tendency to be “risk-shy” therefore, this shows that they were/are structurally more tied to the state sector.

Women continue to form the majority of the unemployed in all of the countries in the region, with the notable exceptions of Hungary and Slovenia. Zavadskaya pointed out that the large numbers of highly educated and well-trained women who become unemployed are often forced to take up jobs in the service sector that do not utilize their training or education. Thus, one of the costs of survival is a process of deskilling and of casualisation. Women also face greater difficulties in finding reemployment, often as a direct result of discriminatory hiring practices, as pointed out by earlier studies done or the ILO by Liba Paukert for Sonja Lokar at this conference.

Further, the assumption, based on received wisdom, is that the accompanying transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy with a greatly expanded and developed service sector would favor women’s employment. The reality turns out to be different. Both Zavadskaya’s paper and studies of the East German economy show that as the banking, insurance, and finance sectors become more centrally important in the context of a new market economy, women are being displaced by men, especially in positions of responsibility. The gender pay gap in this sector, according to Zavadskaya, can be as high as 50–60 percent.

Gender is still not an issue that has reached the agenda of most political parties in the region. Thus the dramatic drop in the levels of female political representation registered in the first and second democratic elections in the region has still not been addressed. There is much debate on the value of quota systems as an appropriate means of raising the level, especially given the legacy of “token” women representatives based on the quotas for particular parties and organizations operated by the discredited state socialist systems. Both Zavadskaya and Tabyshalieva were opposed to quotas or positive discrimination. Yet, although “Women of Russia” received 8 percent of the votes in the first election they contested as a political party, they did not get into the parliament in the second. And there are only 4–5 percent female representatives in the national legislature in Kyrgyzstan. Thus the achievement of a critical mass of female politicians, generally accepted as a precondition for implementing anti-discriminatory legislation and other measure to promote gender equality, is a long way off in most countries of the region. Many speakers felt that although women are very active at the level of civil society associations and NGOs, they are effectively excluded from becoming fully equal agents in the political reform and democratization process.

Changes in political discourse in the region have been influenced by a variety of factors, including organized religion and traditional cultural practices. Traditional, often patriarchal preconceptions of women’s primary role as mother abound. In this context, women’s reproductive rights are often curtailed, with male-dominated legislatures deciding for them when they should reproduce, which women should reproduce, and whose children they should have. Access to abortion and even to sex education and contraception, has in several countries been abolished or restricted. This type of reproductive control is particularly apparent in the context of ethnically-based nationalism, such as has emerged in the former Yugoslavia. In this framework, rape as a tool of war has been an extreme example of the way that conflicts are fought out
on the bodies of actual, rather than symbolic, women. Reproductive rights also include such issues as the availability of public and affordable childcare facilities, and parental rather than maternity leave. In many countries, high levels of unemployment, increasing poverty, and social dislocation, coupled with Western imports of pornography, have led to high levels of domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking in women, as reported by Larysa Kobelyanska and Stanislava Buchowska. All of these issues make clear that reproductive autonomy must be regarded as a prime indicator when measuring women’s citizenship rights and the level of gender equality in any society.

**Rights Versus Entitlements**

In conclusion, then, I would like to present briefly my concept of entitlements, rather than rights, as being a more appropriate tool for conceptualizing, and for realizing, women’s citizenship status. Women need the capacity to exercise the formal legal, social, and political rights they gained with the transformation process. There are problems that prevent attaining a society characterized by gender equity. Wanda Nowicka spoke of the lack of political will and appropriate government initiatives. Buchowska too spoke of the lack of genuine government-led initiatives for equality as a key problem. Katalin Koncz even spoke of the government as, in some cases, the biggest violator of women’s rights by not introducing affirmative action or equal opportunities policies.

Government legislation and policy alone can not bring about gender equality. However, within the context of a neo-liberal market-dominated model of development, the state sector shrinks in favor of the market, leaving much social provision to NGOs and civil society initiatives. This is inadequate. An example is childcare, which women need if they are to have equal access to the market as economic actors or the public sphere of national, mainstream politics. Social supports, and hence the state, remain crucial women’s citizenship rights.

Zavadskaya rightly noted that the principle of equal rights cannot ensure the implementation of equal opportunities—even less, I would add, the possibility of equality of outcomes. It is important to find modes of moving from equal rights to equal opportunities and even more important to try to ensure equality of outcomes. It is for this reason that I favor the use of the concept of entitlements, since this enables us to speak of the links between the state, the market, and individual households. It provides a way out of what I have called the “civil society trap.” This is a situation wherein women remain active at the local, grassroots, civil society or NGO level, often providing in an informal manner the social welfare that the state no longer offers. However, there is a gap between this undoubtedly crucial level of activity that may also be empowering for the women involved, and the level of government legislation, political discourse and political decision-making. The concept of entitlements suggests the possibility of making claims on the state, of facilitating better linkages between government and NGO or civil society organizations, and of introducing institutional mechanisms that could ensure gender equity in a transformation process with a society characterized by gender equality as its ultimate goal.
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Ludmila Zavadskaya is currently the Head of the Moscow Notaries Chamber. In one capacity or another, she has been working on behalf of women's rights in the Russian Federation since 1987. From 1996 to 1998, she served as the Deputy Minister of Justice. She is also a former member of the State Duma where she chaired the Sub-Committee for Human Rights and Federal Legislation. During this period of time, she participated in the political movement known as WOMEN of RUSSIA which helped a number of women get elected to the Duma. She is an active member of the Russian Union of Lawyers and sits on the Presidential Commission for the Protection of the Family, Motherhood and Childhood. She is the author of several books and articles on human rights and women's rights, including *Legislation Process: Citizenship and Power* (Moscow, 1996).
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