



# UNITED NATIONS IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC:

TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS ON GENDER EQUALITY INTO ACTIONS



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### United Nations Gender Theme Group

In 2004, the United Nations Country Team in Kyrgyzstan established a Gender Theme Group (UN GTG), aiming to meet the standards for gender equality and women's empowerment set out in the Beijing Platform for Actions (BPFA), the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The UN GTG, consisting of the Gender Focal Points of nine UN Organizations (ILO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, OHCHR and WHO), serves as an instrument for member organizations to jointly coordinate, monitor and evaluate progress on the implementation of the GTG Work Plan, and strengthen the visibility of gender-quality issues within the overall UN agenda at the country level.

For more information about UN GTG, please refer to [www.un.org.kg](http://www.un.org.kg)

Cover photo courtesy of International Labor Organization

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
AWLI	Alliance of Women Legislative Initiatives
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Actions
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DOTS	Directly Observed Treatment, Short-Course (strategy to combat Tuberculosis)
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EFA-FTI	Education for All – Fast Track Initiative
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple indicator cluster surveys
NAR	Net attendance rate
NER	Net enrollment rate
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RC	Resident Coordinator
STI	Sexual Transmitted Infections
TB	Tuberculosis
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN GTG	United Nations Gender Them Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization

### *Administrative divisions in the Kyrgyz Republic*

Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven **oblasts** (provinces). Each oblast is further divided into **rayons** (districts), administered by government-appointed officials. Rural **aiyl okmotus** (village administrations), consisting of up to twenty small settlements, have their own elected mayors and councils.





## WE SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT IN TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS ON GENDER EQUALITY INTO ACTIONS AND RESULTS

The past decade has seen great advances in terms of commitments of the Kyrgyz Republic to gender equality and women's rights. The country has joined the Beijing Platform for Actions, ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and signed the Millennium Declaration. The international standards and norms have been agreed upon by the government. In the country, the Government has adopted strategies, such as the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, and passed laws, including the Law on the Social and Legal Protection from Domestic Violence and the Law on State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women. While these commitments constitute important milestones for the country they are still to be matched by real results.

We are halfway towards the year 2015, the date set by the international community as the target for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality is a crucial determining factor

for each of them. Yet, in Kyrgyzstan, progress has been slow in gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus, maternal mortality rate – 62.5 per 100,000 live births, the highest in CIS – is alarming.<sup>1</sup> Violence against women, including bride kidnapping, polygamy, early marriages and domestic violence, remains pervasive. There is an increase in the number of registered HIV cases among women: from 9.5 percent in 2001 to 31.7 percent in 2008. There are still unresolved problems with women's lower pensions, unemployment and their concentration in informal sectors of the economy with low earnings and no social security.

To translate the commitments into actions, United Nations human rights instruments could be used as an effective way to achieve gender equality and empower women. There are positive examples in Kyrgyzstan to document this. Citing the country's commitments under the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, the Kyrgyz government introduced gender quotas in parliamentary elections. The end result: from no women in Parliament in 2000 to 27 percent women MPs in 2007 elections, the highest women's representation in Kyrgyzstan's history and in Central Asia.

The United Nations Agencies have been present in Kyrgyzstan for more than 16 years. Over these years, we have worked in a dedicated manner with the Government, Parliament, media, academia and women's organizations in building capacities, sharing knowledge and supporting priorities of gender equality and women's rights.

The mandate of each individual organization of the United Nations System in Kyrgyzstan promotes gender equality in a specific area. In addition, bringing their comparative advantages in gender equality and women's human rights, UN organizations join their efforts through a Gender Theme Group to provide coordinated support to the Government and gender equality advocates for action on gender equality. The United Nations stands squarely for gender equality and women's rights. This publication explains the contributions, which the United Nations Agencies, individually or through collective efforts, are making to help the Government of Kyrgyzstan in fulfilling its commitments to achieve gender equality.

**Neal Walker**  
**Resident Coordinator**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neal Walker', written in a cursive style.

**United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic**

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Republican Medical Information Centre, 2007.



# THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN UN

The United Nations system has made multiple commitments to the advancement of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality. The UN Charter (1947) grounds all system-wide activity unambiguously on the principle of equality between the sexes, and other instruments elaborate this core principle in the specific areas of human rights, including humanitarian concerns, development and peace and security. This represents a global consensus on the centrality of women's advancement to the attainment of human development goals, and provides a comprehensive mandate for UN action.

Globally, all organizations of the UN system share responsibility for supporting countries to accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in line with international standards and national priorities. Doing so is central to: meeting the commitments of the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed goals; implementation of international standards and agreements including the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820, and the outcome document of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); and the pursuit of human rights and human development as a whole.

In Kyrgyzstan, the United Nations System notes with satisfaction that gender equality constitutes an important part of national legislation and the Country Development Strategy. Studies in many countries provide clear evidence that effective action on gender equality leads to an improvement in a number of areas that are also national priorities, as defined in the national development strategies, including economic growth, poverty reduction and decrease of child and maternal mortality rate.

Within this context, The UN promotes gender equality and the realization of human rights in all its activities, both collectively as a UN Team and through the focused work of individual agencies. The United Nations in Kyrgyzstan implements its country-based activities based on two complementary approaches for achieving gender equality: **gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment**.

Gender Mainstreaming was clearly established as the global strategy for promoting gender equality through the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

Since the founders of the United Nations noted their faith in 'the equal rights of men and women' on the first page of the UN Charter 60 years ago, studies have shown that 'there is no tool for development more effective than the **EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**'.

*Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UN Commission on the Status of Women meeting to review progress in the 10 years since the Platform of Action of the IV World Conference on Women (Beijing+10), New York, 28 February 2005*

Later, the strategy of mainstreaming was defined in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2, as '...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels'. To that end, the UN in Kyrgyzstan actively undertakes to promote the mainstreaming of gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of politics and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, and further increase the capacity of the UN in the area of gender equality.

Recognizing that in spite of the progress made in achieving greater gender equality, women continue to be among the poorest and most marginalised segments of the population the gender mainstreaming as the key strategy for achieving gender equality<sup>2</sup> is applied by the UN Agencies in conjunction with the **empowerment of women** approach.<sup>3</sup> Targeted actions aimed at empowering women and righting gender inequalities in the social and economic spheres, as well as in terms of civil and political rights, must be taken alongside efforts to engender the development process.

2 The United Nations System – Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: focusing on results and impact, CEB/2006/2, p.2.; ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 'Mainstreaming gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations System', 1997/2; The Secretary General's Communication on Gender Mainstreaming, 13 October 1997; The Outcome Document from General Assembly, 10 June 2000.

3 'Guidelines on Women's Empowerment for the UN RC System', UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Women's empowerment has five components: 1) women's sense of self-worth; 2) their right to have and to determine choices; 3) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; 4) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; 5) and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.



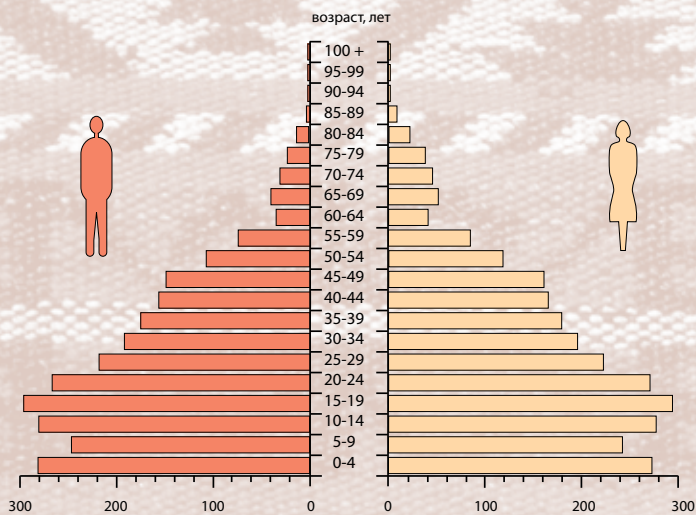
# I. GENDER EQUALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN: BASIC FACTS AND FIGURES

THIS SECTION PROVIDES FIGURES AND DATA FOR THE KEY GENDER DISPARITIES AND PROBLEMS IN KYRGYZSTAN, AS PER BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTIONS, CONVENTION ON ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON GENDER DEVELOPMENT 2007 – 2010.



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

# GENDER ANALYSIS OF POPULATION OF KYRGYZSTAN



**Diagram 1: Age and Gender Structure of Population as of 1 January 2008<sup>4</sup>**

The population of Kyrgyzstan is 5,224,000, of which 2,642,000 are women and 2,582,000 are men (data as of 1 January 2008).<sup>5</sup> There are more women in urban areas (52 percent), but there are more men in rural areas (50.3 percent).

Life expectancy is a general indicator of population health. In 2007, life expectancy at birth for boys and girls was 63.7 years and 72.3 years, respectively. After retirement, women tend to live another 23 years more, but men only 15. The difference in life expectancy relates to differences in mortality rates: male mortality is 1.5-1.6 times as much higher than women.<sup>6</sup>

The population of Kyrgyzstan is young. Data from early 2007 indicate that 32.8 percent of the population are children and adolescents, 59 percent are working age and 8.2 percent are over the working age. Since 2001, the number of women aged 20-29 has increased. As a result, the birth rate has also increased. Around 60 percent of births every year are

from women in their twenties. In addition, the total fertility rate (the number of children born by one woman throughout her life time) has increased from 2.5 children in 2003 to 2.8 children in 2007.<sup>7</sup>

## Number of births

(source: Women and Men in KR, NSC 2008 p.48)

Years	Number of births			Number of births per 1000 population		
	Total population	Urban population	Rural	Total population	Urban population	Rural population
2003	105490	31866	73624	20.9	17.8	22.6
2004	109939	37381	72558	21.6	20.7	22.1
2005	109839	35600	74239	21.4	19.4	22.4
2006	120737	39414	81323	23.3	21.4	24.3
2007	123251	41402	81849	23.5	22.4	24.2

In 2007, 123,300 children were born, which is 2,600 more than were born in 2006. The total birth rate (number of births per 1000 population) was 23.5. This indicator is higher in rural areas (24.2 ppm) than in urban areas (22.4 ppm) as two thirds of the republic's population live in rural areas. In these areas, the tradition of big families remains strong (see table above).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 'Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic', National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



# INFANT AND CHILD MORTALITY



Diseases and the state of health during the post-natal period are the main reasons for child mortality under five years of age as well as infant mortality. For example, in 2007, of the children that died between 0-4 years old, 52.4 percent died because of these reasons. Other deaths were due to respiratory diseases (19.5 percent); congenital anomalies (malformation), deformations and chromosome damages (10.7 percent); infections and parasitic diseases (7.7 percent); and traumas, poisoning and other external reasons (4.5 percent).<sup>9</sup>

An analysis of infant mortality cases in Kyrgyzstan shows that majority of neonatal deaths took place within first seven days of life, while a large proportion of these happened within first 24 hours. The unsatisfactory state of maternal health is a major factor contributing to the high level of infant mortality.

**Diagram 2: Infant Mortality Rate (number of deaths under 1 year of age per 1,000 live births) and Child Mortality Rate (number of deaths under 5 years of age per 1,000 live births)**

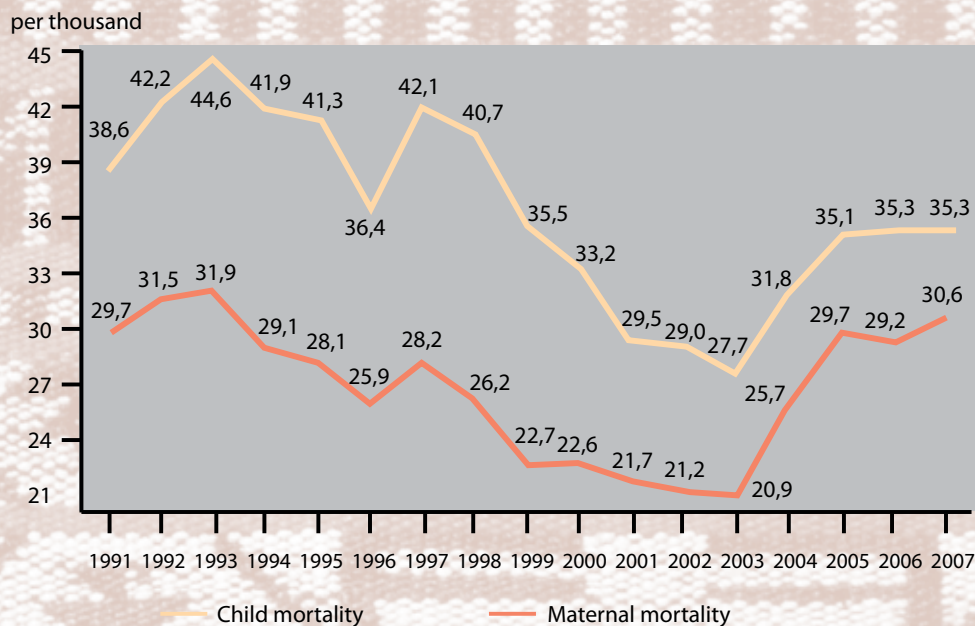


Photo courtesy of OHCHR OSCE

<sup>9</sup> 'Women and Men in the Kyrgyz Republic', National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2008.



# MATERNAL MORTALITY



Photo courtesy of UNDP

indicates that the mortality rate is higher at the hospital level, due to the lack of professional and well-trained medical personnel, who are unable to provide adequate and timely support. In addition, the infrastructure and equipment of medical facilities is not always adequate and cannot provide proper medical support. If trained medical staff, necessary supplies and infrastructure are in place, the majority of maternal deaths could be prevented.

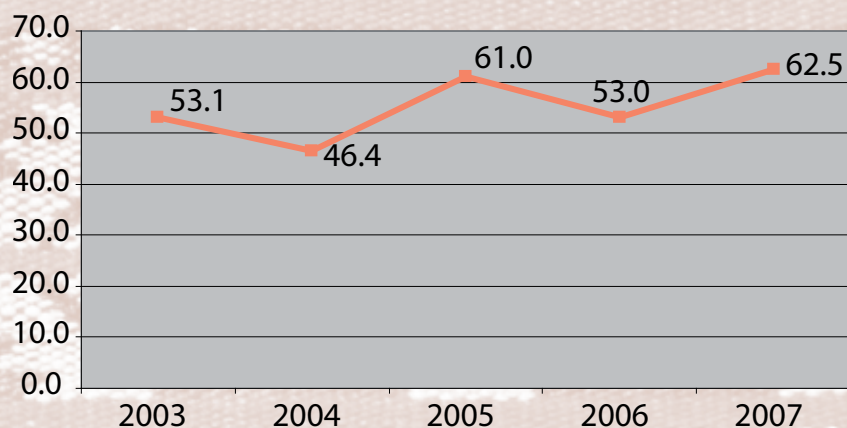
Despite a relatively high level of commitment to and investment in improving maternal health in the country the maternal mortality remains very high. In 2007, this was 62.5 per 100,000 live births, while in 2006 – 53.0 per 100,000 live births. As a means of comparison, the average maternal mortality rate of the 12 countries of Commonwealth of Independent States in 2006 was 27.2 per 100,000 live births<sup>10</sup>. Obstetrics bleeding is estimated to account for 52.2 percent of death, hypertensive abnormalities during pregnancy (22.4 percent), septic complications (10.4 percent) and extra-genital conditions, for both pregnant and non-pregnant women (14.9 percent).

The number of women and pregnant women suffering from anaemia remains high due to poor nutrition, iron and vitamin deficiency.

A high rate of complications during pregnancy is caused by a lack of quality antenatal care and referral system, in particular in rural area. This is aggravated by a poor system of emergency obstetric care, insufficient maternal health care infrastructure and a shortage in qualified staff within regions of the country.

Often, because of delayed or poor quality of obstetric care, an overwhelming number of pregnant/parturient women die before reaching oblast obstetric facilities of perinatal centres. According to the Ministry of Health's 2007 review of maternal mortality causes, the increasing mortality rate is due to the low quality prenatal medical care, as well as the lack of emergency obstetric care. The analysis also

**Diagram 3: Number of deaths due to complications during pregnancy, delivery and postpartum period per 100,000 live births**





# TUBERCULOSIS



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

Diagram 6: TB notification rate in the Kyrgyz Republic including the penitentiary system

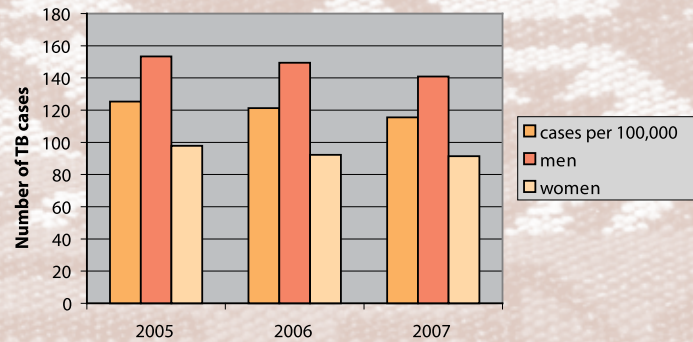


Diagram 4: TB case notification rate (a number of TB cases per 100,000 population)

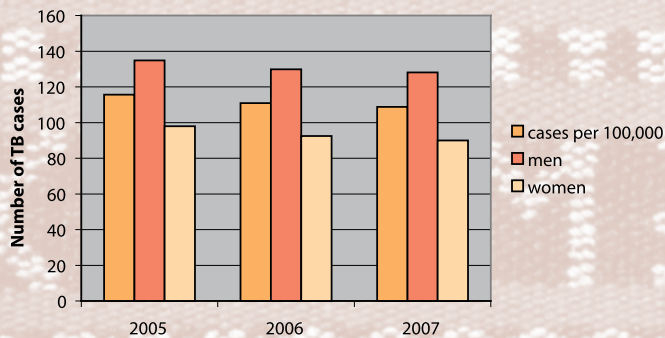


Diagram 7: TB mortality rate in the Kyrgyz Republic including the penitentiary system

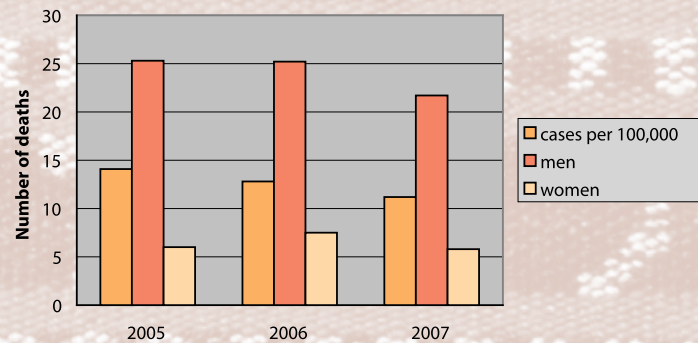
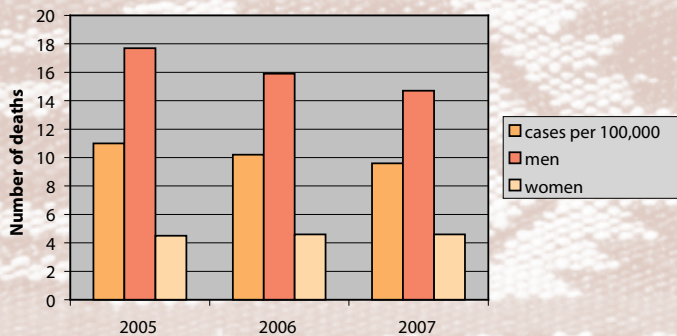


Diagram 5: TB mortality rate in the Kyrgyz Republic



Source: Republican Medical Information Center

The transition period and the related economic and social hardships led to an increase of tuberculosis (TB) morbidity rate. Over the last few years, thanks to international donors, the country has managed stabilizing the situation and slightly reduced the TB case notification rate.

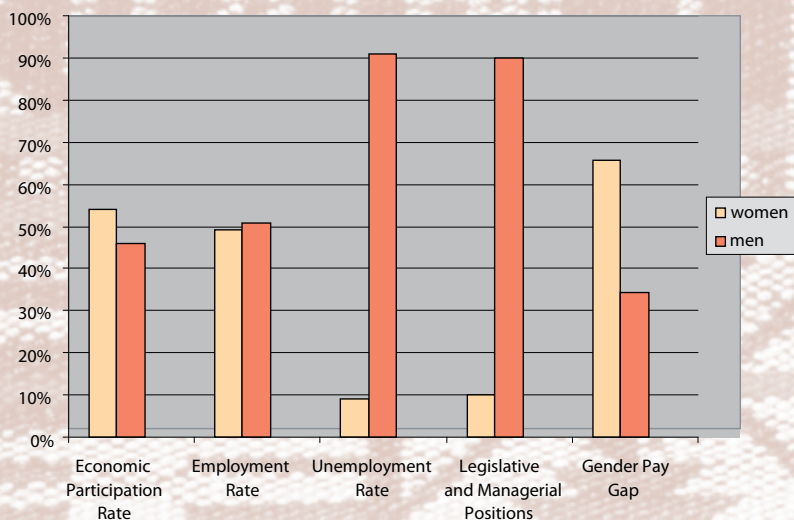


# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



Photo courtesy of OHCHR OSCE

**Diagram 8: Men and Women in Labor Market**



Eight key indicators<sup>11</sup> examine and demonstrate women's relative status in the labor market: 1) labor force participation rate, 2) employment rate, 3) unemployment rate, 3) female share in non-agricultural; 4) total paid employment, 5) percentage distribution of women workers by status (unpaid, self-employed and employee), 6) female shares in legislative, 7) female shares managerial positions, 8) gender pay gap (wages/earnings). According to the available national statistics<sup>12</sup>, female labor force participation rate is 54.2 percent, with employment rate of 49.3 percent, (meaning that only one woman out of two is employed). While the total unemployment in the country is 8 percent, unemployment among women constitutes 9.1 percent (7.4 percent among men). It should be mentioned that though women's share in managerial positions has increased during the past few years, they still represent a distinct minority (only 9.9 percent). The average wage of women is significantly lower than men's, and the gender pay gap is increasing. In 2005, women earned only 65.8 percent of men's salaries. Though the economic activity of women in Kyrgyzstan remains relatively high, as elsewhere, women face a whole range of problems in the labor market. Industrial and occupation segregation is increasing. Women are concentrated in lower earning and less prestige sectors. They occupy three quarters of the jobs in education, health care, and social services, in the hotel and catering industry, retail trade and processing industry and 85 percent in textile production. In addition, women's share in fast-developing and highly paid sectors is decreasing, and more women than men stay jobless for a long period. As economic restructuring in the country continues and the labor market becomes more competitive, employers in some sectors (e.g. energy, construction and tourism), tend to hire male employees. This is often rooted in the way the work itself is organized or in the challenges women face trying to reconcile professional activities and family responsibilities, especially in the context of increasing pressures and insecurities in today's global economy.



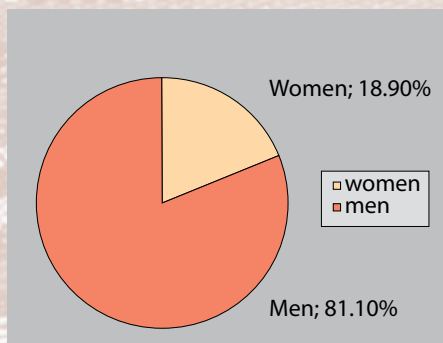
# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN



Photo courtesy of ILO

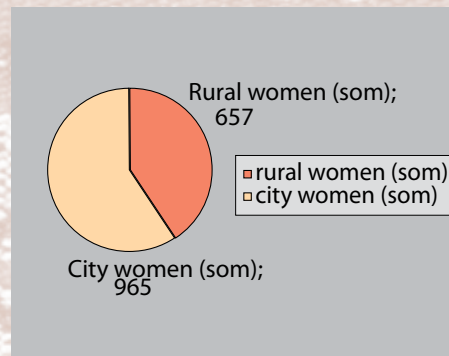
In the course of agricultural reform, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has focused on poverty reduction and providing sustainable sources of income in rural areas. Despite these efforts, the rural population, especially women, still faces severe poverty and lack both economic and social security. The following diagrams illustrate these trends:

**Diagram 9: Women among employees of small enterprises in rural areas**



Women make up 18.9 percent of employees of small enterprises in the rural areas as opposed to men who make up 81.1 percent.<sup>13</sup>

**Diagram 10: Monthly salary of women in agriculture**



The average monthly salary of women in agriculture is one of the lowest at 657 som (less than \$20) compared to the average woman's salary, which is 965 som.<sup>14</sup>

In the absence of alternative employment, the main sources of family income are agriculture and cattle breeding. This makes agricultural products and assets the most important

resources for family welfare, yet women have less access to them than men.

<sup>13</sup> The Rights of Women for Land: Questions and Answers, Bishkek 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Men & Women of the Kyrgyz Republic 2007, National Statistical Committee, Bishkek, 2008.

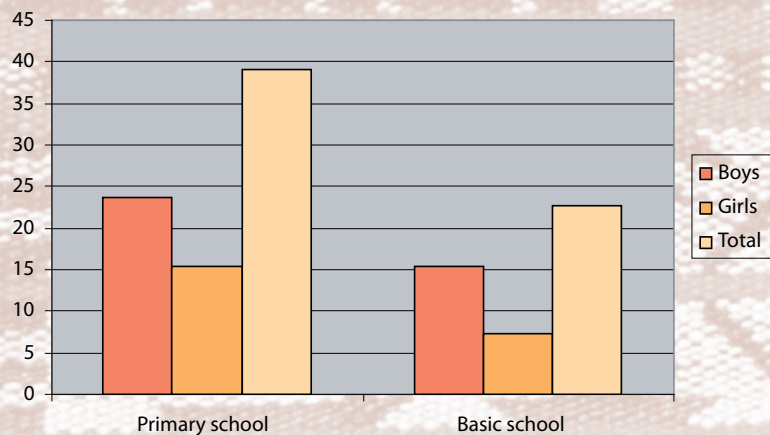


# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

**Diagram 11: Number of children not covered by school education and dropouts, disaggregated by gender** (per thousand people; extrapolation of MICS data<sup>15</sup>)



According to the 'Drop Out Study' (2008)<sup>16</sup>, the key reason for dropping out of school is poverty in the family. Out of the children interviewed, 27 percent indicated a 'lack of clothes, shoes and textbooks' as the main reason for non-attendance and 29 percent of children help their families with seasonal agricultural work to earn money. The difference in dropout and non-attendance rates for boys and girls is explained by the boys and families' belief that boys' involvement in seasonal agricultural work and contribution to family income is more important than going to school.

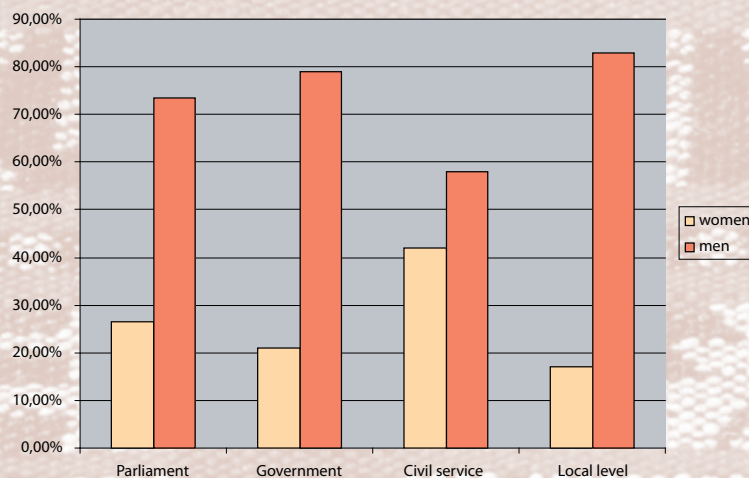


# POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT



Photo courtesy of OHCHR OSCE

**Diagram 12: Women and Men in Decision Making Positions in 2008**



## National Level

Kyrgyzstan has experienced great changes in the representation of women in the national-level decision-making process. In 2005, there were no women in Parliament and only one woman in a high government position. In 2008, Kyrgyzstan had the highest number of women in Parliament (26.6 percent) and Government (21 percent) out of all of Central Asia.

## Local Level

Women's representation in local parliaments (*kenesh*) is still insufficient. In October 2008, preliminary data indicated that out of 7,647 elected deputies, 1,311 were women (17.1 percent). This is a decrease from 2004, when women accounted for 19 percent of elected officials in local parliaments. There are no female oblast governors.

## Civil Service

Although 45 percent of all civil servants are women, only 17 percent of women occupy top administrative positions. Out of 28 state secretaries in agencies and ministries, there are only two women – the state secretaries for the Ministry of Justice and the State Agency on Tourism and Sport.



## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

### **Polygamy**

According to the UNICEF survey data<sup>21</sup>, around 1.7 percent of respondents of fertile age (15-49) stated that they were in a polygamous marriage or union.

It must be noted that it is difficult to obtain clear and precise data on the forms and incidences of violence against women in Kyrgyzstan. The official figures represent the tip of the problem as most of victims do not go to the police. Data is at best an indication, but not reliable, as the police do not classify cases of domestic violence as a crime.

In Kyrgyzstan gender-based violence remains one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations. The most widely spread forms of gender-based violence are domestic violence, bride kidnapping, forced and early marriages, and polygamy.

### **Domestic violence**

Every year, the Ministry of Internal Affairs registers 8,000 to 10,000 emergency calls regarding family crises.<sup>17</sup> In addition, every month 40 to 50 victims of domestic violence are hospitalized in the Bishkek City Hospital.<sup>18</sup>

### **Bride kidnapping**

The number of criminal cases initiated under Article 155 (abduction) of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic grew to 27 in 2005 from 15 in 2002.<sup>19</sup> While this represents nearly a doubling, the number of cases is extremely low compared to the number of kidnappings that actually take place. According to Human Rights Watch<sup>20</sup>, the proportion of marriages concluded because of bride kidnapping varies from 30 to 80 percent depending on the region of the country.

17 Fact sheet of the Committee on Youth, Gender Politics, Physical Education and Sport of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic 'On the implementation of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic' and 'On Social-Legal Protection from Domestic Violence', Bishkek, 17 June 2008.

18 Ibid.

19 Government of Kyrgyzstan, Third Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/C/KGZ/3, 2 March 2007, paragraph 99. The report does not say how many perpetrators were found guilty.

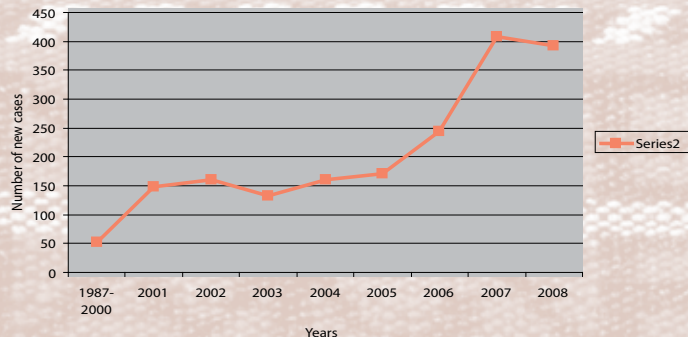
20 'Reconciled to Violence: state failure to stop domestic abuse and abduction of women in Kyrgyzstan', Human Rights Watch, September 2006.

21 Monitoring the situation of children and women, 2006, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

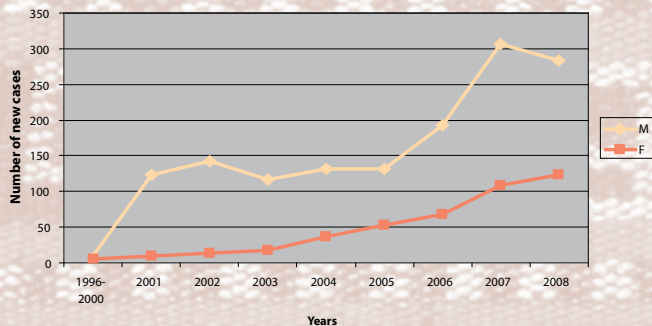


# GENDER ASPECTS OF HIV/AIDS

**Diagram 13: Dynamics of HIV cases in the Kyrgyz Republic**



**Diagram 14: Dynamics of HIV cases by gender**



According to official statistics, HIV prevalence in Kyrgyzstan is still low. As of 1 October 2008, 1,871 HIV cases of injecting drug users have been registered which accounts for over 70 percent of all cases.<sup>22</sup> During 2008, 392 new HIV cases were registered.<sup>23</sup>

There is an increase in the number of registered HIV cases among women. Cases of women living with HIV has grown from 9.5 percent in 2001 to 31.7 percent in 2008.<sup>24</sup>



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Republican AIDS Centre, Ministry of Health, Bishkek, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## II. HOW DOES UN IN KYRGYZSTAN ADDRESS THE GENDER INEQUALITIES AND VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

THIS SECTION PROVIDES A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE KEY GENDER EQUALITY PROBLEMS AND THEIR ROOT CAUSES, AS WELL AS EXAMPLES OF THE CONCRETE ACTIONS BY THE UNITED NATIONS, UNDERTAKEN BOTH COLLECTIVELY AS A UN TEAM AND THROUGH THE FOCUSED WORK OF INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES.



Photo courtesy of UNICEF



# HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

## International Human Rights Standards

Since the moment of its independence, Kyrgyzstan has ratified over 50 UN principal conventions and agreements related to human rights including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol to this. The republic has also adopted conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) regulating international standards and norms in social and labour areas, which further promotes gender equality.

## Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

In 1997, Kyrgyzstan adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thus affirming the inadmissibility of discrimination based on sex and committing itself to ensure the right of equality for men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. Since then, the Government prepared and submitted the Initial Report (1998), Second Periodic Report (2004), and the Third Periodic Report (2008). Traditionally, Kyrgyz civil society organizations have actively participated in reporting on implementation of CEDAW and promoting the implementation of the Committee's Concluding Comments to government.

**UN Agencies Gender Theme Group (GTG)** strives to raise awareness among both state authorities' representatives in charge for Convention implementation and population groups towards those the Convention action is directed.

GTG cooperates with civil society organizations to conduct meetings with different groups in each province in order to inform and familiarize them with the Convention and Optional Protocol.

In 2008, an informational booklet was published in Kyrgyz and Russian languages to clarify the meaning of every clause in the Convention, and to illustrate types of discrimination which Kyrgyz women face with specific cases provided by the 'Crisis Centres Association'.

## United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

In 2007, UNIFEM arranged a visit by Ms. Pramila Patten, member of the UN Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to Kyrgyzstan. This visit, which was organized upon the request of women's organizations, was politically important and timely as the Government of Kyrgyzstan had submitted the Third Periodic on implementation of CEDAW in 2006 and was preparing for its official presentation at the 42nd session of the CEDAW Committee.

During the visit, Ms. Patten was able to meet with high-ranking government officials in the Presidential Administration, Government and Supreme Court, as well as NGOs involved in the development of the Shadow Reports. During the meetings Ms. Patten underlined the importance of fulfilling Kyrgyzstan's obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and stressed the need for more political will, involvement of high-level officials in monitoring the implementation of the Convention, development of the Report and its presentation during the Committee's sessions.

A roundtable on CEDAW Reporting and Implementation was another important part of Ms. Patten's visit. It was organized to increase awareness and competence of mid-level government officials and civil society representatives on the mechanisms of reporting, the essence of state obligations, the role of NGOs in reporting and the importance of the concluding comments and recommendations for the Government.

The expertise of the CEDAW Committee's Members was an important contribution to a number of efforts made mainly by non-government and international organizations. According to the civil servants present, the meeting between high-ranking officials and CEDAW members made them realize the importance of the country's obligations to CEDAW and prompted them to enhance implementation of the Convention.

In 2009 UNIFEM leads the process of celebration of 30th anniversary of CEDAW by organizing the groups of civil society organizations, women's networks, government, private companies at national, regional and global level for raising awareness about the Convention and how it can be used to press for change and to challenge justice.

Since the country ratified the Convention, CSOs twice submitted the Alternative/Shadow Reports to the Committee on Discrimination against Women, organized nationwide awareness campaigns and capacity development activities.

Kyrgyzstan has made some progress in institutionalizing its obligations outlined in the Convention, such as a quota which states that political parties must have at least 30 percent female members during parliamentary elections (which has led to the highest women's representation in Central Asia). Overall, however, action on CEDAW implementation is still low. One key problem is low awareness by government officials, judiciary, members of parliaments and local self-governments about the CEDAW processes. Other problems include inadequately coordinated efforts from various branches of power, as well as of a lack of financial and human resources for effective implementation and reporting on the Convention and the reports of the Committees' Concluding Comments.

A lack of awareness about the Convention, and about specific rights secured by it, is especially true for regions of the republic where state and civil society representatives have limited access to information compared to their colleagues in the capital.

### **International Labour Standards**

Kyrgyzstan has ratified 53 Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) regulating international standards and norms in the socio-labor sphere, including eight fundamental conventions on:

- Forced Labor, No. 29 (1930);
- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, No. 87 (1948);
- Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining, No. 98 (1949);
- Equal Remuneration, No. 100 (1951);
- Abolition of Forced Labor, No. 105 (1957);
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), No. 111 (1958);
- Minimum Age, No. 138 (1973);
- Worst Forms of Child Labor, No. 182 (1999).

All ILO standards and norms – including the above conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan – equally concern both men and women. Meanwhile, some of the standards are directly related to ensuring gender equality on the labor market. Kyrgyzstan has ratified three basic 'gender-related' ILO conventions: Equal Remuneration, No. 100; Maternity Protection, No. 103; and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), No. 111. Another two conventions – Workers with Family Responsibilities, No. 156 and Maternity Protection (revised), No. 183 – have great importance for ensuring equality of opportunities of women and men on the labour market, but have not yet been ratified by Kyrgyzstan.



## International Labour Organization (ILO)

In the framework of the Decent Work Country Programme for 2006-2009, signed by the ILO and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the ILO provides technical assistance to the Government, trade unions' and employers' organizations, in order to implement the relevant provisions of the ratified conventions. The analysis of the system of labour administration was carried out and recommendations of its improvement were developed and national experts were trained on drafting reports on the performance of ratified conventions.

As for the ILO basic gender equality conventions, the ILO/Netherlands Project 'Boosting youth employment using an integrated approach to decent work' is implementing information and awareness-raising activities to promote the ILO Conventions No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities and No. 183 on Maternity Protection (revised). An analysis of the national legislation and existing policies and practices has been carried out to examine to what extent ensuring maternity protection, family needs, right and opportunities of workers with family responsibility, both men and women, are reflected in the relevant legislative acts of the Kyrgyz Republic. On the whole, the analysis demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan has made a number of positive steps to improve legislation for gender equality and protect the interests of workers with family responsibilities.

Law enforcement, however, should be complemented by the additional efforts from the government, employers and trade unions to take into account the interests of workers with family responsibilities. The ILO will assist the national constituents to be familiarized with best practices from other countries on how best to address 'work-family' conflict and develop measures for reconciling work and family.

## Rights of Asylum Seeking, Refugee and Stateless Women

During participatory assessments in 2008, asylum-seeking and refugee women raised documentation problems, employment, medical assistance and housing as their main concerns.

Refugee women have limited access to employment due to a language barrier, medical assistance is expensive and does not meet refugee's expectations and housing remains problematic due to increasing rent prices.

Stateless women are mainly concerned with their lack of documentation which limits their enjoyment of property rights, freedom of movement, access to social welfare, medical services, employment, and civil registration. One notable stateless population is the so-called 'trans-border brides' – women who moved to Kyrgyzstan following marriage to Kyrgyz citizens and then lost their previous citizenship. At the same time, they are not yet citizens of Kyrgyzstan and experience difficulties in applying for naturalization in view of absence of required documentation and residence registration (propiska).



Photo courtesy of UNHCR

A survey conducted for UNHCR in the autumn of 2008 identified 2,018 such women in Batken, Jalalabat and Osh provinces alone. UNHCR supports the Citizenship Commission under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Department of Passport and Visa Control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and several local NGOs in processing applications for naturalization of stateless persons. All obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child notwithstanding, at present, children born to foreigners in the Kyrgyz Republic do not receive birth certificates. Civil registrars believe that a birth certificate is a document certifying citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic and, therefore, can not be issued to children born to aliens. Without birth certificates, children may attend primary school, but can not attend secondary and higher schools or obtain passport. The family unity of Kyrgyz women married to citizens of Syria, Iran, Iraq and some other foreign countries is threatened, as authorities do not provide their foreign husbands with either refugee status or residence permit. At the same time, these families can not move to the countries of origin of the husbands because their marriage to a Kyrgyz citizen would threaten them, their spouses or children with persecution there. Such foreign citizens remain in Kyrgyzstan illegally and without rights or access to work, medical or social services, vulnerable to harassment and extortion. The main governmental body responsible for refugee issues in the country is the State Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic for Migration and Employment. Upon agreement with UNHCR, NGO 'Sezim' provides assistance to refugee women with specific needs. UNHCR also supports the NGO 'Dustie' that was established by Afghan, Chechen and Tajik refugee women.

UNHCR protects the rights of asylum seeking refugees as well as stateless women. The Representation of UNHCR in Bishkek and its Field office in Osh assist the Kyrgyz Republic to implement its international obligations in this respect.

At the beginning of 2009, 20,961 persons of concern to UNHCR resided in Kyrgyzstan including 375 refugees, 643 asylum-seekers and 19,943 stateless persons. Of this number, women comprise 53.4 percent of the refugee population, 40 percent of asylum seekers and 52 percent of stateless persons.



## MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY



Photo courtesy of UNFPA

Maternal and infant mortality rates in the country remain at a high level, the result of a number of serious medical and non-medical issues.

The main **non-medical reasons** of maternal and infant mortality are the poor economic and social status of many of the country's population. A low awareness of maternal health and services along with gender inequality, mass domestic migration are also factors, which limit access to maternal health care.

One of the main **medical reasons** include weakness of health system. This includes poor infrastructure of maternity/obstetric facilities, lack of equipment, an outflow of highly qualified staff from the country, and a lack of quality medicines. The poor public health system cannot provide for adequate prenatal, obstetric, postnatal and resuscitative care. Further, many women (about 60 percent) suffer from anaemia due to poor nutrition.

The Government has identified and strategized a number of key areas of concern, including the level of skills, motivation, and distribution of service providers; the poor condition of many health centers and the barriers to care which include awareness, cost, inadequate referral systems, and physical access to services and supplies.

### **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) works for:**

- **reducing maternal mortality and improving the quality of reproductive health services.**

UNFPA supports the Government in implementing the national policy to reduce maternal mortality, improving access to reproductive health services and information and community mobilization on sexual reproductive health. It provides free means of contraception control, medical equipment and nationwide training for medical personnel in current reproductive health issues, preventative measures and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. In its reproductive health activities, UNFPA aspires to ensure safe motherhood and emergency obstetric care for all women by the introduction of low-cost and high-impact health interventions throughout the country. UNFPA provides technical support in improvement of health education on reproductive health and family planning through training provision and development of clinical protocols and guidelines based on medical evidence.

- **ensuring a supply of reproductive health commodities.**

Reproductive health commodity security is recognized by the Government and introduced in the Government planning processes. To sustain current levels of access to reproductive health services and supplies directly linked to maternal mortality, the Government has prioritized funding for the inclusion of contraceptives and other required reproductive health supplies to meet at least 20 percent of the need, especially for poor and vulnerable women. With UNFPA technical and financial support, a software system has been introduced for monitoring and reporting contraceptive distribution and utilization.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

#### **Maternal mortality**

Since 2000, the WHO has been implementing Making Pregnancy Safer initiative, providing trainings on effective perinatal care technologies for medical specialists in the country. Since 2006, the WHO has been implementing “Beyond the Numbers” initiative to improve quality of health services provided to pregnant women and newborns.

#### **Child mortality**

Since 2000, the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) program has been implemented in the country. IMCI includes prevention and treatment measures aimed at improving quality of care provided to children under 5 in primary healthcare facilities and hospitals. The keystone of the program is an integrated management of childhood illnesses, with a special emphasis on the most prevalent illnesses of children that are main causes of child mortality in the world.

In 2004, with the WHO's assistance and recommendations, the country adopted an international live birth definitions criteria. This led to an increase of infant and child mortality rates, reflecting the actual state of the situation in the country.



# TUBERCULOSIS

The unstable economic situation in the country and poor living conditions has contributed to an increase in morbidity rates of various diseases, including TB. TB morbidity rate remains at a high level. Since 2003, however, the morbidity rate dynamics has been slowly decreasing. In 1996, Kyrgyzstan introduced the DOTS strategy (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-Course – a strategy to control Tuberculosis). This involves treatment under direct observation with short-term chemotherapy, a worldwide recognized strategy to combat TB which became a basis of the ‘Stop Tuberculosis’ strategy in 2006.

## World Health Organization

Since 1996, WHO has been providing technical assistance to the country in implementation of DOTS strategy, and since 2006 the ‘Stop Tuberculosis’ strategy. This assistance entails training of national health professionals on different aspects of TB control and evaluation of the ‘Stop Tuberculosis’ strategy’s implementation in the country.

Gender-related analysis of morbidity statistics demonstrates that the number of men with TB exceeds number of women. Possible reasons of such disproportion is the fact that men more often than women are prone to risk-related behavior such as smoking and alcohol and drug consumption that significantly reduces the body’s resistance to this infection.



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

# ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

## Economic Participation and Employment Opportunities

In Kyrgyzstan, as in many CIS countries, low employment and income opportunities, structural mismatches between supply and demand are prevailing characteristics of the labour market. More and more, women and men are moving between jobs in various sectors or regions, and the number of women migrating is growing. National government and social partners should be assisted to address the mismatch in the labour market between supply and demand for particular skills, including through vocational training and retraining, and providing entrepreneurial education and training for business start-up and self-employment.

Special attention needs to be paid to youth employment and empowerment, young people (especially young women) are among the hardest hit in terms of their labour market position. They usually have less access to decent employment opportunities and working conditions, they are paid less, they are the last to be recruited and among the first to be fired, and they experience problems with reconciling work and family responsibilities.

### International Labour Organization (ILO)

One of the key elements of the ILO/Netherlands project '**Boosting youth employment using an integrated approach to decent work, 2007-2010**' is gender mainstreaming. The project is designed to create conditions for equal access of young men and women to employment, self-employment and skills development through vocational education and training. Training provides entrepreneurial skills to start a business and introduces young people to the World of Work issues – such as decent working conditions, safety and health, HIV/AIDS prevention at the workplace, career guidance, gender equality, reconciliation of work and family – to better prepare them for the start of their careers.

These objectives are addressed by increasing the capacities of Government, employers and trade unions as well as other partner organizations dealing with youth employment. In addition, it promotes and applies gender mainstreaming and integrates specific gender needs of young men and women. While implementing the project's gender component, the following key outcomes have been achieved:

- gender analysis of the Kyrgyz labour market conducted and recommendations made for mainstreaming gender issues in the process of realization of the National Employment Programme;
- gender aspects of youth employment examined; support provided to organizing Parliamentary hearings on the issue, in cooperation with the Committee on Youth and Gender Policies, Physical Education and Sport;
- capacities increased of partner institutions on integrating gender issues in employment and labour market policies, including those targeting youth, by organizing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing workshops;
- basic gender equality principles on the labour market and ILO conventions promoted, including No. 100 on equal remuneration of work of equal value, No. 111 on discrimination in employment and occupation, No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities and Nos 103 and 183 on maternity protection;
- gender audit methodology introduced and applied to assess the efficiency of organizations in promoting and achieving gender equality; training of two groups of national facilitators made;
- first gender audit in the Department of Economic and Social Policy of the President Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic piloted; gender audit in the Apparatus of Jogorku Kengesh organized, in close collaboration with UNDP Parliament project;
- information and awareness-raising on the issues of reconciling work and family;
- a national study prepared on assessing enabling an environment for women entrepreneurship development.

These activities were implemented in close cooperation with the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, Technical Support and Knowledge-sharing on Gender Mainstreaming Project within ILO/Netherlands Cooperation Programme, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.



## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF RURAL WOMEN

While de jure women have equal rights to land ownership, de facto rural women's opportunities for demanding or protecting their rights to land are often restricted by the traditional law (*adat*), which along with the widely spread gender stereotypes, usually restrain women's rights. Weak law enforcement mechanisms also impede vulnerable groups' access, including women, to rent land.

Women have little knowledge of their economic rights, including their right to land and to the other property. This is due to the inaccessibility of legal and economic information. Information about how to run a successful agricultural business is also inaccessible to most women.

The limited access of women to agricultural equipment, seeds, fertilizers and transport, as well as the problems they face in marketing lead to low profitability of their agricultural activities. Women's labour often remains manual, unproductive and unmechanized.

The traditional lifestyle in rural areas – including close family relations, small initial capital and the need to stay at home with children – makes women increasingly start family businesses (farms, workshops, services and tourism). While these provide economic opportunities for rural women, family businesses do not provide them with formal social benefits, such as pensions.



Photo courtesy of UNIFEM

### **UNIFEM's Project 'Women's Rights to Land'**

Kyrgyzstan was the first CIS country to introduce the private ownership of land. Women's rights, however, were largely ignored in the context of land privatization. To address this problem, UNIFEM launched a persistent advocacy campaign resulting in approval of the 'Law on Amendments and Changes to the Land Management Law', which ensures that women's human rights and rights to land are upheld within Kyrgyzstan's land management process. In addition to its legislative efforts, UNIFEM offers women, especially in rural areas, legal counseling on such issues as access to and use of land, resolving conflicts between land owners, registering legal documents and fostering business development in rural areas. To date, close to 5,000 individual and group legal consultations with nearly 17,000 residents of rural areas, half of them women, resulted in about 2,000 rural women gaining access to land they had been prevented from using and/or managing. In addition, 185 female village leaders and activists were trained as community advocates specializing in women's land rights. The training taught them how to help friends and neighbors solve basic practical and legal problems relating to land.

Within the framework of this project, which between 2004 and 2007 was financed by the Government of the Norway, UNIFEM helped to establish a Small Grants Fund for supporting low-budget projects aimed at resolving practical gender problems in rural areas. The projects have been carried out by women's organizations in collaboration with local authorities. As a result of the implementation of 12 grant projects, more than 26,000 rural people, including 13,600 women, have been able to improve their standard of living by obtaining access to irrigation canals and agricultural services, and there has been a general improvement of village infrastructure.

**UNDP Poverty Reduction Programme** is directed towards expanding employment and income generation opportunities of the poor (especially women) through business development and economic empowerment. The programme delivers business services to support entrepreneurship needs of more than 8800 rural poor (68% are women) who lack adequate levels of assets and have found themselves decreasingly able to meet their food and income requirements. UNDP makes special efforts to target women and provide demand-driven services to support women's entrepreneurship for economic empowerment.

The Programme works in 141 villages and concentrates its efforts on **direct integrated service delivery** including intensive capacity building and on-hand mentoring support to small rural entrepreneurs, access to financial capital, market information and supply chains. Through the transfer of modernized skills and business technology the Programme introduces sustainable business-led small enterprise solutions to make rural businesses meet growing market demands. To date more than 885 businesses have been established. Rural women, especially the most disadvantaged ones (widows, with many children and disabled) are given specific attention and their needs for sustainable income generation and economic advancement have been centrally placed at the Programme interventions. In particular about 5 000 rural women already benefited from business capacity building, access to equipment, microfinance and small grants support. UNDP's support to women is being translated into positive effect on the livelihood of the entire family since women have been able to invest more earnings in their children, particularly in education and healthcare.

In terms of **improvement of regulatory frameworks** UNDP provided support to analyze the existing labor and entrepreneurship legislation from gender perspectives. The research "Gender analysis of legislation in the sphere of labor, employment and entrepreneurship" was conducted. The key objective of this research was the development of recommendations on strengthening gender aspects of the existing legislation. A set of practical recommendations on filling existing gaps and address challenges have been made. All recommendations have been taken for further actions by relevant national partners.



# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

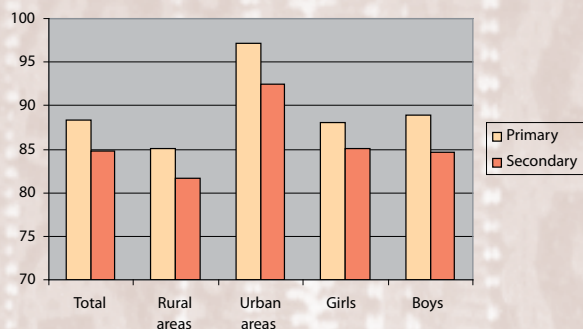
## Literacy rates

The literacy rate in Kyrgyzstan is high and approaching total literacy coverage.<sup>25</sup> The percentage of female literacy in the age group 15-24 is nearly 100 percent with a few regional and ethnical variations.

## Primary and secondary education

Throughout the republic, 98.6 percent of schoolchildren complete their primary school education and pass to the fifth form (secondary education). The primary school completion net ratio on average throughout the country is 79.2 percent (78.1 percent for males, 80.3 percent for females), and the ratio of transfer to the secondary school level is 99.1 percent.

**Diagram 14: Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in primary (classes 1-4) and secondary compulsory (classes 5-9) education for the 2006-2007 academic year<sup>26</sup>**



**Diagram 15: Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) in primary (classes 1-4) and secondary compulsory (classes 5-9) education**

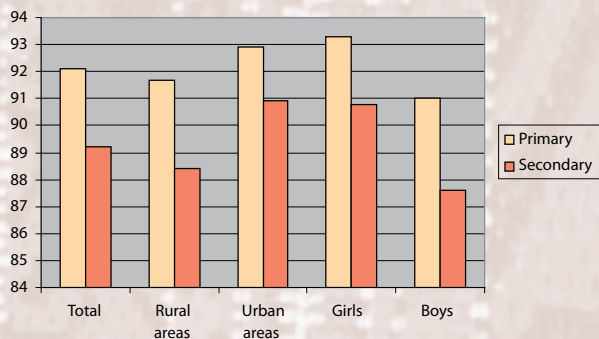


Photo courtesy of UNICEF

25 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, conducted by National Statistical Committee with support of UNICEF, 2006.

26 National Statistical Committee, EFA, 2007.

27 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, op. cit.

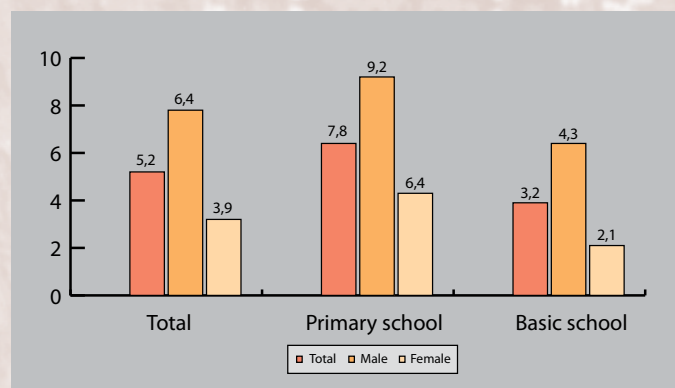
NER and NAR in primary and compulsory schools have remained approximately the same for the last three years. Both decrease with age due to the increasing burden of education-related expenses on families, when the poorest strata are not able to cover education expenses for textbooks and writing materials, books, clothes, footwear and food for middle and especially, senior school. Without a sufficient income, poorer families are forced to take their children out of schools. In addition, some families do not see the importance of their children continuing education in senior school because of the impossibility of their children continuing their education in higher education institutions<sup>28</sup> and have very limited job opportunities.

### School drop-outs

According to the MICS findings, school education covers practically all children in the age group from 7 to 17. Analysis of enrolment data revealed that 27.3 percent of seven-year-old children were out of school, and only 1.6 percent of eight-year-olds. The large percentage of out-of-school seven-year-olds is because many parents send their children to school starting from age eight. According to the study, the percentage of school non-attendance (by school-age children) is 7.6 percent.

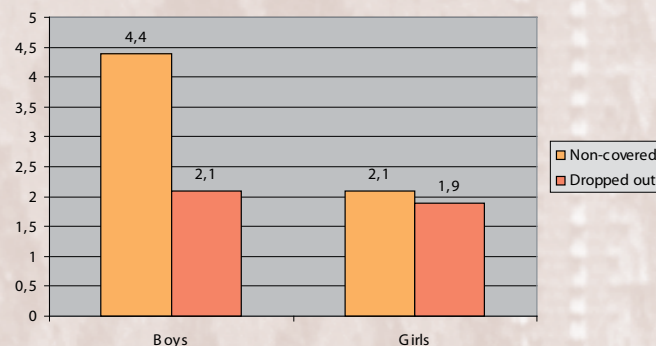
The percentages of children not covered by school education or school drop-outs at the primary school level (classes 1 to 4) and middle school (classes 5–9) are 7.8 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively.<sup>29</sup>

**Diagram 16: Percentage of children non-attending school by gender and level of schooling<sup>30</sup>**



The percentage of girls among non-attending children is somewhat lower than boys (6.1 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively). This difference can be seen at all levels of schooling (primary, basic and secondary) and the drop-out rate among girls is also lower than among boys.

**Diagram 17: Percentage of children not covered by school education and drop-outs by gender**



The Ministry of Education and Science, with UNICEF support, conducted a 'Drop-Out Study' (2008) to get a more objective picture of the reasons for drop-outs and absenteeism, as well as looking at the most vulnerable children, such as working and street children. The study shows that the most important reason for dropping out of school is related to poverty in the family. A total of 27 percent of interviewed children mentioned a 'lack of clothes, shoes and textbooks' as the main reason for non-attendance, while 29 percent help their families with seasonal agricultural work to earn money.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The report did not review the drop-out rate from the 10th and 11th classes. The high percentage of drop-outs found at high school level is that many pupils refuse to continue studying in secondary school after the ninth class.

<sup>30</sup> Multi Indicators Cluster Survey, 2006, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid



### **UNICEF Interventions to Address Education Problems:**

In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science invited UNICEF to play a leading role in speeding up the country's progress towards EDUCATION FOR ALL Goals.

UNICEF is the joint lead agency with the World Bank (WB) as the supervising agency for the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI). This project aims to accelerate attainment of the EFA goals, improve school attendance and preschool and primary school education through expanding and improving early childhood development programmes. Attempts are made to also improve national curricula. UNICEF closely coordinates its efforts with the WB to prepare future proposals for FTI and conduct an independent review of FTI.

UNICEF provides assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science to take informed and evidence-based decisions supporting baseline studies and evaluations as well as contributes to better donors coordination in the education sector by co-chairing of the International Advisory Council to the Education Sector.

As part of the Child Care System Reform and to ensure the implementation of the Code of the Kyrgyz Republic 'On children' (2006), UNICEF supports the Government by building the capacity of the newly established Family and Child Support Departments and Commissions of Minors' Affairs under the district and city state administrations, which will be preventing, responding and registering the children school drop-out cases at local level.



Photo courtesy of UNFPA

## POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT



Photo courtesy of UNDP

The level of political participation is an important indicator of equal rights and opportunities, since a political agenda and access to resources are achieved through representation in decision-making bodies. After independence, the economy collapsed; there were fewer workplaces within state institutions and the state's social protection system was weakened. These factors – together with a cancellation of Soviet quotas for women to occupy positions in the state structures, corruption and increase of patriarchal influence – have led to a slow decrease of women in decision-making bodies. The number of young women with higher education is higher than number of young men with the same level of

education (55.3 percent of university students are women<sup>32</sup>), but there is vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market, where women are concentrated in low positions and low-paid ministries and agencies.

UNDP has carried out a gender analysis of civil service from 2007 to 2008, which revealed systematic inequality and a lack of equal opportunities for women and men in terms of recruitment and professional career building. The process of professional capacity building and career building is not regulated; there is no strategy, agenda or clear plan of public servants' capacity building on the whole, as well as individual plans of professional career building in human resources' service. Officials demonstrated a lack of basic knowledge about equality and, thus, results in daily discrimination, which is considered normal. Further, there was no systematic approach to capacity building of civil servants and no inclusion of gender mainstreaming into civil servants' preparation and capacity-building programme.

32 'Men and women of Kyrgyz Republic', National Statistic Committee, Bishkek, 2008



## **UNDP's Support to the Government in Promotion of Women to Decision-Making Bodies**

UNDP supports the efforts of Kyrgyz Government, Parliament and other state authorities in fulfillment of international and national commitments to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies.

The 'Women Promotion to Decision-Making Bodies Project' (with support of the Government of Finland) and the 'Promotion of Women in Civil Service and Politics Project' (with support of Swedish International Development Agency) are implemented within the UNDP Democratic Governance Programme in order to increase gender equality in state bodies.

The following outcomes were achieved within these projects:

- Gender analysis of Kyrgyz civil service, and recommendations on gender mainstreaming were developed and delivered to the Kyrgyz Civil Service Agency;
- Gender expertise on legislation concerning civil, municipal and diplomatic services, and recommendations on its improvement, taking into account of international conventions and international standards as well as gender-related Kyrgyz laws. These recommendations were reviewed by the Parliamentary Committee for Youth and Gender Policy, Physical Education and Sport, and they were introduced as draft laws;
- Gender mainstreaming related to the capacity of public and municipal servants was increased;
- Gender analysis of political parties and capacity building of members of 12 political parties was conducted. As a result, eight political parties have introduced gender aspects into their political profile, and three political parties have officially declared an establishment of women's wings;
- On-going gender monitoring of mass media throughout all regions of Kyrgyzstan has been conducted. Mass media gender mainstreaming capacity of 70 reporters and editors was strengthened;
- Assistance to Kyrgyz Civil Service Agency in development of a gender disaggregated database of public servants was provided. Training of human resource units (staff) of all ministries and agencies to deal with the database was organized;
- Female political representation awareness raising campaign was supported.

## **UNDP Projects – 'Women Promotion to Decision-Making Bodies Project' and 'Promotion of Women in Civil Service and Policy'**

The 'Women Promotion to Decision-Making Bodies Project' (with support from the Government of Finland) and the 'Promotion of Women in Civil Service and Policy Project' (with support of Swedish International Development Agency) are implemented within the UNDP Democratic Governance Programme. The Alliance of Women Legislative Initiatives (AWLI) was established within the 'Promotion of Women in Public Service and Policy Project'. Members of AWLI are female members of national and local parliaments, public and municipal servants, gender experts and members of female NGOs. The principal goal is strengthening women's influence in the decision-making sphere, i.e. lobby for laws, establish dialogue between state authorities, local self government bodies and civil society, and to train women leaders.

UNDP also implements the 'Parliament Reform Project' to build the institutional capacity of the Parliament in execution of legislative, representative and controlling functions. For that purpose, gender mainstreaming actions were introduced. Standards for draft laws including five mandatory types of expertise were specially developed for Parliament: legal, gender, human rights advocacy, anticorruption and environmental. The need for gender-related expertise in the formulation of laws has justified the promotion of special measures in decision-making bodies to strengthen gender consideration. One important achievement was the introduction of gender quotas in the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. This resulted in the largest representation of women in Parliament in Central Asian.

UNDP supported elaboration of the guidelines on the five mandatory types of expertise of legislation. To ensure institutional sustainability in applying these standards UNDP also trained staff of the Kyrgyz Parliament Office.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The prevalence of gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan is linked to pervasive discriminatory practices against women, such as the bride kidnapping, early and forced marriages, physical violence and abuse in the families.

Existing legislation deems coercion to marry as a crime and stipulates a form of punishment to be administered. Despite this, early marriage and other discriminatory practices against women continue without systematic punishment.

This is further complicated because early marriages, and physical violence against women in marriage, are commonly perceived as 'natural'. The National Statistical Committee, in collaboration with UNICEF, has found that 38 percent of women fewer than 15 years of age believe that a husband has the right to beat his wife in various situations.<sup>33</sup>

The state's weakened social control – in the face of a revival of traditional discriminatory practices and growing cultural stereotypes of differentiated roles for men and women in the family and society – has led to a reduction in the effectiveness of legal measures for the prevention and prosecution of family crimes.



Photo courtesy of UNIFEM

### Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

OHCHR supports the provision of free-of-charge legal assistance to victims of violence and uses international human rights mechanisms to address specific cases of gender-based violence. In particular, people who allege that they have been the victim of a human rights violation may send their own individual communication through OHCHR to the *UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences*. This independent expert requests information and clarifications from concerned state authorities with regard to alleged crimes and requests officials to take preventive actions or measures, including urgent investigations. At the end of each year, the Special Rapporteur reports to the Human Rights Council with information regarding countries which have or have not reacted to these requests and whether measures were taken to protect victims of human rights violations and punish the perpetrators.

<sup>33</sup> Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, 2006, p. 70.



### **UN Gender Theme Group (GTG)**

Since 2006, the UN GTG actively participates in the nationwide advocacy activities of the international campaign '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence'. The activities start on 25 November, the International Day Against Violence Against Women, and ends on 10 December, the International Day of Human Rights. This symbolically links violence against women and human rights, and emphasizes that such violence is a violation of human rights. In partnership with the Government, civil society organizations (such as crisis centres) and international organizations and gender advocates, the UN GTG organizes press conferences, develops logos, brands and texts for information brochures aimed at increasing awareness about gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan, and brings international expertise to increase government institutions' capacity in legislative and other issues.

### **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

Every year, UNIFEM supports various social events in the region, including Kyrgyzstan, aimed at addressing the issue of violence against women through developing gender awareness in government and non-government organizations. Kyrgyzstan is a part of UNIFEM's global internet-based advocacy campaign '**Say NO to Violence against Women**'. Launched in November 2007 and led by UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador – and famous actress – Nicole Kidman, the initiative aims to demonstrate that there is an ever-growing movement of people who raise their voices and demand that ending violence against women be a top priority. In Kyrgyzstan, 500 members of the national parliament and local councils, gender advocates, government officials and citizens joined this global initiative by adding their signatures to an internet 'virtual' book as an expression of public support and call for action. The initiative was designed to feed into UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's campaign, UNiTE, on the same issue. The signatures were handed over to the Secretary-General on 25 November 2008, in observance of the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women.

### **Joint UN Programme on Violence Against Women**

As a major health, human rights and development issue, Violence Against Women has become a priority for UN entities' coordinated efforts to assist states in their efforts to eliminate violence against women. The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women recommends intensified action to eliminate violence against women at all levels. The General Assembly's resolution (**A/RES/63/143**) urges UN entities to enhance coordination and intensify their efforts to eliminate violence against women in a more systematic, comprehensive and sustained way. The only country in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is one of 10 pilot countries – including Burkina Faso and Rwanda for Africa, Jamaica in the Caribbean, Paraguay and Chile for Central America, Fiji for the Pacific, the Philippines for Asia, Jordan and Yemen for the Middle East – to launch the UN Task Force on Violence Against Women focused on comprehensive national approaches against violence against women. A joint programme of UN agencies, lead by the UN Resident Coordinator, government and civil societies will be elaborated and implemented in the following three years.

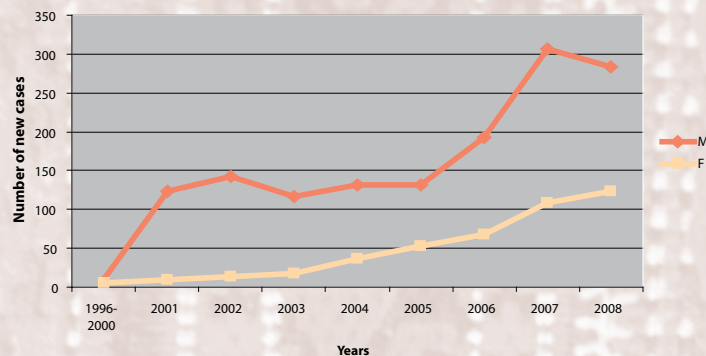
## GENDER ASPECTS OF HIV/AIDS



There is an increase in the number of registered HIV cases among women. Cases of female HIV has grown from 9.5 percent in 2001 to 31.7 percent in 2008.<sup>34</sup> Among women in Kyrgyzstan registered as living with HIV, 65.9 percent were infected through sexual contact, 88 percent of whom contracted the disease from a permanent – and in most cases – their only sexual partner. Illiteracy and low awareness of safe sex practices limit women’s possibilities to protect their rights and prevent HIV infection. Women’s dependence on their

families and economic dependence on a husband/partner prohibit them from influencing the sexual behavior of the husband, insist upon safe sex or abstain even if she is aware of the risk-related behavior or HIV/STIs infection of her sexual partner. Inequality in asserting their rights to protect themselves makes women vulnerable to HIV.<sup>35</sup>

**Diagram 18: Dynamics of HIV cases by gender**





## UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS

Since 1996, the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS co-sponsors) has been supporting the Kyrgyz Government in HIV prevention and identifying forms of stigma and discrimination and what actions are needed to change the structural and socio-cultural biases that underpin them. This is also essential to addressing gender inequality. UN Theme on HIV/AIDS through its Joint UN Plan supports the Government to:

- implement strategic programmes on HIV prevention with an emphasis on the most vulnerable groups, including women in remote areas;
- build the capacity of women's organizations and gender equality organizations as key partners in the development of national AIDS strategies;
- expand access to sexual and reproductive health care programmes, integrating HIV programmes into these;
- incorporate gender dimensions into monitoring and evaluation of HIV prevention activities, ensuring that data is disaggregated by sex, age and marital status;
- promote advocacy campaigns and community dialogue to change harmful gender norms, engage men and boys, and eliminate violence against women and girls;
- enact and enforce legislation, policies and programmes that protect the rights of women and girls in terms of gender equality and freedom from violence.
- Participate in the work of the UN Gender Theme Group, including contributions to the annual reports, analytical papers etc.

## UNICEF

In 2007 and 2008, approximately 90 cases of hospital-acquired HIV have been registered among children, mostly in Osh province. There is a lack of experience in providing continuous care to HIV-infected mothers and children, of medical and social support for children with HIV, as well as of support for HIV-infected children and their families at community level

UNICEF office during 2008 supported MoH in the further integration of HIV services into general medical services for improvement of access of HIV infected children to the good quality medical services.

To ensure improvement of quality of medical care for pregnant women and women in the delivery UNICEF is supporting partners from MoH in the integration of Prophylaxis of Mother to Child HIV Transmission (PMTCT) into general medical services. This will allow increase coverage by testing, and early initiation of prophylaxis of transmission of HIV from mother to child.

The treatment activities support by UNICEF's Health and Nutrition Project are compliment by care and support activities implemented by the Child Protection Project which worked with parents, families in order to prevent and reduce stigma and discrimination and increase their awareness. Since 2008 UNICEF cooperates with International NGO "AIDS Foundation East-West" in providing psychosocial support to families affected by HIV in Osh oblast and builds the capacity of the newly created NGO "Mama+" of mothers of children with HIV

## CONCLUSION

### **Working Together to Achieve Gender Equality**

The United Nations has been working hand in hand with the Government, civil society and other international development partners to implement the commitments of the Kyrgyz Republic on gender equality and women's rights based on the BPFA, CEDAW and MDGs. One of the outstanding examples of such cooperation was the introduction of 30 percent quota for women parliamentary candidates into the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, based on the recommendation of the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The effort resulted in Kyrgyzstan having the highest representation of women among all Central Asian parliaments. There is a set of other important issues, however, such as a domestic violence, poverty, social security of women and many others, which need our immediate attention, joint efforts and financing.

The United Nations firmly believes, on evidence-based studies from around the world, that the investments towards these objectives is not charity but constitutes the clearest and most rapid path to balanced economic development of a productive and equitable society. Focusing on increased partnerships with civil society, government and donor organizations the UN in Kyrgyzstan will continue working to put in place the practical strategies to promote women's rights and work on an actual translation of these commitments into actions, through application of the United Nations human rights instruments to achieve gender equality and empower women.



Photo courtesy of UNICEF







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