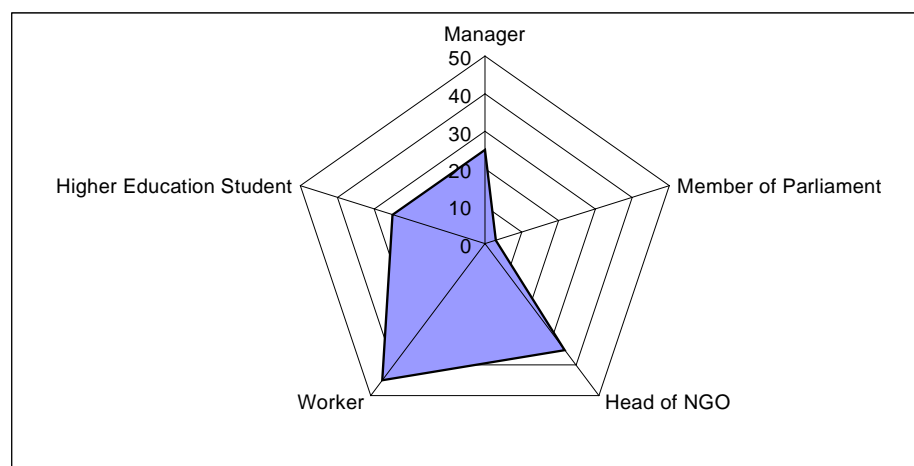


## Chapter 3. Gender Roles in the Public Sphere

One of the biggest transformations in gender roles in Tajikistan has been the withdrawal of women from public life. Political and economic transition has been accompanied by an increase in gender inequality in the political, economic, and social spheres.

**Figure 3.1 Participation of Women in the Public Sphere in Tajikistan (%)**



Source: SSA 1999 UNDP 2000, and TLSS 1999.

### 3.1 Women as Agents of Change

#### 3.1.1 Gender and Political Representation

During the Soviet period women's representative participation within central and local government was high by international standards. Quotas ensured "equal" representation between the genders in the machinery of government, the party, and state enterprises. However in reality men dominated the key decision making positions and, as representatives were appointed rather than elected, many of the bodies had little real political power. There was little opportunity for women, or indeed the majority of men, to participate in genuine decision making.

Since Independence there has been a dramatic change in the gender balance within politics in Tajikistan. As indicated by Figure 3.1, women have all but disappeared from the national political map. During the last Parliamentary (Majlisi Oli) election campaign, only 17 out of 365 registered candidates were women (i.e., 5 percent). A total of 181 deputies were elected, of whom just five were women (i.e., 3 percent) (Table 3.1). Following the abandonment of quotas for women, which ensured representation of women at all levels during the Soviet

period, within government today there are just two women Ministers. At the executive level today, women make up 21 percent of the membership of state committees, hold 7 percent of senior posts in the ministries, and 4 percent in other organs of government.

At the regional level of government the position is some, but not much, better. Table 3.1 presents the gender breakdown of membership of the main elected state bodies. The proportion of total elected members who are women is slightly higher within the local raion (district) administration, but overall membership remains highly gendered towards men, despite the fact that women constitute over half the electorate. Women comprise 4 percent of elected members at the oblast level, 7 percent at the district (*raion*) level, and 11 percent at the municipal level. Only five women head the administrations of cities and regions (*hukumats*), although women hold positions as deputy chairs in 45 of the total 64 local administrations. Women also head 28 of the country's 342 village (*jamoat*) councils.

**Table 3.1 Elected Representatives by Gender**

	Parliament	Oblast	District	Municipal
Number of administrations	1	3	45	26
Total number of elected members	181	205	1699	631
Of whom: Male	176	196	1582	564
Female	5	9	117	67
Percentage: Male	97	96	93	89
Female	3	4	7	11

Source: State Statistical Agency 1999.

Representation in political bodies varies across regions with women being best represented in Dushanbe, where over a fifth of district councillors and an eighth of municipal representatives are women (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2 Proportion of Elected Female Representatives**

Region	Oblast	District	Municipal
GBAO	4.3	6.0	6.7
Leninabad	5.7	11.0	13.4
Khatlon	3.1	5.2	10.1
RRS	-	4.0	7.8
Dushanbe	-	21.6	12.8

Source: SSA 1999.

GBAO - Gorno-Badakhshan, RRS - Regions of Republican Subordination.

In a recent survey of gender and livelihoods in GBAO carried out under the auspices of the Aga Khan Foundation, women were asked how they felt about the decline of women in leadership positions since the Soviet era. The most commonly expressed view was that women had been compelled to retreat into subsistence production, housework, and when possible, petty trading in order to cope with the very difficult situation. With their energies occupied elsewhere, women no longer had time to participate actively in "public" decision-making arenas, even at the local level. Many women felt that this lack of political representation had negatively affected women's status in society (Kanji and Gladwin 2000).

**Women's Views on the Decline in Political Representation**

"During Soviet times, women were leaders in government at all levels. Now we are all in the home". (Rushan, 59 years old).

"Conditions of life are too difficult for us now—we don't have the opportunities we had in Soviet times." (Rushan, 47 years old).

"Wherever you go now, you see men leading everything. Women are left with the problems of home and children. Women have been harmed by these changes." (Shugnan, 36 years).

"There used to be more opportunities for women to travel, learn about things and bring the information back to share with others." (Khitj Khorog, 58 years).

"Then, women worked alongside men much more in public organizations. Now we do so much less and this lowers our status in society." (Rushan, 49 years old).

Source: Kanji and Gladwin 2000.

The marked decline in political representation of women has recently been recognized as a matter of national concern (Burkhanova 2000). Several political parties have attempted to address the issue of gender imbalance by experimenting with a variety of issues to encourage more women to join their parties and become active participants in election campaigns. However, these measures have met with only limited success. In a meeting of women's nongovernment organizations (NGOs), Parliamentary leaders, and representatives of political parties in early 2000, discussion of these issues led to the recommendation that a quota system should be reintroduced to ensure at least some formal representation of women in state structures. Participants endorsed a political reform that no more than 70 percent of positions held in any structure should be held by men. This proposal has, however, yet to be formally adopted and in any case will be too late to affect the parliamentary elections scheduled to be held at the end of February 2000.

On a more optimistic note, although the representation of women within public political office has declined markedly, it should be recognized that those women who are elected have now been elected in their own right and may therefore be more effective than the cosmetically high number in the past. Women have also increasingly found an alternative voice in the political life of Tajikistan through their activity in new NGOs.

### 3.1.2 Gender and the Growth of Civil Society

Nongovernmental initiatives were banned during the Soviet period, as the party and state machinery exercised strict control and covered most domains of activity considered as necessary for the well-being of society, including leisure and culture. Over the last five years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of NGOs registered in Tajikistan, and in particular NGOs working on gender-related issues. According to the latest data from the Ministry of Justice, in 1999 there were about 600 registered NGOs (although not all were active) of which 60 were women's organizations, accounting for 10 percent of the total number. However, women's participation within the "third sector"<sup>6</sup> is not limited to NGOs which are gender-related, but rather women are active across the entire sector. Women constitute 35 percent of the heads of all NGOs, compared with only 3 percent of Parliamentarians.

#### *Women's NGOs*

At present 54 women and gender-related NGOs form a strong network, under the coordination of the Women in Development (WID) Bureau. These include NGOs such as the women's association "Simo", the Association of University Women, "Komila," Association

The women's NGO "Komila" was set up in 1995 by a group of female academics, including economists, sociologists, doctors, and demographers. In 1996 it established the Women Resource Center, sponsored by Counterpart Consortium, and in 1997 it set up a health center in the Bokhtar region with the objective of increasing the knowledge of rural women and men with regard to reproductive health.

The Association Women of Science of Tajikistan was set up in 1996 by scholars to promote gender issues. It has focused in particular on the issue of violence against women and the psychological support of women who have suffered abuse. It is supported by WID Bureau, USAID, and Counterpart Consortium.

of Business Women Association "Khujand," "Traditions and Modernity," "Bonuvon," (Kofarnihon), "Nilufar" (Varzob) and the Women of Science of Tajikistan. Many NGOs have been set up by academics and scholars and the majority of these NGOs have the advancement of the status of women in Tajik society as their main focus of activity. Together these NGOs have been relatively successful in influencing the political agenda and bringing gender issues to the forefront of government planning. A mark of this success is the

<sup>6</sup> The other two sectors being the public and private sectors.

National Plan for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) 1998-2005, which was approved by a government decree in September 1998 and builds upon the goals agreed at the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women.

However, although there is a strong sense of dedication among women's NGOs to address gender issues, there remains fairly limited capacity within the sector and few NGOs are active at the local level. The sector remains dominated by the urban middle classes. As Box 3.1 shows, the majority of NGOs are located in the capital city, Dushanbe, and in the second city of Khojand although attempts are increasingly being made to expand operations to rural areas. Many organizations lack the fundamental skills that are necessary in educating the public and assuming an advocacy role and there is a continuing need to empower Tajik women by providing them with the skills to organize and facilitate meetings and workshops as well as design and implement their own programs. To date, only a small number of NGOs have had experience in designing, implementing, and monitoring projects with funds received as grants from international organizations or other bodies. In order to increase the institutional capacity of NGOs the Government constituted the WID Bureau. With the assistance of UNDP, it has introduced a small grants program and in 1998 nine proposals from different NGOs were supported (see below). This situation should change as more donors become active within Tajikistan. However, it will be essential that any project grants are accompanied by technical assistance for capacity building within the implementing agency.

### *Women in Development Bureau, Tajikistan*

The WID Bureau was established in June 1995 as a quasi-governmental body to promote the interests of Tajik women during the transition to a market economy, to assist in promoting local NGOs and developing projects for women, and to act as a liaison between local and international organizations. Since its establishment, the WID Bureau has been pivotal in fostering the growth of civil society and in promoting gender equality within Tajikistan. As such, its operations deserve special attention.

The WID Project, with funding by UNDP, started in January 1996. Its overarching objective is:

"to empower the national government and members of civil society in order for them to develop sustainable mechanisms to achieve equality for women in political, social and economic development and to support the empowerment of women through focused interventions that involve women in a process to take responsibility and make key decisions concerning their own well-being through grassroots participation in a sustainable target-specific, multi-sectoral development programme".

The WID project presently addresses three distinct areas:

1. Economic empowerment through pilot projects involving credit schemes;
2. Training and social work, including education and dissemination of information concerning women's health and legal rights, and
3. Policy and advocacy for gender/women planning.

Figure 3.2 shows the operational unit within WID for each of the three strategic areas.

In many countries the development of micro-enterprises has been used as a successful livelihood strategy for women. Such enterprises allow women to combine work and family responsibilities. One of the biggest problems facing women in Tajikistan in establishing a micro-enterprise is access to credit. As part of the WID Project a credit scheme providing support to women for the development of small enterprises has been successfully established in Kofarnihon. Initiatives supported included potato plantation, poultry raising, cattle breeding, carpet weaving, a sewing enterprise and a bakery. In 1998 the pilot credit scheme was extended to the districts of Aini and Tursunzade.

Although from a legal point of view nondiscriminatory legislation for women is guaranteed by the Constitution, in reality violations of women's rights are an everyday occurrence. One of the factors sustaining these violations is a general lack of awareness of women's rights. A study carried out by UNESCO as part of a project on "women in higher education and development" found that of a sample women with higher education who were questioned, 94 percent could not name any international document or law on the rights of women. More worrying was that only 22 percent were familiar with the national laws on women's rights or the Constitution. The WID Bureau in conjunction with NGOs, most notably the Tajik Branch of the Open Society Institute (SOROS Foundation), has organized a number of training courses. These range from training in leadership geared specifically at women to help restore the position of women in public life, advocacy training in raising awareness of violence against women as an issue within the judiciary, practical skills training in accounting, marketing and business management, to training in reproductive health issues.

### Box 3.1 Selected Women's Organizations in Tajikistan

(A full list of women's organizations together with contact details is available in Appendix 4)

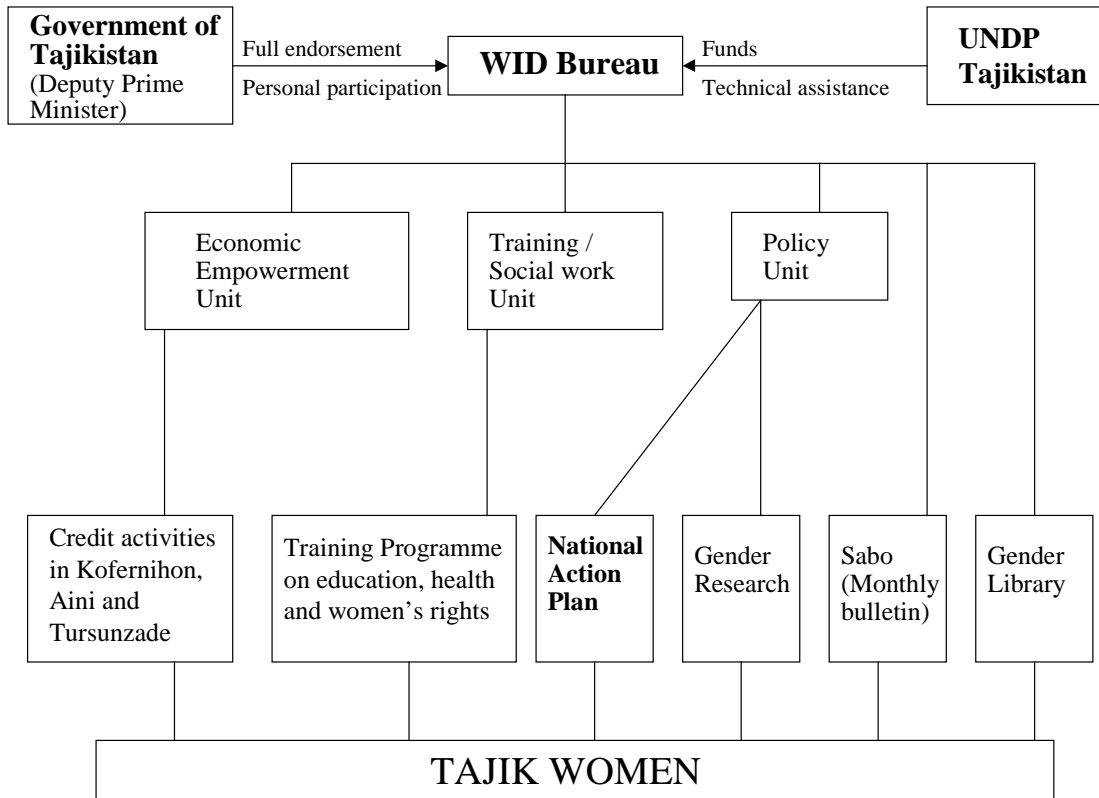
Name of Association	Focus of Activity	Experience and Type of Projects Implemented
<b><i>Dushanbe-based organizations</i></b>		
Union of Women of Tajikistan	Advocacy of women's rights; Coordinating role	Quasi-governmental. Deputy Prime Minister, Bozgul Dodkhudoeva, is the Chairperson. Key role in implementation of NPAW.
Simo	Education on issues of reproductive health and the environment; Promotion of women's employment	Has conducted a number of seminars for women on obtaining employment and has developed a database of employment opportunities.
Association of University Women	Advocacy of women's rights	Dissemination of information about women's rights through brochures.
Club "Women's Initiative"	Provision of support for female-headed families	Received small grant from WID Bureau to support craft making activities among widows and divorcees. Some experience of project design and implementation.
Komila	Advocacy of women's rights Education and reproductive health	Established the Women Resource Center, sponsored by Counterpart Consortium. Set up a health center in the Bokhtar region. Good experience in project design and implementation.
Women of Science of Tajikistan	Advocacy of women's rights Violence against women	Conducted research into violence against women. Runs telephone hotline and counselling services. Only provider in Tajikistan. Good experience in project design and implementation.
Dignity and Charity	Legal rights	Works with families on welfare programs to inform them of their rights. Limited information available.
"Ona"	Advocacy of women's rights and encouragement of political participation	Received small grant from WID Bureau to support publication of gender bulletins. Some experience in project design and implementation.
"Traditions and Modernity"	Gender research and training Advocacy of women's rights	Received small grant from WID Bureau to support training seminars. Carried out sociological research on gender. Some experience in project design and implementation.
"Modar"	Human rights Encouragement of political participation	Received small grant from WID Bureau to support mock Parliament. Has carried out gender awareness seminars. Some experience in project design and implementation. Has branches in Khujand and Kurgan-Tjube cities and in Pyandge and Garm region.
"Open Asia"	Research on gender issues Violence against women	Carries out sociological research
<b><i>Regions of Republican Subordination</i></b>		
Women's Centre	Micro-credit	Established as a result of WID Project. Runs

"Bonuvon" (Kofarnihon)	Reproductive health	successful micro-credit program, which is being extended to other regions. Strong experience in project design and implementation.
"Maftuna" (Kofarnihon)	Employment Reproductive health	Limited information available.
<b>Gorno Badakshan</b>		
"Madad" (Khorog city)	Education Employment Reproductive health	Limited information available.
<b>Leninabad</b>		
Business Women Association "Khujand" (Khujand city)	Training for small businesses Violence against women	Provides counselling services to victims of violence against women. Received small grant from WID Bureau to publish results of research on VAW. Some experience in project design and implementation.
Women for Progress (Khujand city)	Small business development Training and promotion of women entrepreneurs	As well as working with business women, assists vulnerable women to develop home-based businesses and income-generating projects. Reasonable experience in project design and implementation.
'Women of the East' Penjikent city	Advocacy of women's rights; Legal advice	Provides social and legal advice to women. Limited information available.
<b>Khatlon</b>		
'Lady Leader' Business Women's Club Kurgan-Tube city	Advocacy of women's rights; Training for business women	Produces a radio program "For Women and Families." Offers informal management training and free business consultations to women. Limited information available.

The WID Bureau, in conjunction with the Union of Women (Box 3.2), of Tajikistan has also recently established a scholarship program and dormitory to allow 50 female students from remote areas to study at the university in Dushanbe. Preference is given to girls who have no parents, or who have only one of them. The girls live in the dormitory and are given \$20 as a monthly allowance. In addition to following courses at the national universities in Dushanbe, these girls also receive training in leadership skills. It is hoped that once their higher education is completed that these women will return to their homes and take a lead role in the Tajikistan of the future.

To increase the institutional capacity of NGOs in both writing grant proposals and implementing projects, the WID Bureau has introduced a small grants program. In 1998 out of 29 proposals, nine were supported.

**Figure 3.2 Operational Structure of Women in Development Bureau**



The WID Bureau has been one of the success stories in Tajikistan and much of this is due to the driving force of its Director. In actual size, the WID Bureau is relatively small, consisting of 10 core staff (see Figure 3.3). However, its long-term future is in doubt. It has funding from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for four years for specific reproductive health projects and from ADB for three years for activities, but its core funding from UNDP will cease in 2001. Although theoretically located within governmental structures, it appears unlikely that the Government will step in to replace core funding. The Director and staff are therefore considering establishing an NGO, entitled "Gender in Development" to implement the projects already committed and to act as a resource, information, educational, and training centre for other gender-based NGOs in Tajikistan.

**Box 3.2 Small Projects Funded by the WID Bureau in 1998**

Name of Project	Objective	Name of Association	Duration	Budget
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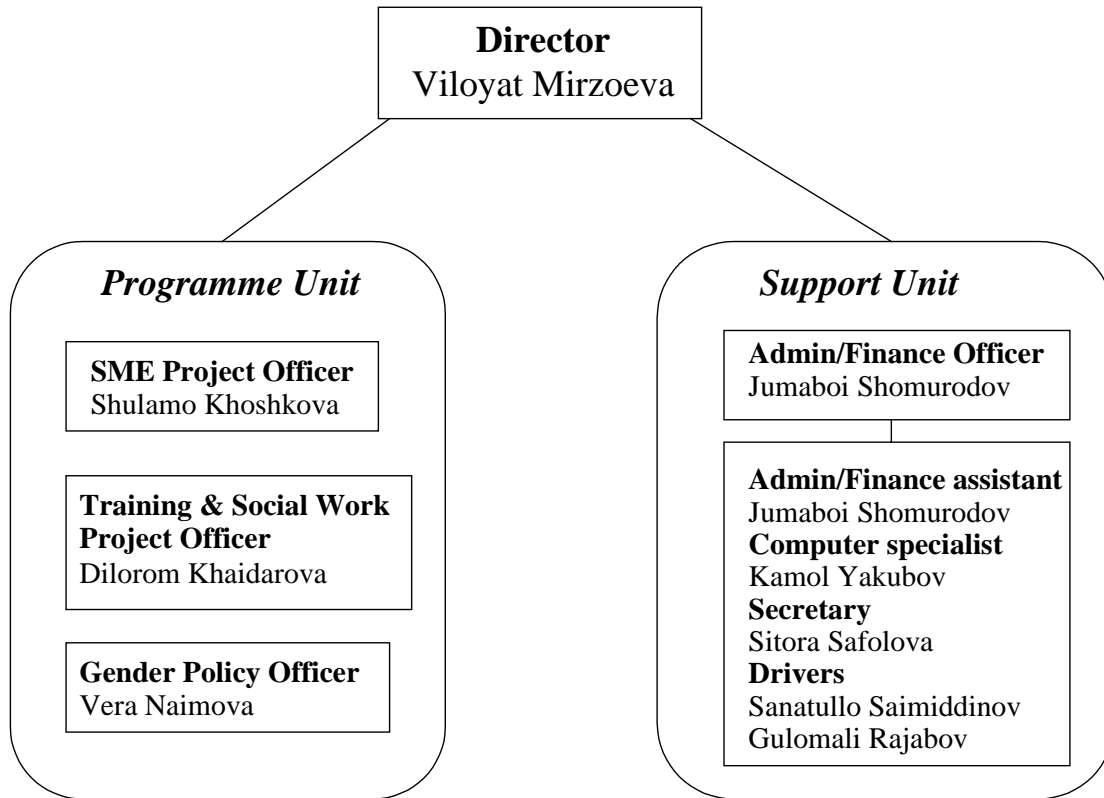
			(months)	(\$)
Women for survival	To support women's craft-making	Women's Initiative	12	1,365.50
Civic education formation of civic responsibilities of girls	To provide female students with a series of training seminars on gender issues	Union of Young Girls of the Slavonic University	6	1,200.00
Mini Parliament	To organize a model parliament among students	Modar	5	714.00
Community and violence	To publish a series of booklets about violence against women	Women of Science of Tajikistan	6	1,559.00
Languages and culture	To organize a seminar on languages and culture in Tajikistan	Women-Foreign Languages Textbook Authors	3	520.00
Youth Gender Centre	To provide necessary equipment to publish gender bulletins	Ona	12	1,890.00
Practical law guidelines for women	To publish law guidelines for rural women	Dignity and Charity	2	1,972.00
Increasing the role of women in politics	To organize a series of seminars on political and gender issues	Traditions and Modernity	3	1,800.00
The Centre for Gender Researchers	To print bulletins to publish the results of sociological research on gender	Business Women of Khojand	12	2,000.00

### *Committee on Women and the Family*

In parallel with the network of women-focused NGOs coordinated by the WID Bureau is the Committee on Women and the Family. This is a state committee inherited from the Soviet period with branches in all regions and districts. Their main aim is to execute official decrees and protect women's rights through governmental institutions. The Committee is expected to play a leading role in implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women. However, like other governmental structures, the Committee lacks funding and as a result is limited in its scope of action.

In sum, there is a small but growing network of women's NGOs that is committed to the advancement of the status of women in Tajikistan. However, there remains a fundamental lack of capacity, both in terms of the skills that are necessary to design and implement projects and for effective advocacy, and a chronic shortage of financial resources.

**Figure 3.3 Organizational Structure of Women in Development Bureau**



### 3.1.3 Women and Economic Decision Making

A role in economic decision making is as important to women's participation in society as is equitable representation in political and non-governmental bodies. There is little data with which to analyze the relative representation of the different genders within economic decision making. Prior to Independence, women were rarely found in key economic positions such as the director of large state enterprises, and this remains the case today. There are no official statistics on the number of women engaged in business. However, of the 482 private enterprises and farms that were members of the Association of Small and Average Businesses, only 16 (i.e., 3 percent) are headed by women. According to a recent survey by the Business Women Association of Khudjand, women occupy 25 percent of "legal and senior management posts" (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] 1999). Using the International Labour Organization's international standard classification of occupation categories (ILO-ISCO), the recent UNDP-World Bank TLSS found that 1.6 percent of men were "legislative, senior official and managers" compared with just 0.6 percent of women; and 8 percent of men were "professionals" compared with 5 percent of women.

The low representation of women in senior economic positions is the result of discrimination, direct and indirect, combined with traditional views about the appropriate roles for men and

women in society. However, it is not just the "establishment" that works against women. The views of women themselves may also act as a barrier to their own advancement.

**Table 3.3 Working Women's Desire to Work in a Higher Position**  
(percent)

	Total	Urban	Rural
Desired to work in a higher position	21	26	13
Did not desire to work in a higher position	53	54	52
Don't know	26	20	34
Of those that did not desire to work in a higher position, reasons why:			
Too great a responsibility	19	20	18
Insufficient experience for such a position	22	21	23
Uncertainty in self	12	10	15
Health condition	9	11	4
Salary too low	13	15	10
Family circumstances	14	12	16
Satisfied with present position	27	26	30

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan 1999*.

The 1998 SSA/WID survey of women's socioeconomic position asked women currently employed directly about their desire to work in a higher position. The majority of working women did not want a higher position (53 percent). However, over a quarter of urban women and an eighth of rural women did. Of those working women who did not express a desire for promotion, over a quarter reported that they were satisfied with their present jobs, nearly a quarter felt that they did not have sufficient experience and a further eighth lacked the confidence to do the job (Table 3.3). Another fifth felt that it was too great a responsibility. Thus, a major barrier to women's advancement in the work place is women's insecurity about their own ability to do the job. With few women in positions of leadership, it is not surprising that many feel senior jobs are beyond their reach and capability. Female role models and training and confidence building may all help to overcome such insecurity in the long run.

Finally, the same survey also asked women their opinion whether they felt that women do indeed have equal rights with men (Table 3.4). As stated earlier, such rights are legally enshrined in the Constitution. Less than a third of women felt that they did. A similar proportion felt that they had equality of some rights and a quarter felt that there was no equality between the genders.

**Table 3.4 Opinion of Women on whether Women have Rights Equal to Men**  
(percent)

	Total	Urban	Rural
Have equal rights	29	26	33
Have only some equality of rights	27	31	21
Unequal rights	24	21	27
Don't know	21	22	19
Total	100	100	100

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan 1999*.

Open discrimination against women is still rare. However the 1996 World Bank social assessment found that in some areas families headed by women were often arbitrarily excluded from the allocation of additional land under privatization by the presumption that they have no labor power to cultivate their own land. This is despite the fact that they are still expected to undertake the hard physical work of growing and picking cotton. In Bokhtar district the international NGO Save the Children (UK) has successfully helped female heads of household who were denied private plots to represent and enforce their claim to the local *kolkhoz*.

Thus, it appears that Tajikistan has a long way to go before full gender equality, real and perceived, is achieved in the political and economic spheres. The position of women in the labor market more generally is discussed below.

## 3.2 Gender and the Labor Market

Under communism the Constitution guaranteed the right to employment for every able-bodied individual of working age and the right to equal pay for equal work among men and work. There was no formal unemployment and, in common with other countries of the FSU, women in Tajikistan were actively engaged in almost all sectors of the labor market. Women enjoyed generous formal and informal benefits related to child care responsibilities and many state-run enterprises had nurseries, kindergartens, and health facilities. The transition to a market economy has meant that many of the old certainties have now been removed. Jobs are no longer guaranteed. Secure state jobs are being eliminated and where they do continue, pay is often months in arrears. Child care facilities are being closed down, leaving women to bear the burden of both family and work.

### 3.2.1 The Labor Market in Transition

Although high by international standards, women's labor force participation rates in Tajikistan were relatively low when compared to those elsewhere in the FSU (especially in

the western republics) and were significantly below those of men. In 1991 29 percent of all females were in the labor force compared with 44 percent of males.

**Table 3.5 Selected Statistics on Labor Market Activity by Gender, 1991-1998**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997*	1998*
Labor force (thousands)	1,971	1,917	1,877	1,887	1,891	1,778	1,842	1,849
Male	1,183	1,134	1,047	1,075	1,059	951		
Female	788	783	830	812	832	827		
Crude labor force participation rate <sup>1</sup>	36	35	33	33	33	30	30	30
Male	44	41	37	38	37	32		
Female	29	28	29	28	28	28		
Total employed population (thousands)	1,970	1,908	1,854	1,854	1,853	1,731	1,790	1,795
Male	1,182	1,128	1,033	1,057	1,038	927		
%	(60)	(59)	(56)	(57)	(56)	(54)		
Female	788	780	821	797	815	804		
%	(40)	(41)	(44)	(43)	(44)	(46)		
Total registered unemployed (thousands)		6.8	21.6	32.1	37.5	45.7	51.1	54.1
Male unemployment rate (%)		4.4	12.4	17.5	20.2	22.8	24.3	25.3
Female unemployment rate (%)		2.6	9.2	14.6	17.3	22.9	26.8	28.8

\* Provisional, <sup>1</sup> The crude labor force participation rate is the economically active population as a percentage of total population.

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan* 1999.

Over the last decade both the size of the labor force and the number employed have fallen dramatically despite rapid rates of population growth.<sup>7</sup> This reflects in part the casualties of the civil war in 1992-93, during which an estimated 50,000 men lost their lives and a further 60,000 fled the country as refugees. In addition it is estimated that a further 500,000 people have left Tajikistan as economic migrants in the period since 1992.<sup>8</sup> The period has also witnessed a growing informalization of the labor market with more people working (unregistered) in the burgeoning private sector, engaged in family-based production, market trading, or other activities.

Elsewhere in the FSU it has been found that women have been disproportionately affected by the economic dislocation associated with transition—being more likely to lose their jobs than

<sup>7</sup> Note that in 1991 the economically active population was equivalent to the employed population as unemployment was non-existent.

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear whether and how such migration has been taken into account by the State Statistical Agency (SSA) when calculating the denominators for labor market participation rates. Given the gendered nature of such migration, involving significantly more males than females, it may be that the falls in male participation rates are overestimated. For example, the number of men in the labor force fell by 100,000 between 1995 and 1996 with a resultant drop in the participation rate from 37 percent to 32 percent.

men, and being concentrated in sectors where wages were least likely to have been paid (Bauer, Boschmann and Green 1997; Bauer, Green and Kuehnast 1997). In Tajikistan the picture is complex.

Fewer women than men were employed in Tajikistan in the pre-transition period. However, the gender-gap has *narrowed* over time, as the registered economic activity of men has fallen more than that of women. This is the converse of what has happened elsewhere in transition economies, with the exceptions of Poland, Hungary, and Belarus.

The number of employed men has fallen sharply, while the number of women has remained constant with the result that women's share of the employed population has increased. Out of an estimated 1,970,000 employed persons in 1991, women accounted for just 40 while men made up 60 percent. By 1996 women accounted for 46 percent of those employed and men 54 percent. However, women also constitute a

disproportionate share of those officially registered as unemployed. In 1998 there were 54,100 persons registered as unemployed of whom 28,800 (i.e., 53 percent) were women. Therefore, it seems that on the one hand women have been 'protected' in terms of their share of employment, but on the other hand they experience higher levels of official unemployment.

The fact that women have been relatively protected in terms of job losses may be explained in part by the segregation of women and men into different occupations. Looking at the distribution of male employees between sectors (Table 3.6) it is clear that the relative importance of manufacturing, transport, construction, and other sectors of "material production" and communal/municipal services has declined, while the relative importance of agriculture, health, and education has increased. This is due to the fact that the absolute employment figures in the latter sectors has remained largely unchanged whilst employment in the former has shrunk, rather than any growth in these sectors. A similar trend is observed for women. However, with the exception of industry, a smaller proportion of women were initially employed in declining sectors than men, with the result that labour shedding in these sectors has affected men more than women.

**Table 3.6 Employment Share by Sector, 1991-1998**  
(%)

Men	Women	Average Monthly Wage
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	1991	1993	1995	1998*	1991	1993	1995	1998*	1998
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	8,590
Industry	15.9	16.7	18.3	14.7	22.4	21.9	19.5	17.7	25,866
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	18.5	20.4	23.2	26.9	18.8	23.7	29.6	29.3	4,499
Transport	9.7	8.5	7.9	6.9	1.3	1.0	1.6	0.5	14,492
Communication	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.7	19,315
Construction	16.4	13.5	11.5	9.0	3.1	2.1	2.6	2.1	18,172
Trade & catering	8.5	8.3	6.2	7.4	7.9	5.9	7.6	3.7	7,879
Information	0.1	0.05	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	13,244
Geology & meteorology	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	18,766
Other material production	3.2	2.1	1.4	1.3	0.8	1.0	0.4	1.4	
Communal services	4.0	3.8	2.5	2.5	3.2	1.9	1.6	2.1	10,204
Health	4.4	5.3	3.5	5.4	14.6	16.3	14.6	16.2	3,735
Education	12.9	15.2	17.6	18.6	20.6	20.6	16.5	21.2	5,350
Culture	1.6	1.5	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.7	4,962
Science	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.1	9,627
Credit	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	21,095
Management body	1.8	2.3	3.6	3.2	1.8	1.3	2.2	2.4	14,666

\* Provisional.

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan 1999*.

Women are, however, more highly concentrated than men in the lowest paid sectors. According to provisional official statistics, in 1998 nearly 30 percent of women were employed in agriculture, with an average monthly wage of just \$6 a month (US\$1 = TJRs780 in 1998). The social services, health and education, accounted for a further four out of every 10 women employees (37 percent), and wages in these sectors averaged between \$5 and \$7 a month. Therefore although women may not have lost any many jobs in the manufacturing sector as have men, the jobs that they retain tend to be very poorly paid. Given that the minimum consumption basket in 1998 was estimated to be TJRs21,880 per adult per month (UNDP 1999), salaries in the social sector, where they are paid, are unlikely to provide sufficient means to live on.

Women in employment are concentrated in the lowest paid sectors of agriculture, education, and health where wages are insufficient to live on.

In addition to low salaries, many employees are working without receiving a wage at all. At January 1997, the total value of wage arrears in the Tajik economy was estimated to amount to TJRs4 billion, equivalent to 11 percent of the total wage bill. Data from the recent UNDP/World Bank TLSS in May 1999 found that more than 35 percent of those employed reported suffering from arrears.

While many continue to work without pay, others are still formally on the payroll but are "on holiday" i.e., on leave without pay. Table 3.7 summarizes the official information on

involuntary part-time workers and on people being on forced holidays in 1994 and 1996. In 1996 almost 21,000 employees were affected by involuntary part-time work and 123,300 persons were on vacation because of "administrative" reasons. The figures were even higher in 1994.

**Table 3.7 Involuntary Part-Time Workers and Forced Holidays, 1994-1996**  
(‘000)

Year	Involuntary part-time work In thousands	Forced holidays In thousands
1994	37.9	163.1
1996	20.9	123.3

Source: SSA 1999

The official statistics presented so far provide only a limited picture of the labor market. A more detailed analysis of the labor market in 1999 can be obtained by looking at data from the TLSS, carried out in May 1999.

### 3.2.2 The Labor Market in 1999

#### *Labor Force Participation*

The labor force participation rate for the country in 1999 was 56 percent, indicating that in 1999 more than half of the people aged 16 and above in Tajikistan were engaged in some form of economic activity. This is considerably higher than the crude participation rate presented in Table 3.8 above as the denominator excludes children under age 16. There are significant differences in the participation rates for men and women, with 69 percent of men of working age (16+) economically active compared with only 44 percent of women. Both of these rates are relatively low when compared to other republics of the FSU, indicating a significant proportion of the potentially economically active may be discouraged workers or may be working in the informal sector.

**Table 3.8 Labor Force Participation and Employment by Gender**  
(%)

	Total Population 16+	Men	Women
In labor force	56	69	44
Out of labor force	42	28	54
Missing data	2	3	2

Of those in labor force:			
Employed full-time	62	66	57
Employed part-time	22	19	25
Employed but temporarily absent	1	1	1
Unemployed	16	16	18

Source: TLSS 1999, De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

Of those who are economically active, the majority are in full-time employment. However a quarter of women and a fifth of men report working part-time. Women are slightly more likely to be unemployed than men, with an unemployment rate of 18 percent compared to 16 percent of men. What is striking however, is that the unemployment rate from the survey, using the ILO definition of unemployed, is over *five times* higher than the registered unemployment rate of 3 percent (see Table 3.5). What is more, this does not include the hidden unemployed (i.e., those who are formally employed but who are effectively not working because they are on leave without pay, working part-time involuntary, or working short-time hours) or discouraged workers (those who are not looking for a job because they no longer believe that they will be able to find one). De Nuebourg and Namazie (1999) estimate that when these groups are taken into account the true unemployment rate is actually 33 percent.<sup>9</sup>

A third of the economically active population is unemployed. This implies a considerable excess supply of labor in Tajikistan

Labor force participation varies by age for both men and women (Table 3.9). The highest participation rates are among men aged between 30 and 54, with between 86 and 88 percent of the men in that age-group being in the labour force. Among women, participation rates are highest for women in their forties, when children are more likely to be

reaching adolescence or even leaving home. Participation rates decline at older ages for both sexes, reflecting that women retire at age 55 and men at age 60. However, even after age 60 a considerable minority remain economically active (30 percent of men and 15 percent of women), reflecting the low value of most state pensions and the necessity of continuing to work for survival.

**Table 3.9 Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group and Gender**

	Total	Men	Women
All 16+	56.2	69.1	43.9
16-19	38.9	39.8	38.1
20-24	55.8	66.4	46.7

<sup>9</sup> When they add the hidden unemployed, the unemployment rate is 20 percent; adding the involuntary part-time workers raises it to 25 percent and adding the discouraged workers and other labour slack increases the unemployment rate to 33 percent.

25-29	66.4	84.0	48.0
30-39	70.1	88.1	54.0
40-49	72.4	88.6	58.2
50-54	64.3	86.3	40.0
55-59	49.6	69.7	24.7
60+	-	30.4	14.5

Source: TLSS 1999, adapted from De Neubourg and Namazie, 1999.

The very low participation rates among young adults are a cause for concern, with less than two in five 16-19 year olds, and only just over half of 20-24 year olds, reporting being employed or actively seeking work. Those respondents not economically active were asked the reason why they were not employed or seeking work and Table 3.10 presents the breakdown of these responses for the whole population aged over 16 and for young men and women.

**Table 3.10 Reasons for Non-participation for Younger Men and Women by Age Group (%)**

	Total population 16+			Men			Women		
	All	Men	Women	16-19	20-24	25-29	16-19	20-24	25-29
No specific job	2.2	4.3	1.2	1.9	6.2	18.9	1.1	2.8	3.8
No jobs	10.8	20.4	6.0	18.3	37.3	47.3	12.9	10.0	13.3
Study	13.8	26.0	7.5	63.1	24.3	1.4	38.7	4.6	6.1
Home care	37.1	6.0	52.4	5.7	12.4	8.1	39.7	73.4	64.8
Pensioners	19.6	22.4	18.2	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Old+disabled	6.8	8.8	5.8	0.6	4.5	1.4	0.0	1.4	1.9
Not healthy	6.3	6.8	6.0	3.3	5.1	9.5	3.6	3.4	4.6
Not willing to work	3.7	5.2	3.0	5.7	10.2	10.8	4.7	4.3	5.7

Source: TLSS 1999, adapted from De Neubourg and Namazie, 1999.

Overall among all persons aged over 16, the majority of women (52.4 percent) are not in the labor force as they are engaged in home care activities. The reasons given by men are more mixed, with 26 percent citing that they are studying and 22 percent that they are retired. However, a significant minority are discouraged workers. About 20 percent of men and 6 percent of women are not in the labor force as they believe that there are no jobs at all, and 4 percent and 2 percent respectively, believe there is no job in their area. This problem is much more acute among young people than in the population in general. Over half of men in their 20s believe there is no work and one in six women. Some of the women who report that they are engaged in home care may also in fact be discouraged workers, i.e., they would work if they thought jobs were available.

The very low labor market participation rates among adolescents is a cause of concern. There is evidence that a significant number of young people are not entering the labor market because they no longer believe that they will find a job. Unless reversed, this will result in growing social exclusion among the young, especially among young males.

What is also striking from Table 3.10 is the marked gender difference in the proportion

of 16-19 who reported that they are not in the labor force as they are studying. Given that participation rates among 16-19 are very similar, one might expect that a similar proportion would not be economically active due to continuing education. However, nearly twice as many teenage boys than teenage girls gave this as a reason, indicating a potentially large gender gap in higher education. We will return to this point in Chapter 4.

### *Unemployment*

We have already seen that true unemployment rates are significantly higher than either registered unemployment or simple International Labour Organisation (ILO) defined unemployment. We have also seen that a significant number of young people are discouraged from entering the labor market due to perceived (or real) lack of jobs. Further detailed information on unemployment by age and gender is presented in Table 3.11. Several key features stand out. Firstly, unemployment is much higher among young people than older people. Secondly, the age gap is even greater when looking at levels of "true" unemployment, reflecting the discussion above concerning the high proportion of discouraged younger workers. Thirdly, there are distinct gender differentials, but these are not consistent across the life-cycle. Young men are at a greater risk of unemployment than young women. This may be due to the fact that young women have the option of alternative activity within the home and so do not come out in the figures as unemployed. However, at ages over 25, women experience higher levels of unemployment than men. From this detailed analysis, it appears that women are slightly more disadvantaged than men in the labor market, particularly at ages over 25. However, what is most shocking is the extremely high level of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular.

**Table 3.11 Unemployment Rates by Age Group and Gender**  
(%)

	ILO U1 Definition			ILO U5 Definition (incl. hidden, involuntary, and discouraged workers)		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
16-19	30.8	34.2	26.9	54.2	57.7	50.2
20-24	22.4	23.7	20.8	45.7	48.0	42.8
25-29	16.9	15.6	19.2	42.4	39.7	47.4
30-39	12.2	11.3	13.6	32.2	30.8	34.2
40-49	10.0	9.6	10.6	26.5	23.1	31.1
50-54	6.8	6.2	8.1	19.8	18.1	23.8
55-59	9.4	6.4	20.0	27.0	21.0	47.6

Source: TLSS 1999; Adapted from De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

Active labor market policies to address youth unemployment are urgently needed if Tajikistan is not to lose a generation of workers. Active labor market policies also need to take into account the gendered nature of unemployment for workers aged over 25.

### *Employment*

Data from the TLSS on the composition of the employed labor force in Tajikistan in 1999 is presented by sector, occupation, employee status, and type of enterprise for both men and women (Tables 3.12-3.15). All classifications use the standard ILO definitions<sup>10</sup>.

Table 3.12 highlights the fact that Tajikistan remains an essentially agrarian economy, with agriculture accounting for just under half of all employment. This figure is much higher than that suggested by the official statistics in Table 3.6. The share of agriculture in total employment varies by region with Dushanbe lowest at less than 2 percent, GBAO 29 percent, RRS 37 percent, Leninabad 51 percent, and Khatlon 63 percent.

Table 3.12 also shows clear signs of gender-based segregation. Women are relatively over-represented in agriculture, education, health, and social work, while men are relatively over-represented in transport, manufacturing and construction. Surprisingly few men and women report being employed in the services sectors despite the fact that, as we saw in Chapter 1, the share of services in GDP increased from 19 percent in 1995 to 44 percent in 1998.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the TLSS is the first survey conducted within Tajikistan to use the ILO classifications. Many of the interviewers, and probably most of the respondents, were not familiar with these groupings, preferring to classify themselves in relation to the old Soviet standards. Although "conversion" tables were drawn up, there may be some errors and figures should be treated as indicative rather than absolute.

**Table 3.12 Employment by Sector**  
(%)

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Agriculture	49.3	46.2	54.1
Mining	0.3	0.4	0.3
Manufacturing	3.4	4.5	1.7
Utilities	1.6	2.3	0.6
Construction	2.5	3.9	0.4
Retail, hotel, restaurant	6.6	7.0	5.8
Transport	2.7	4.1	0.6
Finance, real estate	0.4	0.4	0.4
Insurance	0.1	0.1	0.0
Publ. admin, defence	3.7	4.6	2.4
Education	7.8	7.4	8.5
Health, social work	3.9	2.2	6.5
Other services	5.3	5.7	4.7
Other industries	8.2	7.6	9.2
Missing in sample	4.1	3.5	5.0

Source: TLSS 1999; Adapted from De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

A similar picture of occupational segregation is found in Table 3.13. The majority of people (43 percent) are employed in elementary occupations. Most of these are related to agricultural activities. Skilled agricultural work accounts for the second largest group, followed by clerks and professionals. Men are over-represented among the higher grade (skill) occupations, while women are over-represented among the lower grade (skill) occupations.

**Table 3.13 Employment by Occupation**  
(%)

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Armed Forces	0.8	1.4	0.0
Legisl., senior officials, management	1.2	1.6	0.6
Professionals	5.9	8.0	5.0
Technicians, assoc. professionals	2.6	2.7	2.3
Clerks	9.3	9.2	9.4
Service worker, sales	5.9	6.6	4.7
Skilled agricultural work	11.0	11.3	10.6
Craft and related trade work	1.6	2.5	0.2
Plant, machine operators	3.2	4.9	0.6
Elementary occupation	42.8	37.9	50.3
Other	10.4	9.9	10.9
Missing in sample	4.5	4.0	5.0

Source: TLSS 1999; Adapted from De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

Table 3.14 highlights some of the recent changes in the labor market. In the past workers were almost exclusively either employees of large state enterprises or worked on collective farms. These two categories still account for seven out of 10 workers. However, this means that three out of 10 are employed in new forms of work. Most importantly, 17 percent of men and 14 percent of women report working for themselves and 5-6 percent report working as part of a family business.

**Table 3.14 Employment by Status**  
(%)

	Total	Men	Women
Employee	63.0	63.2	62.6
Member, coop.	1.2	1.5	0.7
Own account worker	15.9	17.0	14.2
Employer	0.8	1.0	0.3
Family worker	5.2	4.7	6.1
Collective farmer	6.7	5.6	8.5
Not classif.	2.8	2.9	2.5
Missing in sample	4.4	4.0	5.1

Source: TLSS 1999; Adapted from De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

Finally, Table 3.15 shows employment disaggregated according to the type of employer and ownership of the enterprises. The majority of people still work in the public sector, in state enterprises, or on collective farms. A significant minority (16 percent), however, work in a family business or informal trading. A further 7 percent work in a privately owned business. Twice as many men work in private enterprises than women, although the proportions for both men and women are low.

Although there are slight gender differentials, the data does *not* indicate that women face significantly greater barriers in taking up self-employment as compared to men.

Tajikistan remains an agricultural and state-dominated economy. The private sector is still in its infancy and the majority of private activities are concentrated in informal family business and street trading. There appear to be no significant gender differentials in the proportions participating in new forms of economic activity.

### ***Wage differentials***

Accurate data on wages is difficult to obtain due to reporting problems. Often wages are paid in kind, or are paid in arrears, or not at all. In the former Soviet Union, wages used to make up 80 percent of a household's budget. Today, although still the most important source of household income, data from the TLSS suggests that labor income constitutes between 32 percent (of the poorest) and 42 percent (of the richest)

household's income. The combined income from the sale of foodstuffs and household assets, on average, accounts for a similar share.

**Table 3.15 Employment by Type of Enterprises and Ownership**  
(%)

	Total	Men	Women
<b>Type</b>			
Government office	18.5	19.0	16.6
State enterprise	17.9	20.8	13.5
Co-operative	1.1	1.3	0.9
Collective farmer	34.1	29.9	40.6
Joint-stock company	0.1	0.2	0.0
Joint venture	0.3	0.2	0.3
Private enterprise	4.2	5.3	2.3
Private farm	2.3	2.2	2.4
Foreign comp. Org	0.3	0.3	0.1
Family business, informal trading	16.5	16.4	16.6
<b>Ownership</b>			
Budget sector state	36.4	39.8	31.2
State controlled	35.2	31.2	41.5
Semi-private	0.4	0.4	0.3
Private	6.7	7.8	4.9
Family business, informal trading	16.5	16.4	16.6

Source: TLSS 1999; Adapted from De Nuebourg and Namazie, 1999.

There are however, considerable differences in the labor income of men and women—despite legislation guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. Table 3.16 shows the average (non-zero) wages for men and women living in households arranged by their position in the distribution of total household consumption. Those in the bottom quintile are considered to be living in the poorest households, and those in the top quintile to be living in the richest households<sup>11</sup>.

Several related features stand out. First, average wages are higher for individuals living in rich households than those in poor households. This is not surprising as the two are causally related—people who earn more are generally richer than people who earn less, although wage income is not the only factor influencing well-being. Second, virtually the difference between the average labor income of rich and poor households is accounted for by differences in *male* wages. Women's wages are almost flat. Thirdly, women wages are significantly less than men's, averaging just TJR\$2,491 a month compared with TJR\$9,649 for men (note that TJR\$1200=US\$1, so this means women's wages were just \$2 a month compared with \$8 for men). This is a function of women's occupational segregation into low paid occupations such as education and health and low skilled occupations such as agriculture.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of this, see Falkingham, 2000a.

**Table 3.16 Average Monthly Wages within Quintiles of Total Household Consumption (TJR)**

	Total	Men	Women
Total	8,161	9,649	2,491
Bottom 20%	4,692	4,957	1,495
Q2	5,633	6,692	2,124
Q3	6,587	7,877	2,349
Q4	8,008	8,675	3,357
Top 20%	16,064	20,042	3,131

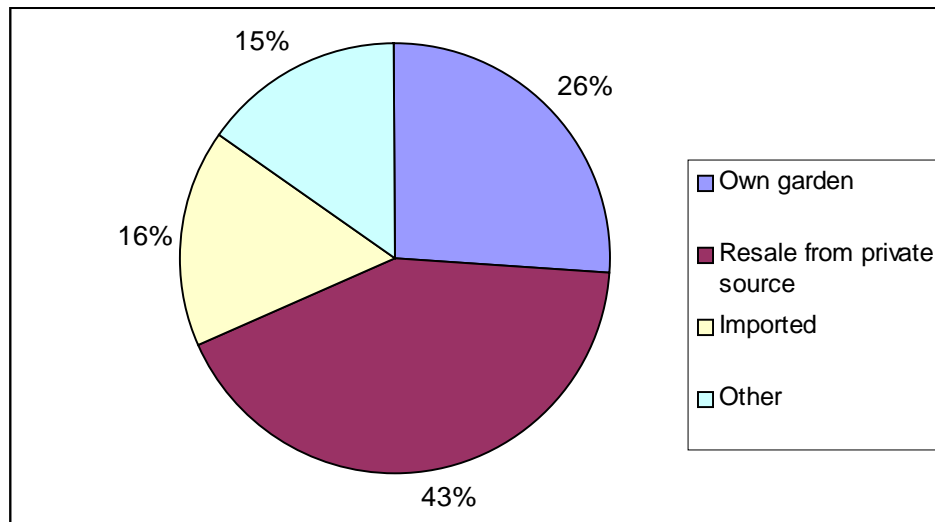
Source: Author's own analysis, TLSS 1999

### 3.2.3 Gender and New Forms of Economic Activity

There has been little systematic study of the Tajik labor market and new forms of economic activity. However, there are a number of ad hoc studies that give some insight into the non-state sector. From Table 3.14 it can be concluded that nearly a quarter of the labor force are now working in the private sector and the majority of these (70 percent) are working in family businesses based on trade. Many of these are engaged in the sale in local bazaars of food and other products produced by the household or in the resale of products purchased from local collective farms, although a minority are selling imported goods from abroad.

**Figure 3.4: Source of Goods for Sale in the Bazaar**

Source: Survey of the Household and Bazaar Economics of Tajikistan. Save the Children/US.



There are considerable regional differences in the role played by women in the new bazaar economy. Table 3.17 shows the results of survey of the composition of market traders carried out by the SSA in conjunction with the WID Bureau in 1998. Women made up 85 percent of all traders in GBAO compared with under one half in Dushanbe.

**Table 3.17 Market Traders by Region and Gender**

	All	Dushanbe	Leninabad	Khatlon	GBAO	RRS
No. of traders per day	30,444	11,443	8,209	7,827	607	2,295
No. and share of women	14,910 (49%)	5,149 (45%)	4,597 (56%)	3,569 (46%)	516 (85%)	1,079 (47%)
Of whom:						
Women over 55	1,174	360	138	511	46	119
Girls under legal age	1,228	412	322	356	41	97

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan 1999*.

Sharp variations were also noted within regions. This was particularly true in Khatlon, where in the northern part of the province (Kurgan-Tube, Sarband, Vakhsh and Gozimalik districts) women represented 58 percent of those engaged in retail trade. However, in the eastern part of Khatlon (Kuliab city, Vosey, Moskovsky, Parkharsky, and other districts) the proportion of women traders was considerably less at just under 22 percent. A gendered division of labor within the market place was also noted, with men largely doing work requiring physical strength such as trade in meat, animals, grain, flour, sugar, potatoes, onions, and carrots as well as cars, spare parts, petrol, and electrical goods. Women on the other hand primarily sold garden foodstuffs, fruit, milk and dairy products, bread, clothing, etc.

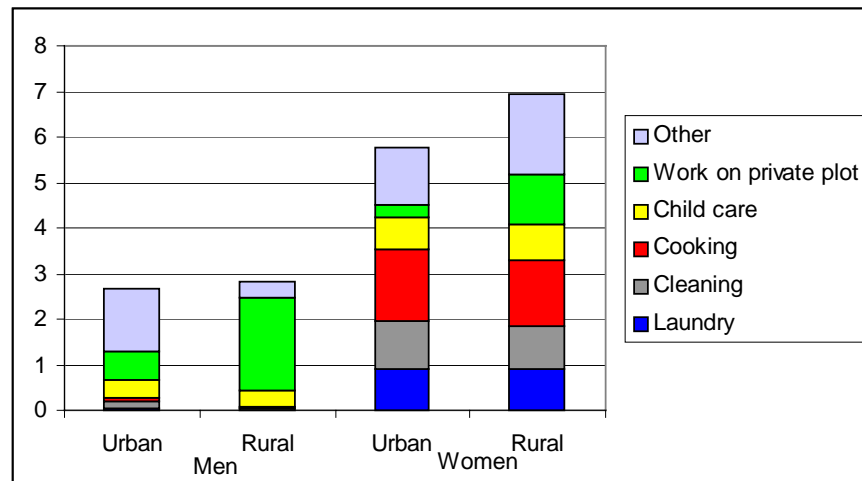
A number of factors limit women's ability to engage in new private business initiatives, including lack of relevant entrepreneurial skills, access to capital, and gender discrimination. Many women lack private savings and have no access to the capital market or to venture capital. There are a number of small-scale projects that provide micro-credits and micro-grants to private undertakings, including TASIF and the WID bureau, but their reach is limited. Encouragement of the development of a well-functioning labor market and the institutional conditions for private business activities are major elements in the proposed World Bank pro-poor employment strategy (World Bank 2000).

### 3.2.4 The Gendered Division of Unpaid Labor

Despite the advances of women in the public sphere during the Soviet period, women continue to bear most, if not all, of the burden of unpaid work within the household. With the closure of state-run kindergartens, and the increasing reliance on the consumption of home produced foodstuffs, the burden of unpaid work in the home has increased rather than diminished as a result of transition. The SSA/WID survey collected time use information

from both men and women. The time spent on unpaid work in the home is summarized below.

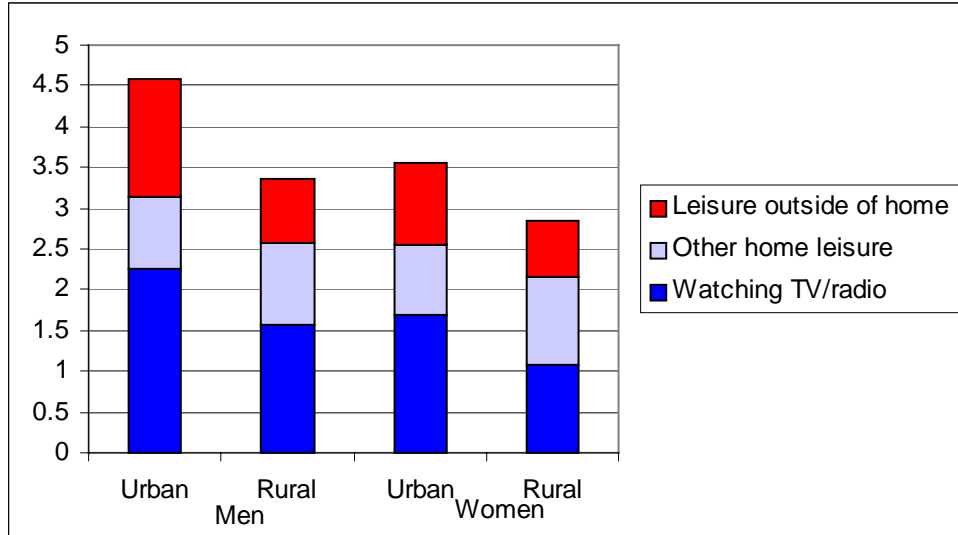
**Figure 3.5 Time Spent on Unpaid Work within the Home by Men and Women**



Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan 1999*.

Women spend an average of 6.3 hours a day on unpaid work compared with just 3.3 hours by men. Rural women spend longer than urban women (7 hours versus 5.8 hours). Looking at how men and women spend their time, both urban and rural women spend more time on cooking, cleaning, and laundry combined than the entire unpaid labor of men. In rural areas the majority of men's time is spent on their private plot (2 hours) whereas in urban areas men spend time on "other tasks". Many women, particularly in rural areas, also lack access to domestic appliances that might ease the burden of domestic work. A fifth of women questioned in the SSA/WID survey did not have a washing machine.

As a result of greater reliance on subsistence production to make ends meet, both men and women have less leisure time than in the Soviet era. However, women have less free time than men. Urban men enjoy more leisure time than their female counterparts and rural women spend the least amount of time on leisure. The majority of leisure time is spent within the household, reflecting families' economic hardship. Only 8 percent of urban women, and only 2 percent of rural women, reported that they are now able to visit the theater or cinema. Lack of resources is also taking its toll on the Tajik tradition of hospitality, with a third of urban women and a fifth of rural women reporting that they were no longer able to entertain guests.

**Figure 3.6 Time Spent on Leisure by Men and Women**

Source: SSA, *Gender Statistics in the Republic of Tajikistan*.

In sum, it appears that women are bearing the heaviest burden of economic transition. There has been an intensification of women's workload with increasing participation in both formal and informal labor markets alongside an unequal household division of labor. Efforts to care for and protect their children have diverted many women away from the political process with the result that their political representation is now virtually nonexistent. At the same time, a renewed emphasis on women's domestic role means that women are in danger of becoming isolated from society, with implications for their ability to participate fully in both civil society and the political life of the country.