

Chapter 5. Gender and Poverty

This chapter explores the gender dimension of poverty within Tajikistan. Both the causes and outcomes of poverty are heavily engendered and women and girls have borne a greater share of the cost of economic transition. As previous chapters have shown, women often assume responsibility for "making ends meet" when real income falls. This has resulted in the intensification of women's workloads with increasing participation in formal and, more importantly, informal labor markets alongside an unequal household division of labor (Chapter 3). 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 (Chapter 3). Large cuts in social service programs such as health care, family planning, child care and education have also disproportionately affected women with long-term implications for entitlements, capabilities, and rights (Chapter 4).

5.1 Dimensions of Poverty in Tajikistan

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept. Conventionally poverty has been defined in terms of income or expenditure based on the assumption that a person's material standard of living largely determines their well-being. Increasingly, however, it is being recognized that material resources, or rather lack thereof, reflect just one, albeit very important, dimension of poverty. Monetary measures fail to capture other important aspects of individual's well-being such as public goods, community resources, social relations, culture, security, and the natural environment. The work of Amartya Sen has focused attention away from material resources towards an individual's *capability* to live a healthy life, free of avoidable morbidity, having adequate nourishment, being informed and knowledgeable, being capable of reproduction, enjoying personal security, and being able to freely and actively participate in society.

A summary of recent trends within the different dimensions of poverty in Tajikistan is provided in Box 5.1. As is discussed in more depth in Section 5.2, there has been a rapid increase in material poverty as real household incomes and expenditures have fallen dramatically. In 1999 according to the TLSS around 95 percent of people lived in households where the total household expenditure was below the level of the official minimum consumption basket and female-headed households were at a greater risk of extreme poverty than others. There has also been a significant rise in capability poverty as the educational attainment and health status of the population has fallen. Enrolment rates have declined for all types of education, and rates have fallen more sharply for girls than boys, resulting in an increase in the gender-gap (see Chapter 4.1). In 1998 women made up just under a quarter of all those in tertiary education.

The health status of the entire population has worsened with the re-emergence of communicable and infectious diseases. The incidences of tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and malaria have all increased and diarrhoea among children under five is commonplace. There is

also evidence of rising child malnutrition. Women have been particularly hard hit as reproductive health services have collapsed. The majority of women now give birth at home and a growing number among the poor are unattended by trained personnel. Informal charges for health care consultations and services are widespread as doctors and nurses are forced to supplement their meager wages and patients pay for essential drugs and supplies. This has resulted in widening inequalities in access to health care services, which are disproportionately used by women and children (see Chapter 4.2).

Box 5.1 Dimensions of Poverty and Recent Trends in Tajikistan

Dimension	Summary Trend
Material poverty	↑
Capability poverty: education	↑
Enrolment in compulsory education	↓
Gender gap	↑
Enrolment in higher education	↓
Gender gap	↑
Capability poverty: health	↑
General morbidity	↕
Child health status	↓
Reproductive health status	↓
Participation	↓
<i>Political</i>	
Representation of women	↓
<i>Economic</i>	
Labor force participation	↓
Gender gap	↓
Unemployment	↑
Personal Security	↓
At home	↓
In society	↓

Political and economic participation has also decreased and again women appear to have been affected disproportionately. Women have all but disappeared from political office, holding just 3 percent of parliamentary seats and constituting less than 10 percent of elected local government members (see Section 3.1). Labor force participation rates have fallen for both men and women as inefficient state enterprises close or streamline their work force. Male participation has fallen more than female, with the result that the share of women in the labor force has actually increased, with female workers now comprising 46 percent of the total. However, women suffer higher unemployment than men, with 29 percent of economically active women unemployed as opposed to 25 percent of men. Women are also concentrated in the lowest paid sectors of the economy—agriculture, education and health—where wages are insufficient to live on (see Section 3.2).

Finally, although personal security has improved significantly since the signing of the peace agreement in 1997, harassment and corruption remain widespread. Harassment of men on some major trunk roads has shifted the burden of travel and marketing onto women. In some areas fear for the physical safety of their teenage daughters has been cited by parents as a major reason for girls dropping out of school. But personal insecurity is not limited to the public sphere. Economic stress and the frustrations of lack of employment and income have spilt out into increased tension and violence at the household level (see Section 2.3). Uncertainty has also been cited as a major factor in limiting fertility—another indicator of a society under economic, social, and psychological stress.

How do these different dimensions of poverty relate to the individual Tajik's own perceptions of what is meant by poverty? Between November 1997 and October 1999, the Tajikistan Social Investment Fund conducted seminars and surveys in all major regions of the country, including urban and rural, mountainous and valley, and war-affected communities, to inform the targeting of its micro-projects. Local government officials, mahalla representatives, farm managers and laborers, women, and pensioners were asked to identify community-specific poverty criteria. From their perspective "poverty" includes lack of clothing, food shortages, inadequate salaries, and low pensions. Some respondents also included lack of land or livestock in the definition. In the war-affected areas, such as in Khatlon and the Karategin Valley, local

Women's Impressions of Changes Since the Soviet Era

"Life was fine in Soviet era but now it's getting worse. During the Soviet era we worked hard but we were earning, we knew we would get a salary; but now there is no work."

"Children had an easier life then, sending them to school was not a problem, and they did not have to work on the land the way they have to now."

"My children ask me why I can't buy them shoes to go to school. The older ones are getting angry; they say I want them to help me all the time, but I can't buy them shoes to go to school. What can I say to them?"

"Children used to know what sweets were in those times. There were even lunch shops at school. Now there is not even coal to heat the school in winter."

Source: Kanji and Gladwin (2000).

communities also cited shortages of construction material and insufficient shelter. In contrast, communities residing in valleys (in Leninabad, Khatlon and the Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS) mentioned inadequate drinking and irrigation water, and low crop yields. Mountainous/remote communities in areas such as Gorno-Badakhshan (GBO) included lack of physical infrastructure (transportation, communication, electricity), lack of social infrastructure (health, hygiene, education), unemployment, and underdeveloped production and distribution channels (World Bank 2000). Universally, participants reported that life was better in the Soviet period and that poverty had worsened over time. Many women voiced concerns about the impact on the lives of their children.

5.2 Material Poverty

Poverty within Tajikistan is not new. It was widely recognized as one of the poorest republics of the Soviet Union. In 1989, just prior to "transition", 51 percent of the population had a per capita monthly income below 75 rubles compared with 33 percent in Kyrgyz Republic, 16 percent in Kazakhstan, and 5 percent in Russia (Table 8.4, Atkinson and Micklewright 1992). After independence the country experienced an abrupt economic decline and several years of civil conflict, and today Tajikistan ranks among the poorest countries in the world with an estimated per capita GDP of only \$215 (UNDP 1999).

The first nationally representative survey of household living standards in Tajikistan was carried out in May 1999 and the results of this are presented in the recent World Bank *Poverty Assessment*. Table 5.1, drawn from that report, summarizes the results for a variety of different poverty standards.

The results of the TLSS confirm that the vast majority of the population of Tajikistan are poor. Two thirds live below the World Bank poverty line of purchasing power parity (PPP) \$2.15 a day and a third live below the "extreme" poverty line set by the Tajik State Statistical Agency at around 30 percent of the value of the minimum subsistence basket.

In general terms the TLSS results do not seem to show any significant difference in the poverty rates for men and women in Tajikistan. However, in common with traditional economic approaches, poverty is defined here by the expenditure of the *household* and as such involves the implicit assumption that resources are distributed equally within the household and all members share the same standard of living. Evidence suggests that this is rarely the case in reality, and that within the same household women and female children may be relatively poorer than other household members (Bruce and Dwyer 1988, Evans 1989, Moore 1992). As previous chapters have shown, there is also evidence that the circumstances of transition may increase gender-based disparities within the household rather than reduce them. Therefore, statistics based on household measures may *underestimate* the true extent to which women are affected by poverty.

Table 5.1 Poverty Measures in Tajikistan

Minimum consumption basket ,1998 (TJR\$32,083)	
% poor	95.7%
P1	56.4
P2	36.8
\$2.15 PPP a day (poverty line = TJR\$15,111)	
% poor	65.4%
P1	22.9
P2	10.9
\$1.075 PPP a day (poverty line = TJR\$7,557)	
% poor	16.9%
P1	4.4
P2	1.7
State Statistical Agency (poverty line = TJR\$20,000)	
% poor	82.6%
P1	35.8
P2	19.0
State Statistical Agency (extreme poverty line = TJR\$10,000)	
% poor	32.8%
P1	9.2
P2	3.9

Source: World Bank 2000.

Notes: Sample size 14,142 individuals, based on equivalent household expenditure with $\theta = 0.75$.

The head-count (% poor) measures the incidence of poverty; the poverty gap (P1) is a measure of the depth of poverty, and the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke index (P2) provides a measure of the severity of poverty.

Female-headed households (FHHs) are likely to face particular problems. The civil war created approximately 25,000 female-headed households, predominately in Khatlon and Garm. Some women lost their husbands during the war. Others lost their husbands to emigration. A few of the latter group abandoned their families and created new families. In all of these cases, the woman became the head of the household. According to the Save the Children 1998 Socio-Economic Survey of Households, Farms and Bazaars, FHHs have less access to land, irrigation and livestock. They are also less food secure, but receive more humanitarian assistance. Even with this assistance, their monthly income is less than male-headed households.

Using data from the TLSS, Table 5.2a presents the percentage within each quintile of the distribution of per capita expenditure, with extreme poverty being defined as being in the bottom 20 percent of the distribution. It confirms that individuals living in female-headed households experience a greater risk of extreme poverty (29 percent) than those in male-headed households (21 percent). However, such households account for only a fifth of all "extremely poor" people.

Furthermore, as Table 2.4 previously illustrated, FHHs encompass a variety of different types of households, which face differential risks of poverty. Lone mother and other FHHs with

children experience the greatest risk, while households with no children are less likely to be extremely poor. Surprisingly, no elderly women living alone fall in the bottom quintile of household expenditure. The reasons for this may be twofold. Firstly, this may reflect that fact that the receipt of an old age pension, however small, may be sufficient to lift them out of extreme poverty. Those that have access to cash income, even if that access is intermittent, may be privileged over other groups. An indication of this is the statement by one respondent in the Buryat region in the east of the Russian Federation that "*It is [now] better to have two live grandparents than to have two cows*" (Humphrey 1998, pp.465). Additionally, this vulnerable group of lone elderly women may more likely to be in receipt of humanitarian aid and again the imputed value of food aid and other assistance may have moved them up the distribution. Secondly, the finding may be a statistical artefact, reflecting the use of per capita household expenditure as the welfare measure. Work by Lanjouw, Milanovic and Paternostro (1998) has shown that using a per capita welfare indicator can lead to a conclusion that larger households are poorer, while alternative equivalence scales will reverse this policy conclusion.

Table 5.2a Poverty Incidence Among Individuals by Sex of the Head of Household, Using Per Capita Household Expenditure (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All
Male-headed households	21	22	21	20	17	100
Female-headed households	29	20	20	16	15	100
Lone mother households	27	20	9	30	15	100
Other FHHs with children	30	21	21	15	12	100
Lone elderly woman	-	8	23	31	39	100
Other FHHs with no children	9	10	7	16	58	100

Source: Authors own analysis of the TLSS.

Work carried out as part of the World Bank *Poverty Assessment* suggests that the most appropriate equivalence scale for Tajikistan is to adjust total household expenditure by household size raised to the power of 0.75. This assumes that larger households enjoy some economies of scale, but is not as strong an assumption as that used by the European Community which uses the square root of household size (i.e., $\theta = 0.5$). Using this measure a different picture is obtained (Table 5.2b). Individuals living in FHHs households are over a third *more likely* to be in extreme poverty than those living in male-headed households. Individuals in lone mother households are most at risk of extreme poverty, being over *twice* as likely to be poor than male-headed households. Moreover, now lone elderly women are at a slightly higher risk of poverty than the population in general. Thus policymakers concerned with the targeting of resources to the most vulnerable groups need to be sensitized to the effects of different assumptions.

Table 5.2b Poverty Incidence Among Individuals By Sex of the Head of Household, Using Equivalent Household Expenditure ($\theta = 0.75$) (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All
Male-headed households	19	21	21	21	19	100
Female-headed households	26	21	20	16	17	100
Lone mother households	39	14	19	21	8	100
Other FHHs with children	26	22	21	15	16	100
Lone elderly woman	23	23	23	23	8	100
Other FHHs with no children	15	12	14	6	54	100

Source: Authors own analysis of the TLSS.

5.3 Material Poverty and Other Dimensions of Well-Being

5.3.1 Poverty and Education

As Section 4.1.2 has shown, as the costs associated with education increase, children from poorer families are effectively excluded from participating in school life. Many poor families are forced to keep their children at home simply because they can no longer afford the costs of shoes and uniforms, let alone rising bus fares and fees for textbooks. About 37 percent of children have missed school for two or more weeks in the last academic year and a third of these children reported that the main reason for this was lack of shoes or clothes (Table 4.4). Absence rates for children from the poorest households rose to 44 percent, of whom four in 10 cited lack of suitable clothing. There were no significant gender differences in absenteeism rates, although of those absent a higher proportion of girls than boys reported poor health as the main reason for their absence (18 percent versus 13 percent).

5.3.2 Poverty and Health

The relationship between poverty and health in Tajikistan is not straightforward. Table 5.3 shows that poverty and health are positively correlated, with the poorest both reporting illness and seeking care at lower rates. This may reflect that fact that the very poor, lacking the resources to access medical care easily, define illness more narrowly than those who are able to afford treatment. The poorest may also be deferring care (and the recognition of illness) until their illness is severe.

Table 5.3 Self-Reported Morbidity by Quintile of Per Capita Household Expenditure (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All Taj
Chronic illness lasting more than six months						
Yes	8.3	8.2	8.7	10.5	14.0	9.7
No	91.7	91.8	91.3	89.5	86.0	90.3
Acute illness in the last two weeks						
Yes	6.7	7.9	7.2	8.3	11.5	8.1
No	93.3	92.1	92.8	91.7	88.5	91.9
Sought medical assistance in last two weeks						
Yes	3.9	5.3	5.2	5.9	8.8	5.7
No	96.1	94.7	94.8	94.1	91.2	94.3
Hospitalized in the last year						
Yes	3.5	4.7	5.0	6.0	7.3	5.2
No	96.5	95.3	95.0	94	92.7	94.8

Note: All chi-square significant at ($p < 0.001$).

Section 4.2.3 above has detailed the growing inequalities in access to health care in Tajikistan. Although the poor report less illness, when they do require medical care it appears that the *cost* of that care is a barrier to access more frequently than for other groups (Table 5.4). Those in the poorest fifth of the population were nearly twice as likely as those in the richest fifth to report affordability as the main reason for not seeking health care. However, even among the richest fifth, lack of resources was cited by a quarter of respondents. This is perhaps not surprising, given that an estimated 95 percent of the population of Tajikistan are currently living below the official minimum subsistence basket. There is no significant gender difference with a third of both men and women who report needing health care citing affordability as the main barrier to health care. However, given that women and children are the main consumers of health care services, this does have worrying implications from a gender perspective.

Table 5.4 Reasons Given for Why Respondents Did Not Seek Medical Assistance by Quintile (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All Taj	Me n	Women
Self medicated	42	49	50	55	65	52	51	50
Believed problem would go away	11	3	16	5	6	8	8	10
Too far/facility closed/poor service	1	2	4	5	3	3	3	3
Could not afford	42	41	28	30	24	33	33	33
Other	5	5	2	5	2	4	5	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: All chi-square significant at ($p < 0.001$).

Source: Author's own analysis of the TLSS, May 1999.

Material poverty is only one indicator of the quality of life in Tajikistan.

Quality of Life in Tajikistan

- 7 percent of all households report that their home was damaged during the war (6 percent male-headed households; 9 percent female-headed household), of which a quarter experienced significant damage and a third almost completely destroyed.
- Less than half of all households have access to piped water. Nearly a quarter are reliant on water from river/lake/ponds and a further eighth on spring water (probably actually the best source!).
- Of those who have piped water, a quarter reported that water was only available for five hours a day or less; and only 36 percent reported 24-hour availability.
- Only a half of households reported that their water quality was good/excellent and a half reported fair/poor.
- About 75 percent of households reported no source of *hot* water.
- Only 14 percent of households have a flush toilet; 85 percent rely on an outside latrine.
- The most common source of fuel used by households for cooking was wood (43 percent), followed by manure (17.5 percent), and cotton stem (12.3 percent). Similarly, the most common usual source of heat was wood stove (45 percent), followed by manure/peat (23.6 percent). Burning solid fuels indoors has important implications for health as indoor air pollution is associated with numerous respiratory complaints.
- A third of households had only heated their home for 3 months or less in the last year; two thirds heated it for 4 months or less.
- About 14 percent of households have a phone inside the dwelling, 17 percent rely on neighbors, 54 percent stated that they had no access to a phone.

Table 5.5 shows household's satisfaction with life in general.¹⁴ About 65 percent of respondents are either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with their life at present. These findings are disturbing as they indicate high levels of psychological stress and insecurity within the Tajik population. Taking a broad view of well-being, it is clear that not only are there high levels of economic (or material) poverty, but also growing social exclusion and alienation.

¹⁴ The Spearman rank correlation between subjective poverty and life satisfaction was high at 0.45, and significant at $p < 0.0001$.

Table 5.5 Satisfaction With Life at Present

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All Taj	MHH	FHH
Very satisfied	-	1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	-
Satisfied	19	30	38	38	45	34	34	29
Unsatisfied	63	58	54	54	49	55	54	62
Very unsatisfied	19	10	8	8	5	10	10	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Chi-square significant at ($p < 0.001$).

FHH - female-headed household, MHH - male-headed household.

5.4 Poverty and Household Coping Strategies

Women and their families report using a range of different strategies to help them survive on limited resources. Howell (1994) classified these strategies into four main groups:

- (a) Reductive strategies—including reduced consumption, not just of luxuries but also of basic items such as meat, sugar and coal;
- (b) Depleting strategies—through the sale of assets, particularly livestock in rural areas but also household goods;
- (c) Maintaining strategies—by borrowing from relatives or friends and raising credit from suppliers or producers; and
- (d) Regenerative strategies—including trade and home production of food and clothing for sale.

Evidence on how households in Tajikistan are actually living with poverty points to use of all of these, but worryingly over time there appears to be *increasing* use of reductive, depleting, and maintaining strategies, which are not sustainable in the longer term.

Table 5.6 provides information about a range of coping strategies households reported employing with regard to food consumption over the last six months. There is a clear relationship between poverty and the proportion of households reporting the use of a particular strategy. However, what is most striking is the *widespread* nature of behavior change within Tajikistan. Even among the most well-off households, nearly 30 percent reported having reduced the number of meals a day and a similar proportion reported eating smaller portions. This rose to over 60 percent among the poorest households.

Table 5.6 Households Reporting Having Engaged in Selected Coping Strategies in the Last Six Months by Quintile of Per Capita Household Expenditure and by Gender of Head (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All Taj	MHH	FHH
Reduce number of meals a day ^a	61	44	42	44	29	44	44	45
Eat smaller portions ^a	63	45	47	45	30	46	45	51
Find other work ^a	45	35	31	35	26	34	34	31
Sell household assets	29	25	28	29	27	28	27	30
Borrow	37	33	34	34	30	34	33	37
Beg ^a	7	3	1	1	<1	3	2	3
Send children to relatives ^a	9	6	3	2	3	5	4	7

Note: ^a chi-square significant at ($p < 0.001$).

Source: Author's own analysis of the TLSS.

FHH - female-headed household; MHH - male-headed household.

An indication of the pervasive nature of financial insecurity for households across Tajikistan is the fact that over a quarter of all households had sold assets in the last month, and a third had had to borrow from relatives, friends, and neighbors. These proportions were roughly constant for households *across the entire distribution*.

There were no statistically significant differences between the coping strategies adopted by FHHs and MHHs, although more women than men reported eating smaller portions, selling household assets, and borrowing from friends and neighbors while more men reported finding other work.

In addition to the coping strategies already employed by households, respondents claimed that they would use a variety of coping strategies over the *next* six months. A higher proportion of households thought that they would have to modify their diet still further and/or find other work. A quarter thought that they would have to sell household assets and over a quarter would have to borrow to make ends meet. About 2 percent thought that they would have to resort to begging. Again there was no difference between MHHs and FHHs households.

Migration is often seen as a strategy of the last resort. About 2 percent of households reported that they had had to migrate within Tajikistan in last six months, and 3 percent reported that at least one member had migrated to outside the republic. The same proportions reported that they envisaged migrating either internally or externally in the next 6 months. More encouragingly, however, is also extensive use of regenerative livelihood strategies, including home production of food and trade. The most basic necessity within any household is food, and by far the most important coping strategy with regard to ensuring its supply is its

self-production. About 84 percent of all households reported having access to an individual garden plot and 72 percent of households reported consuming food grown by the household in the last seven days. Access to land is therefore a critical factor in many households' survival.

Table 5.7 Households Reporting That They Are Likely to Engage In Selected Coping Strategies In The Next Six Months by Quintile of Per Capita Household Expenditure and by Gender of Head (%)

	Poorest 20%	2	3	4	Richest 20%	All Taj	MHH	FHH
Reduce number of meals a day **	46%	43%	43%	41%	33%	41%	41%	41%
Eat smaller portions **	47%	41%	41%	40%	31%	40%	39%	42%
Find other work #	40%	37%	32%	35%	30%	35%	35%	35%
Sell household assets	25%	19%	25%	23%	21%	23%	23%	23%
Borrow #	33%	29%	31%	27%	23%	28%	28%	29%
Beg **	4%	2%	2%	3%	<1%	2%	2%	2%
Send children to relatives #	6%	5%	4%	2%	2%	4%	4%	2%

Note: ** chi-square significant at ($p < 0.001$), * chi-square significant at ($p < 0.01$), # chi-square significant at ($p < 0.05$).

Much of the burden of survival falls on women. Qualitative research conducted in GBAO in 1999 found that women worry more than men about the everyday problems of managing food in the household, and are more prepared to ask others for help, and to consider trading and other activities that could generate income to buy food for the household (Kanji and Gladwin 2000).

"Women suffer more because we have to think about what to give the children for breakfast"

"Men escape more from the problems we faced – they go out sometimes. Women are constantly with the problems of the home and children."

"Women worry about the home and children more than men. When I worry, my husband says 'why do you worry so much? We will eat what God gives us. I get very upset when he says this—he does not understand."

Source: Kanji and Gladwin 2000.

As Chapter 3 illustrates, 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. Furthermore, efforts to care for and protect their families have meant that women have less time to devote to other activities. Poverty reduction strategies that are sensitive to the gendered nature of poverty and that both empower women to maximize their existing entitlements, enhance their capabilities, and facilitate

their participation in political, economic, and civil society are essential.

5.5 Towards Gender-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategies

Gender-sensitive poverty reduction strategies are desirable, from both an equity and efficiency perspective. It is increasingly recognized that to achieve sustainable development investments in both women and men are needed. Low levels of human capital and poor health status not only depress women's quality of life but they also limit economic productivity and growth. Failure to address the factors that limit women's participation will impede economic efficiency. Furthermore, since women tend to use a higher proportion of their income on children and household resources, poverty reduction strategies that increase women's income are more likely to have a positive effect on overall levels of well-being than if they are addressed to men. This is particularly the case in Tajikistan, where children under age 18 constitute 48 percent of the population.

When developing poverty reduction strategies, Beneria and Bisnath (1996) argue that it is imperative to focus on gender as a separate category from "women" and as such it is important to look not only at women in isolation, but at women in relation to men and the institutions and ideologies that govern women's rights, entitlements, and capabilities. It is not sufficient to improve women's capabilities, for example with training programs; it is also necessary to break down the barriers that prevent women from then deploying these capabilities in order to move out of poverty. There is a danger that, without doing this, poverty reduction policies may actually reinforce women's subordinate position within the household and community. For example, micro-enterprise projects that promote low-paid craft production for women without training them in marketing or other better paid skills, or without addressing institutional impediments and gender stereotypes that prevent them from full participation, may merely replace one low paid option with another.

Similarly in addition to focusing on women's entitlements, through increasing their access to land-ownership and use, credit and other productive resources that have the potential to facilitate income generation, there is also a need to provide women with *enabling* resources that will allow them to take greater control over their lives and maximize the returns to their entitlements. This will involve the removal of both legal obstacles and cultural constraints.

In common with other republics of the FSU, Tajikistan's legal and administrative systems do not explicitly discriminate against women. Gender equality is enshrined in the Tajik Constitution, and in a body of legislation including the Code of Labor Laws, the Code of Civil Laws, the Law on the Protection of the Health of the Population, and the Code of Laws relating to Marriage and the Family. A delegation attended the UN Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in October 1995 and based on its recommendations the Tajik Government has developed a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women 1998-2005.

However, although in principle women have equal legal rights to men, in reality there remain many barriers to their equal participation in Tajik society reflecting deeply entrenched prejudices regarding appropriate roles for women. Many women are excluded from the process of obtaining land rights to the new "dekhan" or "private" farms. Article 69 of the Land Code includes an explicit presumption that the applicant has "the necessary knowledge, qualifications and agricultural experience," and many *kolkoz* administrators are extremely dismissive of women's capabilities regarding farming. There have been several instances where FHHs have been denied land on the basis of their lack of "man" power, despite the fact that women employees are relied upon to pick the cotton and to perform other physically arduous tasks. Women are also effectively excluded from some forms of economic activity. As Chapter 3 shows there is strong gender-based occupational segregation, with women concentrated in low paid sectors such as agriculture, education, and health. This in part reflects the fact that girls have less access to technical and vocational education, and fewer are studying the subjects necessary for full participation in the new forms of economic activity that are part of a market economy. Over four times as many boys as girls are studying economics, and just one in five of those studying subjects related to industry are female.