Kazakhstan
Country Gender Assessment

Asian Development Bank
Kazakhstan
Country Gender Assessment

Asian Development Bank
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables and Figures</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency Equivalents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Background and Context</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Country Situation and Policy Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. National Policies and Institutions on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Crosscutting Gender Issues</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Sex-Disaggregated Statistics and Data</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Gender Roles and Norms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Urban and Rural Disparities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Gender Disparities in Employment and the Labor Market</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Human Development Issues for Women and Men</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Gender Issues in Key Sectors for ADB Operations</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Transport</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Urban Services and Infrastructure</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. Conclusions</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Points to Consider in Project Design and Preparation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Definitions of Gender and Development Terms</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables and Figures

Tables
1. Gender and Development Indicators for Selected Central Asian Republics 4
2. Women in Legislative and Representative Bodies, 2010 16
3. Women in Appointed Positions in the Executive Branch, 2010 17
4. Female and Male Students by Specialization in Vocational Schools and Colleges, Academic Year 2010–2011 26
5. Female and Male Students by Specialization in Universities, Academic Year 2010–2011 27

Figures
1. Yearly Comparison of Global Gender Gap Index Scores for Kazakhstan, by Subcategory 5
2. Gender Equity Index Scores for Central Asian Republics, 2012 6
3. Distribution of Employees by Selected Types of Employment, 2010 21
4. Women’s Wages as a Proportion of Men’s Wages, 2005–2010 (%) 22
5. Distribution of Student Enrollment by Type of Educational Institution, Academic Year 2010–2011 26
Preface

This country gender assessment for Kazakhstan builds on a previous assessment published in 2006, as well as on experience gained by Asian Development Bank (ADB) in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Kazakhstan. It takes into account ADB’s Strategy 2020 and the evolution of ADB-wide gender equality strategies and targets.

The previous assessment provided an overview of gender issues across a number of broad topics as well as general recommendations for gender mainstreaming in ADB projects. This current assessment, however, takes a different approach. While reviewing progress toward gender equality and women’s empowerment overall, it focuses particularly on key constraints to gender equality in ADB’s core areas of operations, primarily within transport, urban services, and private sector development and entrepreneurship.

The gender issues highlighted in ADB core sectors should also be considered in the context of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Kazakhstan in general. Gender mainstreaming in future operations should rest on an understanding of both the progress already made in Kazakhstan toward gender equality and the critical inequalities that remain. Many of the barriers to gender equality encountered in the ADB sectors are underpinned by deeper structural disparities in terms of how women and men are positioned in the economy, their access to assets and resources, their ability to influence decision making, and their access to social protection.

This assessment is reflected in ADB’s country partnership strategy for 2012–2016 and will subsequently serve as a resource for staff and consultants planning and managing projects under this strategy. While this document has been prepared primarily for use by ADB, it is hoped that it will prove to be a useful resource to the government, civil society organizations, other international agencies, and individuals working in the field of gender and development in Kazakhstan.

The assessment methodology included in-country consultations and reviews of secondary sources. Consultations were conducted in Astana and Almaty with the ADB Resident Mission and with representatives of government agencies, civil society organizations, intergovernment organizations, donors, and international organizations. A focus group was held in Akmola oblast to consult with women about issues facing rural communities. The purpose of the consultations and meetings was to confirm preliminary findings and identify priorities relevant to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in future projects. Two national gender experts contributed additional research and information.

ADB’s Policy on Gender and Development (1998) adopts mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment. The ADB approach to gender and development, specifically the promotion of gender equality, is a dual one that includes treating gender as a crosscutting theme in all social and economic processes and adopting targeted measures to address egregious gender disparities.

Since 2006, when the previous country strategy and operational plan were prepared for Kazakhstan, ADB has formulated a long-term strategic framework, Strategy 2020, which highlights gender equity as one of five drivers of change. Strategy 2020 notes that women are the largest group excluded from the benefits of economic expansion in the regions where ADB operates. It also notes that gender equity is essential for the reduction of poverty, improvement of living standards, and sustainability of economic growth. Women’s empowerment is a goal that ADB shares with its developing member countries. The results framework formulated in light of Strategy 2020 established corporate targets to be met by 2012, namely, that 40% of all ADB operations and 50% of those financed through the Asian Development Fund should include significant gender mainstreaming.
Currency Equivalents

as of 15 October 2013

Currency Unit – tenge
T1.00 = $0.0065
$1.00 = T153.5

Abbreviations

ADB – Asian Development Bank
CAREC – Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO – civil society organization
GDP – gross domestic product
IGPN – International Gender Policy Network
MDGs – Millennium Development Goals
NGO – nongovernment organization
OIC – Organization of the Islamic Conference
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RETA – regional technical assistance
SMEs – small and medium-sized enterprises
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
This country gender assessment is an edited version of a longer technical assistance consultant’s report researched and written by Elisabeth Duban. The full report is available online at http://www.adb.org/projects/documents/promoting-gender-inclusive-growth-central-and-west-asia-cga-kaz, and readers are encouraged to access that version for further details of the issues covered.

The country gender assessment was prepared under an Asian Development Bank (ADB) regional technical assistance project (RETA 7563), Promoting Gender-Inclusive Growth in Central and West Asia Developing Member Countries, covering 10 countries (Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). The overall assessment process was supervised and managed by the gender and development team of ADB’s Central and West Asia Department, consisting of Jeremy Stickings (senior social development specialist on gender and development), Susann Roth (social development specialist on gender and development, and now on social protection at the Regional and Sustainable Development Department), and Wilma Silva-Netto Rojas (gender and development specialist consultant).

Special mention should also be made of the important contributions in the form of facilitation of stakeholder meetings and analysis provided by two experts from the civil society sector: Gulzi Nabi, director of Zharia, in Astana, and Yevgeniya Kozyreva, president of the Feminist League, in Almaty. Thanks also go to Gulmaira Baimakova, director of Zher-Ana Astana, for her work organizing a focus group in Akmola oblast.

The report benefited from the constructive input of peer reviewers at ADB headquarters in Manila (both gender and development, and sector specialists) and from expertise provided by the Kazakhstan Resident Mission, especially Manshuk Nurseitova. This report was edited by Jeremy Stickings with the help of Larson Moth and Kimberly Fullerton, with Muriel S. Ordoñez overseeing its publication.
Glossary

akim – presidential representative who is the head of the akimat
akimat – executive office at the regional, district, or municipal level
maslikhat – elected assembly at the local level
mazhilis – lower house of the Parliament
oblast – region (Kazakhstan has 14 regions, in addition to the cities of Astana and Almaty)
raion – district
Executive Summary

Since the Asian Development Bank (ADB) published its last country gender assessment in 2006, the Government of Kazakhstan has enacted important national policies promoting gender equality, followed by action plans and national programs dedicated to specific issues affecting women. The principles of nondiscrimination and gender equality have been clearly articulated and included in the country’s development plans, but the realization of gender-equality goals remains a top-down process characterized by high-level declarative strategies. Kazakhstan, which has experienced significant economic growth in recent years, has been taking a leading role in promoting regional stability and cooperation in Central Asia and is seen as a positive example for the region. However, the country’s progress toward gender equality has not kept pace with its other accomplishments. Kazakhstan scores consistently high in terms of equal access to education and health outcomes for women, but this is counterbalanced by limited progress in women’s political empowerment and improving women’s access to economic opportunities.

Achieving gender equality in the economy is one of seven priority areas of the government’s Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2006–2016. The implementation of this strategy, through a series of action plans, requires positive gender-related activities at the national level and the inclusion of gender in strategic development plans at the regional level. However, state policies relevant to gender equality are still limited to social sector initiatives, with no strategic goals articulated for other sectors of the country’s development, such as transport, urban infrastructure, or energy.

Kazakhstan’s gender equality policies and the primary institution responsible for implementing them—the National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy—provide a framework within which international partners can work with the government to mainstream gender concerns into planning processes. Linking projects with national goals should facilitate cooperation in project planning and implementation, and advance the achievement of Kazakhstan’s gender-equality targets.

A. Sex-Disaggregated Statistics and Data

Kazakhstan has made important progress in improving and institutionalizing the collection of sex-disaggregated data and is the only Central Asian republic to have dedicated a specialized division to the compilation of national gender statistics. Nevertheless, the government’s own gender equality strategy highlights the country’s insufficient data and limited use of statistics in planning as persistent weaknesses. Further, sex-disaggregated data are mainly collected in the social sectors. In the context of planning and project development, development partners should promote the use of sex-disaggregated information. They should also support the collection and dissemination of gender-specific data generated during project implementation and expand the use of gender-sensitive indicators to measure progress toward any gender-related project goals.
B. Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life

The government recognizes that the underrepresentation of women in political office is a critical problem, and officials have spoken out in favor of increasing the number of women in government. Yet there have been only limited initiatives to remedy the situation, and women remain a minority among parliamentarians, ministers, and executive branch officials, including akims (representatives of the president) and heads of the akimat (the executive office of a municipal, district, or regional government). This raises questions about the extent to which women’s views and concerns are reflected in policy making, given women’s low levels of representation among decision makers. Meaningful participation of women should include their full involvement in planning, agenda setting, and implementation.

C. Gender Disparities in the Labor Market

The extent to which women in Kazakhstan will benefit from economic growth depends greatly on how they are positioned in the labor market. Women are less active than men in the formal economy, and opportunities for them still mainly lie in the informal sector or in self-employment. This reflects the general expectation that women will be primarily responsible for childcare and unpaid domestic work. The labor market exhibits distinct gender patterns, with women overly represented in public sector jobs (e.g., health care and education) which offer the lowest salaries, and men predominating in higher-paying technical fields (e.g., natural resources extraction, construction, and industry). Women are also underrepresented in upper managerial positions. This occupational segregation, along with the persistence of workplace discrimination, contributes directly to the gender wage gap and impedes inclusive growth.

D. Gender Disparities in Education

With regard to education, similar gender patterns can be observed in post-secondary and vocational schools. Young men are much more likely to pursue technical training and to study in such fields as energy, transport, and construction. Young women predominate in traditionally female areas of study, such as the humanities, health, and education. Such choices are undoubtedly influenced by persistent gender stereotypes, which help perpetuate the labor market patterns noted above. Technical fields of study generally correlate with jobs in higher-paying industries, while the humanities lead to lower-wage jobs, often in the public sector. Such educational and occupational segregation compromises the ability of women to benefit from employment opportunities that may arise.

E. Key Crosscutting Themes

Gender and transport. The government views the improvement of road infrastructure as critical for the country’s economic development, with a particular emphasis on the establishment of transit corridors to expand cross-border trade and investment. Projects in the transport sector have undoubtedly helped improve the lives of women, for instance, by increasing their economic opportunities in trade and services near main roads and border crossings. However, sector strategies have focused primarily on infrastructure investment and
less on such questions as whether roads and transport increase the mobility of women and men and meet their priority needs.

During consultations for this assessment, women emphasized that they would benefit from the improvement of local and feeder roads that would facilitate their access to markets, health centers, schools, and government offices. The development of these roads, as opposed to only developing major highways, could increase income-earning opportunities for women—both directly through jobs in road construction and indirectly through the facilitation of roadside or cross-border trade. Women tend to use public transport more than men in Kazakhstan, and they travel more often with children. Gender-sensitive projects in public transport should take into account these priorities and such issues as the cost and scheduling of various transport options, the safety of female passengers on public transport and at stops, and access for passengers traveling with baby carriages or wheelchairs.

As in other infrastructure sectors, women are underrepresented in the transport sector in terms of decision-making posts and employment overall, and this should be addressed by ensuring women’s participation in the design and implementation of transport projects.

**Gender and urban development.** Kazakhstan is becoming increasingly urbanized. Its largest cities, particularly Almaty and Astana, have experienced significant population growth in recent years. A considerable portion of the urban infrastructure (i.e., water supply and sanitation, energy supply, and housing) remain outdated and in need of rehabilitation. While deficiencies in infrastructure affect both women and men, in urban planning, it is important to also consider such factors as (i) how access to infrastructure and services correlates with economic status, (ii) the roles played by women and men in finding alternatives when services are deficient, and (iii) how women and men stand to benefit from improved services.

Due to their domestic roles, women are particularly affected by the lack of water, electricity, gas, and heating, so they will benefit considerably from infrastructure improvements. Women in Kazakhstan identified their own priorities, such as improving play spaces for children, building separate toilet facilities in public areas, and maintaining adequate lighting to ensure safety on city streets and public transport. Women’s participation should be ensured in urban services and infrastructure projects. In addition, there should be capacity building for integrating issues of concern to women into community development projects.

**Gender, entrepreneurship, and private sector development.** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute considerably to the economy, including employment of a third of the workforce. Both government and partners recognize the potential of SMEs to foster economic growth, resolve social issues, and provide employment. Thus, development of the private sector is a priority area for reform. All entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan face obstacles that hinder SME development, but there are also important gender differences to consider.

Women in Kazakhstan more often start a business because of necessity and the lack of alternative employment options, whereas men are more likely to be motivated by a desire to take advantage of a perceived opportunity. Female entrepreneurs tend to operate micro and small businesses and, in rural regions, often engage in home-based production or other entrepreneurial activities that are compatible with household duties. Women often have
limited knowledge of the business environment and also face particular obstacles related to access to and control over land and other economic assets. A critical issue is their limited access to finance, especially loans from commercial banks. Women who do use financial services generally rely on microcredit, often through specific programs targeting female borrowers. Such obstacles limit the extent to which women can build profitable businesses and provide employment for other women.

With the exception of microcredit programs and some training opportunities for women, most SME development programs have taken a gender-blind approach, without addressing the underlying disparities that put female entrepreneurs at a disadvantage. Development partners should encourage the mainstreaming of gender issues into SME development and support programs, while also promoting opportunities for businesswomen to enter new sectors and expand micro and small businesses. The planning of business advisory services, training programs, and credit schemes should identify and respond to the distinct needs of women entrepreneurs.
I. Background and Context

A. Country Situation and Policy Environment

1. Geographically, Kazakhstan is the largest of the five Central Asian countries and is also the most prosperous. Its economic growth, relative political stability and smooth transition from its Soviet past can be viewed as a success in the Eurasian region. The people of Kazakhstan enjoy higher living standards than those of their neighbors, in large part due to the country’s abundant natural resources, including oil and gas, and to consistently high oil prices on the world market. The country has also become a desirable destination for labor migrants from other Central Asian countries.

2. Kazakhstan is not an insular country. Its leadership has recently indicated an intention to play a role in fostering stability and setting policy in both the Commonwealth of Independent States and in the region. Kazakhstan’s chairing of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010 and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 2011 put the country on the world stage. Further, Kazakhstan has demonstrated its commitment to human rights through its participation in the United Nations Universal Periodic Review in 2010 and in the development of a national human rights action plan for 2009–2012 in anticipation of becoming the OSCE chair. Kazakhstan is also assuming a leadership role in the region in improving the lives of women and girls and advancing gender equality. It used both the OSCE and OIC chairs as opportunities to raise issues of women’s rights. The forthcoming review by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is another indication that women’s rights are being addressed in the country’s development plans.

3. Still, Kazakhstan has received some criticism from independent observers and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) for its lack of a robust civil society, slow progress in establishing democracy, and protection of human rights. An alternative review of the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and of the Accra Agenda for Action suggests that while Kazakhstan is among the highest recipient countries of official development assistance in the former Soviet region, “improvement in the lives of its 16 million population has yet to be seen, though, as a result of partnership between Kazakhstan and its donors.” Women’s rights groups point to critical areas in which women remain in a disadvantaged position compared with that of men.

---


2 The Government of Kazakhstan has submitted a combined third and fourth periodic report, and a review is expected to take place in 2014.

3 For example, see A. Hug. 2011. Kazakhstan at the Crossroads. London: Foreign Policy Centre.

1. Gender Issues in the Transition Period

4. During 2005–2012, Kazakhstan’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew in real terms at an average annual rate of 6.6%. While the national government has articulated a policy centered on economic reform and diversification, national programs have invested in only a few areas: infrastructure improvement, construction, and finance. Experts have suggested that these reforms have not benefitted women to the same extent as men, due in large part to the fact that women are underrepresented in these sectors. In the context of trade liberalization, for instance, “despite the fact that national legislations provide for gender equality, economic policy of the Central Asian countries in trade and services remain discriminatory with regard to women. Therefore, mainly men will enjoy benefits from trade liberalization and expansion of production and market.”

5. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the government has formulated important policies on gender equality, followed by national action plans to put these policies into practice. There have also been several national programs on specific issues affecting women. Yet while principles of nondiscrimination and gender equality are clear and are, theoretically, part of the country’s development plans, the realization of gender equality goals has remained very much a top-down process, characterized by high-level declarations and programs planned centrally over several years. As mentioned, such national programs rely little on input from female stakeholders. Program activities have also not been transparent, so the extent to which the programs have been implemented is not fully discernible. Even programs that are expected to improve women’s lives, such as the expansion of preschool education, do not include indicators to measure gender impacts. As has been noted in a review of development assistance to Kazakhstan, the country remains underdeveloped in terms of having a systematic mechanism to monitor progress toward gender equality.

2. The Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Women and Men

6. Kazakhstan appears to have weathered the 2008–2009 global financial crisis well. The country’s anti-crisis and recovery plans included monetary, fiscal, and structural measures, as well as initiatives to stimulate labor demand and employment creation. The sectors that were particularly hard hit by the crisis, such as construction and oil and gas, are those that have a high share of male employees. It is important to consider, however, that women in these sectors are often concentrated in poorly paid ancillary activities and may be particularly vulnerable to dismissal. The growing self-employed population in Kazakhstan is noteworthy and may be a cause for concern, especially since women are slightly more likely than men to be engaged as workers in the informal sector or to be unpaid family workers (as opposed to self-employed businesspeople who hire others). Informal sector work
is characterized by lower wages and lack of unemployment protection and other benefits. Given women’s particular needs regarding maternity and sick leave, informal work arguably contributes to women’s vulnerable position in times of crisis.

7. Kazakhstan’s anti-crisis programs did not include any specific steps to protect women affected by the crisis. The full impact of the economic crisis on women in Kazakhstan has yet to be evaluated. The number of women and men officially registered as unemployed increased between 2008 and 2009. From 2006 to 2008, men represented about 30%–33% of registered unemployed individuals, with this figure increasing to 35% in 2009. Unemployment has since decreased for both sexes, but women continue to represent 67% of the total registered unemployed population. Studies of the economic status of single-parent families in Kazakhstan (the majority of which are headed by women) found that from 2006 to 2008, poverty decreased more rapidly among male-headed households, but at the same time, “the share of the poor represented by female-headed households increased by 10%, pointing to an increasing vulnerability of female-headed households”. There is concern that families that were vulnerable before the crisis, especially large families with many children, households with disabled family members, single-parent families (especially women-headed households), and migrant families, have not recovered to the same extent as the general population or as national statistics would suggest. The long-term impacts of the crisis on women and on progress toward gender equality should be given greater consideration in national development programs and donor interventions.

8. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted that “the global economic crisis cut GDP growth levels in [Central Asia] by half, exacerbating existing high levels of poverty and income inequality and further weakening the business climate” and suggested that key reforms are needed to unlock further growth. As Kazakhstan continues to address the problems resulting from the global economic crisis, it will have to improve its understanding of how gender inequalities, if disregarded, could negatively impact the country’s development and growth. And as Kazakhstan seeks to solidify its position as a regional leader, it should concentrate not only on reforms needed to attract investment, but also on instituting best practices for realizing gender equality.

3. Indicators on Gender and Development for Kazakhstan

9. A review of indicators of human development, particularly the gender dimensions of development, shows that progress has taken place in Kazakhstan toward the realization of gender equality, yet significant barriers remain.

---

10. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a numerical expression of the extent to which national development achievements are eroded by inequality based on five indicators (maternal mortality ratio, adolescent fertility rate, seats in national parliament, population with at least secondary education, and labor force participation). The higher the GII value, the greater the discrimination. Despite improvement since 2000, the current index value of 0.312 for Kazakhstan still represents a 31% loss, which is greater than the regional average loss for Europe and Central Asia (28%). Similarly, the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), devised by the World Economic Forum to measure gender-based gaps in resources and opportunities independently from a country’s level of development, takes into consideration four basic categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Kazakhstan received a score of 0.722 in 2013, indicating that progress has been made since 2006 in narrowing the gender gap, but improvement has been slow (Figure 1).

11. Because of varied methodologies and insufficient data, it is difficult to make precise comparisons of how countries in Central Asia are faring in terms of gender equality, but it is useful to note that Kazakhstan represents a positive example of progress in the region. Table 1 summarizes the most recent gender equality values assigned to some Central Asian countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender Inequality Index (GII) Rank out of 148 Countries</th>
<th>Valuea</th>
<th>Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) Rank out of 136 Countries</th>
<th>Valueb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.668</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Due to lack of data, information for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan could not be included.

* Under the Gender Inequality Index, countries are scored on a scale in which the highest score is zero, which indicates no losses due to inequality while the lowest score is 1.00, which indicates losses due to inequality.

* Under the Global Gender Gap Index, countries are scored on a scale in which the highest score is 1.00, which indicates full equality, while the lowest score is zero, which indicates the lowest equality.

19 Note that in 2010, UNDP introduced the Gender Inequality Index, replacing earlier measures, the Gender-Related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure, which means that values and rankings for Kazakhstan from before 2010 are not directly comparable to 2011 scores.


12. National scores by subindex are perhaps more useful in revealing where the gender gap is the most acute in Kazakhstan. Global Gender Gap Index scores for educational attainment (i.e., a measure of the literacy rate and enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education) and for health and survival (i.e., a measure of the sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy) are high. Low scores are evident for economic participation and opportunity (i.e., a combined measure of labor force participation; wage equality; and the numbers of senior officials, managers, and professional and technical workers) and for political empowerment (which measures women in parliament, ministerial positions, and as heads of state), and cause the gender gap to widen overall. Figure 1 compares scores by subindex in recent years and shows that since 2006, scores for economic participation and political empowerment have remained consistently lower than scores for the other two dimensions.

![Figure 1 Yearly Comparison of Global Gender Gap Index Scores for Kazakhstan, by Subcategory](image)


13. The Gender Equity Index, developed by Social Watch to measure gaps between women and men in three dimensions—education, the economy, and political empowerment—offers another perspective on progress in Kazakhstan. In education, the index examines gender gaps in enrollment and literacy rates, economic participation measures gaps in wage and employment, and political empowerment measures “gaps in highly qualified jobs, parliament, and senior executive positions.”

---

22 The gender gap is assigned a value in each of the three areas from 0 (a situation of complete inequality) to 100 (perfect equality) and the Gender Equity Index is an average of the three dimensions. See Social Watch. 2012. *Measuring Inequality: The 2012 Gender Equity Index*. 

14. Gender Equity Index scores for 2012 show a dynamic in Kazakhstan that is reflected to varying degrees across Central Asia—gender parity in education is not correlated with equality in either economic participation or political empowerment.

B. National Policies and Institutions on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

1. Law and Policy on Gender Equality

15. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan includes a clause that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.23 In addition, the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Men and Women (known as the equal rights law), enacted in 2009, establishes the legal principle of equal rights. The equal rights law defines basic concepts of gender discrimination and reiterates state guarantees in a number of spheres, including civil service, the labor market, health care, education, and family. The law also affirms that all state agencies are responsible for implementing gender policies in

---

their respective spheres. While the adoption of the law is significant, it should be noted that the law is declarative in nature and does not provide a legal basis for sex discrimination suits. While women do use the legal system to protect their rights, most often with respect to family issues, employment, and housing, there have been no lawsuits alleging sex discrimination in Kazakhstan.24

16. Since the completion of the previous country gender assessment, Kazakhstan has articulated several important policies and adopted legislation strengthening the protection of equal rights. In 2005, the President approved the gender equality strategy.25 The government later adopted action plans for the implementation of the gender equality strategy for 2006–2008, 2009–2011, and 2012–2016.26 The strategy articulates overarching objectives, among them a gradual transformation of the current paradigm in which one sex is dominant to one in which there is “partnership and cooperation between both sexes” and in which women “participate equally in all processes of social development, realizing their personal and human potential.”27 The strategy defines seven substantive areas relevant to strengthening gender equality: the political and public sphere, the economy, gender education, reproductive health, gender-based violence, the family, and public awareness. Each area is accompanied by specific goals, an analysis of the current situation, strategic objectives, and indicators for monitoring implementation. During the course of this assessment, however, no monitoring results or appraisals of the implementation of the strategy were found. An evaluation prepared by a group of NGOs noted that the strategy has a “purely formal character” and that local government, in particular, has not been active in realizing the strategy's basic goals.28

17. The action plan for the implementation of the gender equality strategy for 2012–2016 consists of eight sections, addressing such issues as gender equality in politics and the economy, prevention of gender-based violence, and applying gender mainstreaming to official acts. Of particular significance for future development planning, this action plan calls for gender to be integrated into the country’s strategic development plans at the oblast (region) level, into the formation of national and local budgets, and into national statistics gathering. The plan has specific goals relevant to women’s entrepreneurship and microfinance for women in rural areas. The majority of actions under this action plan are unfunded, but it is expected that each responsible government agency will carry them out alongside its regular functions.

18. Gender issues are also included in the national human rights policy. The national human rights action plan, 2009–2012 addressed the rights of women and covers issues of labor, employment and pension security, domestic violence, participation in government, and the prevention of human trafficking.29 The plan is only a descriptive document, however, with no specific actions or targets.

19. There have been some attempts to introduce more gender equality legislation (e.g., instituting temporary special measures and quotas, establishing a government body to implement gender-equality policies, requiring gender analyses of state programs and laws, addressing sexual harassment, and conceptualizing unpaid domestic work). However, these did not gain support in parliament and thus did not become part of the law despite Kazakhstan's ratification of the United Nations CEDAW. Discussions have been held on the possibility of amending the equal rights law and in 2011, a legal commentary on the law was prepared. These initiatives may improve how the principles of the law are upheld in practice.

2. National Machinery for Women's Affairs and Gender Equality

20. The national machinery for women's affairs in Kazakhstan was established shortly after independence for the purpose of improving the status of women, but today has a more expansive mandate that also includes the promotion of gender equality. The National Commission for Women's Affairs and Family was created by a presidential decree in 1998 in conjunction with the development of the National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women for the purposes of further implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2008, the commission was restructured and renamed the National Commission for Women's Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy. It has retained a high status, and the chairperson of the commission reports directly to the President. Gender advocates in Kazakhstan view the latest renaming of the institution as a return to a traditional view of a woman's role as one being connected with family affairs. The mandate of the commission, however, does include recommending and defining priority areas for state programs concerned with equality between women and men. The commission is the primary institution for the realization of Kazakhstan's gender equality strategy, and it is tasked with implementing official gender equality policy in the context of Kazakhstan 2030, the national development strategy.

21. A full overview of the activities of the commission is beyond the scope of this review, but during consultations for this assessment, frequent mention was made of the First Congress of Women in Kazakhstan, organized by the commission in March 2011. The event established several important areas of government policy for women. Opening the Congress, President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted the positive contributions of women in Kazakhstan to the growth of the country, but also highlighted several ways in which women remain disadvantaged, specifically, with regard to their high unemployment, lack of representation in senior government positions, and lack of social support for balancing child care with formal employment.

22. The commission regularly partners with state agencies, as well as with NGOs and international organizations, so there could be opportunities for greater donor engagement with this institution. Further, it has parallel structures at the regional level. All regions, plus the cities of Astana and Almaty, have commissions for women's affairs, family, and demographic policy within the office of the akim (representative of the president and head of the akimat—the executive office of a municipal, district, or regional government). ADB projects may benefit from coordination and cooperation with such commissions at the level of project implementation.

23. In its most recent review, the CEDAW Committee noted a positive trend in the expansion of the commission’s powers, yet also expressed concern that it may lack sufficient authority, decision-making power and financial and human resources to coordinate effectively the government’s work to promote gender equality and the full implementation of the Convention, including coordination and cooperation with all other gender equality and human rights mechanisms at the national and local levels.  

24. Other key institutions that play a role in the promotion of gender equality include the commissioner for human rights (known also as the national human rights ombudsman) and the Human Rights Commission under the President, both of which have worked jointly with the commission. Each year, the commissioner for human rights reports on the state of women’s rights to Parliament, noting the trends in the types of complaints submitted by women. In 2008, a permanent commission on family policy and gender equality was established within the Social Council of the majority party in Parliament, Nur Otan (the People’s Democratic Party). The commission was said to “consider gender and women’s issues when approving national and regional budgets and exercise control over budget appropriations,” and it provided expertise during the drafting of Kazakhstan’s law on domestic violence. The gender equality strategy calls for the identification of key persons in “all government structures… who are responsible for the formation and implementation of state gender policy.” It was officially reported in 2010 that staff members responsible for gender policy had been identified in all government bodies. It is not clear, however, whether such personnel act officially as gender focal points (i.e., staff members responsible for gender mainstreaming in government offices), but at least international agencies should be able to work on project design and management with them. Staff members in offices most relevant to each agency’s core operational sectors should also be included. Greater effort should be made to identify and engage more directly with these staff members.

3. Conceptual Approaches to Gender Equality

25. During its more than two decades of independence, Kazakhstan has taken steps to adopt measures in line with international standards to advance the status of women. With the adoption of a national policy on gender equality and the equal rights law, achieving gender equality has increasingly come to mean changing the roles of both women and men. While such concepts are articulated clearly in policy, in practice, gender equality is still equated with assisting women in relatively narrow spheres. Improving the status of women is widely regarded as the implementation of state commitments to provide social protection to women as mothers, with little attention given to counteracting existing discriminatory practices and ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men. A 2010 gender assessment found that “those working in government who are familiar with the term [gender] understand it as only addressing women’s issues, or ensuring equal participation of men and women in government committees or boards.” When women’s disadvantaged position in

---

35 Government of Kazakhstan. 2010c.
society is acknowledged, it is often understood as the product of inherent differences between
the sexes and not as arising from socially constructed inequalities. When a number of experts
in Kazakhstan were asked to explain why, in their opinion, women experience discrimination
despite the existence of a law that affirms formal guarantees of equality and mechanisms for
promoting gender equality, the majority (62.5%) responded that “gender bias is present in
many politicians and civil servants who believe that inequality is natural and inevitable.”

26. The fact that official policy on gender equality is understood narrowly has led to a
situation in which state programs tend to fall into one of two categories in terms of their
approach to gender. The first category aims to achieve gender equality by focusing solely
on improving opportunities for women. For example, the President has announced specific
goals for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and for providing
microfinance to female entrepreneurs. The government has also undertaken programs
that will improve the lives of women, such as programs on motherhood, pregnancy, and
childbirth, or the expansion of child-care programs and targets for the creation of preschools
by 2020. However, these programs are not necessarily characterized as measures to advance
gender equality or, in the case of preschools, to increase women’s opportunities.

27. The second category consists of programs that are not gender-specific in approach
and includes a number of large-scale socially oriented initiatives directed, for example, at
increasing employment, supporting small businesses, developing rural areas, improving
water supply, and increasing accessibility to affordable housing. While such programs will
undoubtedly improve the lives of the people of Kazakhstan in tangible ways, there is no
evidence that existing gender disparities or women’s vulnerabilities were given any particular
consideration, nor is it clear whether these programs included goals or indicators to monitor
specific benefits to, or impacts on, the lives of women and men as distinct groups. In fact, in
reference to the State Program for Poverty Reduction, 2003–2005, concern was expressed
over the fact that the performance indicators were tied to “the priority programmes (e.g.,
retraining, provision of microcredit, improved access to potable water, and increased
telephone coverage),” while none of the 18 indicators were sex-disaggregated other than
“the longevity target and the inclusion of maternal mortality.” The lack of gender-specific
goals means that progress in addressing women’s vulnerabilities cannot be gauged and that
it will not be possible “to identify where and how future programming can be adjusted to
reduce emerging gender gaps.”

28. Although the gender equality strategy includes such critical strategic objectives
as raising “gender sensitivity at all levels of developing social and economic policy” and
“introducing gender approaches into the development, realization and control over
implementation of national legislation, republican and local budgets and state social and
economic programs,” it appears that the link between policy articulation and execution has
not been made.

38 National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy, Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP. 2010.
Results of Studies on the Development of an Action Plan to Improve Conditions for the Economic Empowerment of Women
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
29. The particular issue of how men view gender issues was raised several times during consultations for this assessment. It appears that most men understand gender equality in a limited way and do not widely recognize the mutual benefits of equality. Respondents noted that men closely associate the concept of gender equality with feminism, and view a gender-equal society as one in which “everyone is the same” and “women do men’s jobs.” Due in part to this conceptual misunderstanding, there are few men leading gender equality initiatives in Kazakhstan. The issue of the male role in promoting gender equality in Kazakhstan is also closely connected to dominant stereotypes.

30. While the gender policy framework in Kazakhstan is sound, the realization of the gender equality strategy and implementation of related laws are not yet complete. Women’s NGOs point to persistent problems such as the disparities between women’s lives in rural and urban areas, women’s unemployment, and domestic violence.
II. Crosscutting Gender Issues

31. In development work, gender equality is viewed not only as a core objective but also as a theme that cuts across other areas of programming and should be addressed through multiple actions. This chapter examines several broad gender issues that can also be thought of as crosscutting and considers the influence that these themes could have on the effectiveness of ADB projects.

A. Sex-Disaggregated Statistics and Data

32. Gender statistics reveal information “vital to the development of policies and programs promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment… and can contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development overall.”

33. Important progress has been made in the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics in Kazakhstan, which is the only Central Asian republic to have a specialized division managing gender statistics and indicators for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The unit is located within the Department of Social and Demographic Statistics of the Agency of Statistics. The Agency of Statistics publishes *Women and Men in Kazakhstan*, a compilation of sex-disaggregated data across a number of fields, on an annual basis. It is made available through the official website in Kazakh, Russian, and English. The compilations cover a range of topics, but the focus is on social areas. Despite positive trends, the gender equality strategy highlights the fact that insufficient reliable data remain an overall weakness in Kazakhstan. The sharing of gender-sensitive information and data is not well coordinated among government agencies, and not all data are made available to the public.

34. As noted in the preceding section, national programs do not appear to include gender indicators nor provide gender-specific information for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. However, Kazakhstan has taken steps to introduce gender expertise into the legislative process. The government has approved a plan to conduct gender analysis of legislation from 2011 to 2013. A manual for the gender analysis of legislative and normative acts has also been developed. However, such data, at best, merely reveal obvious disparities. Quantitative data should be balanced with qualitative analysis to uncover the reasons for gender imbalances and how to address them more effectively.

---

35. In the coming years, the results of several evaluation and stocktaking exercises should produce updated and original information concerning the situation of women. In 2013, the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Agency of Statistics, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) completed the fourth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Kazakhstan. This is an initiative to monitor the situation of women and children that includes a component on water and sanitation as well as other indicators relevant to the status of women and girls. A review of Kazakhstan’s combined third and fourth periodic reports by the CEDAW Committee is scheduled for February 2014; it is expected that a coalition of NGOs will formally submit a shadow report during the review process.

B. Gender Roles and Norms

36. Notions of the traditional roles of women and men exist in every society and are often unconsciously accepted as inevitable. Kazakhstan’s gender equality strategy acknowledges that such stereotypes are critical obstacles to gender equality, noting an “insufficient understanding of the need for gender equality in society [and]… stable and traditional stereotypes about the role and place of a woman in the society.”

37. Respondents referred a number of times to gender stereotypes during consultations for this assessment. Many respondents expressed the view that the primary role of women is that of caregiver and that women are the center of family life even when they work outside of the home. Others noted that while women can become leaders, men are naturally better in a leadership role. Some women expressed the opinion that men have a higher status by virtue of their gender.

38. The gender equality strategy highlights inequalities in the family, noting that the distribution of responsibilities inside the family is traditional and discriminates against women. The budgeted time of men usually consists of paid work and leisure time, while that of women includes paid work, responsibilities in the home, taking care of the children and serving the needs of other family members. The prevailing expectation that women should take on unpaid domestic duties is supported by time-use studies demonstrating that women in Kazakhstan spend 3 hours more per day than men on household activities. Over 1 year, this additional time amounts to 96 days, or 3 months. In contrast, men spend almost 2 hours more time per day in formal employment than women, but also have slightly over 30 minutes more free time per day.

39. The notion that women are primarily occupied in the private sphere and men in the public sphere has implications beyond the family. Gender stereotypes help explain why women are underrepresented in political office, managerial positions, and even in formal employment. For instance, noting that women in Kazakhstan spend three times more time on domestic work than men, one study noted that “women find it harder to remain in full-time employment due to pressure from unpaid work…. Time pressures are forcing women to seek income in the informal sector or insecure part-time jobs.”

51 Ibid., p. 30.
54 UNECE. 2008. p. 11.
women may have insufficient time for self-education, professional training, or entrepreneurial activities. Gender stereotypes also have negative impacts on men. Several female respondents to this assessment raised the issue that men’s primary role as the financial provider for the family means their participation in child rearing is limited.

C. Urban and Rural Disparities

40. According to 2012 estimates, about 54.7% of Kazakhstan’s total population lives in urban areas. An official government report also noted that the rural population has increased more than three times, a change that is attributed to the State Program on Developing Rural Areas of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2004–2010.

41. The topic of differences between rural and urban life was mentioned frequently in consultations for this assessment. Most respondents mentioned that rural women face more difficulties than women in urban areas because they must contend with fewer opportunities for formal employment, a greater burden of domestic work, and a lack of infrastructure and social services.

42. Rural areas have far less access to piped water than urban areas. Government programs have improved access to clean drinking water in rural areas, and it has been reported that as of 2010, piped water coverage had increased to 41% of rural settlements. However, joint World Health Organization and UNICEF monitoring indicates that only 24% of the rural population have access to water piped into their homes. Two critical issues facing rural regions are the collapse of the water supply system and the high levels of pollution in the surface and groundwater.

43. Deficiencies in basic services and the burden of household work on rural women are considerable obstacles to their other endeavors. Consultations for this assessment found that women in rural areas spend a significant amount of time transporting and treating water (i.e., for cleaning, laundry, bathing, cooking, drinking, and livestock) and collecting fuel (i.e., wood or dried animal dung) to use for home heating. According to a survey conducted in Aktiubinsk Oblast, rural women—who live in larger settlements and are employed and able to buy some goods from shops—spend 50%–60% of their time on household chores. By contrast, women—in small and more remote villages with high female unemployment and limited supplies of gas and water—report that they spend 90%–100% of their time on household chores. A large part of their time is spent collecting and transporting water. The survey found that rural women have to play an important role in the social lives of their villages and are expected to participate in community events such as weddings and funerals, a finding confirmed during consultations for this assessment. Rural women consulted during this assessment also raised the issue of limited street lighting, which requires women to take special precautions when walking at night.

---

44. Respondents to this assessment suggested that gender stereotypes vary by region and that people in rural areas, especially in southern Kazakhstan, tend to be more conservative and to have more traditional views on the roles of women and men. Interviewees in a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) gender assessment claimed that “rural areas are more traditional and more patriarchal,” and, in southern Kazakhstan, even educated women do not actively seek employment outside the home, but are expected to take care of their families. There are many restrictive attitudes that inhibit women's increased participation in business, such as a fear that the women will grow "too independent" and not fulfill their household obligations.60

45. Monitoring conducted in rural areas of Aktiubinsk Oblast suggests that gender roles are changing and that now many women have become the sole financial providers for their families and men have started to participate more in housework.61 Findings suggest that rural women should not be presumed to be passive; on the contrary, they could play an important role in setting priorities for rural improvement projects.

D. Women's Participation in Political and Public Life

46. Women and men in Kazakhstan have differing views about governance, as well as distinct priorities for their country's development. Women are underrepresented in political office in Kazakhstan and have not been able to achieve the critical minority (i.e., 30%–40%) considered necessary for an effective voice in political decision making or agenda setting. Having met its targets in 2007 for gender equality in education under MDG 3 (i.e., promote gender equality and empower women), the government set new targets, which included increasing the representation of women in legislative and executive bodies.62 As of April 2011, figures from the Civil Service Agency showed that 56% of all public sector employees were women, yet female civil servants occupied only 9.4% of political positions.63

1. Women in Elected Office

47. Women's representation in both national and local elected offices has decreased since independence, although the January 2012 elections resulted in an increase in the proportion of female members of Parliament in the Mazhilis (the lower house of the bicameral parliament), up from almost 18% to 22%, representing the addition of five female members. The number of women in the Senate (the upper house) remained unchanged at 4.3% of the Senate’s members.

48. Within maslikhats (locally elected assemblies), women make up only 17% of the total number of delegates in the country as a whole, but this figure varies considerably by region (Table 2). For example, in Kostanay Oblast, women have achieved almost 30% representation, while in South Kazakhstan Oblast, they comprise fewer than 4% of delegates.64 Women’s representation in maslikhats has been decreasing with each election, despite the fact that an increasing number of women are standing as candidates locally.65

---

64 Table 9.3 of Agency of Statistics. 2011b. p. 106.
Table 2  Women in Legislative and Representative Bodies, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative or Representative Body</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
<th>Proportion of Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate (upper house)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazhilis (lower house)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslikhats (total delegates in regional, municipal, and district bodies)</td>
<td>3,329</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2. Women’s Underrepresentation in Governance

49. Men’s dominance of governance in Kazakhstan is clear from a review of women’s representation in state offices, including decision-making positions. Although women make up the majority of civil servants, they hold only 8.8% of high-level positions in central executive offices.66 There are three female ministers (i.e., the ministers of economic integration, labor and social protection, and health) out of a total of 18 (i.e., the prime minister and 17 line ministers). In all the ministries combined, there are five female executive secretaries and four female deputy ministers.

50. In regional and local governance, women are more likely to hold decision-making posts at the lowest level of office, in rural settlements. None of the 16 oblasts are headed by female akims,67 and there are only five deputy akims in the country. Table 3 provides statistics illustrating women’s representation in office. At the raion (district) level, three women occupy the office of akim, and 17% of all deputy akims at the district level are women. Among leaders in rural areas (i.e., regions, towns, and villages), there are 265 female akims, or 11% of the total.68 While these figures indicate that power in terms of national and regional leadership is not in women’s hands, the fact that there are women leaders representing the interests of towns and villages in rural areas is important for ADB activities. These women leaders should be engaged as resources for ADB project development and implementation.

3. Structural Barriers to Women Entering Government

51. As noted above, the gender equality strategy includes the goal of achieving 30% representation of women at decision-making levels of governance. There is, however, no mechanism for bringing about this change. Attempts to introduce a 30% quota for parliamentary candidates into the draft equal rights law were defeated (despite CEDAW’s requirement for the use of temporary special measures). Women’s activism in politics has been increasing, but it has not yet resulted in more women entering office. For example, in the 2007 elections, the number of female candidates running for Parliament and officially registered on party lists increased 1.7 times, yet little change was observed in the composition of Parliament.

---

67 Kazakhstan consists of 16 regional administrations, which are subdivided into districts. The cities of Astana and Almaty each has the status of a region.
Table 3  Women in Appointed Positions in the Executive Branch, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointed Positions in the Executive Branch</th>
<th>Total Positions</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
<th>Proportion of Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive secretaries</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy ministers&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy chairs of national committees and agencies</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oblast level

| Akims                                     | 16              | 0              | 0                       |
| Deputy akims<sup>c</sup>                  | n/a             | 5              | n/a                     |

Raion level

| Akims                                     | n/a             | 3              | n/a                     |
| Deputy akims<sup>c</sup>                  | n/a             | n/a            | n/a                     |

Rural settlements

| Akims                                     | n/a             | 265            | 11.0                    |

State employees in executive office (Total in appointed posts) | 3,132 | 294 | 9.4 |

n/a = data not available.


<sup>a</sup> Includes the prime minister and 17 line ministers.
<sup>b</sup> Includes the deputy ministers in the Office of the Prime Minister and in line ministries.
<sup>c</sup> There are typically four or five deputies working under the akim in each akimat.

or in the maslikhats. A study of active political parties in Kazakhstan found that “almost none… have set gender equality and/or equal opportunities of women and men as one of their political objectives, nor do they have strategies for increasing women’s representation—be it on the party list and/or in the national or local assemblies.” Overall, the electoral system does not offer incentives for political parties to engage women in political campaigns.

52. Other barriers to women entering political office are more closely tied to women’s positions in society (e.g., their unequal access to the financial and networking resources needed to conduct a campaign), as well as the burden of trying to balance a political career with women’s socially ascribed responsibilities. The prevalent stereotype that women are not suited for leadership roles also plays a part in limiting women’s opportunities in politics. As a member of Parliament said about the low number of women in political office, “In our mentality, we still have a banal and cynical stereotype: a cook cannot lead the State!”

53. The government has supported initiatives to create schools for women’s leadership, mainly through regional branches of the National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy. The primary actors in this field appear to be international organizations and NGOs. Gender in politics was one theme of the Tomiris Program

---

69 IGPN. Increasing Women’s Representation. p. 41.
70 Z. Asanov. The Newly Elected Mazhilis.
Country Gender Assessment: Kazakhstan

(2004–2007),\textsuperscript{71} which concluded with the establishment of the Women’s Leadership School national network. The network consists of 65 NGOs throughout the country, with Almaty, Astana, and regional centers hosting clubs of women politicians.\textsuperscript{72} It is interesting to note that a 2008 sociological survey conducted with 1,500 respondents in seven regions indicated that 70% thought that women do not have fewer leadership skills than men.\textsuperscript{73} Given that the leadership of all major parties remains predominantly male, a focus on enhancing women’s skills may not be sufficient to address some of the most serious barriers that women face in entering politics. Greater support and resources are still needed to help women overcome the masculinized political environment.

4. Engagement in Civil Society

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are crucial avenues through which both women and men can participate in public life and influence policy making. Kazakhstan has one of the highest levels of NGO development among the Central Asian republics.\textsuperscript{74} According to the Ministry of Justice, there were over 30,000 registered NGOs in Kazakhstan in 2010, a considerable increase over the previous year, attributed to legal changes in 2009 that improved the environment for CSOs.\textsuperscript{75} NGOs can include public associations, foundations, religious organizations, political parties, and some professional associations. However, experts point out that the number of active NGOs is considerably lower than the number of registered NGOs overall, and estimate the number of active organizations at 200.\textsuperscript{76}

Women’s groups account for about 300 NGOs, and these tend to concentrate on topics that are “closely linked to the socially approved roles for women or concerns of women: home and family, education, health and social services.”\textsuperscript{77} There are also women’s NGOs that expressly undertake advocacy work for gender equality and regularly analyze the extent to which formal commitments are being realized through legislation and policy implementation.

NGOs formally cooperate with the National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy, and several line ministries consult with, or at least include, NGOs in their working groups. In addition, since 2005, the government has formalized a process of offering “social orders,” a tender mechanism through which NGOs bid for state funds to implement projects aimed at solving social problems. In 2011, the total estimated budget was T1 billion ($6.6 million), with T22 million ($146,227) designated for gender-equality projects.\textsuperscript{78} However, the monitoring of fulfilled social orders allocated by the Ministry of Information and Culture indicated that in 2010–2011, a number of tenders dedicated to gender issues were planned but ultimately not issued.\textsuperscript{79} While the contributions of women’s NGOs are significant, it should be noted that the government engages with such organizations only in a limited number of spheres (i.e., women’s affairs and social

\textsuperscript{71} Tomiris: “Gender, Leadership and Networking across Borders” is a project to achieve greater gender equality in Kazakhstan. It was funded by UNDP and the Swedish International Development Agency and implemented in six cities by the National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy; a Swedish NGO; and Kazakh NGOs. See Government of Kazakhstan. 2011a.


\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} S. Somach and D. Rubin. Gender Assessment. p. 24.

\textsuperscript{78} Government of Kazakhstan. 2011a. p. 35.

\textsuperscript{79} Information accessed from the integrated electronic monitoring system created by the Ministry of Culture and Information. http://monitoring.academy.kz/
issues). In other spheres, such as economic development, women's NGOs are not necessarily included as key partners.

57. CSOs tend to be limited to urban areas, particularly Almaty and Astana. NGOs addressing social issues have “begun to engage more in outreach work in the community and to assist the development of NGOs in the rural areas. However, effective rural NGOs are few and sparsely distributed.”80 Women's NGOs, several of which have missions to address social issues, have forged important links with rural women, both through outreach activities and the development of filial organizations, but opportunities for rural women to engage in civil society are still limited. In 2011, ADB funded the creation of a database of gender and development-related organizations in Central and West Asia Developing Member Countries (including Kazakhstan) which is accessible on the ADB website.81

58. Local sources of funding for projects related to gender equality or women’s empowerment have not been sufficiently developed, so women's NGOs are still heavily reliant on foreign donors and grants. An interesting development in Kazakhstan—one that is discussed in more detail in the next section—is the promotion of corporate social responsibility. A number of large multinational corporations have engaged with NGOs and other local organizations to support diverse projects focusing on, for example, orphans and youth, protecting the environment, promotion of culture, and workforce development. Although gender issues have not attracted private sector support, it is worth exploring measures to increase the inclusion of women's NGOs in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

59. Women’s positive contributions to civil society should be recognized, but the fact that NGOs (not only women’s groups) are often dominated by women also points to significant gender inequalities. NGOs are generally not well financed, do not offer high salaries, and are neither particularly prestigious nor visible to the public. For these reasons, women face little competition from men for jobs in the nongovernment sector. Instead, NGOs tend to attract female employees, who are usually not expected to support their families financially. Also significant is the fact that the development of NGOs occurred at a time when the social services sector was changing and many women had lost jobs. “Thus women started small organizations as a means of survival…. The diversion of women into NGO work can be seen as another aspect of the skewing of women’s labor force participation and a loss of highly educated professionals and their skills to the wider economy.”82 It should be noted that while women have become leaders in the NGO sector, few have managed to transfer their leadership skills to either the political or private spheres. According to CSOs, “the attempts of women’s NGOs to become a real and quite influential force in the political life of Kazakhstan are more or less ignored by the ruling party and political stakeholders.”83

E. Gender Disparities in Employment and the Labor Market

60. Women’s economic empowerment is critical for achieving gender equality and combating poverty, and also for harnessing women’s economic potential and contribution

83 IGPN. Increasing Women's Representation. p. 42.
to the country’s economic development. A legacy of the Soviet system is the generally high representation of women in the labor force in Kazakhstan, especially compared with other developing countries. Yet clear gender-based imbalances exist despite changes in the overall economic climate and employment patterns. How women are positioned in the labor market will determine whether they will benefit equally with men from projects that increase employment opportunities and even from economic growth in general.

61. When gender experts in Kazakhstan were asked to identify the spheres in which women’s rights, and the principle of gender equality, are most often violated, a number of responses indicated the economic sphere. Among the most common answers were “finding a job” (66.3% of respondents) and related issues such as “the type of work [available to women] is non-prestigious, low skilled, and in low-paid sectors” (65.2%), “the system of pay rises” (53.8%), “entrepreneurism” (48.1%), and “the pension system” (31.4%).84 The decline in public services (particularly child care) since independence has also curtailed the ability of women to participate fully in the labor market.

1. Labor Market Segregation

62. The formal labor market in Kazakhstan exhibits occupational segregation, with women representing over 70% of total employees in spheres that are considered traditional for women, such as education and health care. Other sectors—such as food services, the hospitality industry, financial services, and insurance—also show a high proportion of female workers. As can be seen in Figure 3 below, men predominate in the industrial fields, representing over three-quarters of employees in mining, transport, storage, and construction, and they account for almost two-thirds of workers in electricity and gas supply, water supply, and waste management. The sectors where men are highly represented are also the most profitable, with the highest-paying jobs. Industry accounts for 36.0% of GDP and mining for 22.0%, education accounts for 3.4%, and health care and social services for 2.0%.85 The sectors in which women predominate, particularly education and health, are paid through the state budget, and thus offer low salaries and fewer opportunities for career advancement.86 In 2010, 27.4% of employed women were working in agriculture, a figure that declined consistently from 34.7% in 2002.

63. There are a number of reasons for women’s low representation in the more lucrative professions. Public sector jobs are considered more flexible in terms of combining work and family responsibilities. Gender-based stereotypes also play a role, and few women enroll in technical programs of study at the post-secondary level. These educational choices mean that women often lack the qualifications needed for the highest-paying jobs. The Kazakhstan Labor Code87 refers to a list of 299 specific jobs that are prohibited for women, a considerable number of which are in the construction and transport sectors. The prohibited jobs are high-risk, involving heavy physical labor or exposure to harmful and hazardous conditions, so the list serves to protect women from potential harm. Women’s rights advocates contend that restricting access to jobs is discriminatory, and have called for the abolition of the list.

---

Kazakhstan’s measures to respond to the financial crisis also prioritized job creation in male-dominated sectors (i.e., construction, communications, and infrastructure) without adopting measures that would allow greater access for women to such fields.  

In addition to sector, or horizontal, segregation, the Kazakhstan labor market also exhibits vertical segregation, meaning that women are underrepresented in leadership and managerial positions within industries. According to World Bank estimates, 33.3% of small private enterprises have top female managers, 21.0% of medium-sized firms have women in management positions, and only 9.8% of large enterprises have top female managers. UNDP estimated that, overall, only 25% of firms have any top female management in Kazakhstan. 

---

2. Gender and Wage Disparities

65. While the minimum wage has steadily increased since 2005, as of 2010, women’s average earnings still remained only 66% of what men were making. The wage gap has been also lessening slightly since 2005, although this trend has not been entirely consistent (Figure 4).

66. In 2007, the MDG 3 targets were revised to include minimizing the gender wage gap. By 2012, the gender wage gap had narrowed slightly and women’s wages as a proportion of men’s were calculated at 69.6%. In 2011, the President called for an increase in public sector salaries to twice the 2008 rates. Women’s rights advocates point out however, that previous salary increases have not kept up with inflation.

67. Gender wage gaps are partly attributed to “differences in human capital endowment and differences in job characteristics.” Disparities in salaries between women and men are partially the consequence of the specific patterns in women’s employment and the choices that women make, and are not necessarily the result of discrimination. For example, some women choose specific fields of study or take time out from work to raise children. Some choose jobs that are compatible with child-care responsibilities and forgo promotions for the same reason.

68. Nonetheless, Kazakhstan is considered to be a country with a particularly high “proportion of the unexplained earnings gap” for the region, suggesting the existence of gender discrimination. It seems that women are also paid less because they are women, not merely because they are in lower-paid jobs or industries or take time out from formal employment. Indeed, respondents to this assessment noted common forms of discrimination and labor law violations that women encounter in employment, such as the practice of asking young women about their marital and family status in job interviews, lack of promotions, nonpayment of wages, hiring without a written contract, and abuse of trial periods followed

---

93 Government of Kazakhstan. 2011a, p. 45.
by termination as a way to obtain unpaid labor. Women themselves are not always aware of their rights and do not act collectively to protect them. Despite the fact that discriminatory practices such as those described above are known, gaps between the legal principles of equality and implementation mean that “it is thus difficult to bring to the courts cases about discrimination in the workplace,”96 and few organizations are addressing this issue.

3. Self-Employment and the Informal Sector

69. A number of respondents in this assessment drew attention to the issue of self-employment as a particular concern for women, and noted women’s engagement in the informal sector. In 2009, women made up 59.2% of the informal sector among the economically active rural population97 and, overall, 34.6% of women are self-employed. The classification of women who are engaged in the informal sector as “self-employed,” or even as employed in small enterprises, tends to obscure the fact that they occupy a precarious and unprotected position in the economy. Self-employed women and men do not pay into the pension system or receive social insurance. They have little security and no legal protection in terms of workplace safety; regulation of working conditions; or maternity, childcare, or sick leave. The government has prioritized the transfer of self-employment and informal business to the formal sector, but women’s NGOs are skeptical that this will ultimately benefit women in terms of increased social support relative to their costs associated with increased regulation.

70. Women who are classified as unemployed, whether housewives or those on maternity leave, provide “socially useful” labor in terms of “creating living conditions for working family members and take part in raising the population of future workers.”98 Conventional wisdom supports the image of men as economic producers and undervalues women’s contributions in their support of men’s labor (e.g., in 2012, men’s contribution to the GDP in Kazakhstan was calculated as 60.3% while women’s was 39.7%).99 “Unfortunately, government agencies, politicians, and economists still do not recognize the economic value of women’s domestic unpaid labor, including child care.”100

4. Formal Employment and Unemployment

71. The economically active population in Kazakhstan increased from 7.8 million to 8.6 million during 2004–2010, and the number of employed persons increased at a similar rate. According to official data, the number of employed women increased from 3.5 million to almost 4.0 million during this period.101 While the number of working women may have increased during those years, other figures suggest that women’s economic activity rates were in decline in all Central Asian republics from 2008 to 2009, including Kazakhstan.102 It is also clear that there is an employment gap between women and men in Kazakhstan, and it has remained stable since 2006. During 2008–2012, roughly 66% of all women aged 15 and over were economically active, compared with about 77% of all men in the same age group.103

---

96 S. Somach and D. Rubin. Gender Assessment. p. 15.
103 Table 7.2 of Agency of Statistics. 2009. p. 65; Table 7.2 of Agency of Statistics. 2011b. p. 76; Table 1.1 of Agency of Statistics. 2013. p.5.
72. Like patterns of women’s economic activity, formal unemployment rates in Kazakhstan show distinct gender patterns. For instance, women made up about two-thirds of the officially registered unemployed in 2008–2010. Official unemployment figures for rural areas show a different pattern. Women represent only 48% of those registered as unemployed, and data for rural areas by region show that the number of unemployed women and men are comparable. Women are overrepresented among the long-term unemployed in both urban and rural settings. Women’s higher unemployment rate can partly be explained by the fact that they take leave from work to care for children. A survey of over 360 women shows a characteristic pattern: 30% of the respondents were not engaged in formal employment outside of the home, but only one-quarter of these identified themselves as unemployed (meaning actively seeking work). Among unemployed women, more than half (53.2%) reported that they had been out of work for over 2 years, while 30.0% had been out of work for 6 months up to 2 years.

73. Employment centers are managed by the district or municipal government, and women are frequent users of their services. In 2010, 20,000 women received training through employment centers for jobs in high demand in the labor market such as “seamstresses, bookkeepers, cooks, painters, plasterers and others.” It is important that women receive training in areas that are both in high demand and in nontraditional spheres. Gender experts note that training courses at employment centers are short-term and limited in scope, and thus often cannot provide women with the skills needed for higher-paying jobs (e.g., in accounting).

5. Balancing Work and Family

74. Differences in women and men’s wages, pensions, and positions that they occupy in the labor market are underpinned by stereotyped notions about women’s roles in family life and the incompatibility of domestic responsibilities with formal employment. Women’s unemployment and underemployment are directly related to the need to care for children. Women’s uncompensated domestic work leaves limited time to pursue a career.

75. Although national labor law offers several guarantees relevant to family life, such as prohibitions on discrimination against women who are pregnant or have children or on maternity and child-care leave (which can be used by fathers), NGOs have documented cases of young women being required by employers to sign illegal contracts stating that they will not marry or apply for maternity leave during the term of employment, as well as cases of women over age 40 being constructively terminated and replaced with younger employees.

76. Women outside of large cities and regional centers noted the bureaucratic difficulties involved in applying for child benefits, which requires travel to regional centers and long waiting times for processing documents. NGOs had previously contended that progress toward improving the system of maternity benefits had been slow due to the fact that

---

104 Table 7.10 of Agency of Statistics. 2011b. p. 83.
105 Table 7.11 of Agency of Statistics. 2011b. p. 84.
107 Ibid.
108 The Employment 2020 Program, approved by Government Resolution No. 316 of 31 March 2011, instructed local authorities to create employment centers that operate as state agencies.
110 Recent pension reform initiatives by the government are expected to result in equalizing women’s and men’s retirement age (currently at 58 years for women, and 63 years for men).
111 “Constructive termination” occurs when an employer, rather than firing an employee outright, makes working conditions so difficult or intolerable that the employee resigns. See Feminist League. 2011. pp. 12–13.
Kazakhstan had not ratified the International Labor Organization Maternity Protection Convention. Kazakhstan’s ratification of the convention in June 2012, however, is a positive indication of an intention to address such issues as maternity benefits and employment protection.

77. Gender-based stereotypes and expectations about the roles of women and men doubtlessly complicate the process of addressing discrimination in employment. For instance, in one survey, 45% of the women stated that men should be the financial provider for the family despite the fact that this pattern is often not observed in practice (33% of the women in the same survey stated that they are, in fact, the primary providers). Such findings suggest that there is still an expectation that men will be higher wage earners and the sole providers, despite the fact that it no longer reflects reality.

F. Human Development Issues for Women and Men

78. The ability of women and men to participate in and gain from development programs, especially in the long term, is dependent on such factors as their health and education. The relative health and educational status of women and men are also affected by economic status and infrastructure issues. ADB’s work in sectors such as water supply and sanitation, energy, and transport has implications for infrastructure projects that could improve both conditions in health care and educational institutions and also access to such facilities.

1. Gender Issues in Education

79. Kazakhstan exhibits close to gender parity in access to primary and secondary education, as well as in literacy rates. Having met its targets regarding education and literacy under MDG 3, the government set new targets in 2007 focusing on quality of education. Figure 5 shows how gender-based differences in enrollment become apparent after basic comprehensive education (i.e., grade 9): boys are much more likely to attend institutions that offer technical and vocational training, while girls typically remain in general education in comprehensive schools. Enrollment in colleges (i.e., post-secondary education) is more balanced, but in higher education, women make up the majority of university students.

80. In academic year 2010–2011, women represented 64% of those studying for master’s degrees and 58% of those pursuing doctoral studies. Women’s high levels of academic success, however, are not reflected in their professional achievements. In particular, women’s
educational levels do not correlate either with top-level and management posts nor with higher salaries in the working world. There is a real risk that female students will increasingly lose motivation to enter professional and higher education if education is not seen to correlate with a successful career.

81. Perhaps more significant than the types of institutions in which women and men are educated are the fields of study that they chose in preparation for employment. Gender segregation in academic subjects is apparent in secondary and higher education in Kazakhstan. As in basic education, young men tend to enter technical and vocational schools, while young women are much more likely to attend colleges and universities. Women are also concentrated in traditional female fields of study such as education, health care, and the services sector, while young men are overly represented in technical subjects, particularly those connected with the hydrocarbon, transport, and energy industries. Official data for selected specializations reveal these patterns as shown in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4  Female and Male Students by Specialization in Vocational Schools and Colleges, Academic Year 2010–2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialization</th>
<th>Vocational Schools (%)</th>
<th>Colleges (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geology, mining</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and gas</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical engineering</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport operations</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and utilities</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information science and computer engineering</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication, telecommunications, and information technology</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued on next page
82. The patterns of educational enrollment correspond closely to patterns of labor market segregation. Men predominate among those receiving higher education and technical training in fields that are experiencing growth. Without measures to redress this gender imbalance, women may not have equal access to employment in such fields in the future. However, the numbers of women and men who study information science and technology are slightly more balanced than in many other technical fields.

83. Addressing the limited number of free or affordable preschool facilities has been a priority in Kazakhstan, one that implicates access to both education and employment. As part of its Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2020, the government adopted the Balapan (Nestling) Program to Support Children’s Pre-School Education for 2010–2014. During the early years of independence, half of all preschools were privatized, and many buildings that had housed former preschools were abandoned or destroyed. In 2010, it was reported that only 38.7% (or 373,160) of all preschool-aged children were attending such schools, while more than 260,000 children were on waiting lists.

The Balapan Program also recognizes regional disparities in preschool availability. For instance, of almost 7,000 rural settlements, 69% had no preschools in 2010, largely because their preschool-aged populations were not large enough to support the opening of new facilities.

119 UNESCO. 2011. World Data on Education. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Kazakhstan.pdf. Preschool education is aimed at children 1 to 6 or 7 years old, and is offered through state-owned or private centers. The Ministry of Education is the main provider of preschool education through kindergarten, but there is a small number of private early childhood services.

84. The rationale for creating the Balapan Program is recognition of the importance of early childhood education, combined with an increase in the number of children. Most respondents to this assessment identified the lack of accessible childcare as a significant contributing factor to women's inability to resume formal employment after having children. The Balapan Program may therefore play a key role in supporting women who want to return to work.

2. Gender-Based Violence

85. The subject of gender-based violence was raised by a large number of respondents to this assessment when they were asked about issues of particular concern to women and about indications of gender inequalities in Kazakhstan today. Prevention of gender-based violence is the subject of a full chapter of the gender equality strategy, which recognizes that the elimination of violence against women is a critical factor in advancing gender equality. In the context of the MDGs, the government has articulated a position in which “combating violence against women is one of the top-priority objectives of social and economic development in Kazakhstan.”

86. The government has taken a number of positive steps to address the problem of gender-based violence more effectively, mostly focusing on domestic violence. In 2008, the Agency of Statistics initiated a comprehensive training and capacity-building program to improve the collection of gender-sensitive data, including a component on data relevant to violence against women. In addition, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence was adopted in 2009. This law requires local authorities to develop and approve regional programs on domestic violence prevention; ensure the provision of specialized social services for victims; and create organizations to provide victims with necessary psychological, medical, and legal assistance. Significantly, the law created a mechanism, the protection order, which allows the perpetrator of violence to be temporarily removed from the home.

87. A number of training sessions have been held for law enforcement officers to improve police response to domestic violence, and the government also partners with NGOs to support awareness-raising and information campaigns. There are approximately 20 NGO-led crisis centers operating in Kazakhstan that offer assistance primarily to female victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, but several regions have none or only one crisis center for the entire territory. The action plan for the implementation of the gender equality strategy for 2012–2016 calls for the creation of crisis centers for victims of domestic violence in four regions that currently have no such centers, using municipal funds. NGO-operated crisis centers are largely supported by the international donor community.

88. Violence against women also has a serious impact on women's economic status and has implications for the larger community and the nation. Women's lower economic status and lack of financial independence are reasons why women remain in violent relationships, as living independently and supporting children alone does not appear to be a viable option. NGOs that provide assistance to domestic violence victims observe that women's lack of

121 Government of Kazakhstan and UN Country Team. MDGs in Kazakhstan, p. 53.
122 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Secretary-General’s Database on Violence Against Women. http://sgdatabase.unwomen.org/home.action
123 Official figures indicated that there were 28 crisis centers operating in the country in 2010, but NGOs dispute this number, stating that there are significantly fewer functioning crisis centers.
economic protection is one of the primary reasons that they withdraw complaints made to law enforcement agencies.\textsuperscript{125}

89. In addition to domestic violence, respondents drew attention to the problem of sexual harassment, which can be characterized either as a form of violence against women or a type of employment-based discrimination. At present, sexual harassment is not adequately addressed either by the legal system or through workplace regulations. Provisions on sexual harassment were ultimately not included in the equal rights law\textsuperscript{126} when it was enacted. Consultations with trade union representatives in Kazakhstan revealed that sexual harassment in the workplace is a serious problem, especially for young women, but that women rarely raise this issue through formal channels. One of the reasons commonly given for the underreporting of sexual harassment is the mentality that prevents women in Kazakhstan from speaking openly about a subject that is perceived as taboo. In addition, workplace policies on sexual harassment do not exist, which means that women have little recourse and may well fear losing their jobs.

3. Gender and Disability

90. A UNDP review of factors contributing to social exclusion in post-socialist countries in both Eastern Europe and Central Asia pointed out that people with disabilities face widespread social exclusion across the region.\textsuperscript{127} Increased attention has been devoted to the intersection of gender and disability, as women can face discrimination based on both sex and disability. In 2011, the government established a working group to develop a national action plan on the rights of people with disabilities, and the plan will give specific attention to women. The commissioner for human rights stated that the most pressing concerns for women with disabilities are integration into the labor market and "facilitating their access to education, protecting their reproductive health, providing them with free quality medical care, ensuring their access to information, providing them with quality assistive devices, ensuring their unimpeded access to social services, and ensuring their access to public transportation."\textsuperscript{128} Under a project financed by the European Union to support women with disabilities by developing strategies to protect their rights, further concerns were articulated, such as the general lack of basic infrastructure for enabling access to public spaces and transport and the greater vulnerability of disabled women to violence (i.e., psychological, physical, or economic) and exploitation.\textsuperscript{129}

91. Another intersection between gender and disability, and one that was highlighted by several respondents in this assessment, is the role that women play in caring for disabled persons. Child care generally falls to women in Kazakhstan as well as caring for disabled family members. It was reported that there are limited programs or facilities for children with disabilities, and no specialized programs for children once they reach age 18. The lack of social support for women caring for persons with disabilities places additional burdens on women’s time. The accessibility issues noted above also create particular difficulties for women who are caregivers.

\textsuperscript{126} The Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Men and Women.
III. Gender Issues in Key Sectors for ADB Operations

92. This chapter reviews gender issues in key sectors for ADB operations in Kazakhstan. While some of the topics included here have often been seen as gender-neutral, consideration of the different roles and responsibilities of women and men, their differing priorities and needs, unequal access to resources, and the potential differential impacts of neutral policies illustrate the need to take gender into account even in such sectors.

A. Transport

93. Kazakhstan is a large country with vast distances between its cities and towns, as well as between its remote industrial areas, agricultural regions, and urban centers. It is well placed between Europe and Asia geographically, yet remains isolated from world markets due to its limited road and rail transport networks. The country thus needs improvements in both national and regional transport networks to increase domestic and international trade.

94. The government views the improvement of Kazakhstan’s road infrastructure as “the backbone of economic development,” with a particular emphasis on establishing transit corridors that would expand cross-border trade and investment. As is the case in many countries in the region, Kazakhstan’s road network needs rehabilitation and modernization. It has over 97,400 kilometers of roadways, about 90% of which are paved. Historically, most of the ADB portfolio in Kazakhstan has been devoted to the transport sector, namely, highway construction and rehabilitation and the modernization of border and customs controls under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. Transport projects can, however, encompass cross-border transport and logistics, urban transport (including public transport systems), road safety, and social sustainability.

95. Transport sector projects in Kazakhstan in the transport sector have undoubtedly had ancillary effects in terms of improving the lives of women (e.g., by providing access to education and health services and increasing economic opportunities for women in trade and services). This sector offers entry points for the development of more gender-aware projects that could lead to improved mobility and economic opportunities for women.

96. It should be acknowledged that the gender dimensions of projects in the transport sector may not be immediately apparent, especially when the focus is on outputs related to

---

infrastructure. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the rationale behind road and transport development—increasing people’s mobility—that, in turn, will mean improved access to employment, health services, educational facilities, and markets, as well as the easier movement of goods. As noted in the section above, the majority of women's businesses in the SME sector are related to trade, which means that reform in the transport sector could have a distinct impact on businesswomen.

1. **Government Policies and Commitments**

97. The government and ADB both view improving the transport sector as a critical component of larger national strategic objectives, which include increasing economic growth, facilitating domestic and foreign trade, and creating reliable and accessible transit routes. However, government programs have focused primarily on infrastructure investments and less on such considerations as increasing mobility of the population and ensuring that roads and transport meet the needs of both women and men. National strategies in the road and transport sector have not referenced gender differences. They do not include provisions on ensuring women’s participation in decision making nor refer to gender equality goals. Infrastructure improvements are measured primarily in terms of quantifiable outputs (e.g., kilometers of roads that have been repaired). While several objectives that could include a gender dimension have been articulated in national policies, gender-based targets have not been developed.

98. Transport is a key element in the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2020, with a focus on integrating and improving the efficiency of all forms of transport infrastructure (i.e., rail, road, air, and water) and on reforming customs and border procedures to improve trade with foreign markets. Similarly, under the national development strategy, Kazakhstan 2030, the improvement of transport infrastructure is identified as a long-term priority linked to enhancing stability and economic growth.

99. The Transport Strategy of Kazakhstan to 2015 recognizes the interconnections between transport and economic development, and notes that the current transport system, both of goods and passengers, does not meet the needs of the country. Special attention is given to setting the cost of public transport at a level commensurate with income levels of disadvantaged groups, including the poor and persons with disabilities.

2. **Gender Issues Related to Transport**

100. To ensure that transport investments are responsive to women’s concerns and priorities as well as to men’s and to enable women to contribute fully to economic development and to improve their own livelihoods, better information is required on women’s transport needs and preferences. This should include their patterns of travel (e.g., frequency, mode, time spent traveling, destinations, purpose, scheduling, affordability, and with whom they travel). Research elsewhere shows that women tend to travel shorter distances, often

---

134 The Kazakhstan 2030 development strategy is presently being elaborated into a longer-range plan, Kazakhstan 2050.
135 Government of Kazakhstan. 2006b.
by public transport or on foot and often with children or other people, combining several activities in one journey (e.g., taking children to and from school, going to the market, and attending a workplace or other livelihood-related destination). Comparable information is required for Kazakhstan to maximize the benefits of transport projects for the whole country.

101. Women in rural areas of Kazakhstan emphasized the impact that improvement of local and feeder roads would have on their lives, facilitating their access to markets, health centers, schools, and government offices. Rural women also noted their dependence on public transport, as well as the infrequency of many services, poor condition of bus shelters, and distances between them.

a. Local Roads and Access to Transport

102. The Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2020 foresees the development of the road sector and the creation of a modern road network linking cities and towns, with particular attention to the development of local roads. Kazakhstan 2030 prioritizes the development of a network of paved rural roads. Women in rural areas consulted for this assessment, however, stated that the improvement of local and feeder roads would have a greater impact on their lives, facilitating their access to markets, health centers, schools and government offices. Local authorities should be encouraged to improve local roads in conjunction with national projects on the main corridors.

103. A report based on the monitoring of differences between the lives of women in rural and urban areas in Kazakhstan found that the low level of access to transport in rural settlements is an issue. According to official estimates, about 2,000 rural settlements do not have year-round access to transport, and only 69.3% of rural towns and villages have regular transport connections. Rural women consulted for this assessment confirmed that they are particularly dependent on public transport for travel to regional centers, where they go to visit government offices (e.g., to apply for child benefits), access health services, and sell home-produced goods. Women often travel with children. Men in rural settlements are much more likely to drive privately-owned vehicles, in part because fewer women can afford to purchase cars. Other issues that rural women raised (and should be considered in public transport projects) included the distances between bus stops, condition of bus shelters (often without lights or benches), and infrequency of bus service between villages and city centers, which results in overcrowded buses and long journey times.

104. Gender experts estimate that fewer than a quarter of drivers are women, mostly located in large cities. Women in Kazakhstan are much more likely to rely on public transport or travel on foot, but the affordability of public transport is another issue with important gender dimensions, considering women’s lower incomes, limited claims on household resources, and their need to travel with frequent stops (thus requiring payment of multiple fares). Because of these differences, women and men also have different views regarding such issues as the cost of transport and the efficiency and safety of transport stops and stations.

137 Government of Kazakhstan. 2006b.
105. Women also noted that limited transport options result in overcrowding, and they were concerned by unsafe driving practices on public transport. A situational analysis conducted by UNDP in Almaty, under a project to support sustainable transport, found that public transport is characterized by such problems as “overcrowding especially at peak hours that allows bus operators to maximize profits; lack of services in off-peak hours; poor mobility on roads due to traffic congestion and lack of priority for buses; and a lack of cleanliness on board.”

106. The first rows of urban public transport are allocated to persons with disabilities and passengers with children, but overcrowding means that this rule is often not followed. A small number of specialized vehicles for transporting wheelchair users operate in Almaty and Astana, but the routes are limited, and the service is operated by NGOs.

b. Women’s Entrepreneurial Opportunities

107. The development of both main and feeder roads can lead to increased income-earning opportunities for women, such as selling goods to drivers, operating cafes, and managing rest-stop facilities. Project planning for road improvement should explore ways to create an environment that will support such businesses for women. Measures could include creating highway rest areas, reserving commercial and vending spaces for women in roadside infrastructure, installing public toilets, and establishing transport from rural villages to roadside rest stops. Improvements in transport logistics should also take into account the numbers of women involved in trade, and how reform in this sector could improve the efficiency and profitability of women’s enterprises.

108. A review of some of the beneficiaries of ADB projects under the CAREC Program noted that road rehabilitation has also contributed to the growth of small supporting businesses, including those in which women are well represented. If the planning of transport projects were coordinated with SME project planning, with specific attention to supporting women’s businesses, these positive impacts could be multiplied.

109. As noted above, women regularly make day trips across international borders. There are gender differences with regard to difficulties encountered at border crossings. For instance, while most shuttle traders (67.5%) reported that they have problems crossing borders, 55.5% of this group consisted of women, with some of those respondents (10.0%) citing forms of discrimination that only women encounter at these borders.

c. Employment in Transport and Construction

110. Women also want their share of jobs arising from transport projects, and in the transport and construction industries in general, but they encounter barriers to jobs that are considered to be nontraditional forms of female employment. Urban women stated that specific forms of public transport, such as trams, trolleys or light rail, offer greater employment opportunities for female drivers than city buses or trains. Measures could be taken, however, to more precisely identify barriers to women’s employment in these fields.

---

Country Gender Assessment: Kazakhstan

(e.g., limited access to technical fields of study, recruitment and hiring practices, workplace environment, and stereotypes) and to address those barriers within transport sector projects.

111. Further, the fact that the transport and construction sectors are male-dominated has implications for women’s participation in decision making regarding policies and strategies in these sectors, and the extent to which they will be able to benefit from investments, especially investments in job creation.

112. Women’s representation in employment in both construction (which includes road construction and rehabilitation projects) and transport is low. Of all working men in Kazakhstan in 2010, 10.5% were employed in construction and 9.4% in transport and storage, but only around 3.0% of all working women were employed in each field. Overall, men represented 76.8% of all those working in transport and storage and 76.5% of those employed in construction. Women are also unlikely to run businesses dealing with transport or communications. There are explicit limitations on a woman’s ability to enter these fields, most notably a list annexed to the Labor Code that elaborates certain forms of work that women are prohibited from performing. Among the listed jobs, several are in the construction and transport industries, for instance, laying asphalt, grading, operating bulldozers, manufacturing and repairing tires, and several jobs affiliated with railway and subway train operations.

113. Stereotypes also play a role in the jobs that women and men hold in these sectors. Respondents to this assessment confirmed that drivers of railway trains, subway trains, and buses are usually male. Women in the transport sector are most likely to be employed in administrative jobs, or as conductors or drivers of trams, which is considered lighter work. In professional institutions, the vast majority of students enrolled in transport fields are male (over 85%), suggesting that fewer female graduates will have the required skills necessary for employment in this sector. A study of shuttle traders, described above, noted that while mostly women are engaged in this activity, only 10% of border staff are female.

d. Gender Dimensions of Road Safety

114. According to the World Bank, Kazakhstan has the highest mortality rate from road traffic accidents of any country in Europe and Central Asia. The World Bank also estimates that the economic cost of road injuries in Kazakhstan was $2.7 billion in 2008.

115. Information about the gender dimensions of road safety in Kazakhstan is limited, but data from the World Health Organization suggest that men are particularly at risk for accidents and injury. For instance, of all reported road traffic fatalities in 2007, 78% were male and 22% female. Road projects should address not only the technical aspects of road safety, such as road design, but also gender-influenced behaviors, such as alcohol

---

141 Table 7.4 of Agency of Statistics. 2011b. p. 78.
142 Ibid.
143 In a survey of 362 women in business, none of the respondents were engaged in the transport or communications sectors. See National Commission for Women’s Affairs. Results of Studies on the Development of an Action Plan, p. 27.
147 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
consumption or the lack of seatbelt and safety helmet use among men. Educational programs should include messages specifically targeted at males. Additionally, greater attention should be given to protecting pedestrians, for instance, by constructing safer pavements and crossings, providing adequate lighting, and posting and monitoring speed limits.

e. Sexually Transmitted Infections and Human Trafficking

116. An important priority for ADB infrastructure projects is to ensure that the improvement of transport corridors does not also facilitate the movement of illegal goods, the spread of diseases, or an increase in illicit practices such as commercial sex work or human trafficking. In Kazakhstan, CAREC projects include prevention activities on HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections, and human trafficking. While there are important gender dimensions within each of these broad categories, the available information is insufficient to establish specific links between gender and transport sector work.

117. For instance, national statistics show that men are at particular risk for HIV infection. Of newly diagnosed infections in 2010, 63% involved males, and men have consistently represented the large majority of registered cases of HIV infection. At the same time, the number of registered cases of HIV infection among women has been steadily increasing since 2006, while for men the number has been decreasing slightly. The dominant mode of transmission is injecting drug use (55% of newly reported cases in 2010 for which the transmission mode was known), followed by heterosexual contact (43%). While male infection rates are highest in Almaty (city) and in Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Karaganda, and Mangystau oblasts, there is insufficient information to establish that (male) truck drivers or road construction and transport workers engage in high-risk behaviors. Nor is it clear that commercial sex is a primary vector for the spread of HIV infection. Further surveillance and vulnerability mapping on HIV/AIDS in Kazakhstan is needed to identify the gender issues that should be addressed through prevention work.

118. For recommendations and entry points for gender mainstreaming in ADB initiatives in this sector, please refer to Appendix 1.

B. Urban Services and Infrastructure

119. Kazakhstan is becoming increasingly urbanized and its largest cities, particularly Almaty and Astana, have experienced considerable population growth in recent years. Today, urban residents represent just over half of the entire population in Kazakhstan. The rate of urbanization is estimated to be 0.90% annually for 2010–2015, and by 2030, it is expected that 66% of the population will be living in urban areas.

---

Growing internal labor migration from villages and small towns, especially from Akmola, East Kazakhstan, South Kazakhstan, and Zhambyl oblasts,\textsuperscript{155} is a major driver of urban growth. The internal labor migration rate in Kazakhstan is higher than the rates in neighboring Central Asian countries. A recent survey of over 2,000 people found that 40% of respondents had close relatives who had migrated to other parts of Kazakhstan to find work, three times the rate of those who had traveled abroad for the same reason.\textsuperscript{156} The primary motivation for migration to larger cities is the deterioration of living conditions in rural areas and the lack of economic opportunities, primarily because of declining agricultural production.

Deficiencies in basic infrastructure affect both women and men, and the design of urban development projects should aim to identify those differential impacts more precisely. Attention should be paid to such factors as how access to basic services correlates with economic status, the roles played by women and men in finding alternatives when services are deficient, and how women and men stand to benefit from improved infrastructure.

1. Government Policies and Commitments

Government commitments concerning urban development, improvements in urban infrastructure, and access to basic services have not referenced gender. State programs provide analyses of the current situation in particular spheres and have focused on improving the quality of life for the population as a whole. Assessments within national programs do not refer to gender differences in access to services, nor do the programs specify measures to promote women’s participation in decision making or the advancement of gender equality.

In his annual state of the nation address in 2011, the President outlined three priority areas under the theme of social modernization. Two of them—modernizing utilities and providing safe drinking water—are related to urban services.\textsuperscript{157} The President instructed the government to develop new programs to improve communal services, heating, electricity, and gas supply, and to construct new water facilities to provide 100% water-supply coverage in urban areas. In his 2012 address, the President identified 10 priority areas to be the focus of planning for socioeconomic modernization. Two of them were affordable housing and regional development.\textsuperscript{158}

The Program for Modernization of Housing and Utilities, 2011–2020 includes infrastructure improvements; the development of a condominium management system; and the modernization of municipal utilities providing heat, gas, electricity, and sanitation services. The Ak Bulak (drinking water) Program aims to improve water supply in both urban and rural areas.\textsuperscript{159} Most of the indicators used in the Ak Bulak Program measure the development of the infrastructure necessary for providing drinking water (e.g., water management organizations), and set targets for the proportion of the population with access to water.

\textsuperscript{155} These regions have consistently had the highest levels of outmigration over the past several years. For example, see Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Migration of the Population Data for 2003–2008. http://www.eng.stat.kz/digital/Population/Pages/default.aspx


2. Gender Issues Related to Urban Services

125. Sex-disaggregated data are needed on such topics as (i) the affordability of basic services for women and men, (ii) gender-based differences in access to services, and (iii) the extent to which consumption patterns differ between women and men. Perhaps more importantly, qualitative information about the impact of deficiencies in public services and infrastructure on women and men would be helpful for project planning.

a. Gender and Access to Basic Services

126. Indicators suggest that improvements in access to basic services (e.g., water and sanitation) have taken place in Kazakhstan, yet deficiencies persist in urban areas. According to data from joint monitoring by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, 99% of the urban population have access to “improved sources of drinking water,” of which 82% have a piped water connection into a dwelling or yard. Government sources, however, indicate that in 2010, only 72% of the urban population had access to the centralized water supply. Most water mains are in poor condition, and 64% of the urban network requires major repairs or complete replacement. The overwhelming majority of the urban population (97%) have access to “improved sanitation facilities.” UNICEF surveys found that most urban households use flush toilets connected to a sewage system or a septic tank (60%), but a considerable portion uses pit latrines (35.5%). Other identified problems concerning the water supply and sanitation system are the lack of knowledge of optimal water consumption patterns, which leads to wasteful practices among water users, and relatively low coverage by water meters. As of 2010, on average, only 76% of urban areas were covered by water meters.

127. Much of the housing infrastructure in Kazakhstan is in need of repair and is deficient in terms of utilities (i.e., heat, gas, and electricity). Official estimates consider 32% of multistory apartment buildings (the most typical housing in urban areas) to be in need of repair, and 2% to be unfit for habitation. Many such residential buildings are energy-inefficient. Experts estimate that 65% of the total municipal heating system is in need of replacement or repair, and that residential buildings, in particular, experience considerable heat loss. A high proportion of the country’s electrical networks (73%) and over half of the gas pipelines (54%) are in need of repair. Monitoring carried out in Aktiubinsk Oblast revealed that only half of the districts in the region had both gas and water supplies.

128. Women in urban areas consulted for this assessment highlighted the deficiencies outlined above, particularly noting problems with heat distribution and water supply, as well as increasing tariffs combined with poor service (e.g., lack of heat in winter and poor-quality drinking water). Within urban areas, there are considerable differences in housing conditions. Some female respondents explained that many new buildings are constructed quickly and with poor-quality materials, resulting in heating deficiencies. Others commented that older buildings are in poor condition, with pipes and heating systems in need of major renovations.

---

161 Ak Bulak Program for 2011–2020: Situational Analysis.
166 Ibid.
129. While such deficiencies affect all residents, women and men differ in their needs, perceptions, and roles with regard to urban services. Because women take on the primary responsibility for household chores and are the primary users of utilities in the home, deficiencies in basic services increase women’s unpaid workload. Improving women’s access to urban infrastructure would not only improve their living conditions but also increase their time for productive activities. Projects to improve water, electrical, and gas supplies should therefore take women’s specific needs into account to ensure that these benefits are realized. Equally important, housing design, including such factors as heating systems, ventilation, lighting, and the design of common spaces, should also reflect women’s concerns. Assessments of improvements in access to basic services within urban development projects should not be limited to the most immediate impacts on the lives of women, such as the time saved when piped water is available in the home. The ability of women to invest this time in their education, income-generating activities, care of family members, and in their own welfare is equally important.

130. Access to basic services should be considered from the perspectives of availability and affordability. The potential impact of metering projects and new billing schemes for utilities on low-income populations should take into account the fact that women are among the poorest groups in the country. If provisions are made to ensure that low-income customers have access to basic utilities, special attention should be paid to vulnerable women, especially single mothers and pensioners. The introduction of metering systems for basic utilities should also improve energy efficiency. When introducing new metering systems, it is important to consider that women are the frontline users of electricity, gas, and water in the home, but men are most often responsible for paying utility bills. Thus, educational programs on metering and energy efficiency, as well as outreach to customers, should be sensitive to differences that result from gender roles. Promotional materials may need to target women and men differently.

b. Women’s Priorities in Urban Planning

131. When consulted about issues that they consider critical in the context of urbanization, the majority of women in this assessment noted the lack of public spaces for children and for recreation in general. Women in cities described the problem of courtyards between buildings being used unofficially as parking spaces, leaving few safe places where children can play. They were also concerned that many public areas and buildings are not accessible to wheelchairs, strollers, or prams. While new buildings in large urban areas generally have ramps installed, many are inadequately constructed and cannot be used.

c. Women’s Role in Managing Housing Associations

132. The issue of how communal services are managed for urban residents was raised several times during this assessment. In Kazakhstan, housing and communal services in apartment buildings are managed by cooperatives of apartment owners. A number of problems specific to multi-family housing have been identified in Kazakhstan: (i) homeowners’ low level of participation in condominium management, (ii) homeowners’
d. Gender-Aware Policies and Planning

134. As noted above, the goal underlying government and ADB infrastructure projects is the improvement of the basic quality of life for the people of Kazakhstan. While improved access to clean water, sanitation services, electricity, and gas invariably changes the lives of both women and men for the better, the strategic planning behind such projects has not necessarily focused on gender-specific outcomes. The capacity of stakeholders to take into account gender issues in strategic planning and national programs on urban services is dependent on such factors as the inclusion of gender-related goals in relevant law and policy, increasing gender balance in key institutions (which could include government bodies and relevant private companies), and ensuring women’s participation in, and the gender sensitivity of, planning processes. Gender budgeting exercises could also be promoted as a way to analyze how priorities in national and municipal spending on urban development projects may have differential impacts on women and men.

135. Recommendations and entry points for gender mainstreaming in ADB initiatives in this sector are shown in Appendix 1.

C. Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development

136. Both the government and ADB have emphasized the importance of improving the climate for private business, with a focus on supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The government recognizes that SMEs can have a significant

---

impact on economic development, contribute to the resolution of social issues, and provide employment opportunities. It thus aims to stimulate the development of non-oil export sectors of the economy through a partnership with business enterprises. The importance of the private sector is indicated by the fact that the combined contribution of micro and SMEs amounts to up to 40% of Kazakhstan’s GDP. At least 34.8% of the labor force are employed by SMEs.

137. The primary obstacles to SME development are lack of access to finance and the high cost of borrowing, underdeveloped industrial infrastructure, insufficient support for entrepreneurship, and the existence of a large informal sector. Particular issues facing women entrepreneurs are discussed below.

138. Given the focus on SME development and its role in economic stability, this sector offers important opportunities for empowering women economically and promoting gender equality. Running their own small businesses also allows women to arrange their activities around their domestic responsibilities. Further work in this area is needed to identify clearly the nature of women’s entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan and the gender-specific constraints and biases that affect women.

1. Government Policies and Commitments

139. The achievement of gender equality in the economy is a goal of the government’s gender equality strategy, and one that is linked to the promotion of small business. The strategy envisions several measures to promote women’s role in business, including programs on vocational retraining, business management and administration, and other “mechanisms promoting women’s involvement in business and providing development assistance to their business.” The strategy also pays special attention to the development of family businesses and home-based work with flexible schedules. Expected results include equalizing women and men’s access to land, materials, and financial resources. The strategy aims to increase the number of women involved in entrepreneurship, including in small and medium-sized businesses, and it envisions growth in the number of companies owned by women. The strategy does not, however, establish baseline data against which to measure any increase in the number of female-owned and -operated businesses in Kazakhstan.

140. The action plan for implementation of the gender equality strategy includes specific actions to “involve women in entrepreneurial activities;” to promote sustainable and productive self-employment for women, family businesses, and home-based work; “to provide microcredit for the development of women’s entrepreneurship in rural areas;” and to support training courses and seminars on microcredit and entrepreneurship for businesswomen and rural residents. The Employment 2020 Program devotes a section to promoting

176 Government of Kazakhstan. 2012. Sec. 3.
entrepreneurship in rural areas, and states that “priority in program participation will be given to women wishing to organize their own businesses in villages.”

141. The Program on Microcredit for Women’s Entrepreneurship, 2009–2015, was initiated according to instructions issued by President Nazarbayev at the Fifth Forum of Women of Kazakhstan in 2009. It is open to individual entrepreneurs and to enterprises under the leadership of women, meaning that the share of women’s ownership (i.e., share capital) in the company must be at least 50% and that at least 30% of the employees must be female. In 2011, the President called for increasing the available funds to T2 billion annually.

2. Gender Issues Related to Entrepreneurship

142. There are no sex-disaggregated official data on entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan, and only limited information on such topics as the number of female-owned and managed businesses, average sizes of women and men’s businesses, or age of women and men’s business ventures. Further detail about the specific sectors in which women run businesses would also be helpful, and more analysis is needed of the precise gender-based constraints that women face in opening and expanding their businesses. Finally, to identify ways to increase job opportunities for women, it would be useful to have data on the correlation between women’s ownership and/or management of enterprises and the rate of female employment in such businesses. The gender action plan of ADB’s Small and Medium Enterprise Investment Program, Tranche includes the establishment of a data collection mechanism enabling capture of sex-disaggregated statistics on entrepreneurship for the geo-information system (GIS) of the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund, the state support program created to support entrepreneurship development.

a. Characteristics of Women’s Entrepreneurship

143. Research supported by the Damu Enterprise Development Fund indicates that women are strongly associated with small enterprises and even microbusinesses in Kazakhstan. From a survey of 10,000 respondents, 61% of those who identified themselves as engaged in small enterprises (as defined under the Law on Private Enterprise) were women. Women were also well represented in microbusinesses (65% of respondents who identified themselves as individual entrepreneurs were women) and small business enterprises (52% of respondents in this category) as defined by the Tax Code. A separate survey of 362 women in business found that 82.5% were engaged in small businesses and only 9.1% in medium-sized enterprises. The remaining women were all engaged in the informal sector.

---

144. Self-employment has grown during the economic crisis. The term “self-employed” refers to a specific category of private business in the informal sector under which the majority of self-employed people are operating without licenses. This type of entrepreneurial work (primarily market and retail trade) appeals to women since it does not “require long-term training, work experience, [or] additional training and allows them to have comparatively stable income.” Women find informal businesses to be an attractive form of work because it allows them to combine work and care of children and other household matters. In addition, they can resolve any issues concerning their businesses themselves, are not subject to inspections by tax authorities, and are not required to file tax returns. According to some estimates, 59% of self-employed individuals are women. Over 50% of a group of working women who were surveyed in Kazakhstan reported that they were employed without a contract. These included female employers, self-employed members of cooperatives, women who work free-of-charge in family businesses, and those who work on household plots.

145. In rural regions, many women who are not formally employed nevertheless engage in informal businesses, such as making sweets, baking, and selling home-produced goods (e.g., meat, milk, fruit, and vegetables). A survey of businesswomen found that they were as likely to run their businesses with a close relative, such as a spouse, parent, or child (40.6%), as they were to run it independently (41.3%), a characteristic that differentiates women’s business from men’s.

146. In addition to the fact that women’s businesses tend to be small or even micro in size, they are concentrated in specific sectors: primarily small-scale trade and services. Close to half (49.0%) of the women who took part in the aforementioned survey were engaged in trade, and 36.4% in the services sector, which typically includes such businesses as hair salons, cafeterias, laundries, notary offices, pharmacies, and small shops. No women were running businesses in the areas of transport, communications, construction, or mining. Data from women’s microlending programs confirm that the majority of borrowers are engaged in wholesale and retail trade (65%), with the next largest number of borrowers in services (13%).

147. “Shuttle trade,” a particularly female form of work, occurs when women travel across borders between Kazakhstan and neighboring countries for the purpose of purchasing consumer goods, mainly textiles and household items, to resell. Shuttle trade can be characterized as informal work or microenterprise, and it is especially appealing to women because it offers low entry barriers. A survey of 80 people engaged in shuttle trade in Kazakhstan found that there were 24% more women than men among those interviewed. More than half of all respondents (56.3%) who engaged in shuttle trade did so due to a lack of other employment opportunities and the majority of this group, (65.0%) were women. Although few young people were engaged in shuttle trade, 70% of shuttle traders under age 25 were women. Another study of women engaged in informal shuttle trade found that they

185 Government of Kazakhstan and UN Country Team. MDGs in Kazakhstan. p. 56.
187 Government of Kazakhstan and UN Country Team. MDGs in Kazakhstan. p. 56.
191 Ibid.
had insufficient financial capital to transition to the formal sector. In addition, they also faced psychological hurdles: the women were fearful of the difficulties they would encounter when required to submit registration documents and pay taxes.

148. The sizes, characteristics, and types of businesses that women tend to own and/or manage suggest that business-support services should be tailored to the specific needs of female entrepreneurs. Efforts are needed to diversify the sectors in which women have businesses and to help them enter nontraditional and high-level industries.

149. A study of the ratio of opportunity to necessity that drives people into entrepreneurial activity in Kazakhstan found that men are much more likely to be motivated by a desire to take advantage of perceived opportunities, whereas women are more often “driven by nonexistent or unsatisfactory alternative employment options.” 193 Almost twice as many men were "opportunity entrepreneurs." The ratio of opportunity-to-necessity for men was 2.96 : 1.00, compared with the ratio for women of 1.83 : 1.00. 194 The fact that women more often decide to start a business out of necessity (e.g., to support their family) is closely related to some of the obstacles that they encounter, such as lack of preparedness, insufficient business skills and training, and even an unwillingness to take risks.

b. Barriers to Women’s Entrepreneurial Activities

150. While both women and men face constraints in trying to sustain and develop their businesses in Kazakhstan, women’s opportunities are further restricted by the “large gender gap in the distribution of microcredit, land and other economic assets.” 195 When asked what problems impeded them from starting a business, a large majority of women (71.2%) reported insufficient financing. 196 When providing greater detail, the women described the following difficulties: lack of start-up capital, limited access to loans, and insufficient experience or specialized knowledge about running a business. This final point is thought to be particularly relevant to women who “due to family obligations are unable to become completely familiar with the study of business.” 197 In addition to these financial literacy issues, women face prejudices of loan officers about women’s ability to manage effectively and repay the loan.

151. The obstacles women in rural areas face are for the most part similar, but are in fact more acute, than those living in urban environments. Rural women identify such constraints as lack of collateral (i.e., property is often registered in the name of the husband or male head of household), refusals by banks, complicated banking procedures, fear of taking on debt, and the lack of skills and knowledge necessary for creating a business plan (a requirement for obtaining loans). 198 The fact that the most successful women’s businesses in Kazakhstan today are those that were initiated in the early 1990s—when the business registration process was simpler, legislation regarding credit and loans was more liberal, and there were no customs regulations—suggests that increased regulation of the SME sector may have resulted in greater barriers for female entrepreneurs. 199

194 Ibid.
195 UNECE. 2009. p. 16.
197 Ibid., p. 29.
199 Ibid., p. 110.
c. Access to Commercial Loans and Microcredit

152. Access to finance is critical in the SME sector, but little analysis has been conducted of the gender aspects of access to credit in Kazakhstan. It appears that while access may be equally guaranteed in terms of legal rights and loan procedures, women are actually treated differently. As a result, women’s access to commercial banks is more limited than men’s.

153. Several distinct barriers that make access to credit an especially acute problem for women entrepreneurs have been identified, including:

(i) Unequal access to physical assets. Female entrepreneurs have limited access to collateral for loans. Although national law guarantees equal rights to property ownership, in reality, “women are rarely owners of land or other property and often encounter legal limitations in obtaining loans.”

(ii) Characteristics of women’s businesses and employment status. Women tend to run small enterprises and are often engaged in temporary or part-time employment which also limits their ability to obtain finance.

(iii) Bureaucratic obstacles. Women have noted the difficulty, time requirement, and cost of drawing up and notarizing the documents necessary for loan applications as reasons why they do not seek credit. A business plan is required for loan applications, but women generally have limited experience in developing such plans. As noted above, women face prejudices of loan officers about women’s ability to manage effectively and repay the loan. Women also report that high taxes, numerous inspections, and customs procedures (for women engaged in trade) are especially burdensome.

(iv) Lack of information and knowledge. Significantly, it has been found that women frequently lack access to official information about bank loans, microfinance programs, and loan application procedures. They rely most often on friends and acquaintances with personal experience in acquiring loans. This finding was confirmed by a survey of 362 women, 60.5% of whom responded that they did not know of any microfinance programs.

154. By contrast, under a specific social microcredit project targeting rural areas (managed by Delta-Credit, a partner bank in the state Program on Microcredit for Women’s Entrepreneurship for 2009–2015), 79 of 98 active borrowers (80%) are female entrepreneurs, most of whom are self-employed and engaged in home production. Kaz MicroFinance is another example of a microcredit institution with a focus on female entrepreneurs. In 2009, reportedly 80% of the 20,300 clients in the Kaz MicroFinance portfolio were women.
d. Human and Social Assets and Support

155. In addition to women’s more limited access to the financial assets required to start a business, observers have noted that women also lack access to important human and social assets, such as specialized knowledge and skills, information, and business networks.

156. Interviewees claimed that the “typical” female characteristics of patience and persistence would serve them especially well in running a business. However, the same female respondents acknowledged that it has become more difficult for them to engage in entrepreneurial activities, especially in small-scale and home-based businesses and in rural areas, due to their lack of experience and knowledge necessary for writing business plans, their limited management skills, inadequate understanding of supply-and-demand concepts, and, in some cases, incomplete education.\textsuperscript{207} There are few organizations offering women assistance in business planning, and women generally cannot afford to pay for business assistance services.\textsuperscript{208} While women account for less than one-third of borrowers from the Damu Enterprise Development Fund, they make up over one-half of the beneficiaries of its business advisor program,\textsuperscript{209} which suggests that such advisory services should be expanded to accommodate more female entrepreneurs.

157. Successful business ventures are increasingly dependent on access to new technologies, such as internet-based advertising, social media, and networking sites, as well as mobile phone-based communication or banking processes. National development plans include the provision of internet access to all rural villages in Kazakhstan by 2015; thus, when providing internet connections to rural villages, consideration should be given to factors that may impede businesswomen from accessing information and communication technologies. The gender digital divide means that women, including those engaged in private enterprise, may be restricted from accessing technology due to time commitments, limited access to computers, lack of technological knowledge and skills, the cost of services, and limited motivation to use the internet.\textsuperscript{210}

158. Often overlooked, time is a critical asset in starting and running a successful business, and, as noted above, women’s family obligations present severe time constraints. Key differences in the patterns of women and men’s business networking have also been observed: many business arrangements are made through connections that are established and maintained in social settings. For men, these locations include the baths and the bars where there are no women. It is somewhat more difficult for women to make these connections either with men or with other women, as their mobility is limited both by social conventions and household responsibilities.\textsuperscript{211} In addition to training and educational services, a wider range of support may be necessary to assist female entrepreneurs.

159. For recommendations and entry points for gender mainstreaming in ADB initiatives in this sector, please refer to Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} L. Ibragimova. Closing the Gender Gaps.
\textsuperscript{211} S. Somach and D. Rubin. Gender Assessment. p. 21.
IV. Conclusions

160. Achieving gender equality in the economy is one of seven priority areas of the government’s Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2006–2016. The implementation of this strategy, through a series of action plans, requires positive gender-related activities at the national level and the inclusion of gender in strategic development plans at the regional level. Currently the emphasis has been on social sector initiatives rather than other sectors of the country’s development, such as transport or urban infrastructure. ADB is ready to work with government to ensure that gender issues are addressed in these sectors too, and this report shows some of the ways this can be done.

161. Kazakhstan’s gender equality policies and the primary institution responsible for implementing them, the National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy, provide a framework within which international partners can work with the government to mainstream gender concerns into planning processes. Linking projects with national goals should facilitate cooperation in project planning and implementation, and advance the achievement of Kazakhstan’s gender-equality targets.

162. The government of Kazakhstan will need to ensure women’s full inclusion in development initiatives. Enabling women to participate in planning and share in all the benefits will help avoid the long-term negative impacts that gender inequality could have on the country’s development and growth.
APPENDIX 1
Points to Consider in Project Design and Preparation

A. General

• Review the gender equality strategy and related implementation plans to identify key entry points relevant to the particular sector.
• During project planning, engage with the appropriate national machinery for the promotion of gender equality and/or women’s empowerment. Such links should facilitate government cooperation and ensure support for country-specific gender equality targets.
• Support the regular collection of gender-sensitive information and sex-disaggregated data, and promote its use in policymaking, particularly in fields (e.g., infrastructure) where gender issues are often not taken into account. Sex-disaggregated indicators should be included systematically in design and monitoring frameworks so that they may be tracked.
• Conduct needs assessments and other forms of project-specific gender analysis, clearly noting differential perceptions and concerns of women and men, so that project planning may address these findings and benefits can be maximized for the whole community. Women may face greater restrictions in some regions than others (e.g., in their ability to work outside the home or participate in decision making). Particular attention should be paid to the priorities of rural women.
• Consider the extent to which project investments will create opportunities for income generation and employment for women and men.
• Support capacity building for key stakeholders involved in project design and implementation. Capacity building will help operationalize commitments regarding the promotion of gender equality.
• Ensure that project implementers have the capacity to undertake sector-specific gender analysis, integrate gender concerns into project implementation, collect sex-disaggregated data, and monitor and evaluate progress toward gender-equality goals.
• Ensure women’s participation in the design of projects. Take special measures to ensure that women are able to participate in and influence decisions about ADB operations that will impact them. Consult with women’s civil society organizations on national policies and programs, and also support efforts to increase women’s access to decision-making posts in government and the private sector. Capitalize on the greater number of women in political office at the town and village level, and engage with such leaders as resources for ADB projects.
• Processes for public consultations should contain mechanisms that enable women’s voices to be heard, and include women’s nongovernment organizations (NGOs) that
advocate on behalf of specific groups of women (e.g., women with disabilities, single mothers, pensioners, or domestic violence victims) in consultations with the government and funding agencies.

- Assess how women can most effectively be involved in the preparation and implementation of project gender action plans.
- Define how women’s effective participation in project and community decision making will be measured.
- Promote adherence to Kazakhstan’s labor law and principles of nondiscrimination in the workplace, especially in private sector enterprises. Incorporate into enterprise development projects the promotion of workplaces that demonstrate gender equality and good practices for balancing work and family life. Develop home-based and flexible work arrangements for women in profitable growth sectors (e.g., information technology). Take special measures to facilitate the entry and re-entry into the workforce of women with children. Measures should include the equalization of gender roles and responsibilities.
- As labor market segregation may result in women not benefitting from employment opportunities in sectors where ADB operates, consider special measures to allow women greater access to jobs in those sectors. Make training available to women who want to enter nontraditional professions in the private sphere. Assess existing training and employment schemes to determine whether they promote jobs for women only in limited and traditionally female spheres.
- Encourage urban planning and development projects with features protecting women from potential gender-based violence (e.g., sexual assault and harassment) through safe infrastructure designs, gender-sensitive human resource policies, and operational strategies.
- Enhance access of persons with disabilities to public transport and construction projects (i.e., rehabilitation and new buildings), especially for women, and take measures to facilitate the participation of women with disabilities or who are caring for persons with disabilities in project planning.

B. Sector Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming

1. Transport

- Support capacity development for planning and analysis in the transport sector that incorporates a gender-sensitive approach.
- Ensure that consideration is given to the implications of transport deficiencies for women and men, perspectives of women and men regarding transport needs, and extent to which these needs are currently being served in project design.
- Expand project monitoring and assessment processes to gain an understanding of how women are impacted by improvements in road and transport systems.

Key Questions to Consider

- Do government officials and transport company staff have an adequate understanding of the needs and preferences of women and men regarding transport and road use or of the factors that hinder women’s mobility?
- Do managers and planners have the skills to formulate and analyze questions about the gender aspects of road and transport improvement and the implications for project
Points to Consider in Project Design and Preparation

design? Are gender-sensitive information and sex-disaggregated data on transport patterns regularly collected and used in policy making?

• Which income-generating activities of local women could be expanded or supported through improved access to the project road and feeder roads? What else could the project do to improve local women's livelihoods?

• Could measures be taken to enhance women's livelihood activities linked to roadside infrastructure improvements (e.g., intersections and highway rest stops) and their access to such facilities?

• Have local authorities been engaged to improve local roads that feed into the major highways now being renovated through projects?

• If the project involves a border crossing, does it take into consideration the problems encountered there by shuttle traders, especially any gender-based constraints to this type of business activity?

• How will the gender dimensions of road safety be addressed? What specific messages and initiatives will be directed toward addressing men's risk-taking behavior leading to road accidents and fatalities?

• Have measures been taken to address the barriers to women's representation on the staff of relevant and partner agencies? What measures can be included in project design to address prevailing attitudes and gender stereotypes about women's employment in nontraditional fields? Will additional support will be offered to women, such as career counseling, job placement, or mentoring?

• Are indicators and assessment methodologies used to measure the effect of infrastructure improvements on women's lives (in such areas as increased mobility, safer and affordable public transport, shortened travel times, and easier access to income-generating activities)?

2. Urban Services and Infrastructure

• Ensure that government officials (at all levels) and public utility companies have an adequate understanding of the different needs and priorities of women and men regarding basic services. Support capacity development for urban planning that incorporates a gender-sensitive approach.

• Ensure that managers and planners have the skills to formulate and analyze questions about the gender aspects of urban development and their implications for project design.

• Expand project monitoring and assessment processes to gain an understanding of how women in urban settings are impacted by improvements in infrastructure and basic services (including, e.g., reduced workloads or improved family health).

Key Questions to Consider

• Does urban planning include the creation of structures that meet women's needs (e.g., preschool facilities, playgrounds, women's crisis centers, and shelters)?

• Is the planning of urban spaces undertaken with women in mind (e.g., ensuring adequate lighting on streets and in common spaces in buildings, safe transport shelters, separate toilet facilities in public spaces, and accessibility for prams and wheelchairs)?

• How can female chairs of apartment cooperatives be supported and their role expanded to improve gender sensitivity in urban development projects?

• What is the representation of women on the staff of key institutions involved in urban services and infrastructure work (e.g., construction companies, public utilities,
and energy companies)? Have measures been taken to address barriers to women’s participation?

- What measures can be included in project design to address prevailing attitudes and gender stereotypes about women’s employment in these fields (e.g., career counseling, job placement, and mentoring)?

3. Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development

- Evaluate the extent to which gender mainstreaming may be necessary in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) support projects to address the significant barriers to women’s entrepreneurship, and ensure that such projects are responsive to the problems encountered by women in micro and small businesses.
- Assess what measures can be taken to address some of the disparities in women’s access to economic resources, such as start-up capital, financing, and property.
- Consider the limitations and long-term consequences of women-only microloan programs in terms of possibly limiting women’s access to larger loans from commercial banks.
- Assess whether mainstream SME advisory services have the capacity to provide services tailored to the needs of women’s businesses, whether mainstream business associations represent the interests and concerns of female business owners, and to what extent the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan and other female entrepreneurs’ NGOs are integrated into general policy discussions on the development of the SME sector.
- Support business advisory services and training programs that are sensitive to the distinctive characteristics of women’s entrepreneurship, including financial literacy for female borrowers and gender-awareness training for loan officers.
- Review whether managers and planners have the skills to formulate and analyze questions about the gender aspects of entrepreneurship and the implications for project design.
- Provide businesswomen with opportunities to enter new sectors and to expand their micro and small businesses.
- Undertake project monitoring and assessment processes to gain an understanding of how women are impacted by financial sector improvements.

Key Questions to Consider

- To what extent are women’s enterprises limited by sector, and what are the limitations of this? What are the implications of such limitations? For example, are there female-owned businesses in high-growth sectors?
- Are women represented as business owners or managers in sectors that are addressed in other parts (e.g., infrastructure development) of the ADB portfolio? Can activities be included in such projects to promote women’s entrepreneurship in those sectors?
- What measures can be taken to ensure that businesswomen have equal access to commercial bank loans? What can motivate financial institutions to offer non-collateral credit to female business starters who have no access to physical assets?
- Have plans been put into place to assist female entrepreneurs in transitioning from microcredit to other loan or financial instruments? Are banks and financial institutions taking steps to ensure equal access to women through outreach, specialized financial products, or by other means?
Points to Consider in Project Design and Preparation

- Are there free or affordable business advisory services for women independent of any loan application mechanisms?
- Do training and educational programs for businesswomen address, in addition to knowledge gaps, psychological barriers to business expansion? Are there activities to improve women's access to social assets, such as networking opportunities, business mentoring, or consultations?
- Are women being targeted for training, information, and advice related to medium-sized businesses, and not just related to small businesses and microenterprises?
- Are indicators and assessment methodologies used to measure the effect of improvements in financial services on women's entrepreneurship? For example, are data being collected about female-owned or operated businesses using such indicators as the number of start-up businesses, number of active businesses, longevity of businesses, and number of businesses being liquidated or declaring bankruptcy?
- What steps are being taken to monitor the extent to which private sector enterprises follow domestic labor law and principles of non-discrimination (e.g., regarding hiring, promotion, maternity and/or parental leave, and equal pay)? Are there any initiatives to promote family friendly working environments that could be supported and replicated?
- How can a model for corporate social responsibility that supports both gender equality in the workplace and social programs for women in the community be promoted and expanded among SMEs?
APPENDIX 2
Definitions of Gender and Development Terms

This country gender assessment uses several terms relevant to gender and development. Some development organizations and international financial institutions have their own definitions of these terms, but the Asian Development Bank (ADB) generally relies on commonly accepted meanings. Where possible, the list below includes definitions from ADB policy documents. As meanings change over time, vary by organization, and are also dependent on context, the definitions are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive.

**Domestic violence** (also called “intimate partner violence”) refers to behavior in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors.1

**Empowerment** describes both the process and the outcome of people—women and men—taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills (or having their own skills and knowledge recognized), increasing self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. Empowerment implies an expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. In most cases, the empowerment of women requires transformation of the (gender) division of labor and of society.2

**Gender** refers to the sociologically and culturally based distinction between women and men. One's gender is therefore most often composed of those roles and attributes that are not purely “natural” or biologically determined, but are rather dictated by norms and traditions. Because gender is not biologically given, the attributes of both male and female gender can (and do) change over time and across cultures.3

**Gender analysis** is a key strategy of ADB's gender mainstreaming approach that involves systematically assessing the impact of a project on men and women and on the economic and social relationship between them.4

**Gender-based violence** was first defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as an alternative term for “violence against women”

to refer to any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Over time, the definition has evolved to refer to any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will; that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person; and that is the result of gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males, and among females. Although not exclusive to women and girls, gender-based violence principally affects them across all cultures. Violence may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or sociocultural.

**Gender and development** is an approach that concentrates on the unequal relations between women and men due to uneven playing fields. The term “gender” as an analytical tool arose, therefore, from an increasing awareness of inequalities due to institutional structures. It focuses not only on women as an isolated and homogeneous group but on the roles and needs of both women and men. Given that women are usually in a disadvantaged position as compared with men, promotion of gender equality implies an explicit attention to women’s needs, interests, and perspectives. The objective, then, is the advancement of the status of women in society, with gender equality as the ultimate goal. ADB describes the gender and development approach as one that sees gender as a crosscutting issue with relevance for and influencing all economic, social, and political processes.

**Gender discrimination** refers to any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms that prevent a person from enjoying full human rights.

**Gender equality** is a desired result of gender equity and refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for men and women.

**Gender equity** is a process for achieving the goal or outcome of gender equality. ADB included gender equity as one of the five drivers of change in its long-term strategic framework, Strategy 2020.

**Gender mainstreaming.** Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, programs, and projects in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

---

8 ADB. 2003. p. 28.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
Gender sensitivity is a key strategy of ADB’s gender mainstreaming approach that involves observing how ADB operations affect women and men, and taking into account women’s needs and perspectives in planning its operations.\textsuperscript{13}

National machinery (for the advancement of women) is the central policy-coordinating structure inside the government, whose main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.\textsuperscript{14}

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish human beings as female or male.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work, including the conduct of superiors and colleagues.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] European Commission, EuropeAid Cooperation Office. Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality. p. 5.
\end{itemize}
References


References


Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment

This report reviews Kazakhstan’s progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment, and focuses particularly on gender issues in the Asian Development Bank’s operations in transport, urban development, and support for entrepreneurship. Since the previous assessment in 2006, Kazakhstan has introduced several policies and programs for gender equality. While consistently high scores have been achieved for women’s access to education and health, progress on political empowerment and economic opportunities has been less rapid. It is hoped this assessment will also prove useful to government, civil society organizations, other international agencies, and individuals working in gender and development in Kazakhstan.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB’s vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region’s many successes, it remains home to two-thirds of the world’s poor: 1.7 billion people who live on less than $2 a day, with 828 million struggling on less than $1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.