

GENDER ANALYSIS (SUMMARY)

A. Gender Status and Key Challenges

1. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has made impressive advances in poverty reduction, progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the establishment of policies that support gender equality. The MDG target on education has been met, with little disparity between boys and girls, and the PRC is largely on track regarding the goals on gender equality and maternal health. However, persistent gender disparities in access to opportunities continue and are often exacerbated through other forms of social inequality (i.e., rural–urban, ethnicity). New disparities are also emerging, in part, as a result of the large social change under way.

2. **Demographic change and gender impacts.** Three forms of demographic change are impacting, and will continue to impact, gender disparities in the country: sex ratio imbalance, rapid aging, and urbanization. According to the 2010 census there are currently 1.18 males per female, which is even higher than 10 years earlier (2000).¹ This is due to preference for sons and sex selection during pregnancy, and is largely a result of the one-child policy. These “missing girls” will have an impact on the future as the unprecedented social imbalance will result in many young men having difficulty in finding marriage partners—a phenomenon known as “bare branches”. The PRC is among the most rapidly aging societies in the world. The proportion of people above the age of 60 across the PRC is expected to grow from roughly 15% in 2014 to 34% by 2050.² The gender dimensions of aging are multiple and only just beginning to emerge for researchers and policy makers. Women are the majority of caregivers well into their old age for multiple generations and often must leave paid work to take care of family members. With a retirement age of 50 or 55, women in the PRC on average earn less in pensions and are more economically vulnerable than men in old age. Cognition declines rapidly with age and a large gender gap exists in cognitive ability, especially among older people. The PRC is also one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in the world. Over the last decades (1980-2015), this has been accomplished through a migration pattern that has left children, the elderly, and largely middle-aged and older women behind. The disparities in access to basic services and opportunity in rural areas and among regions add to the social inequalities already mentioned.

3. **Economic empowerment.** Urbanization has been a driving force of growth and development in the PRC and has relied heavily on migrant labor. By 2011, the urban population of the PRC had risen to 690.8 million, representing 51.3% of the total population.³ About two-thirds of urban population growth is attributable to rural–urban migration, predominantly from inland rural to coastal urban areas. Because of the current *hukou* (residential registration) restrictions, migrant laborers, especially those seeking to relocate with their families, have restricted access to basic services such as health care, education, housing, and social protection. Despite a gradual easing of *hukou* in many places, equitable access remains a concern. More than one-third of all migrant workers are women, nearly 50% of them between the ages of 16 and 25. Women migrants tend to be younger than their male counterparts, with an average age of 23; they migrate for a shorter period of time than their male counterparts; and

¹ This ratio was 1.16 in 2014.

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/world-population-prospects-the-2010-revision.html>, and PRC Government figures.

³ National Bureau of Statistics. 2011. *Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2011 National Economic and Social Development*. Beijing.

are more likely to migrate within a province. About 33% of women migrant workers are in low-paying jobs in the informal sector. There are many nongovernment and women's organizations working on issues of migrant women's safety, workers' rights, and skills training, but much more could and needs to be done to assist female migrants.

4. Women's labor force participation is high (64%) but their wages lag those of men. Of four factors explaining differences in wages, education is the most significant (45.6%), followed by place of origin (30.2%), work experience (16.8%), and gender (7.0%).⁴ Despite the existence of policies for equal pay and nondiscrimination in hiring, enforcement remains an issue. Urban women are more likely to be in lower-paying occupations in sectors with lower wages, and have significantly lower employment rates than men. The employment statistics have lifelong implications and impact on the vulnerability of elderly women. The mandatory retirement age for women in the civil service is 50 or 55, while men normally retire at 60. The loss of contributions to pensions will impact how women can pay for their old age.

5. **Education.** The PRC has made impressive progress in education and largely met the MDGs with little disparity between boys and girls at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. One area that persists is that women comprise a majority of illiterate adults in the PRC. Over the next decade (2011-2021), the government aims to provide compulsory education to 95% of all girls and to boost the female enrollment rate for secondary schools to 90% and for colleges to 40%.⁵ Increased emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and medicine education (STEM) and efforts to recruit girls to these areas are under way. Much more needs to be done in the expansion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and other education programs to improve quality and to ensure that girls are entering into and graduating from majors that provide them with sustainable futures.

6. **Health.** The PRC's progress on MDGs related to maternal and child mortality has been significant. Long-standing support for primary health care and maternal and child health care has paid off—the maternal mortality ratio was reduced from 88.9 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 32.0 per 100,000 live births in 2013. The mortality rate for children under 5 has also decreased from 61.0 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 12.7 per 1,000 live births in 2013. At the policy level, legal structures and policies that ensure women's access to health care exist. These include the Law on Maternal and Infant Healthcare, the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, the Population and Family Planning Law, the Management Regulations for Technical Services in Family Planning, and Programs for the Development of Chinese Women and Children. While overall female health is improving, disparities such as the sex ratio still exist. The Care for Girls program aims to help offset preference for boys by providing a small subsidy for families with girls. Women are also becoming increasingly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and the share of female HIV/AIDS cases increased from 15% in the late 1990s to 31% by the end of 2009. The government has mainstreamed gender in its national AIDS response and to include gender-disaggregated data in future HIV/AIDS monitoring.

7. **Agriculture and rural development.** In 2000, around 62% of the overall agriculture workforce was female, and while this has declined over time (57% in 2009), this phenomenon and the fact that it is mostly middle-aged or elderly women who perform the largest hours of farm work has led many scholars to refer to a feminization of the PRC's agriculture sector.⁶

⁴ World Bank. 2009. *Poor Areas to Poor People: China's Evolving Poverty Reduction Agenda—An Assessment of Poverty and Inequality in China*. Washington, DC.

⁵ State Council. 2011. *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women*. Beijing.

⁶ de Brauw, A. et. al. 2012. *The Feminization of Agriculture with Chinese Characteristics*. International Food Policy Research Institute discussion paper 01189. Rome.

Women in rural areas are often marginalized because of lack of access to skills and information, and have to cope with multiple livelihood stresses, including the loss of male household members and the younger cohort in general from migration to cities. Despite having laws on land management and rural land contracting that guarantee gender equality in land rights, in reality women's rights to land remain weak and access to contracted land for expansion is limited. To date women are underrepresented in decision-making positions in village committees, farmer associations, water user associations, and similar rural decision-making bodies, signaling an important opening point for projects and policy makers. At present, fewer than 30% of farm extension workers are women, but this rises to 40% at the younger ages which indicates that the changes in institutional structures are under way.

8. **Political participation.** Despite strong public policy and legal framework support for gender equality, representation by women in public decision-making bodies remains limited at all levels. The proportion of female delegates to the National People's Congress was 23.4% in 2013, only a slight increase over 21.2% in 1978. Women make up 39% of the civil service, but only 8% of the heads of ministries. Many female civil servants are concentrated in traditional sectors such as health and education. The China National Plan for Women's Development (2011–2020) includes targets for women in local government, village and residents' committees, and leadership positions and strategies to improve representation in areas such as school faculties and enterprise boards. The early retirement age for women inhibits the progression of women to higher-level posts in the civil service.

B. Government's Gender Strategy

9. Gender equality has been a strong component of public policy since 1949 and gained further support under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, the goals set in the Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (1995–2000), the adoption of the MDGs in 2001, and the Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2001–2010). Recent legal reforms have addressed issues such as maternity insurance (2010); prohibitions on terminating employment because of pregnancy, childbirth, or nursing needs (2007); prohibitions on discrimination in employment (2007); and stipulating quotas for women's representation on village committees and conferences (2010). Despite these achievements, effective enforcement and monitoring remain an issue for many of the reforms. In 2011, the China National Program for Women's Development (2011–2020) was released. This document clearly states that equality between men and women is a fundamental state policy. It outlines basic principles and goals and measures to promote access and equality in: health, education, labor, the economy, decision making and management, social security, the environment, and law. The document identifies the challenges different groups of women face (e.g., migrant women, farmers, new urban residents) and strategies to address them. In 2015 the draft Anti-domestic Violence Law is being discussed including through public consultation. This law will provide an important missing element in legal protection and enforcement of the rights of women, children, and the elderly.

10. The PRC has a well-established institutional framework for advancing women's issues. The National Working Committee on Women and Children under the State Council coordinates policies and programs related to women. The All-China Women's Federation is the largest organization dedicated to gender equality, and numerous other organizations work on issues such as migrant women's rights, illiteracy, health, and environment. The government has made considerable efforts to eliminate gender disparities and integrate gender equality principles in public policy.

C. ADB Experience

11. In accordance with Strategy 2020,⁷ the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has increasingly defined gender as a driver of change in the PRC country program. In the urban development portfolio, emphasis has been placed on ensuring women's participation in the design and implementation of projects, accessing training opportunities for women professionals in executing and implementing agencies, implementing public programs in environmental and sanitation awareness, tariff reform, and road safety. In education projects, efforts have been made to ensure the access of girls to priority programs, equal access to teacher training programs, and the establishment of strong school partnerships to industries. In natural resources and agriculture, gender mainstreaming has focused on increasing representation of women in professional associations (e.g., water user associations), participation in skills training, and access to agricultural extension services. In the energy sector, ADB supports efficiency improvements to district heating networks to reduce local pollutant and carbon dioxide emissions to provide direct benefits to poor and vulnerable consumers. In transport, gender mainstreaming has focused on project designs to improve mobility, access and safety (pedestrian crossings and public transport facilities), HIV/AIDS awareness activities, and participation in consultation processes and road maintenance activities.

D. ADB's Gender Strategy

12. ADB will continue to assist the government in promoting gender equality. Under the country partnership strategy, 2016–2020 ADB will renew its efforts at gender mainstreaming in all stages of project processing and implementation. Areas for focus to ensure women's empowerment and gender equality include the following:

- (i) **Urban development:** Increasing gender mainstreaming in urban planning tools and processes, identifying ways in which ADB can contribute to making cities safer and increasing women's participation in decision making (e.g., tariff reform and spatial planning), urban management (e.g., community roles in 3R (i.e. reduce, reuse, and recycle), and water conservation programs), awareness (e.g., recycling, traffic safety programs), and employment.
- (ii) **Education:** Improving the access of girls access to and progression through the education system and into the world of work through a focus on improving TVET programs (including STEM programs and multilevel TVET), and improving access to and quality of higher education and links to jobs and sectors, including new areas such as social services and elderly care.
- (iii) **Health:** Assessing gendered needs of the elderly for care services and support, and investigating the role of new support systems such as the establishment of social workers in social assistance and elderly care.
- (iv) **Transport:** Continued attention to mitigation measures related to sexually transmitted infections and trafficking in persons; increased attention to urban women's transport concerns, particularly safety, affordability of public transport, and access; and employment opportunities in the sector.
- (v) **Agriculture and natural resources:** Improving women's access to and roles in land management and decision-making positions in village committees, farmer associations, water user associations, and similar rural decision-making bodies.

⁷ ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank, 2008–2020*. Manila.