

## Gender in Transition

Development and transition affect women and men in different ways. In many new EU member states, and in the countries of the Western Balkans and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the post-communist transition has seen reductions in women's wages and employment rates relative to men's; access to assets, property, and political representation has declined. Women as primary-care providers have been hard hit by the collapse or declines in social services. When poverty data are disaggregated by gender they generally show that women fare much worse than men. Gender roles most often found in traditional societies have re-asserted themselves and may be exacerbating labour market discrimination and domestic violence. Concerns about trafficking, as a particularly negative outcome of labour migration and its impact on women, are likewise growing. But some hardships of transition have fallen disproportionately on men. Male mortality rates in the Russian Federation and Western CIS countries have risen sharply since the 1980s.

In this issue of *Development and Transition*, Patrícia Eszter Margit suggests that many of the region's seemingly contradictory development trends with respect to gender reflect differences in perception, emphasis, and data. Anna Matveeva links some of the region's most serious gender challenges—apparent in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus—to the armed conflicts that have occurred there, as well as to relatively low incomes and the re-emergence of traditional gender roles in these countries. Angela Coyle points out that women face challenges even in relatively prosperous Poland, where EU membership and migration options pose threats as well as opportunities. Marta Rawłuszko

describes UNDP's efforts to help Polish employers comply with the country's post-accession anti-discrimination legislation by ranking companies via a 'gender index'. According to Fiona Beveridge, Poland is not exceptional: all the new EU member states face major challenges in complying with the '*gender acquis*' – the gender equality obligations that have come with membership.

Recent survey data described by Irada Ahmedova suggest that cultural stereotypes continue to determine gender roles in Azerbaijan. Survey data from Moldova analysed by Mihail Peleah show the impact of migration on intra-household gender roles, both empowering women and increasing the vulnerability of children whose mothers (and fathers) are working abroad. Evgeniy Abdullaev presents survey data among migrants in Uzbekistan which suggest that the challenges facing female migrant labourers can be particularly daunting.

Sarah Ashwin reminds us that transition also affects men. Russian male life expectancy has experienced unprecedented declines, both vis-à-vis Russian women and men in OECD (and some other CIS) countries. Gender roles are at the heart of the causes of these declines, Ashwin suggests, particularly in terms of cultural expectations that leave men demoralized by the changes to their status brought about by transition. Ben Slay places the unfavourable male mortality trend in a broader demographic context. Slay points out that the trend in Russia is not shared by most other countries in the region, and it began well before the Soviet collapse. This debate reminds us that many of the gender issues in the region pre-date the challenges posed by transition.

**James Hughes and Ben Slay**

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## Women on Post-communist Labour Markets: Is the Glass Half Full, or Half Empty?

Patrícia Eszter Margit

Reverse gender policies, setbacks in the feminist movement, low representation of women in leadership positions, the withdrawal of state support for childcare and parental leave: these alarming factors suggest that in transition countries women have experienced dramatic declines in their labour-market position. On the other hand, a good number of scholars argue that, despite these negative changes, women have managed to maintain their relative position vis-à-vis men, and that transition has even created considerable new opportunities for them.

According to a database published in 2005 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), gender inequality did not increase during the post-communist transition in the region, but remained at pre-transition levels.<sup>1</sup> The database also shows, however, that the vast majority of women have suffered economic setbacks, in the form of increasing poverty and unemployment, as well as growing economic insecurity and exploitation.

Two major regional studies—a report by the World Bank and a study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions—came to different conclusions regarding whether in the case of gender equality the glass is half full or half empty. The European Foundation is the more pessimistic, and states that, “Although women continue to constitute 45 percent of employed people, female participation rates have gone down, and women have dropped out of the labour force to work in household and informal economies, or when still present are overrepresented among unemployed people”.<sup>2</sup> The World Bank report, in contrast, states that there is no empirical evidence indicating that women’s participation has systematically deteriorated in transition economies.<sup>3</sup>

These two reports symbolize the ongoing debate among scholars and policy makers: some argue that the economic transition has harmed the position of women on the labour market, while others focus on the gains, such as the narrowing wage gap. These

varying conclusions reflect the fact that different questions are posed and different factors are taken into consideration.

Scholars who ask whether the labour-market position and living standards of women have deteriorated since 1989 have unfortunately found the answer to be clearly ‘yes’. The most recent (2006) labour market report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) states that while unemployment was absent during state socialism, after wage liberalization and privatization, unemployment grew to 10–30 percent in almost all countries of the region.<sup>4</sup> This resulted in skyrocketing poverty and social inequalities. Nearly 40 percent of unemployed women are classified as long-term unemployed. UNIFEM also found that economic activity rates have declined, especially among younger women.

Experts agree that the position of women in most Central European countries is no worse than in Western Europe. According to the European Commission, in some transition states, such as Estonia and Latvia, their position is better.<sup>5</sup> Fully integrating women into the labour market is still one of the major goals of most EU policy makers. The EU’s Lisbon targets for Europe’s competitiveness in the world economy require that the overall employment rate be increased to 70 percent by 2010. If achieved, 60 percent of European women would be in the labour force.

The question of whether the labour-market position and overall living standards of women have declined relative to men’s is more complex. The 2006 UNIFEM report states that social class, religion, nationality, race/ethnicity, and geography all intersect to shape the position of women on the labour market. The biggest losers of transition have been women of Roma or Egyptian origin, who are poorly educated, live in rural areas with few employment opportunities, and are more likely to suffer from poverty and domestic violence. After the overthrow of communism, out-migration became the preferred route to avoid poverty in many countries. Unfortunately, too many migrants—especially children and young women—have fallen prey to criminals.

Women still work more in lower-paid jobs, and are often employed in the informal economy without the stability and benefits of legal work. The European Commission states that the gender pay gap is still significant in the new Member States and, as compared to men, women have only limited access to managerial positions and high-skilled jobs.<sup>6</sup>

According to UNIFEM, while women comprise the majority of public-sector workers, men make up the majority of employees in the private sector.<sup>7</sup> Women's share of public-sector employment has significantly increased, from 55 percent to 64 percent in the new EU member states, and from 40 percent to 52 percent in Southeast Europe. This would be good news if salaries in the public sector weren't so much lower than in the private sector. It is important to note that while work conditions are different for the same job in each country, public-sector salaries are now lower in real terms than they were in the pre-transition period, and the state sector offers fewer in-kind benefits than the best jobs offered by private companies.

Highly skilled young women, who can benefit from the opportunities created from the social and economic transformation, are among the winners of transition. Yet, after the abolition of the gender quota systems that were used during socialism, women have occupied proportionately fewer key political positions. According to the UN's Millennium Development Goals Report, the share of women in single or lower houses of parliament in Central European countries is 12 percent on average.<sup>8</sup> This is significantly lower than global averages. According to the Commission on the Status of Women, women make up 16.3 percent of parliamentarians worldwide, while in 20 states the representation of women is over 30 percent.<sup>9</sup>

The picture is even less favourable if we consider UNIFEM's finding (2006), that younger women's participation has fallen sharply compared to men's. The European Women's Lobby (2006) found that women's professional success is largely determined by age, number of children, marital status, education level, as well as by social policies such as childcare and parental leave. The Centre for Work-Life Policy (2003) also found that family obligations are the most important reason why women leave the workforce temporarily.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, age is a key factor in evaluating whether the glass is half full or half empty. Even though the labour-force participation rates of women older than 55 years have increased since 1990, this group is still significantly less likely to be active than men. Women's labour-force participation rates are highest for those between 35 and 49 (women tend to return to the labour market after 35 years of age). The rate is 80-90 percent in most countries, which is close to the rate of active men.

Whereas some younger women might be major winners of the transitions, many others are in fact becoming mar-

ginalized due to declines in childcare services after privatization and financial restructuring. According to ILO statistics (2004), spending in Hungary on family benefits declined from 3.2 percent to 2.0 percent of GDP between 1990-2000; in Poland the decline was from 1.7 percent to 1.1 percent (1990 to 1998); and in the Czech Republic 1.6 percent to 1.2 percent (1996 to 2002).<sup>11</sup> Women who benefit from paid parental leave and sufficient childcare support have higher full-time labour participation rates.

Flexible arrangements help women and men reconcile work and family life. While in most European countries flexible working conditions are settled individually at the organizational level, European legislation has attempted to broaden the range of part-time work possibilities. In the transition economies, employers have not been encouraged to create flex-time arrangements, because tax laws require employers to provide the same amount of benefits for their part-time employees as for their full-time ones.

In many transition economies, the position of women would seem to have improved compared to men's. However, the gaps between winners and losers in transition are large, and many women are still unable to take full advantage of the new opportunities. The battle is now being fought to make the labour market take full account of the needs of women. Governments, employers, and parents should come to a just division of responsibilities to provide affordable policies including child-care facilities, tax-incentives, financial allowances, flexible work arrangements, and parental leave, tailored to the personal and professional needs of women.

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## A Gendered Perspective on Conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia

Anna Matveeva

The wars and social upheavals of the post-independence period in the South Caucasus and Central Asia have affected women and men differently. This makes a gender perspective on issues of peace and conflict relevant. Women often carry the bulk of the social hardship created by conflicts. In countries with high labour migration, women remain the backbone of the labour force. The dangerous shuttle trade in the former Soviet Union is largely a woman's domain. In this activity women are faced with hostile border regimes and harassment by corrupt law-enforcement agencies. In the Fergana Valley, where the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan meet and interstate relations are tense, female shuttle traders are routinely locked up by guards, who try to extort bribes, sometimes under the threat of 'gynaecological checks'. The plight of women is further aggravated by the expansion of conservative values and practices at home, and the growth in domestic violence and early marriages. These factors suggest that there is a reservoir of female discontent that is suppressed by the constraints of traditional societies. Still, women's protests, however vocal, are not seen as a credible threat by the ruling and increasingly authoritarian regimes.

There are many recent cases where women have taken part in social protests. For example, women have been in the forefront of the protests over fuel shortages in Tajikistan, and over the rise of flour prices that hit Central Asia this autumn. They were also active participants in the protests against evictions from shanty towns in 2006 in Kazakhstan. In one such episode in April 2006, Korlan Dolybayeva attempted self-immolation in protest over her family being evicted from the Shanyrak tenement district of Almaty that was then demolished by the city authorities to make way for new construction projects.<sup>1</sup>

The most important safety valve for social discontent is the high labour migration, mostly to Russia, which receives over 70 percent of labour migrants from Central Asia, but also to Kazakhstan, where workers have to compete with labour migrants from Turkey. Migration takes the unemployed and discontented young men, and also the most energetic and skilled, and potentially the most politically active, out of the local environment. Moreover,

remittances provide an economic lifeline for the majority of rural households. It is estimated that at least 700,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan and 800,000 citizens of Uzbekistan work in Russia. In Tajikistan, where out of the population of 7 million, over 1 million men work in Russia and many are long-term migrants, migration has had profound social consequences. With one third of the male population gone, leaving women, children and older men behind, there are now areas that have large majority populations of women. The social consequences are many, but their long-term effect is hard to predict. In some villages in Tajikistan, two or three men of adult age are left, e.g. head of administration and a headmaster, which affects patterns of male socialization and traditional male networks, such as *gaps* or *gashtaks*. Many children grow up with absent fathers who often have second families in Russia. The social aspirations of teenage boys are formed by an expectation that they will go to Russia for work: even boys from middle-income families, who are not so dependant upon remittances, feel compelled to go through this coming-of-age experience that has come to replace the Soviet Army service as a form of socialization.

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, the only opposition party in Central Asia with real experience of contesting power, has found its base for recruitment severely undermined. Its strongholds in the Rasht Valley, in the central districts, and in the Khatlon province in the south, remain the most economically deprived, with hardly any active young men left who could be mobilized into the party. By the same token, internally displaced persons in Azerbaijan who are victims of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, despite their large numbers (estimated at 800,000) have not become ready-made material for fighting to take Karabakh back, despite the rhetoric of their leaders. Many of these men are in Russia, and their families cannot afford for them to return home and thus lose their remittances.

In the short term, the current gender and demographic trends support greater political and social stability. Local publics view labour migration as a positive development, despite its negative impact upon family life. However, the massive exodus could pose long-term risks to economic development, as most of the potential active labour force is abroad, thereby stunting the development of domestic production. Migration also disrupts social relations and has created a growing category of women whose social status is uncertain. Young wives of the migrants have no say in when their husbands come and go to Russia, as decisions are made by the men's mothers, whose authority behind the scenes as dominant figures in community life has grown. Significantly, the migration of men can arrest political development by reducing the scope for

social mobilization. Women's protests, even if highly vocal, are constrained by the need to protect their families first. Consequently, the authorities know that there is a lack of credible potential for violence. While the authorities fear the spread of coloured revolutions, they recognize that such protests require the presence of large numbers of young men. Even then, in most cases the tacit approval of their mothers would be essential.

Conflict situations can actually empower women to upgrade their social status, as they shift power relations and affect traditional gender roles. One such instance is displacement in the aftermath of a violent conflict. While women may find the process of being uprooted more traumatic than men do, they often show greater flexibility in adapting to their circumstances and developing survival strategies. Men tend to expect assistance from formal institutions, and their skills are often not transferable, while women more easily adapt to an informal setting. In the aftermath of the conflicts in the South Caucasus, men were unable to find 'masculine' work in the new environments, but considered it unacceptable to do 'female jobs', e.g. work as market traders. This left women as the main economic providers for the families.

The role of women in formal political and economic institutions has declined compared with the Soviet period. In Kyrgyzstan – the most liberal Central Asian country – after the March 2005 power change, women are no longer represented in parliament, and only two hold ministerial appointments. In contrast, most leading NGO activists are women, often pitted against predominantly male politicians. Such NGO leaders include Tolekan Ismailova of the Legal Centre *Citizens Against Corruption*, or Raya Kadyrova of *Foundation for Tolerance International*. A similar pattern is evident in Georgia.

International aid practitioners seek to promote the role of women in conflict resolution. International Alert and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung South Caucasus Office have engaged women with more success than other initiatives such as work with ex-combatants or historians. In the South Caucasus, women have been at the forefront of public efforts at reconciliation. For example, women from Georgia were the first to cross the border over the Inguri bridge and speak to women in Abkhazia. In the Georgian – Abkhaz conflict, IDP women's groups on the Georgian side, such as The Sukhumi Foundation based in Kutaisi, have been able to establish genuine partnerships



Women and children displaced by conflict in a camp in Azerbaijan

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with different women's groups on the Abkhaz side, for example the Association of Women of Abkhazia (AWA). The Sukhumi Foundation and AWA recently decided to study women's experience in the resolution of conflicts in the Caucasus via a joint project on 'Women's contribution to the peace processes'. The Foundation also supports joint business groups with women from the Abkhaz Union of Women-Entrepreneurs, which generates business activity in the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarchali districts where ethnic Georgian returnees are present.

Women have the advantage of being perceived as less threatening and more effective in the diffusion of tensions when violent episodes occur and when there is a need to reach out to the other side to prevent further

escalation. Women's protests, however, while often vocal, are not seen as a credible threat by the ruling regimes given the absence of young males who are abroad. Yet, the role of women is being transformed. High standards of education and social awareness inherited from the Soviet past, coupled with a search for new roles, have meant that women in the region have emerged as prominent civil society actors in matters of war and peace.

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## Has Transition Left Women Behind?<sup>1</sup> Polish Women's Labour Markets at 'Home' and 'Abroad'

Angela Coyle

Earlier this year Lech Kaczynski, the President of Poland, famously commented on the impossibility of finding a decorator in Warsaw. He was alluding to the skills shortages that Poland is now experiencing as a result of emigration. Poland is regarded as one of the most successful of the new EU Member States, yet in common with other new market economies in Central and Eastern Europe, high levels of economic growth has not resulted in significant job growth. On the contrary, economic restructuring has created a large pool of surplus labour, and Poland has shifted from a labour market of full employment to having one of the highest levels of unemployment in the EU 25.

As a result, large numbers of Polish nationals have left to find alternative employment in other European states. The Polish government estimates that at any given time more than 2 million Poles, mostly in their 20s and 30s, are working abroad. The migrant Polish construction worker is a popular stereotype across Europe even though around half of Polish labour migrants in Europe are women.<sup>2</sup> Both women and men have been affected by Poland's transformation, but women have been disproportionately affected by job loss, unemployment, impoverishment, and gender discrimination. Emigration

has enabled women to find new work opportunities across Europe as cleaners, nannies, care workers, and nurses. While this is a 'success story' of sorts, the exodus of young women is depleting Poland of its mothers and daughters and large swathes of human and social capital. It is Poland's 'care drain', rather than a shortage of painters and decorators, that is now in need of President Kaczynski's attention.

### Labour market transformations and gender inequality in Poland

Prior to the 1990s, Polish women had the highest female employment rates in Europe. They were well represented in higher level, scientific and managerial occupations and well supported by state-funded family and welfare services including comprehensive nursery and childcare facilities. Now, Polish female employment rates are 47.8 percent, far lower than the EU-25 average female employment rate of 57.3 percent. The female unemployment rate is 14.2 percent, the highest in Europe and exceeds both Polish men's unemployment rate (11.2 percent) and the average female unemployment rate (8.6 percent) in the EU-25. Many older women (aged 55+) have withdrawn from the labour market altogether with employment rates of just 19.4 percent, compared with 34.1 percent for Polish men aged 55+ and 31.7 percent for women aged 55+ across the EU-25.<sup>3</sup> Education does not protect women against unemployment: unemployed women are better educated than unemployed men. Over 50 percent of unemployed women have secondary, post-secondary or tertiary education, as opposed to 32 percent of unemployed men.<sup>4</sup>

Market transformations affected women's jobs first and disproportionately because they were concentrated in a very narrow band of industries, especially textiles and clothing, and in state-run public services, including

health, education, and social work that were all subject to early restructuring. Job loss in these female-dominated labour markets has not been offset by any significant new employment opportunities in the private sector, which is distinguished by overt gender discrimination in employment practices. These detrimental effects of labour market restructuring have been compounded by the lack of institutional support for the promotion of gender equality. On the contrary, thousands of day-care centres and nurseries that supported working women have closed down and European discourses of gender equality are unwelcome.

In the years prior to European enlargement, the EU frequently raised its concerns about the Polish state's apparent disregard for EU equal treatment directives and the lack of harmonization with EU gender equality and employment targets. EU labour-market strategies are based on responses to the twin challenges of an aging population and a diminishing workforce. Promoting equal opportunities for women and men, including equal pay, childcare and the better reconciliation of working and home life, is seen as the best way of increasing female labour-force participation and thereby activating Europe's full labour-force potential in the face of demographic decline. Poland is a long way from the EU target of female labour-force participation rates of 60 percent. At the same time, Poland's fertility rates are the lowest in the EU. High unemployment, low household income, and high levels of women's labour migration are not conducive to family formation.

### Polish women and labour migration

Both women and men have resorted to migration in response to the lack of employment opportunities in Poland's new market economy. Mobility, not employment, is the new opportunity created by transformation. As most of this labour migration has been irregu-

lar and circular, its scale is very difficult to quantify. Around 1 million Poles are thought to have sought work outside of Poland every year since 1989; approximately half have been women. In fact, Polish women have very much been at the forefront of this new paradigm of cross-border working and transnational lives. Many have children living in Poland and travel back and forth across borders between work and their families. They believe themselves to be more like long-distance commuters rather than migrants or settlers. They are not concerned with assimilation or settlement; they maintain their lives in Poland by email, cheap phone calls and low-cost travel.

Although the experiences of Polish migrants in Europe are heterogeneous, there are some distinct features of their working abroad. Germany, the Netherlands, France and Britain have been favoured destinations; migrants have taken advantage of various means of legal entry available such as student visas or seasonal worker schemes, but they work in breach of their conditions of entry. For both women and men, migration has been deskilling. Their undocumented, irregular status forces them into low-paid, unskilled, and informal work. They are 'high-quality migrants in low-wage jobs'.<sup>5</sup> Polish nationals have all but taken over seasonal jobs in agriculture and construction in Europe. Polish women staff the new army of domestic workers in Europe, working as cleaners, childminders and carers, frequently in private households.

Polish women's decision to work abroad cannot be understood in employment terms alone. It is clear from their narratives that they want to be part of a new, modern, cosmopolitan Europe. They want to be socially mobile and independent economic actors, not men's dependents. Many professionally qualified women such as nurses and teachers prefer to work in Europe in these kinds of occupations than to remain working in Poland. This is an opportunity to speak English and live abroad and, while their work is not well paid, they can earn more than they would at home.

In 2004, Poland became part of the enlarged EU; Britain, Ireland and Sweden immediately adopted an open-door policy extending the right of Polish nationals to work there. Now an estimated 600,000 Poles are thought to be working in Britain and a further 250,000 in Ireland. These arrangements allow these countries to improve the selective recruitment of skilled migrant workers; over time, it should enable qualified Polish women to access more skilled work. The UK is employing increasing numbers of Polish women as nurses and as care assistants in hospitals and residential care



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homes. Still, hard facts on the extent and experience of Polish labour migration remain patchy. Many Polish women in the UK are still 'invisible', choosing not to regularize their status through the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS—although knowledge of the WRS is not widespread). The key to understanding Polish women's labour migration is that they do not plan to stay. Even though they can't quite envisage when they will be able to return home, they regard their international commute as wholly temporary.

## Sustainable futures?

Migration has helped ease the unemployment and socio-economic insecurity experienced in Poland as a result of economic transformation. Poles have proved themselves to be a hard-working, flexible, and useful labour supply in Europe. However, migration invariably depletes labour-sending countries of the skills needed for sustainable economic development. When women

migrate it is not just their labour-force contribution that is lost: also lost is the unpaid work of social reproduction that women perform as carers of families, children, and older people, and which is vital to social sustainability. Until Poland can offer women work opportunities within a framework of gender equality and equal rights at home, it is hard to imagine why they will return.

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## Balancing the Carrot and the Stick: Promoting Gender Equality in Poland's Private Sector

Marta Rawłuszko

Discrimination in the workplace remains an important factor in explaining women's inferior social status. With Poland's May 2004 accession to the European Union, amendments to the country's labour code both defined and prohibited direct and indirect discrimination in employment. Sexual harassment was recognized as a form of discrimination, and an 'equal pay for equal work' rule was introduced. It was also explicitly stated that the principle of equal treatment is not violated by temporary measures providing specific advantages to under-represented groups whenever they aim to secure equal opportunities.

However, it is quite apparent that these amendments would not by themselves reduce discrimination in the workplace. Additional measures are needed in order to interest employers in gender equality, convince them of the importance of the issue, and help them combat gender discrimination. At the end of 2004, UNDP initiated the 'Gender Index' project<sup>1</sup> to promote gender

equality among Polish companies. Since the legal framework was already in place, the project focused on employers' attitudes, knowledge, and capacities to redress workplace discrimination.

Quantitative and qualitative data indicate that gender discrimination in Polish workplaces occur because of the following employer characteristics:

- Inadequate knowledge of Poland's new anti-discrimination legislation, and of discriminatory practices in the workplace;
- Poor awareness concerning gender stereotypes;
- Weak commitment to ensuring the equal treatment of women and men in the workplace; and
- Inadequate knowledge of equal opportunity policies and other business tools that can promote gender equality in commercial organizations.

These challenges were addressed in three ways. First, a gender index focusing on seven areas (recruitment, security of employment, career advancement, access to training, equal pay, prevention of sexual harassment, and work/life balance) was developed to measure the position of women and men within a given company. This index was computed from information gathered from a random sample of employees and from the company's human resources department. The company's score was then entered in a national 'Equal Opportunity Company' competition that highlighted business leaders whose companies had developed the most successful equal-opportunity policies.

Employers were also provided with educational materials on 'How to Manage an Equal Opportunity Company', consisting of a training model and a good practices guidebook. The guidebook is a collection of 58 concrete examples for ensuring equal prospects for women and men in the workplace, based on good practices from 27 companies. These materials, and associated training activities, helped employers and managers to recognize gender discrimination in their workplace, and to introduce equal-opportunity policies.

The 'Gender Index' turned out to be very successful: it gave gender equality greater visibility in business and human resource management. Whereas the first competition in 2006 attracted the attention of 52 companies (22 large enterprises and 30 small- and medium-sized firms), more than 100 organizations participated in the second round in 2007. This doubling of business interest would not have been possible without strong media coverage produced by an effective communications strategy, focusing on the benefits for businesses and linking gender equality to the broader concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

However, this approach to reducing gender inequality in the workplace is not without its limitations. Some employers chose not to get involved in the 'Gender Index', so that their employees do not benefit from the opportunities it creates. Employers seemed most interested in using equal-opportunity instruments in order to recruit and retain valuable workers. The business case for equality becomes less evident in the case of blue-collar workers, and solutions developed under the project

may not apply to them. Also, the labour code's non-discrimination provisions only apply to employees working on contracts regulated by it. Employees working on contracts regulated by the civil code (e.g., commission contracts), or the self-employed, are not covered by the labour code's anti-discrimination clauses. Many Polish employers prefer contracting employees under the civil code, or outsourcing employment to other companies (particularly in the service sector), thereby escaping the labour code's anti-discrimination provisions.

Difficult questions remain as to whether the case against gender discrimination in the workplace should be based solely on commercial criteria and competitive advantage, as opposed to ethical considerations. Arguments about whether equal opportunity 'pays' in the workplace can lose sight of broader goals and equality principles, which are rooted in the values of human rights and social justice. Likewise, the creation of opportunities for businesses to promote themselves and their brands should not be allowed to undermine the importance of state control (e.g., labour inspectorates) and the judicial review of discrimination cases. Furthermore, companies that have invested in developing successful equal-opportunity instruments are not always eager to share these instruments with 'the competition'. This makes the collection of data and the dissemination of these tools more demanding than would otherwise be the case.

Gender discrimination on the Polish labour market does not exist in a vacuum: it also reflects gendered power relations in society. Treating workplace discrimination as

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*'Equal at work – it pays off'*

a problem of human resource management and organizational culture can downplay broader issues of inclusion, participation, and justice. Likewise, gender discrimination is not only a matter of individual stereotypes or prejudices, attitudes or behaviour: discrimination in the workplace occurs in a broader social and institutional context. Getting employers to adhere to good practices is only one way of combating and preventing gender discrimination. More fundamental progress requires advocacy for stronger and more rigorous observance of anti-discrimination legislation so that employers would fear the reputational damage caused by discrimination litigation and

penalties for negative verdicts. Educational programmes on employee rights targeted at women and workers from vulnerable groups are urgently needed. It is also crucial to build institutional support for individuals asserting their rights in discrimination cases against employers. Last but not least, gender equality should become more visible in existing social dialogue.

Marta Rawłuszko is gender specialist for UNDP Poland.

1. The 'Gender Index' project is financed by the European Social Fund within the framework of the Community Initiative EQUAL. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm).

## Gender and EU Enlargement – Potential and Progress

Fiona Beveridge

The 2004 and 2007 enlargements created important spaces for the pursuit of gender politics in the Central and East European Member States. On the one hand, accession preparations fuelled a rush to implement new laws and create new institutions to implement the equal opportunities *acquis*, that is the existing body of Treaty provisions, directives, and European Court of Justice decisions on equal pay, equal treatment, and maternity and parental leave which is binding on Member States. On the other hand, preparations for accession also fuelled capacity development in candidate countries. Officials became involved in 'twinning' arrangements, whereby officials from Member States assisted those from candidate countries in producing the necessary laws and regulations. EU funds became available to support these activities. NGOs and activists became more drawn in, in some cases, to EU-wide or EU-funded activities, and sought to exploit pre-accession leverage to secure equality gains in national arenas.

There nonetheless remained, at the time of accession, significant shortfalls both in the transposition of law and in the capacity for its effective enforcement. A very patchy picture is revealed, with governments, national courts, and state equality bodies struggling to realize the promise of accession.

### Background

Adopting EU laws and regulations and decisions of the European Court of Justice on gender equality – the gender *acquis* – is just one of the conditions for EU member-

ship. In principle, candidate countries are required to demonstrate not only that their domestic legislation conforms to EU law, but also that it is actually applied—that state institutions, including courts, have the tools, capacity, and willingness to apply the relevant laws. The European Commission is tasked first with assisting a country's preparations for accession and later with monitoring its progress. However, because gender equality is only one of its many concerns, the Commission's *de facto* scrutiny has often been quite cursory.

For many candidate countries or 'new' Member States, gender equality may not seem of the highest political priority. Nevertheless, the political imperative to secure a 'green' light from the Commission to proceed towards membership can provide unique opportunities for gender activists to make important gains. Persuading governments to collect gender-sensitive statistics, enact gender-equality laws, and create state bodies charged with advancing gender equality has rarely been easier. As a result, the 10 post-communist countries who became members in 2004 and 2007 all saw significant changes in equality laws and institutions in the pre-accession period. However, the post-accession period has demonstrated significant shortfalls both in the transposition of law and in the capacity within the new member states for their effective enforcement. A number of different factors explain this.

**The transplantation industry:** In the rush to adopt new laws, existing member state legislation was often held up as a blueprint. 'Twinning' arrangements (often with very short deadlines) reinforced this process. Over 700 such projects were approved in preparations for the 2004 enlargement. While often billed as 'mutual learning' experiences, in reality these relationships felt far from equal. In any case, time pressures often left candidate countries with little option other than implementing an 'off-the-shelf' reform package not tailored to

domestic legal systems. Post-accession, these 'transplants' often prove to be an awkward fit with domestic law, leaving judges with huge problems trying to fit new employment protection obligations, for instance, into existing civil-code provisions for remedies.

**Lost in translation:** Key concepts of EU law are sometimes translated differently into domestic legislation. For example, the transposition of the EU's 'indirect discrimination' principle (which seeks to prevent discrimination resulting from practices that do not necessarily have discriminatory intents) into Croatian law has been hampered by its divergent treatment in two key pieces of national legislation – the Gender Equality Act and the Labour Code.

**Differing national judicial traditions:** EU gender equality law depends on national judiciaries for effective implementation, partly because compensation to the individual 'victim' is central to its concept of 'effectiveness', and partly because it relies on 'balancing tests', e.g., to determine when indirect discrimination *can* be justified. This necessarily requires adjudication on a case-by-case basis. However, many judges in the new Member States who were schooled under socialist legal regimes are not fully prepared to abandon their inherited formalistic legal traditions and apply the 'European' rule-of-reason approaches. Though some judicial training has been funded through EU programmes, deep cultural changes are often required for judges to fully realize their potential as independent guardians of individual rights.

**Weak political support:** While the pre-accession period may have provided attractive reform opportunities, gender equality measures and institutions in the new Member States have rarely enjoyed strong support from existing political groupings. Most new Member States boast few 'gender champions' within the administration who remain actively engaged post-accession. Indeed, the fact that gender equality legislation was often 'fast-tracked' through parliament with little time for debate exacerbated problems of inadequate support from domestic constituencies. Many gender-equality bodies in the new Member States have therefore seen their roles and budgets slashed, or their work criticized by the government. And while the *acquis* may have been transposed on time pre-accession, some outstanding legal issues nonetheless remain. The Czech Republic currently faces enforcement action by the Commission in relation to Directive 2002/73 which should have been transposed by October 2005. A draft Anti-Discrimination Act to implement this (and other EU provisions) was rejected by the Czech parliament in January 2006, and still remains outstanding.

**What's a 'good practice'?** Although the EU presents itself as a 'champion' of gender equality and has committed itself to mainstreaming gender through all its activities, there is no consensus about how this should be done. Even in such key areas as employment and social exclusion, where the EU is committed to the 'open method of coordination' based on peer review and the exchange of 'good practice', important debates about what good practice might entail continue. A variety of strategies and arrangements exist in the 'old' member states, none of which can claim superiority, as the persistence of employment and pay gaps in all Member States readily testifies.<sup>1</sup> Is the Lisbon Strategy target of 60 percent participation of women in the labour market by 2010 appropriate for all states? How should this participation be defined? While the Netherlands can claim a female labour force participation rate of 67.5 percent, 74.7 percent of these women work part-time. Bulgaria, on the other hand, falls below the target with 55 percent of women in employment, but only 2.7 percent of women work part-time, as this is not traditionally an employment option.<sup>2</sup>



*Transplanting EU laws in new member states has proven more difficult than expected*

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For these and other reasons, the picture of gender equality in the new Member States is one of patchy implementation

and progress.<sup>3</sup> However, as this conclusion could also apply to old Member States—some of which have been working towards this goal for decades—this is perhaps not so surprising.

## Future prospects

Accession is the beginning, rather than the end, of a debate about the role of the EU as a promoter of equality in Central and Eastern Europe. Enlargement should also herald a new chapter in debates within the 'old' Member States about future gender equality policy – not least due to the increasing dependence of those states on migrants from new Member States to fill gaps in the employment market, often in low-paid occupations, with serious repercussions for family and domestic life. Recent moves to extend the scope of EU gender policy to embrace areas such as domestic violence and health<sup>4</sup> require the development of wider and more inclusive processes, embracing viewpoints from all over the EU. However, progress on gender equality within Member States – especially the new

Member States and candidate countries – will depend on the more gradual evolution of domestic attitudes, public institutions, and behaviour. Better statistics, new laws and regulations, and new gender equality bodies will help, but common efforts from many actors are required for any real improvements to emerge.

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1. For example, see Plantenga, J. and Remery, C. (2006), *The Gender Pay Gap: Origins and Policy Responses. A Comparative Review of 30 European Countries*, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Brussels: The European Commission.
2. All figures from EUROSTAT, 2006. In Bulgaria rates of part-time female employment are particularly low, but they are generally low across Central and Eastern Europe, compared with 'old' Member States.
3. For statistical information and an overview, see the EU's Annual Reports on equality between women and men, at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/gender\\_equality/gender\\_mainstreaming/activity\\_reports\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/activity_reports_en.html). For states outside the EU see e.g. Open Society Institute *On the Road to the EU: Monitoring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in South Eastern Europe*, May 2006.
4. European Commission (2006). *Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men for the Period 2006-10*. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/news/2006/mar/com06092\\_roadmap\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2006/mar/com06092_roadmap_en.pdf).

## Gender Attitudes and Gender Equality in Azerbaijan

Irada Ahmedova

Like a number of other CIS countries, Azerbaijan's constitutional and legal framework for promoting gender equality grew out of Soviet-era equality and the international norms contained in UN conventions and treaties on the rights of women. During 16 years of independence, efforts have been made to adapt this legal framework to the Azerbaijani context, to enable women and men to contribute to nation-building, and to the completion of the transition to democracy and the market economy. In the process, a gap has opened up between *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality in the country. Some have argued that this is largely due to the revival of traditional attitudes towards gender and family values, after being suppressed during 70 years of communist rule. If correct, these arguments suggest that major barriers to post-Soviet gender equality lie not in inadequate legal frameworks or insufficient institutional capacity, but in traditional beliefs and behaviour.

What exactly are the barriers to gender equality in Azerbaijan, and to what extent do traditional gender attitudes contribute to them? The findings of the first national independent survey of gender attitudes ever

conducted in Azerbaijan (and possibly in the CIS) provide a lucid illustration of popular perceptions regarding gender disparities in the country.<sup>1</sup> This survey covered perceptions on the gender dimensions of employment and living conditions, education, health, marriage, and family and social life. The results on the whole support the conclusion that gender inequalities in Azerbaijan are often due to negative attitudes and stereotypes that have their roots in household and inter-personal relations.

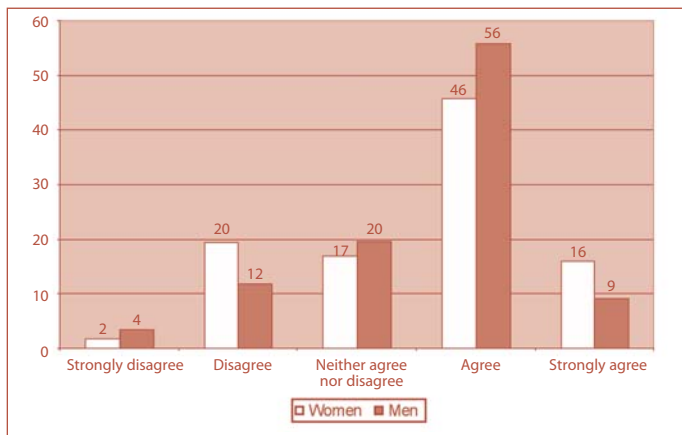
### What do the survey data say?

The survey data show that the Azerbaijani family is inclined towards patriarchy in terms of expectations vis-à-vis men and women, stereotypes about male and female roles, gender-biased divisions of labour, and attitudes towards male and female employment. Deeply rooted cultural norms perpetuate traditional gender roles and facilitate their internalization by both women and men. One male respondent explained: "In our families, power belongs to men. It has always been like this. Our traditions propagate this idea".

The Azerbaijani family is currently undergoing rapid transformation and change. Family sizes are decreasing, and the vast majority of families are now nuclear (as opposed to extended). However, the gender division of labour and authority within families show much greater resistance to change. There is a hard-core stereotypical gender division of labour, and a near consensus on the 'ideal' role models for men as the 'breadwinner' and women as the 'homemaker'.

The survey results indicate that the male ‘breadwinner’ and female ‘homemaker’ roles are internalized by most members of society, and are reflected in what most respondents believe to be suitable jobs for women and men. Women and men are virtually unanimous in their views that ideal jobs for men are those that enable them to fulfil their dual roles of breadwinner and household head by providing sufficient income and securing social prestige and status. This differentiation is reflected in the wage gap: women in Azerbaijan tend to work in lower-paid jobs. Moreover, fewer women than men were in favour of wage equality: 65 percent of male survey respondents “agreed” and “strongly agreed” with the ‘equal pay for equal work’ principle, compared with 62 percent for female respondents (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Responses (in %) to the statement: Women and men should receive the same wage for the same job.**



Traditional gender roles often constitute a burden on women, since they can either restrict female engagement in economic activity and decrease the range of choices they enjoy. In Azerbaijan, women are concentrated in ‘feminized professions’ in health and education, where they tend to find employment in lower-paid jobs than do men. Socialization and negative stereotyping reinforce tendencies for decision-making to remain a male domain. In the private sector, women are under-represented in management positions and are often concentrated at lower levels of the management pyramid. The survey data suggest, however, that Azerbaijani women and men may be parting ways on this subject. Whereas some 57 percent of female respondents agreed with the statement that “women can do men’s work”, only 24 percent of male respondents agreed.

Differing labour market outcomes also reflect unequal economic opportunities for women and men. In agriculture, a strict gender division of labour persists. Despite this, the survey respondents viewed land reform as a positive socio-economic development for both women

and men, even though women lacked the knowledge and skills needed to fully benefit from the opportunities created by private land ownership. As a result, women tend to be excluded from private ownership of agricultural property. As the labour market is expanding and private enterprise is increasingly driving economic development in Azerbaijan, the relatively greater barriers to credit facing women are a key feature of gender inequalities in economic opportunities.

The survey data also suggest that traditional gender differences concerning employment and supporting the family are becoming less rigid. For example, 46 percent of female and 34 percent of male respondents disagreed with the statement that there is no need for a woman to work if her husband’s income was sufficient.

Most respondents shared a high regard for education as a source of knowledge and social capital for both women and men. Compared to men, women are more inclined to disagree with gender stereotypes limiting women’s educational opportunities. One young woman surveyed remarked “... if we had an education, we would not be afraid of anybody, I mean of men. We could go and work”. The majority of male and female respondents supported higher education for both girls and boys (but a higher proportion of those surveyed gave preferences to boys for higher education, particularly at the post-graduate level).

**Table 1. Gender differences in views about education (%)**

| Statement  | Disagree |        | Partially agree |        | Agree |        |
|--|----------|--------|-----------------|--------|-------|--------|
|  | Male     | Female | Male            | Female | Male  | Female |
| <i>There is no point sending girls to universities of engineering, because they won't be able to find a job suitable to their profession</i> | 47       | 38     | 25              | 24     | 28    | 38     |
| <i>If a girl goes abroad to get an education, she loses her opportunity to get married</i>   | 57       | 59     | 25              | 23     | 18    | 18     |
| <i>Men only get an education in order to earn money in the future</i>  | 25       | 23     | 20              | 22     | 55    | 56     |
| <i>Women get an education in order to become mothers and take care of their children</i>   | 52       | 61     | 25              | 18     | 23    | 22     |



Survey results indicate that the female 'homemaker' role is internalized by most members of society

Persisting stereotypes of gendered professions, influencing views on education and career choices, were also evident among respondents (see Table 1). At the same time, gender attitudes concerning specific aspects of education varied depending on the age, gender, religion, income, and education level of respondents. Gender equality in access to education can clearly help eliminate other forms of gender inequality, forming more egalitarian intra-family relations and increasing women's participation in social life. However, the survey results suggest that, although the vast majority of respondents had secondary or higher education, significant gender prejudices remain concerning girls' education, choice of profession, and free access to information (specifically the Internet). Greater access to education in itself may not be sufficient to change traditional attitudes concerning female education.

The survey data also underscore the continuing influence of traditional views on women's participation in Azerbaijan's social and political life. However, some weakening of

gender-biased attitudes is also apparent, particularly among more highly educated respondents. The majority of both female and male respondents supported women's more active participation in parliamentary elections: only 12 percent of female and 27 percent of male respondents were against this. One female respondent observed that "women are born politicians. A woman deals in politics with her children, between her daughter and son and among her neighbours, ensuring there are no disputes".

## Conclusions

The survey data demonstrate that, while some gender attitudes in Azerbaijan tend to be passed from generation to generation, others are evolving with the gradually changing circumstances in families, communities, neighbourhoods, and society in general. Still, they confirm that women's participation in economic, social, and political life is largely determined by tradition. Women suffer not only from the gender roles attributed to them, but also from stereotypes associating them with 'weakness' and 'powerlessness'.

While better laws and improved enforcement can help reduce gender inequalities, changing traditional attitudes about gender roles may be more important in Azerbaijan. In the view of one female activist, "Experience bears out that in the most difficult issues the mechanism of equal rights does not work. Laws on the books are one thing, and reality is an altogether different thing". Improving gender equality within the family without violating intra-family harmony and national identity can be quite a challenge. More robust public debate on gender attitudes among state, civil society, and media organizations can play an important role in meeting this challenge.

**Irada Ahmedova, UN Coordination Analyst, was formerly the Gender Focal Point for UNDP Azerbaijan.**

1. This article is based on survey data analysed in UNDP-Azerbaijan's 2007 Human Development Report entitled *Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*. This report is based on a national survey of 1,500 women and men, discussions with 80 focus groups, and in-depth interviews with 50 experts. The report can be accessed in Azerbaijani and English at <http://www.un-az.org/undp/publications.php>.

## The Impact of Migration on Gender Roles in Moldova<sup>1</sup>

**Mihail Peleah**

Understanding the distribution of gender roles within families is crucial for identifying and addressing the gender dimensions of policies, programmes, and projects. While

gender roles may seem constant over time, they are not carved in stone; they can change significantly with broader social developments, external shocks, or changes in family structures. Moldova's massive labour migration, which has pushed some 30 percent of the labour force into working abroad, could constitute such a change.

In Moldova (as in most other CIS countries), men are seen as 'family breadwinners'. Not surprisingly, they were the first to be expected to migrate in response to the shrinking opportunities for income generation during the crisis years

of the 1990s. However, women’s share among migrants is also quite high: according to data provided by the International Organization of Migration (IOM), in 2006 42 percent of Moldova’s migrants were women. Migration therefore affects large numbers of Moldovan women—particularly in terms of migration to the EU (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of migrants from Moldova in 2006 (in %)**

|                    | All | EU |
|--------------------|-----|----|
| <b>Age (years)</b> |     |    |
| Below 30 years     | 37  | 34 |
| 30-50 years        | 54  | 57 |
| Above 50 years     | 9   | 9  |
| <b>Gender</b>      |     |    |
| Female             | 42  | 59 |
| Male               | 58  | 41 |
| <b>Education</b>   |     |    |
| Primary            | 5   | 3  |
| Secondary          | 38  | 31 |
| Tertiary           | 36  | 35 |
| University         | 29  | 19 |
| <b>Origin</b>      |     |    |
| Rural              | 65  | 56 |
| Urban              | 35  | 44 |

Source: IOM Migrants Survey, 2006

**Moldovan migrants and families:  
A statistical portrait**

Previous research<sup>2</sup> suggests that intra-family gender roles are significantly affected by migration—particularly when the migrants are mothers (the ‘keepers of hearth and home’). As the data in Figure 1 show, the migration of one or both parents definitely rearranges the division of labour within the family in Moldova. One family member’s departure entails handing over household responsibilities to other family members.

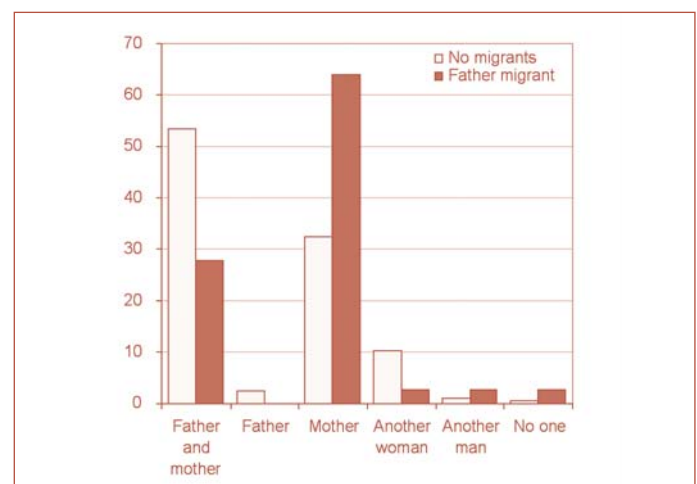
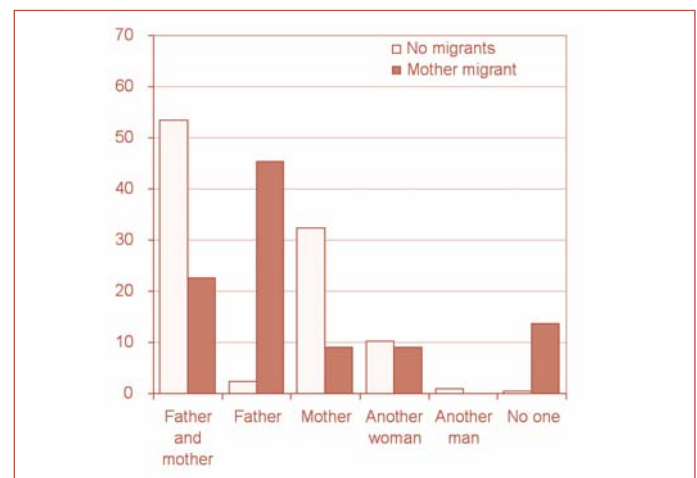
For families without migrants, the survey data suggest that Moldovan mothers are largely responsible for cooking and preparing meals, taking children to the doctor, helping them with schoolwork, taking care of the home, and supervising children during their leisure time. Traditional roles for the father include earning money and agricultural work. Some of these tasks (e.g., educating and taking care of children, agricultural work) are commonly shared by both parents: in nearly half the families surveyed, both father and mother are perceived as breadwinners and childcare providers.

Migration inevitably rearranges these gender roles. In families where both parents are at home, the care provider

role is played either by both the father and the mother (in 53 percent of families surveyed), or just the mother (in 32 percent of families surveyed). When the mother leaves, her role is often taken by the father or another female household member. For instance, in families without migrants, fathers cook only in 1 percent of cases, while in families where the mother has migrated 41 percent of fathers prepare meals. “My father is like a mother to me, he cooks, he does everything” (14 year old girl). “I missed her very much. Usually when I came from school the food was ready, my father also cooks but not like my mother” (16-year-old urban male). “I take care of the ducks, one of my brothers takes care of the poultry, and the elder takes care of the hog. We wash the dishes and the clothes, which mother used to do when she was home” (11-year-old rural male).

When mothers migrate, children still view them as care providers (in 9 percent of cases individually, and in 23 percent of cases—together with the father). This could be explained by the short-term seasonal nature of migration, or by the maintenance of close contacts between migrant mothers and their children.

**Figure 2: Who takes care of children in families with and without migrants? (in %)**



The survey data indicate that many children have difficulty adapting to the changes in the intra-household divisions of labour produced by migration. *"It was very difficult, very, very difficult. There was no one to wake me in the morning, to prepare meals until I learned how to do what usually mother or father did, but now I can do this myself"* (16-year-old rural male). *"Then both parents had left and it was very hard as neither mother nor father was nearby. Then I got used to it, but it isn't the same. It is not a big deal, but I worry without them."* (15-year-old rural female). Some children have noticed that their mother's leaving has affected their usual schedule as they have less spare time to play and are more involved in household chores. *"Dad doesn't let us go play somewhere, just sometimes on holidays, but mom allowed us to go play. Father doesn't allow us because we've got things to do at home"* (11-year-old rural male).

As labour migration from Moldova generally reflects economic factors, migrants are often perceived by family members as the main providers. Interestingly, both in migrant and non-migrant cases the share of dual-earning families is quite high (close to 45 percent). In families in which the father has migrated, the father is more likely to be perceived as the main breadwinner (in 47 percent of cases, compared with 31 percent in families without migrants). Likewise, the mother is less likely to be perceived as the main breadwinner (down to 6 percent, compared with 13 percent in families without migrants). Mothers are mentioned as the main providers in 45 percent of families where the mother is absent—a sharp increase on the 13 percent reported in non-migrant families. Both father and mother are perceived as important breadwinners in 46 percent of families in which mothers have migrated.

### Migration, gender, and communities

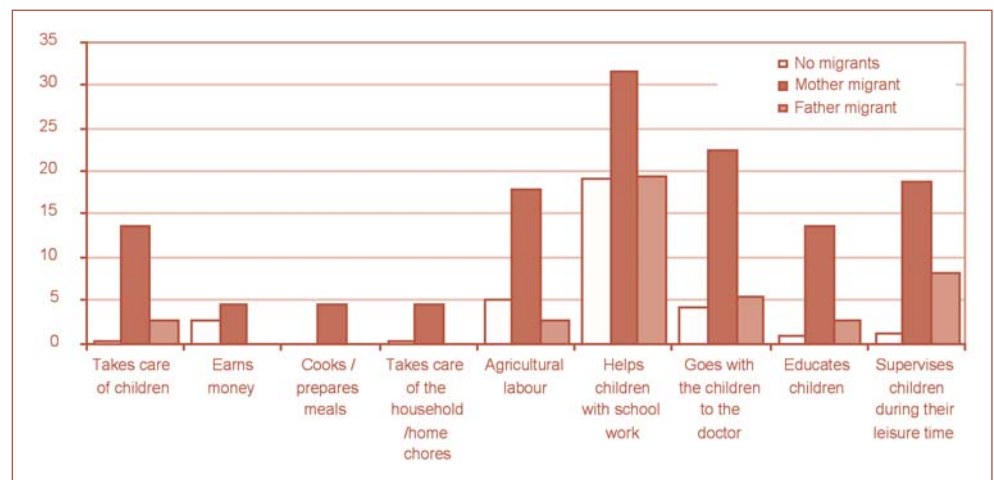
As a result, women working abroad are more self-confident and have more self-esteem. While violence against women is widespread in Moldova, women who have worked abroad seem less willing to tolerate abuse by their partners. Instead, they seem more likely to insist that abusive partners change their behaviour; if not, they divorce and try to rebuild their lives. *"Women are now more confident. From docile women afraid of their men, they have turned into self-confident persons in control of their lives and even of their family situations. I know many cases of women who if they had not left the country*

*would have tolerated their husbands, while upon returning home they tell them, "Don't you dare lay a hand on me ever again. If you do, then you will have problems for the rest of your life and [will] not be a free man again. If you want you can change. Look how people live abroad", and some men have started to change. They moved to the city and became more orderly and gave up drinking habits and buddies. These are some positive examples, but there are also cases when women make demands and husbands disagree, and some families fall apart"* (representative of a local municipality).

### Do some parental roles 'disappear'?

The migration of mothers seems to have a much larger negative impact on childcare than the migration of fathers. The survey data suggest that in 14 percent of families with mother-migrants, children believe that no one is taking care of them (compared with only 3 percent for families with 'only' the father abroad). Similar problems are evident in other areas of family life in which women traditionally play significant roles, such as educating children, helping with school work, taking children to the doctor, and supervising children during their leisure time.

**Figure 3: Non-performed roles in migrants' families (in %)**



### Conclusion

Changes in gender roles can influence communities as well as families. Many respondents suggested that women's migration gives them financial independence and increased decision-making power. They also noted that migrant women increasingly model themselves on the behaviour of women in the host country. A wife's departure to work abroad may therefore be perceived as threatening by her husband, particularly in view of paternalistic expectations in Moldovan society. She will earn more and may try to manage this income herself. This can threaten the husband's status as head of the

family; he may look for a new partner or may seek comfort in drinking. In cases where women's work abroad is associated with prostitution, women's migration may bring stigma for both themselves and their families. Migration—particularly of mothers—may lead to the 'disappearance' of certain family roles. This 'disappearance' could be especially dangerous if it has a long-term impact on childhood development and well-being.

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1. This paper is based on survey data from 300 Moldovan families with children that were surveyed in October 2006 within the framework of the UNDP/UNICEF study on the 'Impact of Migration and Remittances of Families and Communities'.
2. Scalabrini Migration Centre (2003). *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children*. <http://www.smc.org.ph/heartsapart/>.

## A Portrait of Women Migrant Workers in Uzbekistan

Evgeniy Abdullaev

In Uzbekistan, as in many other CIS countries, the growing rural population has tried to compensate for poor access to non-agricultural employment by seeking temporary, informal employment in cities. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the number of internal labour migrants in Uzbekistan increased from 44,000 in 2001 to more than 750,000 in 2007 (5 percent of the able-bodied population). This migration reflects Uzbekistan's population growth, which generates some 250,000 new job-seekers in the labour market annually. Since 2002, this also reflects the out-migration of labour from agriculture (where some 29 percent of Uzbekistan's population was employed in 2006), due to the transformation of *shirkats* (quasi-collective farms) into single-farmer enterprises. At the same time, with a growing gap between rich and poor in rural areas, there is increasing short-term agricultural migration of poor low-skilled women workers. In the Soviet period, migration rates among the Uzbek population were very low compared with those of other Central Asian republics.<sup>1</sup> Since the early 1990s, Uzbek rates have increased significantly.

Women are the most vulnerable group of labour migrants in Uzbekistan. According to traditional cultural views, women belong to the family and must shoulder heavy domestic responsibilities. Women migrants reportedly suffer from labour abuse and sexual harassment. To identify the key issues affecting the rights of migrant workers, UNDP—jointly with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan and the 'Takhli'l' Social Research Centre—interviewed some 1,000 people (62 percent men and 38 percent women) in two regions: Kashkadarya and Namangan (in the Fergana valley), which have the highest rate of out-migration,

and the capital city of Tashkent, which attracts most of the migrant labour. The survey was conducted in the summer of 2007.<sup>2</sup>

The survey results show that while female migrants generally have the same educational level as male migrants, they are usually employed in less-skilled jobs in such sectors as catering and retail trade, and as harvest workers. As a result, their wages are some 30 percent below those of their male counterparts. While both female and male respondents voiced concerns about bad working and living conditions, and the non-payment of wages, women migrants were likely to report rudeness, insults, and sexual harassment. They are also much less aware of their rights, and of the opportunities provided through local temporary employment centres.

About 45 percent of female migrants are single; another 22 percent reported being divorced or widowed. In rural social structures, such women are much more vulnerable than married ones, in light of traditional disapproval of women who leave home in search of a job. Women respondents were also three times more likely to report deteriorating family relations due to their out-migration. Perhaps for these reasons, some 30 percent of female respondents (compared with 24 percent of male respondents) declared that they would not return home under any circumstances.

### Constraints of the *propiska*

Some 70 percent of survey respondents reported seeking work in Tashkent.<sup>3</sup> However, the *propiska* system—state issued permits that register the bearer's place of residence, and may deny the bearer the right to migrate elsewhere—hampers migration to urban areas. Because a *propiska* is often difficult to obtain, the survey data show that informal resettlement and bribery are common methods of circumventing the law. As most (79 percent) of the respondents do not have a *propiska*, they cannot receive legal income or assistance from local labour agencies. Their informal employment therefore means the absence of a stable income, or no access to legal or social protection (pensions, sick benefits, etc.). Although female respondents reported being

stopped by police for *propiska* checks less often than male respondents, women migrants are more likely to be ordered to the police station for further investigation, and forced to leave the city.

## Mardikor-bazaars

About 50 percent of survey respondents during 2006-2007 were involved in temporary or seasonal jobs that are arranged at the *mardikor-bazaars* day markets. Each region has several *mardikor-bazaars*; the biggest ones are located in Tashkent. The number of migrant workers at such markets varies from 100 to 2,000. The *mardikor-bazaars* are strictly divided into 'male' and 'female' parts: the 'male' bazaars provide manpower for hard physical labour, while the 'female' bazaars offer workers for such unskilled tasks as weeding and grading of fruits and vegetables. Since such work is labour intensive, employers prefer to deal with a crew (*brigada*) rather than with individual employees. They typically negotiate with a female crew-leader (*brigadir*), who gets a 'bonus' for each member of the crew, and who guarantees the quality and timeliness of their work. However, employment as crew members does not protect women from violations of their rights; respondents hired at *mardikor-bazaars* com-

plained of insults (49 percent), non-payment of wages (34 percent) and sexual harassment (19 percent)—much more often than other categories of women labour migrants.

Although the local authorities have established temporary employment centres for the protection of workers' rights, most workers do not use these centres. Workers and recruiting agents are reluctant to legalize their business—workers do not want to pay taxes on their low wages, and agents do not want to expose the poor working conditions. As is the case in much of the developing world, migrant workers in Uzbekistan—particularly women migrants—remain outside the protection of state policies and institutions.

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1. For example, in 1968-1970 only 1.4 percent of Uzbeks were labour migrants compared with 6.7 percent of Russians, 4.6 percent of Kazakhs, 2.5 percent of Kyrgyz and 2.2 percent of Tajiks (*Itogy Vsesoyuznoi perepisi naseleniya 1970g.* T. VII. Moscow: Statistika, 1974).
2. The complete data set will be published at the end of 2007.
3. See Maksakova, L (2005). 'Labour Migration of the Population of Uzbekistan: Tendencies and Regional Features'. In: Abdullaev, E. and Azimova, D. (eds.) *Labour Migration: Social and Legal Aspects*. Tashkent: Association of Business Relations, 16-17.



The wages of women migrants in Uzbekistan are some 30 percent below those of their male counterparts

# Adapting to Russia's Transformation: Women and Men Compared

Sarah Ashwin

Russia's economic and social transformation has not had the anticipated effects on women and men. At the beginning of the reform era, most commentators on gender in Russia predicted that women would be the primary casualties of reform. It was anticipated that unemployment would have a 'female face', that the wage gap would grow and that female labour participation was likely to fall. These predictions proved inaccurate. Despite sweeping economic change, continuity in gender trends in employment has been notable. Although men have retained their economic advantage, women have maintained their presence in the labour force. Arguments that women would be the 'losers' during reform were also confounded by trends in life expectancy, which indicated that men were experiencing greater problems in adapting to the new Russia than women. The situation of men in Russia thus presents a paradox. Men continue to enjoy a labour market advantage, but women have proved better able to 'survive' the transformation in the literal sense of the term.

When the Labour Force Survey, using the internationally comparable definition of unemployment, was introduced in Russia in 1992, the male unemployment rate was found marginally to exceed the female. Since then, the unemployment rates of women and men have been roughly equal, standing at 6.7 percent and 6.5 percent respectively in 2006. Meanwhile, women's labour participation rates, which at the end of the Soviet era were close to the biological maximum, have shown a similar decline to that of men. Both male and female labour participation dropped significantly between 1989 and 1998, but the gender difference in these falls was marginal. In 2006 women still comprised over 48 percent of the economically active population.

Although women have managed to maintain their attachment to the labour market, men continue, as in the Soviet era, to enjoy a more favourable position at work. Studies of the wage gap during the transition era suggest that it has remained more or less constant, with women continuing to earn between 60–70 percent of men's wages. Meanwhile, the gender restructuring of

employment during transition also appears to favour men, with men increasing their presence in the now-lucrative, but once female-dominated, spheres of banking and commerce, and women continuing to make up the overwhelming majority of employees in the poorly-paid 'budget sector' areas of health care and education.

While men are in a better economic position than women, this is not mirrored in their well-being. The best indication of this is the life expectancy figures, which tell a dramatic story of male distress. Male life expectancy plummeted in the reform era, declining from 64.2 years of age in 1989 (Goskomstat, 2002: 105), to a low of 57.5 in 1994. It then recovered to 61.3 in 1998, only to fall back to 58.4 in 2002 (Goskomstat, 2003: 117). In 2005 it was still below 59, approximately 16 years below the EU average. Meanwhile, female life expectancy remained more constant, declining from 74.4 in 1989 (Goskomstat, 2002: 105) to a nadir of 71.1 in 1994, followed by a stabilization at over 72 between 1996–2005. The gender gap in life expectancy is nearly 14 years, the highest in the world according to UN figures.

Why has economic change had this dramatic impact on men? Detailed research on responses to reform suggests that the household division of labour is an important factor in explaining these gender differences (Ashwin, 2006). Evidence suggests that women's role as household managers provides them with a sense of efficacy and meaning, which plays some role in alleviating the psychological effects of unemployment or downward mobility at work. By contrast, men's identity is more closely connected with work. Men's main contribution to the household is as primary breadwinners, while women run the household, do most of the domestic work, and usually manage the household budget. This has two effects. First, given men's marginal role in the household and the underdevelopment of the civic sphere and leisure infrastructure in Russia, it is difficult for men to find meaning and validation outside work, which leaves them vulnerable in the face of labour market reversals. This is not to say that unemployed or low-earning women do not experience psychological discomfort. Rather, they are better able to deal with this because their pivotal role in the household is a sustaining and motivating force.

Second, the fact that men's main role in the household is as primary breadwinners renders them vulnerable when they lose their status as main earner. Thus, falling wages or unemployment can threaten married men with domestic 'redundancy', and increase their chances of being left by their wives. This is a particular threat when their response to their labour market problems is seen to exacerbate the

problems of the household – as is the case when men turn to alcohol for solace (of which more below). Meanwhile, when men are excluded from the household it generally accelerates their decline, as both the social support provided by the family and female control in relation to drinking and other risky behaviours are lost.

Women's embeddedness in the household brings other benefits. In particular, women's role as household managers binds them to a web of on-going exchange relations with family members and female acquaintances alongside the relations they have with colleagues from work. By contrast, men's social networks tend to be more narrowly focused on the workplace. While this undoubtedly has positive effects in terms of job search and promotion prospects, it means that men's networks can be rendered vulnerable in the face of changes in employment status. Men who become unemployed or marginalized at work can find themselves cut off from the contacts capable of helping them. This danger is intensified by the fact that perceived equality of status is a more important consideration in mediating relations between men than between women. Thus, while women's household-focused networks are unlikely to be disrupted by changes in their labour market status, the fragility of men's work-centred networks tends to be revealed precisely in moments of adversity when they are most needed.

Russia's drinking culture adds a lethal element to the cocktail of risks which attend men's marginality in the household. There is little doubt that excessive drinking is predominately a male problem. One study of alcohol consumption in the Russian population calculated that alcohol consumption was 10 times higher among men than among women (Bobak *et al.*, 1999: 864). Although women's use of alcohol appears to have increased somewhat recently, heavy drinking among women is still culturally proscribed, while it is considered normal among men. In the absence of other means of compensating for, or dealing with, their labour market problems, men are liable to turn to the treacherous 'medicine' of alcohol. This is confirmed by recent research in the Urals city of Izhevsk (Tomkins *et al.*, 2007). This carefully-executed study looked at the socio-economic determinants of hazardous drinking among men (behaviours including going on extended drinking binges and drinking surrogates such as industrial spirits), and found a strong association with unemployment and low levels of wealth and household amenities. Obviously, alcoholism can cause such problems, but while acknowledging that the causality could run in both directions, the authors argued that 'men struggling economically are driven to alcoholism, and eventually end up consuming surrogates' because they cannot afford spirits (Tomkins *et al.*, 2007: 551). The consequences for the longevity of such men are clear: there is



Alcohol consumption in Russia is 10 times higher among men than among women

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no doubt that alcohol abuse is a major proximate cause of the crisis in male mortality (ibid).

Women in Russia are more likely to live in poverty, but it seems that men are more vulnerable to its effects. Women's domestic role and rich social networks help protect them from demoralization in the face of adversity, while cultural barriers mean they are less exposed to the lure of alcohol. By contrast, heavy drinking offers the most readily available 'cure' to men dealing with problems such as unemployment and poverty, since they lack the household-focused social resources that women are able to draw on. Obviously, however, while alcohol may lessen feelings of pain or anxiety, it exacerbates the problems from which relief was originally sought. Ironically, therefore, women's notorious 'double burden' of work and household management has turned out to have hidden benefits in a period of economic crisis, while men's 'freedom' from domestic responsibilities and license to drink have proved very dangerous to their health.

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## Demographic Dimensions of Regional Gender Issues

Ben Slay

Gender issues in many post-communist countries of Europe and Central Asia diverge significantly from other regions. Women live much longer than men in the Russian Federation and a number of other CIS countries; women in the region enjoy relatively high rates of labour-force participation; and unemployment rates are lower for women than for men in significant numbers of CIS and European countries.<sup>1</sup>

This does not mean that women have not been affected adversely by the post-communist transition. Likewise, neither are women untouched by problems of labour market discrimination, domestic violence, inadequate guarantees of reproductive rights, and other forms of inequality and oppression.

Still, arguments (made *inter alia* by Sarah Ashwin on pp. 19-21) that the costs of transition have not been borne disproportionately by women raise important questions about the extent to which gender patterns apparent in some parts of the region (e.g., Russia) may not be present in other parts (e.g., Central Asia, or the new EU member states). This paper suggests that a number of important differences in development pat-

terns between women and men reflect varying demographic trends in the region.

#### The gender dimensions of socialist demographic legacies<sup>2</sup>

The 'East bloc' countries were already displaying some surprising demographic features in the 1980s—surprises that affected women and men differently. With the exception of the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, Albania, and parts of what was then Yugoslavia (e.g., Kosovo), population growth had either stopped or turned negative across the region. For the European countries that subsequently joined the EU, these were essentially mirror images of the demographic trends apparent in 'old Europe', where falling birth and death rates had already produced stable or shrinking populations. However, while populations in some CIS countries since the 1980s have also been shrinking, this is due in part to relatively high mortality rates—particularly for men. Data show that transition has accelerated this trend. But there is more to the story than this.

In the mid-1960s, female and male mortality rates reported in most of the non-Central Asian Soviet republics were quite close to those of the OECD countries. Starting in the late 1960s, however, life expectancy in much of the USSR stopped rising, producing gaps vis-à-vis OECD countries that have been growing for some 40 years—particularly for men living in Russia and the Western CIS countries (see Figure 1). Likewise, life expectancy for both women and men in

Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova stopped rising in the 1960s, and has not undergone significant improvement since then (see Figure 2). Whereas life expectancy has remained roughly constant for women in these countries, it declined for men, thereby worsening this 'gender gap' inherited from the Soviet period. By contrast, life expectancy for women and men in OECD countries rose during this time. Likewise, life expectancy in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) began to improve shortly after the Soviet collapse—particularly for women.

**Figure 1—Growth/decline in life expectancy in selected countries (in years)**



Sources: Source: *Recent Demographic Development in Europe, 2004*. Council of Europe, 2005. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2004-2005*. Japan Statistical Yearbook 2004. Health, United States 2006. World Bank: *World Development Indicators*. Statistics Bureau, Japan.

## Ashwin reconsidered

These data suggest that Ashwin's 'Russian men devastated by transition' portrait should perhaps be generalized and amended, in three respects. First, because many of Russia's disturbing mortality trends began decades before the USSR collapsed, they should not be ascribed solely to the post-Soviet transition. Second,

Ashwin's portrait would seem to apply only to men in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The fact that these countries account for the bulk of the region's population should not deflect attention from different trends apparent in other transition countries.

**Figure 2—Life expectancy in Russia, the Western CIS,<sup>3</sup> and Baltic States,<sup>4</sup> 1964-2005 (in years)**



Source: *Recent Demographic Development in Europe, 2004*. Council of Europe, 2005. *TransMONEE 2007 Database*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

Indeed, these mortality trends are not found in most of the rest of the region. The data in Figure 3 show that the new EU member states have succeeded in reversing many of the unfavourable demographic trends—affecting both women and men—inherited at the start of the 1990s. In 1990, for example, the Czech Republic ranked 29<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> in the world in female and male mortality rates, respectively; male life expectancy had declined between 1960 and 1990. (In the early 1960s, the Czech Republic ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the world for female life expectancy and 12<sup>th</sup> for male life expectancy.) During the 1990-2003 period, female and male life expectancy in the Czech Republic rose by 3.1 and 4.5 years, respec-

tively—reflecting a ‘demographic convergence’ vis-à-vis the wealthier European countries.

**Figure 3—Changes in life expectancy during 1990-2005 (in years)**



Source: TransMONEE 2007 Database, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

Likewise, while many of the Yugoslav successor states experienced devastating military conflicts and large declines in incomes and output during the 1990s, male and female mortality trends in these countries have generally continued to converge towards European patterns. The Russian and Western CIS experience also contrasts with demographic trends in Turkey, Albania, Kosovo, Central Asia, and Azerbaijan, where populations are growing and gender issues tend to resemble those in more ‘traditional’ developing societies.

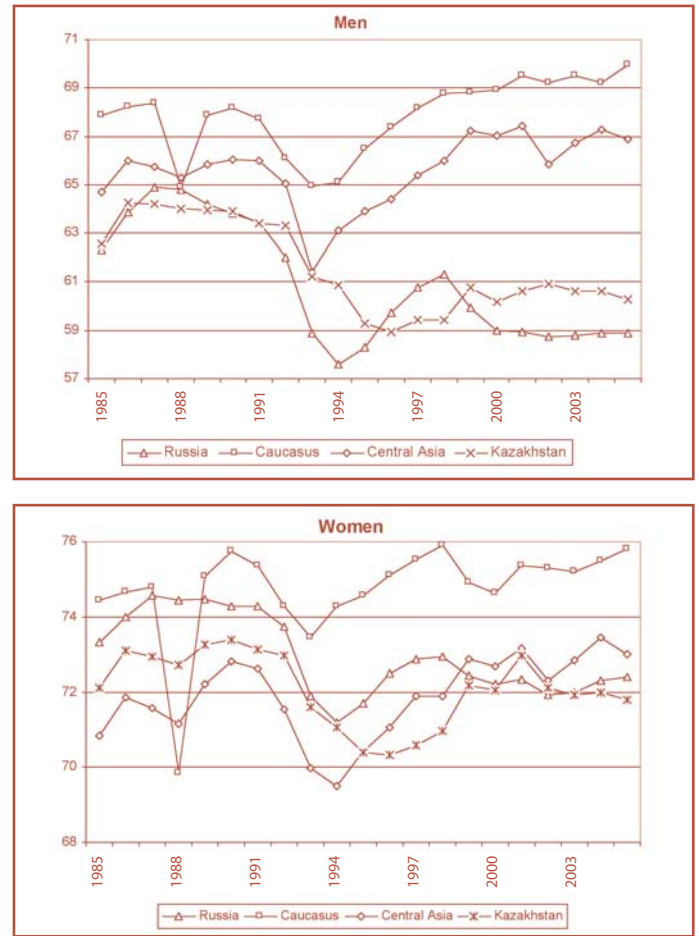
The data in Figure 4 show that, despite per-capita income levels that are generally much lower, both women and (particularly) men in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia live longer than in Russia (and the Western CIS countries), as well as in Kazakhstan (the CIS country with the second largest per-capita GDP). For whatever reasons, the hardships of transition in poor, post-conflict Tajikistan would seem not to have had the same devastating effects on men that they have had in other, wealthier CIS countries to the north and west.

**Gender, women, and men**

In addition to highlighting the importance of demographic factors behind some of the differing developmental trends affecting women and men in the countries of Europe and the CIS, this paper points to ways in which the challenges facing women in these countries may differ from those facing women in other developing regions.

It also underscores how many of these challenges are closely linked to the development challenges facing men. For example, national data in Russia and the

**Figure 4—Life expectancy in the CIS (1985-2005, in years)<sup>5</sup>**



Sources: Sources: *Recent Demographic Development in Europe, 2004*. Council of Europe, 2005. *Country data (CD-Rom)*; WHO *European Health for All database*. World Bank: *World Development Indicators*.

Western CIS countries as a rule show that poverty rates are higher for women than for men. But might this not reflect in part the poverty experienced by Russian widows, many of whom must live on meagre state pensions that cannot be supplemented with incomes supplied by deceased husbands or brothers (or sons)? Likewise, if rural areas in Central Asia, Moldova, and the Caucasus had not been denuded of young men working as migrants in Russia, Kazakhstan, or EU countries, might not women in these rural communities enjoy greater—or at least different—development opportunities?

**Ben Slay, Director of UNDP’s Bratislava Regional Centre, is Executive Editor of *Development and Transition*.**

1. Countries in which unemployment rates for women have been at or below those of men for the past 10-15 years include Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary.
2. This and the subsequent section are based on data and analysis provided by Anatolii Vishnevskii of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
3. Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.
4. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
5. The ‘Caucasus’ refer to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. ‘Central Asia’ refers to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The regional data are unweighted averages of national data.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

An academic conference on corporate social responsibility (CSR) will take place on 12 December 2007 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The conference will seek to stimulate a discussion between the Lithuanian higher education institutions and representatives of other academic institutions on CSR, as well as foster cooperation in implementing CSR training programmes. The conference will seek to involve Lithuanian schools and scholarly institutions in the CSR discussion, as well as identify higher educational institutions for developing and implementing CSR training courses. For more information please contact Ms. Lyra Jakuleviciene, Head of Office, UNDP Lithuania, (lyra.jakuleviciene@undp.org); or Ieva Burneikaite-Labanauskiene, Communications Officer, UNDP Lithuania, (ieva.burneikaite@undp.org).

On 14 and 25 December 2007 the **Georgian Parliament** will serve as the venue for two awards ceremonies for the best gender-sensitive media reporting (printed press/broadcasting) and the best gender-sensitive companies and organizations. The events are organized by UNDP in cooperation with the Gender Equality Council of the Georgian Parliament. Nino Burjanadze, Parliamentary Speaker, will take part in her capacity as the Chairperson of the Council. For more information, please contact Natia Cherkezishvili, UNDP Programme Analyst (natia.chekezishvili@undp.org) or Nino Lagvilava, Project Manager (nino.lagvilava@undp.org).

The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) will hold its 40th session from 14 January - 1 February 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland. It will examine the country reports from the following States Parties: Saudi Arabia, Bolivia, Burundi, France, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Sweden. For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/40sess.htm>.

The 52nd session of the **Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW) will be held in New York at UN Headquarters from 25 February - 7 March 2008. The CSW will consider the theme 'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women' at the session. The UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) will be hosting the event. The CSW is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender

equality and the advancement of women. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards, and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The **OECD Global Forum on International Investment** (GFII) will be held on 27-28 March 2008 in Paris. The relationship between investment and development was a key theme during the 2007 G-8 Summit. The GFII will focus on best practices in promoting investment for growth and sustainable development by engaging governments worldwide and interested stakeholders in peer learning and dialogue on emerging issues facing the investment policy community. See [www.oecd.org/daf/investment/gfii](http://www.oecd.org/daf/investment/gfii) for further information or contact [michael.gestrin@oecd.org](mailto:michael.gestrin@oecd.org).

The **European Feminist Forum** will take place on 13-15 June 2008 in Warsaw, Poland. The European 'F' Forum builds an open and diverse dialogue, organizes an energetic space for talking about women, and will make change happen in Europe. A number of Polish organizations will organize activities throughout the country during the conference, which is expected to bring together 500 participants. Registration will start in January 2008. For more information please visit <http://www.iiav.nl/eng/ic/eff/index.html>.

From 14-17 November 2008, up to 1,500 women's rights leaders and activists from around the world will converge on Cape Town, South Africa to take part in the 11th **AWID International Forum** to discuss the power of movements. AWID is the Association for Women's Rights in Development. The International Forum is both a conference and a call to action. The largest recurring event of its kind, the AWID Forum brings together women's rights leaders and activists from around the world every three years to strategize, network, celebrate, and learn in a highly charged atmosphere that fosters deep discussions and sustained personal and professional growth. For more information please visit <http://www.awid.org>.

### Forthcoming issues of *Development and Transition* will focus on:

The Environment in Europe and the CIS (April 2008)

Reform of the post-communist state (July 2008)

The editors welcome contributions. If you wish to submit an article, please follow the guidelines at [www.developmentandtransition.net](http://www.developmentandtransition.net)

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