

## **Women's Rights in Mongolia**

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According to the statistics, women constitute 50% of the Mongolian population; 51.4% of the employable population; 49.4% of all workers; 73% of students; 79.2% of all teachers and 82.3% of health care service workers. It is evident that women play big role in social life, and have obligations towards national development. Contrary to this, the violation of women's rights has increased; the rate women's representatives is insufficient at the decision making level; and poverty among women has also increased. All of these situations entail severe effects for women with many children, elderly, single mothers and disabled women.

The Mongolian Human Rights Commission is implementing the “Promotion of Women's Rights Implementation” project. This project is aimed at increasing the participation of women at the decision making level; raising consciousness about women's rights as well as improving the potential of governmental and non-governmental organizations working for women related issues.

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, the “National Program on Improvement of Women's Status” and “National Program on Gender Equity” were approved in order to foster the common goal of improving each country's development. As signatory to this declaration, the Mongolian Government released its national program of action for women's issues.

During 1994-2000, poverty deepened; income inequity increased and poverty fluctuations did not occur. According to one survey, 12-13% of all families; 24.6% of ultra poor families; 18.3% of the poor families are headed by women. Due to economic reform, the employment rate of women has changed. Opportunities were also given to the women to work in different types of economic entities; run businesses; and improve their economic rights and potential.

It is regrettable that domestic violence, crime, alcohol addiction and depression has increased in social life due to unemployment and absence of economic guarantees. The law against domestic violence was approved in 2004 by the Parliament and enacted in 2005. This was due to the diligent and constant actions of civic social organizations and fighting against women's suffering. After the law's enactment, the public as well as

governmental and non governmental organizations became involved actions aimed to prevent domestic violence; protect the rights of humiliated people and make the offender responsible.

With the transition from socialism to a market economy, Mongolians have had to cope with a period of health care services change. Due to health care improvements, the average life expectancy of women which was 65.43 (1995), increased by 1.07 years (2003) and for men the average life expectancy which was 62.1, increased by 1.31. Thanks to the increase in quality of reproductive health care services and women's increased knowledge about reproductive health, maternal mortality was reduced by 1.7 times from 186.9 in 1995 to 109.5 in 100.000 births in 2003. Infant mortality was decreased. This shows the possibility of accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals which focus on the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates.

Women's representatives in the Parliament declined from 10.5% in 1996 and 11.8 in 2000's elections to 6.6 in 2004's elections. Nowadays, just 1 woman respectively works as a member of cabinet; advisor to the Prime Minister; State Secretary of ministry; and governor of a district. In order to increase the number of women working at the decision making level, we need to prepare women for leadership and increase public awareness.

Although some surveys show positive indices concerning women's rights and issues, problems still arise as family violations are becoming more secret; teen-age prostitution is increasing and sex violations continue to occur in the workplace.

It is a pleasure to emphasize Mongolian NGO efforts for and participation in the protection of women's rights, but also for human rights in general. The National Center against Violence, a NGO founded by Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS), works, for example, against domestic violence and played a big role in the approval of the Law against Domestic Violence. Finally, Mongolian NGOs have even further potential to contribute to the development of women's rights