

Growing Problem of Domestic Violence

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In Mongolia, there has been a large increase in the number of domestic violence cases since the mid-1990s, especially the ones where violence is directed toward women, attracting broad media coverage. The Reproductive Health Survey conducted in 2009 by National Statistical Office of Mongolia with a loan provided by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) found that 19% of the 6,894 women surveyed had been physically abused by their husbands or common-law husbands. This means nearly one in five women in Mongolia has been victimized by domestic violence. According to data on the number of criminal cases registered by the National Police Agency, 80 people were killed and 1,180 people sustained minor or serious injuries in domestic violence incidences between 2010 and 2015. These statistics reveal that domestic violence has become a grave and significant social phenomenon in recent years in this country.

To tackle this situation, a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions/organizations have been implementing activities to prevent and eliminate domestic violence. Along with government agencies such as Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs, and National Police Agency, non-governmental organizations and private entities including Center for Human Rights and Development, and the Mongolian Gender Equality Center are playing active roles and engaged in various undertakings in cooperation with the United Nations, international aid agencies, and other international organizations.

The National Center Against Violence (NCAV) is the first private-sector institution in Mongolia that facilitates domestic violence preventive efforts. Since its establishment in the capital city of Ulan Bator in 1995, NCAV has been conducting a multitude of projects such as the creation of a legal environment to deal with domestic violence against women and children as well as to forestall violence. Currently, NCAV has its branch offices in 14 of Mongolia's 21 provinces, with 24-hour hotlines that offer victimized women and children mental health counseling and legal advice by experts. It also operates five shelters set up around the country to provide temporary protection for abused or battered women and children who are in a critical condition both physically and mentally.

Behind the rise in the number of domestic violence cases in Mongolia, there are social problems, in particular the ones with alcohol such as heavy drinking, that arose when the country underwent transition from socialism to a market economy. Amid the ongoing state of insecurity caused by unemployment, poverty and distress due to the change in social systems, people tend to suffer from higher levels of social stress, resulting in excessive alcohol consumption to relieve their stress. This leads to the most common cause of domestic violence in this country. Besides the social background described above, it is considered that the insufficient development of the legal environment is partly to blame. In 1996, the government formulated the National Program for the Advancement of Women, specifying the need for special attention to the issues of violence against women as well as of women's rights. Following that, the Law on Fighting Against Domestic Violence was adopted in 2004, as a result of a nine-year campaign effort by a

group of private organizations headed by NCAV. In this way, the legal environment concerning domestic violence is gradually being put in place. Nevertheless, there still remains the deep rooted notion that domestic violence is a private family issue, creating an unfavorable situation for the proper functioning of the much-awaited domestic violence legislation. The good news, though, is that a legal decision was made in December 2015 to treat domestic violence incidents as criminal cases. The passage of the relevant law in the Diet is expected to put the brakes on the prevalence of domestic violence in Mongolia.