



## MULTISTAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA TO PREPARE FOR THE 68<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Accelerating the achievement of  
gender equality and the empowerment  
of all women and girls by addressing  
poverty and strengthening institutions  
and financing with a gender perspective

Organized by the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan and  
UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia



### DRAFT SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

On 12 February 2024, the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, convened a pivotal subregional multi-stakeholder consultation for the Central Asia subregion, involving Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Member States, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, youth representatives, UN partners, international financial institutions and other regional and subregional institutions gathered at the subregional consultation to take stock of progress and critical challenges in preparation for the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) and its priority theme: *“Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective”*.

The consultation focused on key issues, including poverty alleviation, social protection, the recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work, the promotion of women’s participation in the labour force, and the integration of gender perspectives into financing and investment decisions.

Setting the stage for national delegations’ participation at CSW68, this document encapsulates the key outcomes, recommendations and commitments emanating from the consultation, serving as a testament to the shared resolve of the subregion on the priority theme.

# A SNAPSHOT OF GENDER AND POVERTY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Poverty is widespread in the region and its incidence is higher among women than men in most countries, particularly among rural women, older women and women who are lone parents or heads of households.

## WOMEN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO LAND

In Tajikistan, **83.5%** of women in rural areas do not own any land (alone or jointly with others), while in urban areas, **66.3%** of women lacked land ownership.<sup>1</sup> In Azerbaijan, due to the gap in ownership, only **30.1%** of those who receive income from property are women.<sup>2</sup>

## ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SERVICES

In Kyrgyzstan, the employment rate of women with less than complete secondary education was **21%** in 2020, while among those who completed secondary education the employment rate was nearly twice as high, at **40.4%**.<sup>3</sup> Regarding health services, out-of-pocket spending in Kazakhstan accounted for **46%** of total health care spending in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND DECENT EMPLOYMENT

Women are concentrated in social service sectors, such as education, health care and social protection. In Kazakhstan, women represent almost **80%** of total employees in the health care and social work sectors,<sup>5</sup> and in Kyrgyzstan they comprise **78%**.<sup>6</sup>

## WOMEN'S UNPAID CARE WORK

In rural areas of Tajikistan, women spend **6.9 hours** per day on average on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to **0.7 hours** spent by men.<sup>7</sup>

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In Kazakhstan, **17%** of adult women have experienced physical or sexual partner violence and **21%** have experienced psychological abuse.<sup>8</sup> In Turkmenistan, **1 in 8** women aged 18–59 years have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a spouse or a partner.<sup>9</sup> In Uzbekistan, **7.2%** of women aged 20–24 years were married before the age of 18.<sup>10</sup>

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INVESTMENT

In Central Asia, only **14.7%** of the employed are covered by some form of unemployment benefits, which is lower than the world average (**18%**).

<sup>1</sup> FAO. 2016. *National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods Tajikistan*. pp. 25–26.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 2019. *Azerbaijan Country Gender Assessment*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. *Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2016-2020*. p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. Undated. *World Development Indicators*.

<sup>5</sup> Asian Development Bank. 2018. *Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment*. p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2021. *Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2016-2020*. p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> Asian Development Bank. 2020. *Women's Time Use in Rural Tajikistan*.

<sup>8</sup> UN Women. Undated. "Elimination of Violence Against Women".

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA. 2021. *Health and Status of a Woman in the Family in Turkmenistan*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> UN Women. Undated. *SDG Indicator Dashboard*. Women Count Data Hub.

# 1. KEY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.1. ADDRESSING THE MULTIFACETED NATURE OF WOMEN'S POVERTY

### SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EMPLOYMENT

Participants shared plans to increase support for mothers and women with disabled children through social protection programmes. They noted efforts to eradicate corruption, child poverty and violence against women through the provision of aid targeting families and the adoption of new legal frameworks targeting gender-based violence. Other initiatives include ensuring decent work conditions for women, including measures such as expanded access to nurseries and fostering female entrepreneurship. Challenges remain in ensuring the effective implementation of social protection programmes, addressing cultural barriers to women's employment, and combating violence against women, which often hinders their participation in the workforce.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To strengthen the enforcement of social protection programmes to ensure equitable access for women.
- To implement comprehensive measures to address cultural norms and practices that hinder women's employment.
- To enhance efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women through multi-sectoral approaches.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Participants shared efforts to enhance women's access to quality education and vocational training opportunities. Resource centres have been established to provide information and support for women to start their own entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, associations of women entrepreneurs and rural women have been formed to promote their economic empowerment through skills-development and capacity-building. Challenges include addressing barriers to education and training for women, particularly in rural areas, as well as overcoming gender disparities in access to vocational programmes, and ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of training initiatives in meeting market demand.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To expand access to quality education and vocational training programmes for women, with a focus on reaching marginalized populations.
- To strengthen partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies and private sector entities to develop tailored training programmes that meet the needs of women entrepreneurs.
- To integrate gender-sensitive approaches into curriculum development and teaching methodologies to promote gender equality in education and training.



## DEVELOPMENT OF NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Progress is underway to develop normative frameworks, formulate proper taxation policies and reduce unpaid labour, as noted by all governmental representatives. Speakers introduced initiatives to develop digital tools, such as the family digital card, to improve access to social services and identify families below the poverty line. Challenges remain in ensuring the effective utilization of digital tools among vulnerable populations, addressing regulatory barriers to digitalization and minimizing the digital divide, particularly in rural areas.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To enhance digital literacy programmes targeting vulnerable populations, including women in rural areas.
- To streamline regulatory frameworks and facilitate the adoption of digital tools for social service-delivery.
- To invest in infrastructure and connectivity to bridge the digital divide in underserved regions.

## REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

Participants highlighted regional integration as a key strategy to tackle women's poverty. Efforts are focused on sharing the experiences and learning from other countries to collectively address common challenges, emphasizing collaboration around joint projects and financial support for women in rural areas. Challenges include fostering effective collaboration among diverse stakeholders, overcoming political and institutional barriers to regional integration, and ensuring the equitable distribution of resources across regions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To foster cross-border cooperation and knowledge-sharing through regional platforms and initiatives.
- To establish mechanisms for joint project funding and resource allocation to address regional disparities.
- To promote inclusive decision-making processes that engage diverse stakeholders from across the region.

## 1.2. MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN FINANCING AND INVESTMENT SCHEMES

### GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Participants noted progress in integrating gender considerations into budgeting processes. However, challenges persist in finalizing and implementing legislative frameworks. By mandating gender-responsive budgeting and enshrining gender equality principles into budget laws, countries have taken significant steps to ensure that policy objectives are aligned with gender equality goals. Progress has been incremental, with ongoing work towards aligning strategic planning with budget allocation. Challenges remain regarding the insufficient coverage of gender-related objectives in budget allocations and the limited awareness and understanding of gender-responsive budgeting principles among policymakers and stakeholders.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To strengthen efforts to incorporate gender analysis systematically into budgeting processes.
- To enhance capacity-building initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of gender-responsive budgeting principles.
- To ensure adequate resource allocation to support the effective implementation of gender equality goals in budgetary decisions.

## INTERSECTIONAL POLICY PLANNING

Governments have increasingly recognized the importance of integrating gender perspectives into their decision-making processes. Intersectional approaches to policy planning are gaining recognition, but its implementation remains challenging. Speakers shared efforts to address gender disparities within broader policy frameworks, yet gaps persist in translating policies into tangible outcomes for marginalized groups such as elderly women, women with disabilities and women with young children. Participants noted challenges in collecting and analysing relevant data to inform intersectional policy planning and decision-making. They also noted resistance from various stakeholders in addressing the multiple dimensions of identity and inequality within policy frameworks.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To prioritize intersectional approaches in policy development and implementation to address the diverse needs of marginalized communities.
- To improve data collection and analysis to better understand intersecting forms of discrimination.
- To foster collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders to ensure inclusive policy responses that address intersecting inequalities effectively.



## GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Participants noted progress in the adoption of policies aimed at elevating women and girls from poverty and promoting investments for gender equality. Notable efforts to strengthen legal protections and promote gender-sensitive legislation were shared, yet challenges persist in translating legal mandates into practical outcomes. For example, participants shared concerns about the inconsistent enforcement of gender-sensitive legislation and legal protections. They also noted the limited access to justice and redress for women experiencing discrimination and rights violations, as well as resistance to reforming discriminatory laws and practices that perpetuate gender inequality.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To strengthen enforcement mechanisms and ensure accountability for gender-sensitive legislation at all levels of governance.
- To enhance access to legal aid and support services for women experiencing discrimination and rights violations.
- To advocate for legislative reforms to address systemic barriers to gender equality and promote women's rights effectively.

This outcome document aims to encourage national delegations and partners to prioritize the presentation and defense of its findings at CSW68. By articulating the region's commitments, recommendations and innovative strategies, stakeholders can amplify their voices on the global stage, advancing the agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Beyond CSW68, this document represents a testament to the shared resolve of participating countries and stakeholders to translate these commitments into tangible actions in line with the priority theme.

This document was developed with the support of the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women, its Executive Board or United Nations Member States.