



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties*

Mongolia

Part one. Introduction

Mongolia is located in the heart of Central Asia and covers an area of 1.6 million square kilometres. The country is bordered by the Russian Federation and China. Its climate is extreme continental, with four seasons. Total population is 2.3 million. Population density is sparse, 15 inhabitants per 1,000 hectares, with 54.7 per cent of the population living in urban areas and 45.3 per cent in rural areas.

As a result of the liberation movement of the Mongolian people in 1911 and the victory of the people's revolution in 1921, Mongolia won independence, and a new period of revival and development started.

Mongolia is a unitary State, administratively divided into the capital and 21 *aimaks*, or provinces. Mongolia acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981. It submitted its second report in 1986. On 31 January 1990 that report was considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women. During the seven years since then, the political, social, and economic situation of Mongolia has radically changed.

As a result of democratic changes in 1990, the

confident of having a better life and of the country's advancements through creative work.

Social and economic situation

Until the beginning of 1990, the economy of Mongolia was highly dependent on imports and financial assistance from the former Soviet Union. Dismantling of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) bloc and the cessation of funds from the Russian Federation placed Mongolia in an extremely difficult economic situation. The breakdown

social guarantees for children and youth and creating a favourable environment for their education and development.

The National Action Programme on Child Development until 2000 and the National Programme on Improving the Status of Women were adopted and are being implemented by the Government.

The current status of Mongolian women

Women account for 50.4 per cent of the total population; 54.9 per cent live in cities and towns, and 43.2 per cent in provinces. Girls of 0-15 years make up 43.2 per cent of the total; women of 16-54, 47.4 per cent; and women above 55, 9.4 per cent.

According to figures of the State Statistical Office released in June 1996, women accounted for 48.9 per cent of the able-bodied population and 49.2 per cent of the labour force. They constituted 63.9 per cent of employees working in the educational sector, 67.1 per cent of health and social welfare workers, 41.7 per cent of industrial workers, 37.0 per cent of construction workers, 55.9-64.7 per cent of those engaged in trade, public services, hotels, and catering, 45.9 per cent of those employed in agriculture and animal hunting, 32.0 per cent of transportation and communication employees, 52.4 per cent of those in the financial sector, 37.9 per cent of State civil servants in the domain of public administration and insurance, and 45.5 per cent of those engaged in commercial and population services.

In response to structural adjustment, major changes in the pattern of women's employment have become apparent. In the past few years the number of women employed in the private sector has increased 4.3 times and those running small individual business, 5.8 times. According to a survey conducted by the Union of Private Owners in 1996, 26.6 per cent of private companies were led by women, an increase of 3.3 per cent over 1993 figures.

Women make up 43.1 per cent of those employed in research institutions. Out of 100 secondary schoolchildren, 54 pupils are girls and 46 are boys. Out of 100 secondary schoolteachers, 75 are women and 25 are men. Of 100 directors and vice-directors of secondary schools, 39 are women and 61 are men.

The Government of Mongolia concludes that the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are being observed in its country.

As a result of democratic developments and reforms, the legislative base for guaranteeing justice, human rights and freedom has expanded in scope. The main laws governing social, economic and legal relations have been adopted. All this has brought about a new understanding of the notion of equal rights for men and women. Free choice, pluralism and transparency, which are conducive to ensuring human rights, have already been established in Mongolian society. Women are becoming more active in protecting their rights and well-being.

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skills. They carry out various seminars, discussions on household income-generation, creation of new jobs etc. By supporting such activities, they contribute greatly to the implementation of governmental policy and decisions. Moreover, they lobby the Government on topical issues relating to women, family and society as a whole.

The first Congress on Women's Non-governmental Organizations, initiated by the Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS) was held in October 1996. Organization of the first national congress of women's non-governmental organizations in October 1996, at the initiative of the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, was an important catalyst for activating public participation, in particular, involvement of women themselves, and mobilization of cooperation between governmental agencies concerned and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the National Program on Improving the Status of Women.

Moreover, project activities carried out with the financial assistance of the Government of Australia by the Women's Information Research Centre and the Centre against Violence, which were established jointly by the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, Women for Social Progress Movement, and Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association, are rightfully appreciated by women and contribute enormously to the implementation of the Government's policy.

Information and research are crucial for strengthening the existing national mechanism.

The National Statistical Office regularly releases figures on about 40 indicators relating to women, such as health, reproductive status, mortality rate, labour resources, education, coverage by social insurance and safety nets, family and children.

However, these indicators cannot satisfy the need for contemporary gender information and research. Thus, a number of important indicators are not compiled by sex (e.g. differences in wages, bank loans, time spent at the workplace and remunerated by salary and time invested in housework, hence not rewarded in monetary terms). The Government of Mongolia intends to take concrete measures to establish specialized research services and networks mandated with collecting and processing gender information and surveys, and to strengthening further the existing Women's Information and Research Centre.

Participation of women in decision-making

The declining role of women at the higher echelons of political and economic leadership implies that the objectives formulated in the Nairobi Declaration on improving the status of women worldwide are not properly achieved in Mongolia. It is especially unfair, given the education level of Mongolian women, and it may be regarded as an underestimation of their potential contribution to the country's progress and development. On the other hand, it should be admitted that women themselves lack initiative. In light of this, increasing women's participation in decision-making is perceived as one of the key objectives in the advancement of women nationwide.

At present, 9.2 per cent of MPs are women, which shows a threefold reduction compared to the previous parliament. No woman holds a ministerial portfolio; there are no women State secretaries, ambassadors or provincial governors. Women account for 7.5 per cent of heads of ministerial departments and divisions. Women make up 17.6 per cent of the Justices of the Supreme Court, 42 per cent of provincial and city judges, 63.8 per cent of *soum* and district judges. These figures show that in the area of administration of justice, the percentage of women decreases as the level of decision-making goes up.

Our country hopes to increase the percentage of women in parliament and government in the near

employment, medical service, pension and benefits,
freedom of choosing the place of residence,

on Advocacy, and Law on Free Press and Information. The Subcommittee on Human Rights operations within the structure of the State Great Hural. Additional measures for furthering the national mechanisms for human rights will be taken in the future. All will be crucial for insuring compliance with CEDAW provisions at the national level.

Policy and action for promoting women's employment

In implementing its policy on reducing unemployment, the Government of Mongolia supports the employment of women by giving priority to granting them bank loans and assisting them in self-employment.

During the past four years the Government has adopted several major resolutions for ameliorating employment and relieving unemployment. The national programme on unemployment alleviation reflects the gamut of specific activities being implemented.

The Government takes measures to involve women widely in the project activities and training, focusing on the creation of workplaces and income generation schemes, which are being administered in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, UNDP and UNFPA.

In the period 1992-1995 soft loans totalling 160 million tugriks were dis

Article 6 under chapter I, “General provisions”, of the Labour Code reads “It is prohibited to make any direct or indirect distinction, exclusion or preference in labour relations on account of social origin and status, race, colour, national extraction, sex, religion, property status or political opinion”, which is further secured by other relevant laws and legislation. There is a special chapter “Employment of women and young persons” in the Labour Code which contains concrete provisions on ensuring and protecting the employment rights of pregnant women, women with infants, single mothers, or fathers who have children under 16 years.

The Law on Transferring to a Five-day Working Week was adopted on 4 December 1997 by the State Great Hural, and all economical, business entities and organizations began to follow the law, starting from 1 January 1998. This law is of great importance for boosting human development, by freeing up leisure time for citizens which may be invested in developing mental and physical abilities, protecting health, broadening knowledge, and bringing up children.

With a view to reflecting in legislation changes emerging in multiparty labour relations in connection with the transition to market relations, a draft package of laws on labour has been elaborated by the Government and submitted to the State Great Hural.

The laws and regulations of Mongolia do not contain any provisions having the effect of differentiating wages on the basis of sex; hence, it may be inferred that the right to equal pay for equal work is practised without any discrimination.

But differences in the salaries of men and women do exist, due to the features and difficulty of their

implemented. In the course of the seminar, participants were acquainted with the experience and activities of

Social Progress Movement, Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association etc.

Two years have elapsed since the opening of Mother Oulen, a private college for women. Its purpose is to prepare activists for women organizations and diligent housewives.

There are many topical issues that need resolution if the level of women's education is to be upgraded and their right to education is to be exercised to the fullest.

In recent years there have been about 100,000 school drop-outs, of which approximately 40 per cent are girls. Reductions in the number of childcare institutions and kindergartens and the loss of cheap social care have adversely affected the capacities of women to continue their education. Household and cultural services for facilitating the workload of women herders are insufficient. With the introduction of tuition fees for professional schooling in 1992, children from poor households and single parent families have been facing difficulties in acquiring professional educations.

Activities to assist in updating the professional knowledge of women who have been on extended leave in order to provide childcare or look after aged parents or ill family members and in providing technical training for young women, in line with both government and non-governmental organizations, are next to non-existent.

All the above-mentioned obstacles and shortcomings are expected to be overcome with the achievement of objectives specified in the Government's action programme, the national programmes on child development and on poverty alleviation.

In view of this, developing the educational sector, creating a system that enables everyone to get an education according to his or her talent, interest and capability, improving the material bases of schools and kindergartens, eliminating school drop-outs by perfecting informal education, and widening study opportunities for men and women alike are the needs of the hour.

Poverty alleviation

During the past seven years of transition to market relations, poverty has become apparent, with a

rise in unemployment, a decline in the real income of the population and depreciation of the standard of living. It has been aggravated by a number of negative social phenomena, such as the deterioration in the health of poor people due to poor nutrition, school leaving caused by a disruption in the normal functioning of educational and cultural establishments, and an increase in crime, and in the moral decay of adults, resulting in more and various forms of violence.

A nationwide survey conducted in 1997 revealed that 25.2 per cent of the population lived in poverty. Of all the households hit by poverty and unemployment, 9.5 per cent were families led by women, with a large number of children; 47.5 per cent of the poor were children aged 0-16 and 10.9 per cent were elderly. Of the poor, 48.9 per cent were discovered to be extremely impoverished.

The Law on Pensions was amended in 1990 with a provision allowing mothers with four or more children to "retire", irrespective of their age. Although the law provides for retirement at "one's own request", in reality this clause has become an excuse for dismissing women under the pretext of staff reduction. About 50,000 women affected by this activity have slipped into poverty.

In addition, removing pregnancy and maternity benefits from a social insurance scheme and placing them under the Law on Social Care at a level below the minimum standard of living was a major step backward from the previous arrangement. The new Government is now working on rectifying these mistakes committed by the former Government.

In its action programme the Government set a target to ensure twofold reduction in the current poverty rate by the year 2000 by increasing employment and economic growth. To that end, a series of consecutive measures are being taken.

Implementation of the national programme on poverty alleviation constitutes one of the main goals of a.3(o).1(m.2.2

project Social care for extremely poor single mothers

The above priorities are still valid. The Law on

A training of trainers for conducting educational

where women only can be the victim. It is disgusting

In future it is necessary to study domestic violence as a type of legal offence, to train professionals to conduct such studies, to perfect the data collection, to organize training for members of the legal profession, to mobilize all concerned organizations — i.e., law enforcement agencies, cultural and educational institutions — to conduct an enlightenment campaign for boys and girls on ethics, and to fight alcoholism. One of the main ways of preventing domestic violence should be increasing public awareness — in particular, the knowledge of girls and women on self-defence. In this regard, non-governmental organizations such as the Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association and the Centre for Child's Rights display great enthusiasm. Still more needs to be done to help women, families and children affected by domestic violence.

Women and households, traditional approach and experience

Provisions of the Convention on the prohibition of discrimination against women and assurance of their equal rights in entering into marriage and in family relations are being observed in Mongolia on the basis of pertinent laws. The country acceded to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages in 1991.

Family law in Mongolia provides for marriages based on free consent and establishes 18 years as the minimum age. It guarantees the right of spouses to common ownership of property that has been acquired in marriage, their equal parental and spousal rights and duties before the family and children.

As of 1996, there were 518,000 households, with an average of 4.3 members in each. If one looks at the rate of marriage since 1990, a descending trend becomes apparent. In 1992, 18,323 couples registered their marriage; in 1994 the number reached only 15,922, and in 1996 it again dropped, to 14,200. As far as the rate of divorce is concerned, in the period 1990-1994 there had been a tendency towards reduction. Thus, in 1992, 984 divorces were registered; in 1994, there were 736. However, in the past two years, divorces have been increasing: in 1995 and 1996 there were 901 and 908, respectively. Eighty-nine per cent of divorced couples are located in urban areas; 78.6 per cent of divorces are said to have been caused by incompatibility of the partners, and 15.1 per cent by the

excessive consumption of alcohol. The increasing number of single-mother families has already become an issue for the public attention.

In reality, many couples practice late registration of their marriages. Thus, there are many couples living together for from two to three years without a marriage certificate. At the same time there are many couples which divorced without registering their divorce. It is, therefore, necessary to improve the citizens' status registration.

In the state policy document on demography and the national programme on improving the status of women, there have been put forward a cluster of objectives to pursue activities aimed at supporting the family well-being, developing a Mongolian family and household study, passing on to the younger generation respect for national traditions, preserving the genetic pool of Mongolians, and preparing children for future independent life, labour, and equal participation of men and women in family.

To date, a revised draft family law has been submitted to the State Great Hural. Revisions affect mainly the areas of family property regulation, children's upbringing, and parental responsibility.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with women, youth and children carry out many activities aimed not only at preserving humane traditions practised in Mongolian families and inherited from our ancestors, including reverence and care of parents, support for the poor, and respect for elderly and pregnant women, but also at enriching them in new settings and passing them on to future generations.