

## The Systemic crisis' impact on women: sub regional perspectives

# The Impact of the Crisis on Women in Central Asia

By Nurgul Djanaeva<sup>1</sup>

### Preamble

This series of briefs entitled *The crisis' impact on women's rights*, published by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), includes sub-regional perspectives on the impacts seen to date of the current crisis on women and women's rights as well as those likely to come. These sub-regional analyses are a key input from women activists and analysts to inform development debates and decisions that are being made to respond to the crisis. The series also includes a cross-regional and global analysis.

We know that women are at the center of the fallout from the current crisis, which itself combines interlocking crises: a global economic recession, the devastating effects of climate change, and a deepening food and energy crisis. All of this is compounding the increasing poverty and inequality in different parts of the world, as well as the impacts of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. At the same time, traditional power relations among international players are shifting, the so-called 'middle income countries' with the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) assuming greater power (Brazil and China have become creditors of the United States, and important investors in the International Monetary Fund, and all of them hold some of the most important sources of reserves of the world). The current situation, a result of aggressive free-market capitalism pursued in the past decades, calls into sharp question dominant—and even many of the so-called alternative—models for development. The crisis is not new for most of the developing countries that have struggled with crises in the 70's, 80's, 90's and beginning of 2000's. This crisis, however, reached global proportions when it impacted hegemonic

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economies and their role in global arenas and put in evidence the interconnectedness of the diverse realities of countries in this globalized world.

This systemic crisis poses a huge challenge for governments, donors and every development practitioner, activist and policy-maker to reinvent the system in the long term, and reduce the negative impacts in the short and medium terms. In this sense, as many have said, the crisis also represents a historic opportunity to be bold, creative and attempt to right the wrongs of neoliberal development. As the crisis is now a driving force behind many development choices and processes (from the global to the local), and will shape approaches to development for years to come, the role of women and gender equality as a central goal must not be further overlooked. This is not simply because women are among those most negatively impacted by these crises, but also because they are key development players in most communities around the world, as well as relevant and vital actors in proposing effective approaches to mitigate the impacts of the crisis and expand the fulfillment of human rights, environmental sustainability and development commitments around the world. The exclusion of women, gender equality and women's rights as central to these processes is unacceptable and should be used as an indicator of the seriousness of proposed responses.

In preparation for the United Nations (UN) High Level Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development (New York from June 24th to 26th 2009), several women's rights groups expressed their concerns about the impacts of the crisis on women's lives<sup>2</sup> and their rights and the limitations of the actual responses to the crisis implemented or proposed so far. The Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, of which AWID is a member, has been very active and committed to promoting the UN's pivotal role as the legitimate space to address the crisis from a truly inclusive multilateral perspective.<sup>3</sup>

AWID is committed to engaging with and supporting collective initiatives to influence this process, as well as building alliances with actors from other social movements. Solutions that have been defined by the same actors who produced this financial and economic meltdown are unacceptable. Responses to the crisis must emerge from broad processes where both government and civil society engage in dialogue that is both enriching and makes decision-making more responsive to people's needs and the fulfillment of human rights. Both civil society and governments from all countries of the world, including low-income countries, should be central actors included in this global policy dialogue process. Multilateral venues under the UN are the most inclusive and balanced spaces existing in the international system, and the only spaces with clear mechanisms for the participation of developing countries and civil society actors.

Whatever the proposals and responses that emerge from such high level processes - they must be informed by analysis on how these trends are playing out in communities and how the impacts are differentiated among women and men and across different sectors. Allocation of resources for these responses must also be implemented in a way that takes into account the

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<sup>2</sup> See the statement: The G20 committed to save the global economy at the cost of women, November 17, 2008, 11th AWID International Forum, from [http://www.awid.org/eng/Enjeux-et-Analyses/Library/LE-G20-DECIDE-A-SAUVER-L-ECONOMIE-MONDIALE-AUX-DEPENS-DES-FEMMES/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.awid.org/eng/Enjeux-et-Analyses/Library/LE-G20-DECIDE-A-SAUVER-L-ECONOMIE-MONDIALE-AUX-DEPENS-DES-FEMMES/(language)/eng-GB)

<sup>3</sup> Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, Statement from the Second Women's Consultation convened by the WWG on FfD in New York from April 24-26, 2009 from <http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-News/A-call-for-structural-sustainable-gender-equitable-and-rights-based-responses-to-the-global-financial-and-economic-crisis>



gender dynamics at play, and ensures that key social development sectors, such as health or education, are not the ones to be defunded for the sake of economic growth and financial stability. The very social development achievements that have been made in the last two decades, as limited as they are, are currently at stake, if the focus of responses to the crisis is only economic growth and a return to 'business as usual'. In this sense, women's rights and gender equality commitments made by governments and other actors, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, the Millennium Development Goals must not be trade-offs in the definition of responses to the crisis.

It is in that spirit, that the authors of the briefs included in this series accepted the challenge to explore answers to the following questions:

- Considering the diversity of situations in which women live, what are the main challenges for women in your sub-region in the context of the current crisis?
- Can you identify concrete actions or initiatives (responses to the crisis) that have already had either negative and/or positive impacts on women's lives?
- Are women's groups in your region experiencing increased discrimination as a direct or indirect result of the financial crisis?
- If stimulus packages are not inclusive of human rights and gender equality perspectives then are there any alternatives so that these packages are reshaped in order to include gender and rights dimensions?
- If the governments of the region/sub region (or regional bodies) have not set up any stimulus packages or measures yet: what do you expect will be the impact of not tackling the crisis in a timely way at the national and regional level?
- What are potential future impacts on women in your region in the context of a global recession? Which are the most outstanding weaknesses of the region in regards to the economic crisis?
- The UN Stiglitz Commission<sup>4</sup> and the G20 are trying to identify international initiatives to reduce the impact of the crisis on development. Do you think these global initiatives consider challenges confronted by women, and how to help women in your region face the crisis?

The sub-regional analyses presented in this Series are an initial attempt to contribute to identifying challenges, potential responses and proposals from a women's rights perspective, that builds on the different realities and impacts the crisis is having on different regions of the world. The analyses also aim to contribute to grounding responses to the crisis in gender equality and women's rights and promoting a profound transformation for a more inclusive and democratic international system. Various regions raised common areas of concern that reflect common challenges for women's rights around the world.

A lack of gender equality perspectives in the stimulus packages or policy responses to the crisis at the national level seems to be commonplace, as well as how women are particularly affected because of their strong participation in the informal economy, and the non-recognition of their unpaid and reproductive work, as well as the high levels of discrimination and inequality they

<sup>4</sup> See the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development Statements on the Stiglitz Commission from [http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Women-s-Working-Group-on-FFD-Contributions-to-the-Stiglitz-Commission/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Women-s-Working-Group-on-FFD-Contributions-to-the-Stiglitz-Commission/(language)/eng-GB) and the Stiglitz Recommendations from <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=cfr>

face. Amongst other important issues raised, these common findings call for a new understanding of the role of the state and how it affects women in particular through the care economy (in relation to the key reproductive roles that women play which sustain the current economic system at their peril), but also in terms of advancing the decent work agenda. When the role of the state was reduced, several of the social functions previously performed by the state - healthcare, caretaking and education - were absorbed by women across regions, usually in addition to their paid work. Thus, women have disproportionately shouldered the burden of the consequences of state reduction, particularly as they relate to the fulfillment of economic and social rights (such as housing, health and education).<sup>5</sup>

If a post-neoliberalism era is emerging, the new international system should build on community, national, regional and global experiences of development actors, and on historic women's rights agendas. These longstanding struggles should be reinterpreted and communicated broadly to promote alternative thinking around responses to the crisis.

Today we call for holistic responses to the systemic crisis. In doing so, our own efforts (amongst women's movements and organizations) for building alternative discourses and influencing the international system must be grounded in different kinds of knowledge (informal and formal). Our alternative discourse should also be based on a holistic/cross-cutting approach, ensuring full space for the voices of the most excluded groups.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE STRATEGY MEETING: To follow-up efforts on Aid Effectiveness, gender equality and the impact of the crisis on women, 6-7 August 2009, New York, Edited by Cecilia Alemany (AWID).

<sup>6</sup> HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE STRATEGY MEETING: To follow-up efforts on Aid Effectiveness, gender equality and the impact of the crisis on women, 6-7 August 2009, New York, Edited by Cecilia Alemany (AWID).



The current global crisis is bringing economic and financial burden to working class women and rural women's lives in Central Asia, which were and still are under tremendous impact of the previous crisis. Cut in trade, leading to cut of textile production with majority female employees, reduction of remittance is leading to increase of their job insecurity, significant reduction of women's income, increase of their vulnerability to greater gender discrimination, to reduction in access to education and health services. Women entrepreneurs have

fewer opportunities to get access to financial resources.

In the last two decades, Central Asia<sup>7</sup> has undergone two major economic processes: transitioning to a market economy and joining the global economic system. From 2005-2007 – before the global crisis began - Central Asia's development processes were just beginning to see positive gains. However, the crisis has proven development progress to be fragile and unstable.

Main Macroeconomic Indicators of Central Asia:<sup>8</sup> GDP for 2007 and 2008 as a percentage of the previous year, and, for 2009, as a percentage of the corresponding period of the previous year in:

- Kazakhstan: 2007/108.9; 2008/102.4<sup>9</sup>; 2009 (January-March)/95.5
- Uzbekistan: 2007/109.5; 2008/109; 2009 (January-March)/107.9
- Tajikistan: 2007/107.8; 2008/107.9; 2009 (January-March)/103.5
- Kyrgyzstan: 2007/108.5; 2008/107.6; 2009 (January-March)/100.2

Gender inequality and sexism is deeply rooted in current economic structures and relations. The crisis has only worsened women's positions, including further economic disempowerment. Women of Central Asia and suffered unequal access to economic and financial resources and decision-making with more than 85% of the wealth in Central Asian countries owned by men.

The crisis has affected men and women differently: some women have lost their jobs, while some have had their salaries lowered, some lost profits. Amongst the most vulnerable groups are working class women and rural women from poor families; women working in education and healthcare systems; women owning small and medium textile enterprises; women working for export-oriented industries;

women in the informal economy; and non-working women in households dependent on remittances.

The specific losses and possible gains from the global crisis for women are not visible for decision-makers; women's realities vis-à-vis the crisis remain absent in the major state documents of Central Asian countries. Declarative inclusion of women's perspectives in some state economic plans are more of a pleasing token than a substantive consideration that would have substantive considerations that lead to some relief from the crisis'

<sup>7</sup> Central Asia is understood to be comprised of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

<sup>8</sup> Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS. "Main Macroeconomic indicators of the Commonwealth countries."

burden on women's lives in Central Asia, and to strengthening women's economic contribution to GDP.

Women experience the financial, economic and social impacts of the crisis at the macro, micro and personal levels. Growing budget deficits and falling tax revenues have placed spending in social sectors at risk. Salaries in sectors disproportionately populated by women (education, healthcare, social services) are the lowest.<sup>9</sup> Official data has also shown a tremendous decline in production in the textile and sewing industry in Kyrgyzstan, an industry where women represent 90% of workers.<sup>10</sup> In June 2009, for example, production comprised only 59.8% of the volume in June 2008.<sup>11</sup>

Growing international trade during the last decade has provided entrepreneurial opportunities for women in Central Asia; however, the current crisis has diminished these opportunities. Since the beginning of 2009, the largest drop in entrepreneurial opportunities for women took place in export volume.<sup>12</sup> This drop disproportionately affected women, as they are the majority of those involved in the sewing industry, an industry in which 95% of that which is produced is exported.

The increase in food prices has led to growing malnutrition and health deterioration. Moreover, a reduction in remittance levels has led to reduced spending in poor households. Women will continue to compensate for these losses with their own (unpaid) labor and, often, losses of and/or in their careers. These trends have resulted in greater income insecurity and increased burdens of family care. Prior to the crisis, women were earning 1.6 times less than men in Kyrgyzstan,<sup>13</sup> spent 3.6 times more time on household unpaid work and two times more time taking care of children.<sup>14</sup> In the context of the crisis, this burden will only increase.

The crisis is also undermining women's role as

economic development agents. For example, women in Kyrgyzstan developed a robust textile industry and turned it into a serious income generating activity, contributing significantly to GDP. However, their economic contribution is yet to be fully counted or recognized, as shown by their lack of involvement in decision-making processes. Furthermore, when the crisis began, women were not assisted properly nor were they offered a stimulus package. Women leaders in business created jobs for other women; however, development strategies in Central Asia have failed to use this crisis as an opportunity to recognize these contributions or balance ownership relations. In this vein, an increase of soft loans for businesses - from the newly established state funds<sup>15</sup> - does not ensure that the loan benefits will befall women on the same footing as men. Stimulus monies disproportionately benefit men, as men are the majority of business owners and comprise the majority of individuals in the priority areas of business support: construction and agriculture. Women, on the other hand, who are disproportionately represented in the textile industry (an industry that is not a priority), receive far less support. There have been a few positive steps, however, including the 2009-2011 development strategy in which there is a "gender equality achievement policy" section that ensures the promotion of a number of women assigned to professional training, to paid public jobs, and

<sup>9</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Socio-economic status of Kyrgyz Republic*. p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic*, p.27.

<sup>11</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Socio-economic status of Kyrgyz Republic*. p.79

<sup>12</sup> Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS. "Main Macroeconomic indicators of the Commonwealth countries."

<sup>13</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic*, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic*, p.114.

<sup>15</sup> Akylbek, Zhaparov. "Oproverzhenie ministra ekonomicheskogo razvitiya i trgovli KR Akylbeka Zhaparova na pervyi otchet Ob'yedinennoi Evraziiskoi Seti."



those who receive microcredit.<sup>16</sup>

As a priority area to mitigate the impact of the global crisis, the Uzbek State has supported an employment creation agenda.<sup>17</sup> During the last year, 534,600 new jobs were created, 328,000 of them in rural areas, and 52,000 in the outwork sphere in cooperation with enterprises.<sup>18</sup> As a 2009 report from Uzbekistan on BFPA states, “during 2008, upon agreement with big industrial enterprises, 97,800 working places were opened as part of [a] development program of informal work [in] homes.”

A general increase in pension amount is another example of a positive reaction to the crisis: in Kyrgyzstan in 2009 it (an increase) comprised 50% in comparison the 2008 pension amount.<sup>19</sup> The majority of retired people are women; hence, this policy/state action is beneficial to women.

The global crisis has led to an increase in unemployment figures amongst women, particularly in the export processing textile industry where the volume of production has sufficiently reduced. Women constitute up to 90% of workers in this industry and are thus particularly disadvantaged. Rather than providing a stimulus to assist the export producing textile industry, a new and harder taxing scheme for sewing and textile enterprises was introduced in January-February 2009 in Kyrgyzstan. This led to bigger losses, with the reduction of the textile industry volume of production, reaching 42%.<sup>20</sup> After this new tax was canceled, this figure decreased again to 37% in June 2009. The immediate state plan in reaction to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan is neglecting the most basic needs of the sewing industry.

Women in Central Asia are not a priority concern for the state: they are neither thought of as victims nor as beneficiaries; they are simply not factored in. This conclusion is based not only on a review of government documents, but on numerous interviews with high-level state officials. No concrete gender-disaggre-

gated data is available and, as such, there is no database to inform social and economic policies in support of primarily working-class women and women’s businesses.

The state program of entrepreneurship development in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2009-2011 is not sensitive to women’s needs. Specifically, it does not identify any steps that recognize the unique impact of the crisis on women. It also fails to mention support to the textile industry, where women are losing jobs in disproportionate numbers and need greater support.

According to social research conducted in Kyrgyzstan, 48% of the respondents assessed their economic situation as significantly worsened in comparison with last year.<sup>21</sup> One third of the population’s representatives noted that the situation became much worse. Only one third of the respondents stated that the economic situation in their households has improved.<sup>22</sup> What does this mean for women? Women face greater income insecurity and increased burdens of family care. As Batken male farmers state: “Nobody in our village buy bread. It is expensive. All bake bread themselves. Women usually bake a lot of bread during a day. Approximately three-four days family eats this bread, and then again women bake.” Women’s unpaid social reproduction work is increasing in the context of the crisis, as they face – amongst other challenges - limited access to child care facilities: only 17% of

<sup>16</sup> “Kyrgyzstan. Information on implementation of the BPFA+15.” *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*.

<sup>17</sup> “The basic results of social and economic development in January-March 2009.” *State Committee on Statistics of Uzbekistan*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Akylbek, Zhaparov. “Oproverzhenie ministra ekonomicheskogo razvitiya i torgovli KR Akylbeka Zhaparova na pervyi otchet Ob’yedinennoi Evraziiskoi Seti.”

<sup>20</sup> Shamshiev, Nasiridin. “Interview with Head of the Real Sector Department of Ministry of Trade and Economic Development of Kyrgyz Republic.”

<sup>21</sup> Multi sector analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on Kyrgyzstan, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Assessment of the quality of the State services, provided to population, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009.

respondents noted the existence of kindergartens in their villages and 6.4% noted the existence of pre-kindergartens.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, women have less chance than men to participate in their own income generation activities.

According to UNDP, in Central Asia, hunger reduction is being threatened by the crisis.<sup>24</sup>

For example, the research of El-Pikir has found that<sup>25</sup> during the last 12 months (this being written in July of 2009), poor families in Kyrgyzstan faced a consistent lack of food. In March 2009, 80% of households that participated in the research noted that they had problems with lack of food.<sup>26</sup> It is also noted that 12% of boys in country households and 14.5% of girls often missed schools.<sup>27</sup>

**Forecast of the growth rates of consumer price index**  
(current prices as a percentage of the previous year as of the beginning of October 2008)<sup>28</sup>

	2008	2009
Kazakhstan	118-119	110
Kyrgyzstan	125	113
Tajikistan	128	115
Uzbekistan	112	110-112

Migration and remittance factors are also impacting the quality of life for women in Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example, remittance levels grew until 2008 and then began to decline: Tajikistan's banks reported that "already in the fourth quarter of 2008 remittances dropped by 50%."<sup>29</sup> The reduction of remittance levels in 2008 and 2009 has had negative consequences for poor families: in Kyrgyzstan, 47% of families with labor migrants stated that they experienced a simple decrease in remittances, 13% reported a substantial decrease and 26% reported a complete halting of remittances<sup>30</sup> after the start of the economic crisis. Remittances comprise higher than 30% of the annual budget of poor families.<sup>31</sup>

Inflation of local currency in 2009 also decreased the quality of women's lives. The rate of Kazakhstan tenge per one US dollar jumped from 121.47 in January 2009 to 150.44 in May 2009. Similarly, during the same period, the

rate of Tajikistan somoni per one US dollar jumped from 3.67 to 4.374. In Kyrgyzstan, the rate went from 40.338 soms for one US dollar to 43.256.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Multi sector analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on Kyrgyzstan, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009

<sup>24</sup> "Poverty on the Rise in CIS Countries as Global Economic Crisis Bites." United Nations Development Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>25</sup> Multi sector analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on Kyrgyzstan, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Multi sector analysis of the impact of the economic crisis on Kyrgyzstan, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009

<sup>27</sup> Assessment of the quality of the State services, provided to population, UNDP, Elpikir research, 2009

<sup>28</sup> "Main Macroeconomic indicators of the Commonwealth countries." *Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS.*

<sup>29</sup> Marat, Erica. "Labor migration in Central Asia: Implications of the Global Economic Crisis." *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program*, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Elpikir research, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Elpikir research, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> "Main Macroeconomic indicators of the Commonwealth countries." *Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS.*





A decrease in trade/demand for exports has led to the reduction of textile production. As this industry is dominated by women, the reduction is disproportionately impacting women, including through increased job insecurity, a significant reduction in income, increased vulnerability to greater gender discrimination and a reduction in access to education and health services. In the context of the global crisis, external trade turnover in Kyrgyzstan from January-February 2009 decreased by 20.1% in comparison with the same period in the previous year.<sup>33</sup> In the beginning of 2009, one of the biggest wholesale markets in Central Asia - the Dordoi market, located in Bishkek - experienced a huge slowdown with daily standstills and a decrease in sales.

Women entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to gain access to financial resources because – amongst other things - real wealth is concentrated in men's hands. In rural Kyrgyzstan, female heads of farms comprise only 12% of overall farm heads; moreover, more than 90% of arable land,<sup>34</sup> cattle, poultry<sup>35</sup> and agricultural and processing machinery<sup>36</sup> are owned by men. The government has planned to invest in agricultural sectors; who will benefit? Owners – of which the majority are men – will be the primary beneficiaries. A similar situation exists in Kazakhstan, where only 2% of credits were received by women headed farms and, out of 9460 rural micro credits from the “Financial support to agriculture fund,” only 31% went to women.<sup>37</sup>

The total human and social impacts of the crisis will not be known for some time. However, it is clear that a reduction of GDP growth and an overall economic downturn will impact social services. Investments in health will suffer, thus impacting health outcomes, leading to a reduction in access to education and increased malnutrition, amongst other maladies. Shrinking education and job opportunities are leading to an increase in forced early marriages. A consequence of the global crisis in Central Asia may also emerge in the form

of reductions in the state budget for building or rehabilitation of kindergartens. Owing to steady GDP growth in the last three years, it was possible to obtain an increase in state investment into the childcare sector. Due to the global crisis, however, income-generating sectors are losing previous gains. As a result, the quality of and access to health care is likely to deteriorate significantly, obliging women to take on more unpaid care-giving responsibilities. This, of course, also further restricts women's opportunities for paid employment.

The challenges of the global crisis are not being actively discussed by the majority of human rights organizations and are consequently left unaddressed by human right organizations. However, professional associations in the region are raising concerns. For example, the Association of Light Industry Enterprises in Kyrgyzstan is lobbying and leading negotiations on the protection of their rights. They are calling for a sale centre for local sewing products. Major discussions at the regional and international levels remain in headquarters and/or on paper. While the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is not planning to set up any specific programs to target the impact of the crisis (no special funding programs or stimulus packages, for example), neither are they planning on cutting their programs or committed Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) or technical assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

The Kyrgyz State reviewed its strategy in response to the global crisis, but there are no details on final beneficiaries from a gender

<sup>33</sup> National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. 17 July 2009. Web. 20 July 2009. <<http://stat.kg/>>.

<sup>34</sup> Kyrgyz Republic. National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. *Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic*, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.90.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> “Kazakhstan. Information on implementation of the BPPA+15.” *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*.

perspective. There is also a lack of gender disaggregated data in all sectors: the number of women losing their jobs, their incomes, their savings and their homes remains unknown in Central Asia. While “a systematic gender analysis of the current economic crisis is critical for developing viable solutions and upholding human rights standards,”<sup>38</sup> official gender disaggregated data is not available. As a result, states are failing to address women’s impoverishment during the crisis period.

Increase in women’s unemployment - particularly in the textile and trade industry, where women comprise a disproportionate share - has not been calculated or addressed. The inclusion of gender equality as a separate part of the country development strategy (CDS) is certainly a positive step; however, it remains a marginal part of the CDS.

Equal representation and participation of women and men in decision-making is necessary to address social and economic issues in an integrated way. In 2008, the Kyrgyz State created the Coordination Center of Strategic Management with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade as its execution body.<sup>39</sup> Out of its seven participants, none are women.

Another efficient way to address women’s needs in the context of the current global crisis is to lobby for the use of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). In order to have a concrete and detailed understanding of the impact of the crisis - as well as other processes - on women, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of national institutional machineries, as well as line ministries to integrate GRB and gender mainstreaming. One of the ways this could be achieved is by setting up special international, regional and national funds to support women’s economic initiatives and, through this, strengthen women’s capacity to be economic agents. Increasing state expenditures on care giving facilities would also support this end. There is a need for

women to be involved in fiscal processes to ensure that effective and flexible resources support gender equitable growth. Participation of all Central Asian countries in shaping appropriate international responses to the crisis is essential, and women should be equally represented in these spaces.

Among other possible measures to improve women’s position within the crisis is setting up councils – such as an Economic Coordination Council in the IMF, WB, ADB or National Bank - with equal participation by women in business and local authorities. The development of new models of support for the national needs and rights of women – including supporting women’s organizations to strengthen their capacity to hold their governments accountable for commitments related to gender equality and women’s empowerment – is essential. These steps can play a vital role in applying a gender dimension to development programs, reducing the human costs of the global crisis and increasing social security.

<sup>38</sup> “UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women calls on women and men to unite in times of economic crisis.”

<sup>39</sup> Akylbek, Zhaparov. “Oproverzhenie ministra ekonomicheskogo razvitiya i torgovli KR Akylbeka Zhaparova na pervyi otchet Ob’yedinennoi Evraziiskoi Seti.”

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