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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GENDER ISSUES IN EUROPE AND EURASIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The extensive socio-economic transformations of E&E nations over the last decade have differentially affected the women and men of those countries. Earlier studies, most notably UNICEF's MONEE *Women in Transition* research of 1999,¹ reported on the gender impacts of the earlier transition period, and a 2000 E&E study surveyed that and other publications to create a report which was specifically applicable to Bureau concerns.² More recent E&E studies on gender issues include a study of gender in the social sector and a review of domestic violence issues.³

This study builds on the earlier research, focusing on information that has been published since 1999/2000 and knitting together extensive qualitative and quantitative information to provide a more fine-grained picture than that allowed by macro-data sets. The qualitative information is primarily from the academic and scholarly literature; the quantitative is from the datasets of such international research institutions as the United Nations and the World Bank.

The purpose in doing this is to illuminate the subtle ways in which men and women in the region may not receive equal treatment, benefit from equal opportunities, or be equally empowered. The information can be a valuable resource for Missions who are required to take gender issues into consideration in designing and implementing programs.

Five countries were selected as "focus countries": Albania, Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine. They were chosen both because they represent the different E&E sub-regions of different histories and cultural backgrounds and because USAID has full-fledged programs in all of them.

Both at a regional level and within the focus countries, the study examines how the changes of the transition

¹ UNICEF, MONEE Project, *Women in Transition: Regional Monitoring Report No. 6* (Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999), <http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/monee6sume.pdf>

² Rasnake and others, *The Economic, Democratic, and Social Status of Men and Women in Eurasia and Southeast Europe* (Washington: Aguirre International for Europe & Eurasia Bureau, USAID, April 2000) http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACK729.pdf

³ Ruth Rosenberg, *Domestic Violence in Europe and Eurasia* (Washington: Aguirre International, a division of JBS International, for Europe & Eurasia Bureau, USAID, June 2006); and USAID, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, Office of Democracy, Governance and Social Transition, *Women and Men in Europe and Eurasia: An Analysis of Gender Parity in the Social Sector* (Washington: USAID, 2006).

have affected women and men in the following five thematic areas:

- Gender Ideology
- Gender Roles in the Family and Household
- Employment and Income
- Political Power
- Education

Organization of the Paper

The paper begins with an introductory chapter, which lays out the research problem and methodology and introduces the focus countries and topical chapters. The next chapter presents information on the focus countries. The following chapters each deal with a topical issue. The concluding chapter investigates the meaning of the research findings for the field and gives recommendations for next steps

Summary of the Focus-Country Research

A summary of the information for the five focus countries includes:

- Countries range in ethnic and religious diversity from the homogeneous Armenia to the multi-cultural Serbia.
- Household data show falling marriage and fertility rates, and rising divorce rates.
- Four of the five countries fall in the World Bank income category of "lower middle"; the Kyrgyz Republic is categorized as "low."
- In all national parliaments or legislatures, women are significantly under-represented.
- In all countries, women outnumber men enrolled in tertiary education.

Summary of the Topical Research

The five chapters on topical issues are framed by the thematic queries outlined in the Scope of Work. The following summarizes the queries and findings from each chapter.

Gender Ideology

- ***Do citizens of the country hold strong gender stereotypes? If so, what are the contents of these stereotypes? How much tolerance is there for deviations from gender stereotypes?*** The literature on gender ideologies and stereotypes at a national level did not yield any clear analyses or descriptions of belief systems at a national level. Consequently, it is difficult to frame a precise response to the question within the confines of this report.
- ***To what extent is religion a major factor in affecting gender ideologies in the country?*** Few references were found regarding the links between gender ideology and religion. However, in those that were uncovered, two approaches are taken: (a) religion as a cultural or national identity or (b) all major religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as patriarchal in their ideology.

Gender Roles in the Family and Household

- ***What is the division of labor in the home?*** No data were found on specific tasks within the household, but several sources describe a dominant ideology of men being seen as the breadwinners and women as wives and mothers (despite their high rates of participation in the labor force). However, with increasing problems of male unemployment, this model may be breaking down. One possible result is increasing morbidity and mortality rates for men. Another is decreasing marriage rates and increasing female-headed households. A third is changing belief systems about appropriate roles for women and men.

- **Who has the decision making power in the household?** No information was found on this particular query, but it is linked with the preceding in terms of the many changes in gender roles that are currently taking place.
- **How much freedom do women have in choosing who and when to marry?** No information was found on this topic except for the issue of “bride-stealing” in the Kyrgyz Republic. It appears that it may be increasing in the areas which are returning to pre-socialist cultural patterns, but the data are very inconclusive.

Employment and Income

- **Are women and men typically segregated into different occupations? If men and women hold different jobs, is “women’s work” lower paying?** Men and women are still often segregated by occupations, with the women being employed in jobs that generally pay less than those dominated by men.
- **To what extent do men and women participate in the informal economy?** Women are heavily involved in the informal economy, which provides needed employment and additional income but may create later problems due to lack of pension fund contributions.
- **To what extent do men and women engage in entrepreneurial activity and what factors determine this? Do men and women have equal access to credit?** Women’s entrepreneurship lags behind men’s, and women have less access to credit for a variety of reasons, such as a lack of requisite collateral such as title to land or a car.
- **Are women over-represented among the poor? If yes, why?** Given the lack of accurate measures, the research is not entirely clear on whether or not women are likely to be over-represented among the poor. However, gender inequality in income and wealth generation in transitional countries is likely to exacerbate the risk of poverty among women.

Political Power

- **Are men and women equally represented in national, regional and local government bodies?** Women’s representation in government decreased greatly in the early transition from socialism to a level that is now lower than the rest of Europe and even the United States. Some increases can be seen at the local level, especially where gender quotas have been introduced.
- **Has the number of women holding political positions of power been increasing or decreasing since the transition?** Women’s political power does not appear to be increasing from its post-transition low level of well below ten percent in national parliaments, and it has recently significantly decreased in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Education

- **Do men and women specialize in different majors in higher education?** Men and women do have different specialties, with women predominating in such lower-paying areas as teaching, economics, and medicine.
- **Do men and women receive equal returns (in terms of job level and pay) for the same level of education?** Women receive less return than men for comparable levels of education. However, the reasons and outcomes are very complex. For example, in a country such as Ukraine, even though women’s returns are lower than men’s, the return for women is comparable to Sweden and higher than that of the U.S. and the Netherlands
- **Do social norms constrain women from getting the full benefits of their education by discouraging them from working or suggesting that their place should be in the home?** Women’s labor force participation rates remain high and are comparable to men’s, which suggests that socio-cultural forces constraining women from using their education in the workplace are no stronger than in the U.S. or Western Europe.

Conclusions and Recommendations

What does the literature say? Why does gender matter?

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the region went from being under the umbrella of a major superpower to being considered “in transition.” Not only was there a change of status at the geo-political level, there were also major changes in the parity between women and men in a range of socio-economic indicators. In contrast to a truly poor country like Niger -- the lowest-ranked for gender equality among 174 nations – where the hope is that time will bring improvement for women, E&E countries are different. The concern in E&E is that changes in the last decade have brought about increasing gender disparity. This is because socialism, for a variety of economic and ideological reasons, promoted very high rates of participation for women in the labor force, in politics, and in education, resulting in relatively high equality. But even though some economic and political measures have worsened, the inequalities are still relatively small when compared with other areas in which USAID works.

If that is the case, why is gender even an issue for the region? Why should E&E be aware of gender in its planning, programming, and evaluation activities? The simple answer is that attention to gender makes sense and provides for better results in development. It is not only just, it is also economically smart.⁴

USAID Gender Requirements: The ADS

A final reason for considering gender issues in planning, programming, evaluation, and procurement -- in addition to better targeted and more effective development and to redressing inequalities -- is that the Agency requires it. Although these guidelines are currently being revised, the general directive to consider gender in a range of activities will remain. The ADS specifics regarding gender are presented in Appendix III.

Next Steps

In order to improve the socio-economic status of men and women in E&E a number of steps are necessary.

- The first step is to understand the general problems through objective, reliable research. That is where the information from this study and its predecessors are of use. They lay out the parameters. They present the larger picture of the primary inequities in the areas of the labor market, credit, representative politics, and education. And, as noted in the data chapters, gender inequalities affect men as well as women.
- The second step is to operationalize the findings, to link the information with the actual planning, programming, and evaluation activities of a Mission. For example, this research has identified the fact that women entrepreneurs have more difficulty than men in obtaining credit. A Mission should take this into account in planning credit activities because it will also result in more entrepreneurs, thus growing the economic pie.
- The tool for this operational next step is a gender assessment.⁵

A gender assessment asks:

- How are the problems of men and women different? How might solutions be different?

⁴ Both the “equity” argument and the “economic” argument regarding gender are found in the academic literature on gender and development, sometimes in opposition. One useful summary is: Carol Miller and Shahara Razavi, *Gender Analysis: Alternative Paradigms* (Geneva: UNRISD, May 1998), <http://www.sdn.undp.org/gender/resources/mono6.html>

⁵ Two World Bank studies concluded that: (1) projects which took gender into account in their design and implementation tended to achieve their objectives more often than projects that ignored gender issues and (2) projects tended to have better impacts when gender issues had been analyzed at the country and project levels and those issues were taken into account in the design phase. See: World Bank, *Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action* (Washington: World Bank, January 2002), 11, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/strategypaper.pdf>

- How might contributions of men and women to activities be different?
- How might activities differentially affect women and men?

Recommendations

This study resulted in the following recommendations. It is believed that their consideration will promote the integration of gender into planning and implementation, which, in turn, will result in more efficient and effective development.

- **Gender Analyses:** Using this report as a base, gender assessments of Mission activities of planning, programming, or evaluation could be carried out for interested units, taking into account the differential problems, opportunities, and solutions for men and women of the proposed activities. The analyses would provide the Mission with information essential for shaping future activities or revising current ones. It would be vital to have field input in determining the specifics of each SOW.
- **Easily Accessible Research Mechanism:** A variation of the gender analyses described above is a “Rapid Research Response” activity which could be built into a current or future mechanism, perhaps an IQC. Need to define Rapid Research Response. This study and its predecessors demonstrate the wealth of research data on a range of gender issues in E&E. They also point to the importance of systematically examining both qualitative and quantitative information in order to develop and implement policies and programs that accurately reflect the needs and opportunities for men and women. Development experts need accurate information, but generally neither Washington nor the field has the time or human resources for data collection and analyses, and there is currently not an efficient way to get rapid responses to research requests.
- **Special Studies:** The research revealed several regional issues which differentially affect men and women and which have implications for E&E activities. Because the time and space constraints of this study did not permit an in-depth exploration of them, it is suggested that they be considered for a series of special desktop studies. They include:
 - Education / Tertiary Enrollment
 - Elections and Gender Quotas
 - Enterprise Development
 - Poverty

You may download a complete version of the Gender Study from the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse website (<http://dec.usaid.gov>), using Doc ID “PN-ADG-303” for reference.

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