Beijing+25 Review: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in SPECA Countries

September 2020
Table of contents

List of boxes, tables and case studies 3
Acronyms and abbreviations 4
1. Executive summary and recommendations 5
  1.1 Progress towards gender equality gains momentum within SPECA 5
  1.2 From laws and policies to practice – the big challenge 5
  1.3 Recommendations 6
2. Introduction 8
  2.1 Setting the scene 8
  2.2 Intersecting frameworks: The Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs 8
  2.3 The Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) 9
3. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work 12
  3.1 Women in the labour market – structural gender disparities persist 12
  3.2 Unpaid domestic and care work – the double burden of women 16
  3.3 Women’s entrepreneurship – opening opportunities for livelihoods and independence 18
4. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services 21
  4.1 Pathways out of poverty for women 21
  4.2 Social protection – essential support for women’s empowerment 23
  4.3 Education and training – gateway to future opportunities 24
  4.4 Women and health – important progress but inequalities persist 26
5. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes 30
  5.1 Eliminating violence against women and girls 30
  5.2 Early marriage continues to hold back the life prospects of young women 33
  5.3 Discriminatory social norms - driving gender inequality 34
  5.4 Women, the media and changing social norms 36
6. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions 38
  6.1 Laws and gender strategies set directions for national action 39
  6.2 Variable progress in women’s political representation 40
  6.3 Women’s representation in public service low, despite commitments 44
  6.4 Institution mechanisms for women play a crucial role within government 45
  6.5 Gender-responsive budgeting 47
  6.6 Gender statistics: Providing the evidence base for gender equality policies 59
7. Peaceful and inclusive societies 52
8. Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation 54
Annexes 56
List of boxes, tables and case studies

**Box 1:** New tax regime under consideration in Kazakhstan to facilitate transition of women into formal work

**Box 2:** Spotlight on labour migration and gender in Kyrgyzstan

**Box 3:** Sexual harassment in the workplace an emerging issue within SPECA

**Box 4:** Comprehensive rural enterprise programme brings benefits to women in Afghanistan

**Box 5:** National anti-poverty programme brings finance and collective processes to rural women in Afghanistan

**Box 6:** Kyrgyzstan study highlights gaps between gender equality goals and social protection approach

**Box 7:** Progress and potential - Kazakhstan healthcare snapshot

**Box 8:** Turkmenistan introduces medical passport for reproductive health

**Box 9:** Afghanistan: Despite progress, many challenges remain

**Box 10:** SPECA countries take action to address human trafficking

**Box 11:** Promoting gender equality in the media in Uzbekistan

**Box 12:** Building gender balance into community development councils in Afghanistan

**Box 13:** Progress in women’s representation in Afghanistan’s court system

**Box 14:** Multiple challenges affect roles of national women’s institutions

**Box 15:** Afghanistan and Kazakhstan build capacity for gender responsive budgeting

**Box 16:** Mapping the way forward for gender statistics in Kazakhstan

**Box 17:** Gender statistics challenges in Kyrgyzstan reflect those across the region

**Box 18:** Increasing participation by women in Afghanistan’s peace process despite persistent challenges

**Box 19:** Tajikistan and Azerbaijan improve the gender focus of disaster risk management

**Figure 1:** Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+), modelled ILO estimate, 2020

**Figure 2:** Average time spent (hours) in unpaid work in a 24 hour period

**Figure 3:** Maternal mortality rates in SPECA countries

**Table 1:** Women in national politics: Status on 1 January 2020 (%)

**Case study 1:** Discriminatory social norms drive gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan

**Case study 2:** Social norms and violence undermine women in power in Kyrgyzstan
**Acronyms and abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPfA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Contraceptive prevalence rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVAW</td>
<td>Elimination of violence against women</td>
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<td>GRB</td>
<td>Gender-responsive budgeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communications technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non government organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPECA</td>
<td>Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, technology, engineering and mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNECE</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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1. Executive summary and recommendations

1.1 Progress towards gender equality gains momentum within SPECA

Member and associate member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) gathered in Bangkok from 27 to 29 November 2019 for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review. This conference was part of the preparatory process for the Beijing+25 global review, which included similar events in other regions. A key component of the preparatory process was the preparation of national reports on progress towards meeting the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, agreed by United Nations member States in Beijing in 1995. All seven members of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA),\(^1\) submitted national reports in line with global requirements (refer Section 2). The SPECA National Reports indicated important progress in the following areas:\(^2\)

- The strengthening of national institutions and related processes for the advancement of women.
- Mainstreaming of gender equality considerations into SDG implementation frameworks as well as national and sector development strategies and plans.
- The introduction of measures such as gender quotas, leadership training, affirmative action policies and public awareness campaigns to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making at all levels.
- Initiatives to eliminate violence against women and girls, including raising public awareness about the harmful impacts of discriminatory social norms and practices.
- Revision of labour market policies and legislation to increase women’s participation in the labour market; promote equal pay for work of equal value; and prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors.
- Promotion of women’s entrepreneurship as both a measure to address poverty and strengthen the role of women within the economy.
- Increased women’s participation in higher levels of education as well as vocational and technical training; increased participation of women and girls in STEM; and introduction of measures to address gender bias in educational content.
- Increased attention to and resourcing of sexual and reproductive health and rights, services and systems.
- Introduction of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and (in most cases) initial progress towards implementation.
- Measures to increase the participation of women within the peace and security sphere.
- Improved gender indicators in key areas of political, economic and social life; and strengthened collection, analysis, dissemination and use of gender statistics.

\(^1\) The SPECA members are the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

1.2 From laws and policies to practice – the big challenge

All SPECA countries have an increasingly comprehensive architecture of gender-related legislation, policies, strategies and plans. A major priority in this respect in recent year has been addressing violence against women and girls. However, the overriding challenge across the region is translating such commitments into effective action, including through the application of gender-responsive budgeting which remains at variable levels of development within SPECA.

A number of challenges in bringing about the transition from commitment to action stand-out from the Beijing+25 national reports. Key among these are:

- The persistent and pervasive influence of discriminatory social norms which privilege men in all spheres and levels of society. This is reflected *inter alia* by the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work carried by women and high levels of violence against women and girls.
- Continued low levels of political representation at all levels, despite overall improvements across the region over the last five years.
- A general lack of understanding of and expertise on gender issues within government at all levels, despite extensive recent training conducted in all SPECA countries, with support from international agencies.
- A tendency to perceive gender as “only pertaining to the social sector (education, health care, social protection),” rather than a consideration to be comprehensively and systematically embedded in laws, policies, strategies, plans and national budget decisions for economic development (industry, trade and agriculture, for example).
- Systemic capacity weaknesses, under-resourcing and marginalization of the government institutions responsible for gender equality.
- A need to further strengthen systematic monitoring of the gender dimensions of all legislation, policies, strategies, plans and programmes.
- A reliance on international agency technical support and financing, contributing to a “projectization” of gender mainstreaming initiatives and a tendency towards once-off initiatives.

1.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the national Beijing+25 Reports of the SPECA members. They recognize that while legal and policy frameworks for gender equality are increasingly in place in SPECA countries, the major challenge overall is the implementation of these, including within key spheres such as economic development, education, health, social protection and justice. *Inter alia* this requires the prioritization of commitments already in place backed-up by clear strategies, effective national institutions for the advancement of women, effective collaboration between government and civil society actors, and adequate resourcing. The recommendations highlight strategic areas which can help catalyze the promotion of gender equality across all areas of society within SPECA member states.

*Transforming social norms (SDG 5).*

Ensure that measures to transform social norms are central to efforts by governments, civil society and other stakeholders to implement their national laws, strategies and plans for gender equality, including through means as public education and awareness raising, eliminating gender bias within the education system, promoting positive role models for women and girls, and promoting male

3 Kyrgyzstan National Beijing+25 Report
gender equality champions.

**Increasing the number of women in leadership and decision-making (SDG 5).**
Prioritize measures to increase the number of women in leadership, senior management and other decision-making roles in politics, the public service, business, civil society and all other spheres of society, including through means such as temporary special measures (e.g. gender quotas) and leadership training and support.

**Promoting gender-responsive budgeting (SDG 5).**
Prioritize GRB as a key strategy for directing national resources strategically to promote gender equality across all areas of the national budget, requiring the systematic integration of gender considerations into all aspects of national budget process and the development of the requisite systems and capacities within the public sector.

**Promoting women’s economic empowerment (SDGs 5 and 8).**
Prioritize the promotion of policies, measures and international labour standards\(^4\) which enable women to engage in decent work (including provision of quality and affordable childcare services); entrepreneurship (including access to finance and skills); participate in business leadership and decision-making; own land and other productive resources on the same basis as men; and have access to all the available means of financial inclusion.

**Promoting cooperation and partnerships for gender equality (SDGs 5 and 17).**
Prioritize approaches at regional, national and subnational levels which maximize opportunities and space for partnership and cooperation between government, civil society, United Nations entities and other actors, including ensuring opportunities for active and open engagement by women’s organizations and networks in regional and national policy, strategy and programmatic development.

**Strengthening the availability of gender statistics (SDG 17).**
Prioritize the development of the necessary institutional and technical mechanisms, systems and capacities to strengthen the collection, dissemination and use of gender statistics for public policy development, implementation and monitoring in all spheres.

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\(^4\) Such labour standards include ILO Conventions C190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the workplace, C100 on equal remuneration, C111 on discrimination (employment and occupation, C156 on workers with family responsibilities, and C183 on maternity protection.
2. Introduction

2.1 Setting the scene

Ministers, government officials and civil society representatives from 38 member and associate member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) gathered in Bangkok from 27 to 29 November 2019 for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review. All SPECA members, apart from the Kyrgyz Republic, were present at the conference.

As part of the preparations for the conference, 41 member states submitted comprehensive national reports on progress, achievements and areas for ongoing attention. These reports were based on a global template provided by UN Women in line with the Political Declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. This highlighted the following areas for attention in national reporting for the twenty-fifth anniversary:

- progress on laws, policies and strategies;
- institutional mechanisms for gender equality;
- the transformation of discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes;
- investments to close resource gaps;
- accountability for existing commitments and capacity building;
- data collection; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

Drawing primarily on the Beijing+25 National Reports submitted by SPECA members, supplemented by other sources where necessary, this paper provides a consolidated gender profile of countries in that region. Unless otherwise indicated, the material presented is derived from the National Beijing+25 Reports. An important caveat for the paper is the subsequent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the data that is cited. The pandemic has considerably effected the position and prospects of women across the SPECA region.

The paper is designed as a resource for the SPECA Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals. With the above-mentioned caveat in mind, it aims to ensure that the key data, trends, analysis and good practice examples set out in the National Beijing+25 Reports of SPECA member States are available in summarized form for ongoing reference by national and international stakeholders. The paper thus complements the Social Development Working Paper (2019/1): Examining Women’s Economic Empowerment in SPECA Countries, published by ESCAP. It further complements other studies and reports on gender in the countries of Central Asia published by various international agencies.
2.2 Intersecting frameworks: The Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs

The paper focuses on the intersection between the 12 critical areas of concern set out in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which underpin the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015. These intersections are structured under six core clusters of SDGs, as outlined below. This report mainstreams BPfA critical areas of concern F. (human rights of women) and I. (the girl child) across all clusters. SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment and SDG 17 on partnerships apply to each cluster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG thematic clusters:</th>
<th>BPfA critical areas of concern</th>
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| Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work (SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and 17) | A. Women and poverty  
F. Women and the economy  
I. Human rights of women  
L. The girl child |
| Poverty eradication, social protection and social services (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) | A. Women and poverty  
B. Education and training of women  
C. Women and health  
I. Human rights of women  
L. The girl child |
| Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes (SDG 5) | D. Violence against women  
I. Human rights of women  
J. Women and the media  
L. The girl child |
| Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions (SDGs 5, 16 and 17) | G. Women in power and decision-making  
H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women  
I. Human rights of women  
J. Women and the media  
L. The girl child |
| Peaceful and inclusive societies (SDGs 5, 10, 16 and 17) | E. Women and armed conflict  
I. Human rights of women  
L. The girl child |
| Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation (SDGs 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17) | K. Women and the environment  
I. Human rights of women  
L. The girl child |

Central to the gender equality commitments within the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is SDG 5. Annex 1 further shows (i) the links between SDG 5 targets and the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA and (ii) the gender-specific targets under other SDGs, demonstrating the centrality of gender equality across the whole SDG framework.
2.3 The Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

The Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), which is the geographic focus of this paper, was established by the Tashkent Declaration on 26 March 1998, signed by the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan joined the programme later at their own request. SPECA was designed originally with the purpose of forging regional economic cooperation on issues related to trade, energy and transport, and supporting integration into the global economy. Two United Nations bodies jointly support the Programme: the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

The Governing Council, in the 10th SPECA session held in 2015 in Dushanbe, decided to make SPECA a platform for regional cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SPECA is the only Central Asia Centric forum that focuses solely on exchanges between Central Asian countries as landlocked countries in cooperation with Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, which are economically linked to the region. It is the only forum to bring together countries of the sub-region to exchange experiences, build a common vision, and look for common solutions.  

The SPECA Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals

The SPECA Working Group on Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals is a subsidiary body of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. Formerly known as the Working Group on Gender and Economy, the group was established following a proposal of the Special session of the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee (Astana, Kazakhstan, 27 May 2005). It held its first session in Geneva on 5 – 9 December 2005. At the 13th session of the SPECA Governing Council (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 21 September 2018), the participating countries reiterated their commitment to the Programme as a platform for promoting subregional cooperation in the SPECA region and for achieving the SDGs, including the fundamental role of the attainment of gender equality in all areas, reflected in SDG 5.

In line with the overall objective of SPECA to facilitate economic cooperation among member countries as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group on Gender and SDGs has the following specific objectives:

(a) Non-discriminatory labour market policies in the course of hiring and work environment free of discrimination and exploitation
(b) Policies to promote the participation of women in public and private companies
(c) Policies to prevent stereotypes in education and research to advance the participation of women in R&D sectors, and
(d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development.

At its meeting of 28 October 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, the Working Group identified the following key priorities within this context for its 2020-2021 Work Plan: (a) improving connectivity within the SPECA Working Group; (b) fostering cooperation among women entrepreneurs in the

Prepared by Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh. Commissioned by SPECA and ESCAP.
sub-region; (c) capacity building for women to set up their own businesses and/or expand existing activities; (d) increasing women’s presence in new sectors through enhancing women’s technological literacy and competitiveness, thus reducing occupational segregation; (e) encouraging peer learning among SPECA members through exchanging successful policy measures and best practices for promoting women’s economic empowerment and achieving SDG 5; and (f) promoting partnership with the private sector.

Working Group participants at the above meeting also agreed to continue to build capacity for women entrepreneurs in the SPECA countries through workshops/meetings, to regularly inform the secretariat about activities in the above areas and seek opportunities for joint projects and funding.

The Working Group participants comprise national representatives at senior official level nominated by the SPECA participating countries; permanent or ad hoc experts on gender and priority work areas of the group; representatives of relevant regional organizations; and representatives of the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral agencies working on gender within the SPECA region. Representatives of the member States of UNECE and ESCAP; representatives of the United Nations Funds, international financial institutions, and donors; and representatives of the private sector and academic community may be invited to join the Working Group.

All governments of the SPECA countries nominate focal points for the Working Group to ensure successful delivery of programmes of work. The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats support the activities of the Working Group by providing expertise and assistance to its activities and secretariat support. Working Group meetings are held annually before or concurrently with the annual sessions of the SPECA Governing Council. These sessions provide a platform for policy dialogue, capacity-building and networking for concerned government stakeholders from relevant key ministries and agencies in SPECA countries to discuss critical and key emerging issues related to gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the SDGs. In particular, participants share progress and challenges experienced in implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality and discuss strategies to advance gender equality, including women’s full economic and political empowerment.
3. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work:

<table>
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F. Women and the economy  
I. Human rights of women  
L. The girl child |

Introduction: Drawing on the Beijing+25 reports provided by SPECA countries in 2019, this chapter focuses on the Beijing Platform of Action critical area of concern on ‘women and the economy’ (F). Critical area of concern ‘women and poverty’ (A) is addressed in Chapter 4. The human rights of women (I) and issues related to the girl child (L) are mainstreamed throughout the paper.

The chapter particularly links to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and focuses on three key elements of women’s engagement in the economy. These are labour market participation, unpaid domestic and care work and women’s entrepreneurship.

Key messages:

- **Labour market participation:** Women’s participation in the labour market is an important element of economic empowerment. However participation rates and trends vary across the SPECA countries. All countries are prioritizing policies and measures to increase the economic engagement of women in both urban and rural areas, supported by strengthening protections under national labour laws.

- **Unpaid domestic and care work:** Unpaid domestic care and work is a critical factor influencing women’s ability to participate in the labour market, public affairs, education and training. While time-use data is not available for all SPECA countries, it is clear that women carry a much higher share of unpaid domestic and care work than men across the region. This situation is exacerbated by variable levels of access to preschools and childcare facilities. SPECA countries are increasingly adopting policies and measures to address these gaps.

- **Women’s entrepreneurship:** Engagement in entrepreneurship, particularly at micro and small enterprise level, is increasingly providing an important pathway for economic empowerment and improved livelihoods for women across the SPECA countries. All SPECA governments prioritize policies and measures in this regard.
3.1 Women in the labour market – structural gender disparities persist

SPECA overview – variable movement towards increased female participation in labour market

Women’s labour force participation rates and trends vary greatly across the SPECA countries (Figure 1), with an overall increase in recent years in Afghanistan and decrease in Kyrgyzstan, for example. In all cases, the respective governments are prioritizing policies and measures to increase the economic engagement of women in both urban and rural areas through job creation and skills development programmes, entrepreneurship development, support for increased female participation in higher levels of education, addressing gender bias in education and expanding early childhood education.
While the labour legislation of all SPECA countries prohibits discrimination by sex, gender disparities continue to characterize the respective national labour markets. Generally, women across the region experience higher rates of unemployment. In Kazakhstan women’s unemployment rate was 5.6 per cent in 2018, while the corresponding rate for men was 4 per cent for men. Likewise, in Kyrgyzstan unemployment rates were 8.9 per cent and 5.6 per cent for women and men, respectively.

Gender-based occupational imbalances remain stark, with men concentrated in higher paid sectors such as construction and transportation while women are found mainly in lower paid and often informal sectors such as agriculture and services (including retail, education and healthcare). The concentration of women in low-paying informal jobs is a key factor contributing to gender pay gaps which persist in all countries despite legal commitments to equal pay for work of equal value. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, women’s earnings in 2017 were only 75.2 per cent of that of men. In Tajikistan, the ratio of women’s pay to that of men was 59.9 per cent. The male/female gap in Turkmenistan was reported in their Beijing+25 report to average 10-13 per cent.

The availability and terms of family leave are key elements of enabling women’s economic participation. Basic maternity leave provisions within SPECA range from 90 days fully paid in Afghanistan to 140 days fully paid in Tajikistan. Between these two figures, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan each provide 126 days fully paid maternity leave, while 112 days are provided in Turkmenistan. Fully paid paternity leave is not yet formally available within SPECA countries although options can exist on a specific country basis which allow men to take short periods of paid or unpaid leave related to the birth of a child.

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6 Addati, Laura; Cassirer, Naomi; Gilchrist, Katherine. (2014). Maternity and paternity at work: law and practice across the world. Geneva. ILO.
Women’s representation in senior business leadership and management roles also remains low across the SPECA countries, resulting from the disproportionate unpaid care burden carried by women and the time-poverty\(^8\) they experience. These are exacerbated by the lack of access to preschools and childcare facilities. A summary of key labour market trends, issues and initiatives in each of the SPECA countries follows.

**Country-by-country trends show increased efforts to address labour market disparities**

The 2017-2018 Status Report by the **Afghanistan** Ministry of Finance (MoF) indicated that the female employment rate had increased by 27 per cent since 2007. This trend reflects the findings of a 2018 survey by Asia Foundation showing that 74 per cent of Afghans feel women should be allowed to work outside their homes, although this level of support varies according to region and the state of security.\(^9\)

Such developments are supported by a number of national gender and legal frameworks that aim to improve women’s economic empowerment. These include the Empowerment Plan for Afghan Women (2018-2021); the National Program on Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (2016); and the Citizen Charter (2016-2025), which includes the establishment of community development councils (CDCs). A range of initiatives are active with international support under such frameworks, including export-related guidelines for women entrepreneurs; a ‘Made by Afghan Women’ trademark to increase women’s visibility in the global market; a women’s Inheritance and Property Rights Policy; and the establishment of Afghan Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

To continue the current positive trends, the Government of Afghanistan has also prioritized investment in time-saving infrastructure, transportation services, water and sanitation which will particularly improve the circumstances and reduce time poverty for rural women.

In the last five years, **Azerbaijan** has strengthened laws and policies to promote women’s employment (with a new Law On Employment supported by a national employment strategy); prohibit discrimination in recruitment and workplaces; promote equal pay for work of equal value; and support active labour market measures to increase the employability of women. In the case of **Kazakhstan**, the 2025 Strategic Development Plan aims to create an enabling environment for equal employment opportunities for women and men. It is intended that the system of national accounts will include gender-sensitive indicators to measure employment in the informal sector, unaccounted for domestic care work, home-based employment and domestic paid employment. A gender perspective will be used to improve laws on work-life balance as well as occupational safety and working conditions. The introduction and expansion of flexible forms of employment are also on the agenda, along with employment and entrepreneurship promotion, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors of the economy.

**Box 1: New tax regime under consideration in Kazakhstan to facilitate women’s transition to formal work**

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\(^8\) The concept of time poverty, in the sense of not having enough time for oneself due to working disproportionately long hours in paid employment, doing domestic chores, and/or taking care of dependents at home, has gained recognition among time-use researchers in the last few decades as another dimension of poverty (alongside economic and other aspects): Source. ESCAP Statistics Division (2020 forthcoming).

One focus for Kazakhstan in promoting women’s employment is the development of legal and policy measures to support women through the transition from informal to formal work. One measure currently under consideration is a specific tax regime, the Single Cumulative Payment (SCP), which would protect the social and economic rights of the self-employed and simplify the registration and formalization processes. The SCP would consolidate four payments into one (individual income tax, mandatory pension contributions, and contributions to the Medical Insurance Fund and the State Social Insurance Fund). SCP payment would imply the automatic registration (formalization) of business activities and be designed for categories of the self-employed who provide services solely to individuals and earn less than a specified amount (i.e. categories within which many women are concentrated).

The Kyrgyzstan National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018-2020 aims to address the current downward trend in female labour force participation. In 2017, an inter-ministerial group set-up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development conducted a gender analysis of employment legislation and proposed a range of measures to overcome existing employment barriers for women. The analysis showed that despite the declared prohibition of discrimination by sex/gender, gender discrimination persists both at the legislative level and in the labour market. Infringements of women’s rights and freedoms include refusal to employ pregnant women and women with young children, lower wages for women, and factors that prevent women from having certain jobs and exercising their employment rights in certain occupations.

Rural women in the economy in Kyrgyzstan face intersectional discrimination, reinforced by the patriarchal norms that prevail particularly strongly in rural areas. Women are particularly vulnerable in negotiations with service providers (private companies), water users’ associations, pasture management associations, and land banks that are usually headed by men. It is harder for women to secure better terms of irrigation water supply, get equipment for farming and harvesting, or lease larger plots of land. One important response of rural women, often with international support, has been the establishment of self-help groups and associations.

Box 2: Spotlight on labour migration and gender in Kyrgyzstan

Labour migration is an important part of the economic landscape for many women and their families, especially in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Remittance flows are closely tied to developments within the Russian economy. For example, the Kyrgyzstan national Beijing+25 Report cites World Bank findings which indicate that in the pre-COVID-19 period the country had the highest level of remittances as a percentage of GDP (over 29.9 per cent) among European and Central Asian countries. According to the findings, Kyrgyz labour migrants transferred over two billion US dollars to the country in remittances in 2017, with women making up a significant proportion of migrants. However, many women migrant labourers work in “unofficial” informal jobs with no access to social protection services. Two thirds of women migrant labourers are paid in cash “off the books” and only 40 per cent have employment contracts. Women migrant labourers also often face stigmatization and high levels of stress and uncertainty. Labour migration also has wider gender-related social impacts, with many older women playing an important role in raising children (grandchildren) who are left behind. The increased care burden on female relatives can be linked to health problems and financial hardship.

For Tajikistan a major focus for addressing gender disparities within the labour market has been the adoption in 2016 of a new Labour Code. This *inter alia* prohibits employers from refusing to hire pregnant women and women with children or from reducing their earnings due to their pregnancy and childcare responsibilities. In addition, the Labour Code establishes special standards and requirements regarding the work of women with family responsibilities, although men are not yet considered workers with family responsibilities.
Turkmenistan’s Labour Code has also gone through a number of changes in recent years to better reflect commitments to gender equality. This includes improvements in leave and state benefits for pregnancy and childbirth; guarantees to protect the rights of women to access annual leave; and lifting restrictions on the employment of women in jobs with harmful and (or) dangerous working conditions.

As in other SPECA countries, the national development strategy of Uzbekistan prioritizes the issue of women in employment. In the past five years, the average level of economic activity in the country has been 48 per cent for women and 76 per cent for men. The proportion of women in formal employment is slightly lower than that of men: 45.7 per cent versus 54.3 per cent respectively. A key issue requiring attention in terms of lifting employment levels for women is the lack of formal work opportunities in rural areas, compounded by women’s generally lower educational levels. In addition, women make up only 5.4 per cent of heads of farms in Uzbekistan and are more likely to be engaged in small family home-based business, such as traditional crafts. The latter activities are seen by the government as having a significant potential for development and are supported by state employment and skills development programmes.

Box 3: Sexual harassment in the workplace an emerging issue within SPECA

Preventing sexual harassment is a key element of workplace safety and health. This issue emerged as an important concern during Kyrgyzstan’s Beijing+25 consultations, despite existing national constitutional, legislative and policy commitments to prevent such behaviour. The CEDAW Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of the Kyrgyz Republic outline the results of a social survey conducted by the “Tayanych” Public Trade Union Organization. The survey covered 1,200 respondents and showed a widespread prevalence of sexual harassment in institutions such as universities, the media and private businesses. The survey further highlighted the influence of existing gender stereotypes in discouraging women from reporting sexual harassment.

The Government of Afghanistan has initiated various measures to ensure safety of women in the workplace. Among these are the Law on Prevention of Sexual Harassment (2016), the Penal Code which includes specific provisions to prevent the harassment of women and the draft Law on Prevention of Discrimination. Such measures are supported by committees for prevention of harassment which have been established in most government institutions. These provide a safe place where women can register harassment complaints for action to be taken. In order to ensure the safety of policewomen, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has developed a Guide on Prevention of Sexual Harassment, with one of its main objectives to ensure the implementation of the Anti-Harassment Law. The MoI has also established a total of 86 policewomen’s councils, sponsored by the Directorate of Human Rights and Women’s Affairs.
3.2 Unpaid domestic and care work – the double burden of women

Unpaid domestic care and work is a critical factor influencing women’s participation in the labour market. While time-use data is not available for all SPECA countries, it is clear that women carry a much higher share of unpaid domestic and care work than men across the region. The available data shown in Table 4 indicates that women are spending two to three times more on unpaid work in a 24-hour period than men. This leads to long working hours and limits choices in areas such as paid employment, education and social engagement.

Figure 2: Average time spent (hours) in unpaid work in a 24 hour period

![Chart showing average time spent (hours) in unpaid work in a 24-hour period for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.](www.unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/)


Note: Azerbaijan 2008 (age 15+); Kazakhstan 2012 (age 10+); Kyrgyzstan 2015 (age 12+); Uzbekistan 2006 (age 15+)

Development and gender policies and strategies across SPECA are beginning to reflect this imbalance and propose measures to address the gaps. **Azerbaijan**, for example, has prioritized the expansion of childcare services and made existing services more affordable. Public awareness campaigns have been conducted to encourage greater participation by men and boys in unpaid domestic and care work. These included public events and trainings on changing male attitudes which were carried out in most regions.

The **Kyrgyzstan** National Strategy on Achieving Gender Equality until 2020 stresses the uneven distribution of reproductive and family obligations as a factor contributing to economic dependence and vulnerability of women. Kyrgyzstan also prioritizes the expansion of preschool education, both for its value to children and for its role in reducing the burden of unpaid domestic work for women. In 2017, Kyrgyzstan’s preschool education coverage was still only 23.5 per cent.

The issue of achieving work-life balance for women and men is recognized in **Tajikistan’s** Labour Code (with a focus on the particularities of domestic and home-based labour), the National Strategy for Enhancing the Role of Women until 2020 and the State Strategy for the Labour Market Development until 2020. However, the national Beijing + 25 report observes that the underpinning orientation remains one based on the traditional view of women as being primarily responsible for unpaid household work.
Improving access to infrastructure, especially for water and sanitation where women continue to bear major responsibilities in rural areas within SPECA, is also critical for reducing the burden of unpaid domestic work. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan highlighted the need to address this issue in their Beijing+25 reports.

### 3.3 Women’s entrepreneurship – opening opportunities for livelihoods and independence

*Trends across all the SPECA countries show that entrepreneurship is a key pathway for millions of women to engage in the economy, improve the livelihoods of themselves and their families and gain a measure of financial independence. However, gender disparities persist in areas ranging from access to finance to opportunities to acquire essential business skills. Women’s engagement in entrepreneurship across SPECA furthermore tends to be concentrated in low value-added sectors such as wholesale and retail trade and agriculture, with home-based entrepreneurship an important factor in some countries, linked to women’s disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid home care.*

*All SPECA countries prioritize the development of women’s entrepreneurship in national development and gender equality frameworks, supported by specific strategies, plans and programmes at different levels, frequently involving international support. Increasingly, women entrepreneurs are interacting with each other across national borders to exchange experience and lessons and strengthen mutual support. The following country summaries highlight initiatives take to promote women’s entrepreneurship within SPECA.*

In Afghanistan, a range of government and international partner programmes have reached hundreds of thousands of Afghan women. Such programmes have been supported by an intensive programme of skills development initiatives nationwide. At the time of Beijing+25 reporting, some 102,000 women and 28,000 men have benefited in areas such as tailoring, carpentry, gardening, carpeting, embroidery, candle and flower making and handicrafts. According to a 2017 study on Women in Agriculture in Afghanistan, women’s associations have also begun to emerge as an important factor in economic empowerment. For instance, a network of 36 village women food processing centers employs a total of 700 workers in the west of the Herat province, and a Women Saffron Growers Association has been established to support women in this sector. However, one constraint (among others) that women find in all fields is a lack of access to collateral to start a small business, as family assets are usually under a male name.

**Box 4: Comprehensive rural enterprise programme brings benefits to women in Afghanistan**

From 2010 to 2015, the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme under the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development provided women with opportunities to start or expand small-scale business ventures. Inter alia the programme supported village facilitators to create business and saving groups. An example of a successful government initiative is the Food and Agriculture Organization-funded Integrated Dairy Schemes Project implemented in Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kunduz, and Jalalabad. The project has created regular weekly income for female milk producers by integrating them into the milk value chain and has simultaneously organized women into cooperatives, which have had a strong impact on gendered economic empowerment in the household and community units. Despite the low per centage of female milk producers in the Integrated Dairy Schemes (one-third overall), the project can be seen as a viable way of securing

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Promoting entrepreneurship among rural women has been a major focus of state programmes in Azerbaijan. Jointly with international organizations, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs has set-up Women’s Resource Centres in eight regions which offer access to library and computer services as well as business development support and mentoring. More than 3,000 people have received support through these centres, with over 100 to date establishing small businesses which today employ a further 50 staff. Promoting gender equality in the financial sector has been another focus in Azerbaijan. A major project with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development currently aims to identify and eliminate barriers within the sector which hinder women’s access to financial services, including loans for business start-ups and development. The creation in 2017 of a national Women’s Entrepreneurs Association has added further momentum to such developments.

In Kazakhstan over 43 per cent of all active small and medium businesses in the country are run by women, accounting for 31 per cent of all jobs in this sector. When registering their business, 52.6 per cent of women have preferred the ‘individual entrepreneur’ option. However, gender gaps in business remain persistent. As of 2018, women ran only 17.2 per cent of large companies, 27.9 per cent of small and 32.4 per cent of medium businesses out of the total number of legal entities, branches and representative offices registered in Kazakhstan.

Key programmes to promote women’s entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan include the Business Road Map – 2020, the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund (supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), and the Employment Program - 2020 (subsequently the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Program). In 2018, 49 per cent of beneficiaries of the latter were women, with 277,000 women finding jobs as a result. However, a UN Women review of rural women’s access to available loans and credit demonstrates that large gaps remain to be addressed.

Women’s entrepreneurship development is also a policy priority in Kyrgyzstan. The country is currently implementing a number of initiatives with international agency support aimed to promote women’s associations, cooperatives and businesses to ensure full and effective women’s participation in the value chain as well as access to domestic and international markets and international accreditation. These initiatives focus in areas including women’s and youth entrepreneurship mentorship, women’s leadership and improving the competitiveness of enterprises. In 2018, 55.1 per cent of microcredit clients were women. However, access to larger loans for women entrepreneurs is also needed, requiring special lending products with lower interest rates and collateral levels.

Research conducted in Tajikistan by the Gender-Responsive Investment Climate Reform Project with support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development indicates a 95 per cent increase in the number of women entrepreneurs since 2010, reaching 23.6 per cent of all entrepreneurs in 2018. At the same time, there has been a shift in the focus of women’s entrepreneurship from traditional low productivity sectors such as sales, services and agriculture to areas such as construction, transport and logistics, information technologies, healthcare, tourism, finance and manufacturing.

In 2015 an Inter-Agency Working Group to Support Women’s Entrepreneurship was created under Tajikistan’s State Committee on Investments and State Property Management. Key elements of the group’s activities have included skill development initiatives in areas such as business administration
and management, developing handicrafts, ensuring women’s access to financing, strengthening women’s role in agriculture, and helping to develop a regional network of women’s business associations in Central Asian countries and Afghanistan.

A Centre for Business Women operating under the national Union of Women provides a key vehicle for the support of women’s entrepreneurship in Turkmenistan. The centre organizes lectures, exhibitions, and round tables to stimulate women’s involvement in business and public activities. The centre provides strategic, legal and other forms of assistance, as well as advice to women planning to start their own business.

At the beginning of 2018, women entrepreneurs accounted for 29 per cent of all registered business entities in Uzbekistan. To increase this proportion, the government is establishing publically-funded women’s entrepreneurship centres across the country provide training and retraining of women in highly-demanded skills, develop women’s business skills, support the development of business ideas and plans and provide concessional loans. A number of other national initiatives are also in place to promote women’s entrepreneurship. These include cooperation between the Association of Business Women, “Tadbirkor Ayol,” and the Central Bank to introduce concessional credit lines for women entrepreneurs. The Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, in collaboration with the Public Fund for Support to Women and Families, has further put in place initiatives to support women in home-based entrepreneurship.

4. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services
Introduction: Women are more likely to experience poverty due to discriminatory social norms that affect their access to decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, as well as their access to social protection education, training and healthcare services. Drawing on the national Beijing+25 reports of SPECA countries, this chapter examines national approaches to addressing female poverty, improving social protection measures that particularly benefit women, and increasing equitable access to education and healthcare, particularly sexual and reproductive health. The chapter particularly relates to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Key messages:

- **Women and poverty**: In recognition of the particular barriers that women face which lead to increased levels of poverty, particularly in rural areas, the key strategies employed by SPECA governments to address the issue centre around increased labour market participation, strengthened social protection measures and access to TVET and higher levels of education.

- **Social protection**: Policies and measures are still developing among SPECA countries, with a wide variation in the level of development to date. Increasingly attention is being paid to the needs of women in this context, including with respect to pensions and targeted social assistance schemes.

- **Education and training**: With the exception of Afghanistan where the number of girls out of school is a major concern, SPECA countries have essentially achieved gender parity in access to formal education. However issues persist across the region in areas such as the drop out rate for girls after grade 9 in two countries, gender segregation in the choices for study and gender bias within educational content and curricula.

- **Women and health**: All SPECA countries have prioritized women’s health within the public health care system, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health. One positive outcome in this regard has been a reduction over time in maternity mortality rates across the region.

### 4.1 Pathways out of poverty for women

The Beijing +25 national reports of the SPECA countries provided a variety of perspectives on the position of women in poverty and measures to address the issue, particularly in rural areas where the prevalence is higher. A particular focus in Azerbaijan has been reducing poverty among internally displaced and refugee women. A common focus across all countries is the role of labour market mechanisms, women’s entrepreneurship promotion, social protection measures and education (both general and technical/vocational) in providing opportunities to lift women out of poverty. The two country snapshots below highlight current trends, understandings and measures to address poverty among women.

Afghanistan’s Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI) both indicate a feminization of poverty, with severe economic underdevelopment in some areas of the country linked to gender discrimination and lack of gender-based targeting of economic and trade policies. The National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA 2007-17) states that “although women
are often contributors to household economy, through agriculture, livestock management, handicrafts, involvement in small and medium enterprises and civil service, their contributions are either completely non-monetized, hugely underpaid or undervalued. Many women who earn an income are not permitted to control their earnings.”

Afghanistan has a number of strategies in place targeting women in poverty. At the overarching level, Afghanistan’s National Peace and Development Framework includes specific commitments to address the needs of women in poverty. The Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy under the national framework combines investment to improve growth and productivity with targeted programming to help the poor improve their skills and access opportunities. Specifically targeting women, the strategy seeks to utilize USD20 million for a women’s economic empowerment program which will include improving women’s mobility, quality of gender statistics and reducing or eliminating regulations that block women’s access to credit and markets.

**Box 5: National anti-poverty programme brings finance and collective processes to rural women in Afghanistan**

The reduction of female poverty is a major priority for Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The Ministry has made micro-finance available to women in five provinces; established over 2,700 women’s saving groups and over 800 local enterprise groups; and introduced over 500 Village Saving and Loan Associations and 61 Producer Associations made up primarily of women. Such efforts are complemented by some 35,000 Community Development Councils nationwide, in which 37 per cent of the participants are women. Likewise, 37 per cent of participants in 389 District Development Assemblies are women.

**Kyrgyzstan** highlighted labour market gender disparities as a key factor in female poverty, particularly the declining economic engagement of women. The CEDAW Concluding Observations on the Fourth Report of Kyrgyzstan contain concerns about “the disproportionately high rate of unemployment among women and about the high proportion of women working in the informal sector, in particular migrant women, to whom the labour law does not apply.” The country’s national report for the Beijing+25 review observed that a girl from a poor family is more at risk of being forced into early marriage with little opportunity to continue education at school. Pregnancy and childbirth can further be accompanied by risks associated with poverty and limited access to quality nutrition, social and healthcare services, increasing the risk of maternal mortality.

Time poverty was highlighted as a further factor in female poverty, with the disproportionate household burdens carried by women a key factor in their limited access to assets, skills and information, as well as professional contacts needed for business growth.
4.2 Social protection – essential support for women’s empowerment

*Social protection policies and measures are a key element in the strategies of all SPECA countries to address female poverty, with a variety of approaches and levels of social protection development evident across the region. All countries are still developing their social protection policies and programmes, ranging from the first basic safety net measures now in place in Afghanistan to the more comprehensive systems in other SPECA countries. The following review highlights key elements of current social protection provision and plans in each of the SPECA countries, with a particular focus on benefits and implications for women.*

**Afghanistan:** The development of social protection policy and provisions is still at an early stage. There is no comprehensive safety net system in place except for a few limited pensions provided by the Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled Affairs. Poor families depend on informal social support and community-based assistance. Despite difficulties arising from lack of resources, efforts are being made by various ministries to identify and address gaps. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, for example, aims to establish a dedicated agency for cash transfers for pensions and other social protection services.

**Azerbaijan:** The last five years have seen the introduction of several initiatives to enhance social protection for women. These include measures to support unemployed women through benefits, public works programmes and targeted social assistance. Non-contributory social pensions have been introduced or strengthened, while contributory social protection schemes have been reformed to strengthen women’s access and benefit levels. A major development in the pipeline is the introduction of a compulsory health insurance scheme, including for reproductive health services. The scheme has been piloted in two regions since 2017.

**Kazakhstan:** Priorities include cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working-age, and pensions for older women. Increasing pension income for women is an important step in light of the specifics of women’s employment, i.e. relatively short periods of work and low wages. As a result, their reduced earning potential means that their pension coverage differs significantly from that of men. Recent steps to unify female and male retirement ages are aimed at ensuring women have equal rights with men for longer employment and can thus access increased pension income based on a higher overall level of earnings.

**Kyrgyzstan:** The Law on Government Benefits allows for three types of allowance: a one-off (lump-sum) payment upon childbirth; a monthly benefit for low-income families with children aged under 16; and a social security benefit for citizens not eligible for pension. Recent years have seen step-by-step expansion of social protection coverage within this context, including a pregnancy and birth benefit for women in prison.
Box 6: Kyrgyzstan study highlights gaps between gender equality goals and social protection approach

A comprehensive sector review carried out in 2017 by the Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) indicated that social protection rests on a paternalistic and protectionist approach to social groups which perceives them as passive recipients of social support and does not address existing systemic social discrimination and inequality. The review concluded that gaps in the tracking and analysis of gender-specific factors of unpaid care work and infrastructure, especially in rural areas, reinforce an approach which sees national commitments to promote gender equality out of sync with the social protection system.

By comparison, an ILO study on gender and social protection (1) states that a well developed social protection system in line with international standards would be sensitive to differing needs of women and men. The study observes that “well-designed and implemented national social protection floors, as fundamental elements of national social security systems, can contribute to achieving greater gender equality and women’s empowerment as well as reducing other inequalities.”


Tajikistan: The 1997 Law on State Social Insurance and subsequent revisions provides for various benefit payments: pregnancy and maternity benefits, unemployment benefits, family benefits upon birth of the first, second and third child, as well as subsequent children, funeral grants, and temporary disability benefits. The Law on Pensions of the Republic of Tajikistan provides for several types of pension—old age pension, disability pension, and pension upon loss of family provider. A targeted social assistance scheme for vulnerable and poor inter alia prioritizes pregnant women and older persons (who include a higher proportion of women).

Turkmenistan: The Code on Social Protection of the Population is the key legislative act guaranteeing the provision of pensions and other state benefits to citizens, including for childbirth and childcare. The Turkmenistan law On State Guarantees for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men further guarantees gender equality in social protection delivered through pension payments, state benefits, social benefits and related services.

Uzbekistan: The National Strategy of Action 2017-2021 includes a clear commitment to the "improvement of the social protection and health system" as one of its five priority areas. These include provision of compulsory social security, strengthening of social protection of vulnerable groups of population and reforms of healthcare.
4.3 Education and training – gateway to future opportunities

Commitments to free universal education and prohibitions on gender-based discrimination in education are anchored in the national constitutional and legislative arrangements of all SPECA countries. While all countries apart from Afghanistan have achieved gender parity at primary school level, performance from a gender equality perspective varies from country to country at secondary school and higher education levels. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example, a persistent trend of girls dropping-out of school after grade 9 is a cause for concern. By contrast in Kazakhstan, girls accounted for 49.5 per cent of pupils in formal education in 2018, while 64.6 per cent of PhD students in 2018-2019 were women. In Azerbaijan, 48.3 per cent of higher education students were female at the time of Beijing+25 reporting. At the same time, gender segregation is evident in the fields of study which tend to be pursued by girls and boys and women and men across the region, although the extent of this varies by country, as indicated below. Gender bias in educational content is another issue highlighted in Beijing+25 reporting as an issue that affects educational and employment outcome.

A variety of policies, strategies and plans have been put in place by SPECA governments to address gender access and equity gaps within education. Common across countries is a prioritization of steps to (i) increase the number and quality of female teachers within the education system, (ii) continue increasing the number of women in higher education, (iii) continue addressing gender segregation, especially to encourage girls into STEM subjects, (iv) review and revise school textbooks and curricular content from a gender perspective (including the incorporation of gender-related studies in educational curricula), and (v) increase the number of women and girls undertaking TVET programmes. The following summary highlights key trends and issues in each of the SPECA countries.

While not a key concern across most SPECA countries, the number of girls not in school is a prominent issue in Afghanistan. UNICEF estimates that some 3.7 million children are out of school in the country, of whom 60 per cent are girls. Overall, 21.7 per cent of female youth are reported to have participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the last 12 months. However, there is a much lower level of female participation at adult level, at 0.3 per cent compared to male adult students (2.2 per cent). Low female enrollment is linked to factors such as the lack of female teachers, especially in rural areas, as well as socio-cultural norms which do not value female education.

Improving gender balance within technical and vocational educational training is a key priority for Afghanistan. The national TVET strategy (2013-18) enshrined gender equity as “a main principle” in providing “equitable educational opportunities and service delivery to women and girls. According to the findings of a 2016 study on Women and Men in Decision Making in Afghanistan which were cited by the National Beijing+25 Report, women in such roles were more likely than men to have obtained vocational education: 20 per cent of women had a vocational degree compared with 13 per cent of men. However, women decision-makers were less likely than men to have a bachelor’s level education: 24 per cent of women compared to 20 per cent of men. Female literacy is another key focus in Afghanistan, with the Ministry of Education planning to increase female literacy from 53 per cent in 2015 to 60 per cent in 2021.

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The ratio of women to men in secondary and higher education in Azerbaijan is close to 100 per cent. 48.3 per cent of higher education students are female. The role of women in science is significant. 46 per cent of PhDs and 51 per cent of scientific workers are women. As in other SPECA countries, increasing the number of women in TVET programmes is a top priority in order to improve employment possibilities.

In Kazakhstan, girls accounted for 49.5 per cent of pupils in formal education in 2018. 47 per cent of technical and vocational students were women. At higher education institutions, 64.6 per cent of PhD students in 2018-2019 were women. Up to 44.5 per cent of women in employment have a university degree, compared to 36.0 per cent of employed men. Women also made up 31.3 per cent of engineering students, 76.8 per cent of medical and pharmaceutical students and 23.5 per cent of agriculture and veterinary students at the time of Beijing+25 reporting.

Despite improvements in the rate of girls’ educational enrollment in Kyrgyzstan, there is an ongoing tendency for girls to quit school after the ninth grade. The National Beijing+25 Report links this tendency to patriarchal values requiring a girl to be “first an obedient daughter and then an obedient wife.” At higher education levels, gender segregation persists in the choice of careers available. Women are concentrated in humanities and pedagogy (86.6 per cent); and healthcare and social sciences (74.8 per cent). Men choose engineering and technology sciences in higher numbers. In transport-related studies for example, 91 per cent of students are male). The National Beijing+25 Report states that preschool, school and vocational education stages are all crucial in shaping career choices of girls and their interest to pursuing STEM study and careers. Momentum to this end has been generated through a national STEM education movement that encourages young women to study science and innovative technology and choose engineering and technical occupations.

In 2017, 35.9 per cent of the total number of those enrolled in higher education institutions in Tajikistan were female, mostly from remote districts. The group from remote districts were encouraged by an annual Presidential quota for girls entering higher education institutions from rural areas. Many girls also go on to enroll in primary and secondary vocational institutions. As of 1 October 2018, the proportion of female students enrolled in primary and secondary (higher) vocational education institutions was 23 per cent and 33.5 per cent respectively. The number of women who graduated from secondary vocational institutions in 2017 was 64.1 per cent of the total. However, despite such trends and various national initiatives to support girls staying in school, female dropouts after grade 9 remain a serious problem. Research to identify the reasons for this have highlighted a need for improved cooperation between schools, families and community as well as to address the in-built gender bias within the system (leading inter alia to a review of the gender-balance of textbook contents). Implementation of the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to increase the age of marriage from 17 years to 18 years is also having an important role in increasing the number of girls who stay on in the education system.

More young women and girls (57 per cent of total students) than young men and boys received vocational education in Turkmenistan in 2018. The proportion of young women studying in higher education institutions was 38.5 per cent in 2018. As in other SPECA countries, achieving gender balance in educational content continues to be a key priority for Turkmenistan as a means of countering discriminatory social norms and encouraging women and girls to expand their learning horizons. The Ministry of Education has examined and implemented international best practices in developing a module on gender equality which has been incorporated into all levels of general education - in pre-schools, schools and at all levels of higher and vocational education through curricula and printed educational publications (textbooks, teaching aids and notebooks). Textbook materials and teaching aids are periodically assessed by experts to evaluate content from a gender perspective and propose new images when necessary to better promoting gender equality.
One strategy adopted by **Uzbekistan** to increase the number of girls attaining higher education has been the holding of awareness raising sessions in rural areas to promote female professionals as role models, for example through their contribution to development of rural infrastructure. “Kizlarjon” clubs have been established in all higher educational institutions to increase young women’s social and political activity in society as well as to promote their professional development, engagement in innovative projects and participation in competitions. Higher educational institutions have reopened part-time education programmes across many subject areas, making attendance easier for young women who remain tied to domestic responsibilities. In the meantime, women occupy a significant number of leadership positions in scientific and educational institutions: 20 women are vice-principals of higher educational institutions, 34 are deans of departments and 390 are heads of departments.

### 4.4 Women and health – important progress but inequalities persist

*Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), is fundamental to gender equality and women’s full participation on society. All SPECA countries have prioritized women’s health within the public health care system. A key indicator of improvement in women’s access to SHHR is the rate of maternal mortality. Reducing this rate has been a core priority of SPECA governments, with support from local civil society organizations and international partners (refer Figure 3). The following country summaries particularly highlight advances in the provision and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health care services.*

**Figure 3: Maternal mortality ratios (MMR) in SPECA countries, women 15-49 years, 2017, percentage of deaths per 100,000 live births. MMR point estimate and range of uncertainty interval (UI: 80%)**

![Figure 3: Maternal mortality ratios (MMR) in SPECA countries, women 15-49 years, 2017, percentage of deaths per 100,000 live births. MMR point estimate and range of uncertainty interval (UI: 80%)](image)


*Note: National Beijing+25 Reports indicate that Afghanistan has seen a decline of 50% in maternal mortality since 2000. Kazakhstan has seen a decline from 50% in 2014; Tajikistan has seen a decline from 45% in 2010; and Uzbekistan has seen a decline from 20.7% in 1996.*

The National Health Policy 2015-2020 of **Afghanistan** prioritizes five policy areas; governance,
institutional development, public health, health services and human resources. It is complemented by the National Health Strategy 2016 – 2020 which aims to provide equitable and accessible healthcare services to women; the National Gender and Human Rights Strategy for the health sector; and a recently finalized Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, and Child and Adolescent Strategy. The country is working towards promoting public-private partnerships in this sphere while engaging with religious leaders, youth and civil society in order to reach their goal of achieving a Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) of 30 per cent by reducing the unmet need to 10 per cent by 2020.

Expanding access to essential reproductive, maternal and child health services by rural women is a key focus of Afghanistan’s health services. Measures to this end by the Ministry of Public Health include 115 family ‘health nests’ in remote and rural areas of selected provinces. The nests provide lifesaving services, create an active referral system and provide family planning services. Public health services have also been prioritized for survivors of gender-based violence and their families through setting up protection and family support centres.

The last five years in Azerbaijan have seen a further strengthening of the national architecture for women’s health with the adoption of a new State Programme for Improving Mother and Child Health, among other measures. New national clinical protocols and standards have also been developed and are actively monitored, while a Reproductive Health Portal has been established to raise public awareness. Obstetrics and perinatal care operate with a regionalization framework to ensure services are close to the communities they serve. Seven regional perinatal centres were established in the period 2016-2017.

In Kazakhstan, mother and child health are one of the state’s priorities. Two key programmes underpin this commitment: The Salamatty Kazakhstan Program and the new National Healthcare Program “Densaulyk” both address reproductive healthcare needs; maintaining health; reducing morbidity and mortality among mothers, children and adolescents; and preventing sexually transmitted infections. “Densaulyk” has facilitated the stabilization of maternal and infant mortality following a nearly five-fold drop in 2015.

Box 7: Progress and potential - Kazakhstan healthcare snapshot

A multi-indicator cluster study conducted in 2015 in Kazakhstan provides an insight into the issues which have generally been the focus of policy and service attention across the SPECA countries in recent years, with the particular areas of progress in Kazakhstan highlighted. The study showed that 99.4 per cent of births take place in obstetric care facilities in attendance of qualified medical personnel. 99.3 per cent of pregnant women are covered by antenatal care. Improving the access of pregnant women and infants, especially in rural and remote areas, to medically assisted reproduction services is ensured through devolving perinatal care in all 17 regions of the country. The country, however, has not utilized all its capacities to bring down maternal and neonatal mortality. Official data state that every sixth pregnancy in Kazakhstan is terminated by abortion despite recent declined indicators. A multi-indicator cluster study in 2015 demonstrated that only 53 per cent of reproductive age women use modern contraceptives. Efforts to meet the public demand for family planning and expand access to services and contraceptives are carried out under the 2017–2021 National Framework Program and Action Plan for Strengthening Family Planning Service that is delivered as part of the Public Health Development Roadmap of the Ministry of Health.

Building on the 2015 adoption of the Law on Reproductive Rights of Citizens and Guarantees of Such Rights, Kyrgyzstan has taken a number of steps in recent years to improve women’s access to health services. These include the expansion of universal health coverage as well as specific health services for women and girls in areas such as sexual and reproductive health, mental health, maternal health and HIV services. Priority is also placed on strengthening comprehensive sexuality education in schools and communities. Maternal health remains a particular priority with many pregnant women, women in labour and new mothers dying every year. Maternal death rates are higher in rural areas than in towns and cities (36.7 deaths per 100,000 live births in rural areas compared to 31.9 in urban areas).

Recent years have seen the needs of women and girls move increasingly into the centre of national health priorities in Tajikistan. One driver has been adoption by the Tajikistan Government of the Action Plan on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Mothers, Newborns, Children and Adolescents as a part of the National Population Health Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016–2020. All pregnant women now have access to primary healthcare services during the day and the number of reproductive health centres and trained professionals has increased significantly, contributing to a significant reduction in maternal mortality rates.

Turkmenistan’s Law On Health Protection of Citizens (2015) provides guarantees for gender equality in healthcare provision. Access to sexual and reproductive health and protection services is prioritized by the country, with the focus on new mothers enhanced by the introduction of a tool to assess the quality of family planning services. As a result risk groups have been identified; a new sectoral reporting format has been introduced and an indicator has been defined to determine the degree of coverage by contraceptives among women at high risk.

**Box 8: Turkmenistan introduces medical passport for reproductive health**

| An innovative initiative to expand contraceptive coverage in Turkmenistan has been the introduction of medical passports for the reproductive health of mothers. This and other developments have increased the coverage of contraceptive provision to women at risk from 21 per cent in 2013 to 71.4 per cent in 2018. The results of the MICS-5 survey (2016) showed that the rate of met demand for contraception is high (81%) among women aged 15-49 needing contraception in Turkmenistan. |

A major milestone in Uzbekistan’s women’s health efforts was the adoption in March 2019 of the Law “On Guarantees of Protection of Reproductive Rights. This builds on a state programme to strengthen the reproductive health of the population and protect the health of mothers, children and adolescents during 2014–2018. Women’s consultation units have been created in family clinics and rural medical centres to provide support for adolescent girls and women of fertile age. As in other SPECA countries, the improvement over time of sexual and reproductive health and rights in has contributed a reduction in maternal mortality rates.
5 Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes:

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<tr>
<th>SDG thematic clusters</th>
<th>B PfA critical areas of concern</th>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes (SDG 5)</td>
<td>D. Violence against women</td>
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<td>I. Human rights of women</td>
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<td>J. Women and the media</td>
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<td>L. The girl child</td>
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Introduction: Violence against women is one of the most stark and persistent manifestations of gender inequality across the SPECA countries. Recent years have seen significant progress in the development of national responses to address the issue within the region, ranging from new laws to public awareness campaigns and provision of services for survivors. Driving violence against women and gender inequality all areas covered by the SPECA national Beijing+ reports are deep seated social norms. As well as surveying steps taken by SPECA countries to address violence against women, this chapter also looks at the impact of social norms through a country case study and the role that can be played by the media to both expose and transform the norms that influence institutional and personal behavior. This chapter particularly relates to SDG 5.

Key messages:

- **Violence against women and girls:** The last five years have seen a significant development of policy, legislative, regulatory, institutional, programmatic and public awareness measures to address gender-based violence across all SPECA countries, with initial evidence of progress being demonstrated.
- **Early marriage:** Although the practice is being progressively reduced by government policies and measures within the SPECA countries, early marriage remains a factor in holding back the life prospects of many young women. As well as affecting their ability to undertake employment and education, the practice also increases health risks linked to pregnancy, including maternal mortality.
- **Discriminatory social norms:** These drive and underpin all aspects of gender inequality across the region, particularly in rural areas. Recent years have seen increasing efforts by SPECA governments, working with international partners and local NGOs, to challenge and change discriminatory norms, including through increasing the number of women in the media, promoting gender sensitive media content and addressing gender bias in educational curricula.

5.1 Eliminating violence against women and girls.

A notable feature of efforts to promote gender equality in the last five years across SPECA countries has been the rapid development of legislation, policies, strategies and mechanisms to address violence against women, supported by a diverse array of programmes and services to support survivors. Considerable experience has been developed in a short time from which countries which are moving more slowly, such as Turkmenistan, can benefit. However, systemic challenges remain linked to factors such as the influence of deep-seated social norms, low levels of literacy and public awareness and the uneven availability of services.

Afghanistan’s landmark 2009 Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (known as the EVAW Law) criminalized 22 acts of violence against women and harmful practices including child marriage, forcing or prohibiting marriage, forced marriage, rape and beating. The law’s provisions are reinforced by the Penal Code 2018, the Child Protection Law 2019 and the Anti-Harassment Law to protect Women and Children 2017 and the Protection Law 2019 (Child Act).
To back up the new measures, all 34 provinces of Afghanistan have EVAW Prosecution Units headed by female prosecutors and EVAW Courts have been established across the country. A national High Commission (with 12 representatives of different organizations) and provincial commissions on EVAW have also been set up in all provinces, along with a deputy position in the Attorney General’s Office, 32 provincial EVAW attorney offices, 28 EVAW special courts, Family Response Units in all police offices, and 27 women protection centres in 20 provinces. The EVAW law has also strengthened the rights of women to employment by criminalizing any interference on rights of women to work. This is being done by promoting ethos of non-discrimination based in Article 22 of the Afghan Constitution.

**Box 9: Afghanistan: Despite progress, many challenges remain**

Despite the above measures and many awareness-raising programmes on the rights of women within the Constitution and Islam, many challenges stand in the way of eliminating gender-based violence in Afghanistan. These include low rates of literacy and awareness of women rights; security challenges and attacks on women in public spaces; lack of the rule of law in remote areas; and the prevalence of discriminatory social norms that bar women from seeking legal assistance. As a result, few cases get to be reported compared to the actual prevalence rate of violence against women due to stigma, discrimination, fear of reprisals, as well as the treatment of victims of sexual abuse as perpetrators of zina (i.e. sexual intercourse outside of marriage) or “attempted zina”. Therefore, women and girls are sometimes charged with the “intention” of committing zina when they run away from abuse and seek help.

Major achievements for Azerbaijan in addressing violence against women have included the progressive improvement of relevant legislation and related regulations; the creation of a national online database to improve the collection, analysis and use of data; large-scale awareness raising campaigns; training for service providers and the development of integrated strategies to coordinate approaches to addressing violence. The Government has developed a National Action Plan on gender-based violence prevention and response to provide a framework to pull these and other initiatives together. Guidelines for inter-agency coordination have also been formulated.

To support these developments, research has been conducted with UNFPA support on the extent of domestic violence and the financial losses caused by gender-based violence. A particular focus in Azerbaijan has been the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence among some 500,000 internally displaced and refugee women, led by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This has included building awareness and relevant capacities of existing national mechanisms to prevent and respond to cases and support survivors.

In Kazakhstan, the joint efforts of governmental agencies and NGOs has put the elimination of violence against women and children at the centre of national policies and priorities. December 2009 saw the adoption of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence. The Law sets out legal, economic, social and organizational frameworks for governmental agencies, local authorities, organizations and the public at large to prevent domestic violence. The Law introduced new mechanisms against offenders, such as restraining orders and specific requirements for behavior.

In 2015, the country conducted its first national survey on the incidence of violence against women. This was implemented by the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy in collaboration with WHO, UNFPA and UN Women. The survey showed that nearly 17 per cent of women in Kazakhstan, aged 18-75 and who had ever had a partner, suffered from physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. In 2017 UN Women and the Statistics Committee made a comprehensive assessment of economic costs and damage to the society caused by domestic violence. A number of recommendations were made to set up a robust system to use and
disseminate gender statistics, statistical analysis, monitoring and evaluation of the domestic violence situation.

Arising out of these various initiatives has been the establishment of some 30 crisis centres in 17 regions of the country; helplines and dedicated services for women experiencing domestic violence; a multisectoral pilot project to keep “Kazakhstan free from domestic violence;” and special units under the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the protection of women against violence.

As a result of measures introduced to prevent gender-based violence, Kyrgyzstan has seen an increase in the number of domestic violence (registered) reports and temporary protection orders. The primary legislative instrument to address violence against women and girls in Kyrgyzstan is the Law On Prevention and Protection Against Domestic Violence (2017). The law outlines fundamental mandatory principles for the 11 responsible government agencies. The law sets specific objectives for each of these government agencies and also a mechanism for inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation to facilitate the implementation process.

In particular, the law stipulates that persons who experienced domestic violence are entitled to all legal, medical and psychological assistance, social support and consultations as required. The law also contains innovative approaches, such as requiring law enforcement agencies to respond to reports of domestic violence no matter when or from whom they were received, i.e., not only from violence victims. A single protection order was introduced to replace two different types of orders (a temporary protective order and a court order). Intervention programmes for domestic abusers were furthermore introduced for the first time with the aim of changing abusive behavior.

The new legislation is supported by a number of regulations and agency-level documents which inter alia detail the mechanisms of interaction and collaboration between responsible government agencies. In 2017 government and administration (agency-level) statistics were analyzed for the first time and accounting and reporting forms were improved.

The focus in Tajikistan is on mechanisms to effectively implement the provisions of the Law on the Prevention of Violence in the Family and the State Programme on the Prevention of Domestic Violence for 2014–2023. The efforts of several national working groups have contributed to the development and strengthening of new laws, regulations, guidelines, standards and initiatives in a range of areas. These include assistance to victims of domestic violence; an enhanced role by educational institutions in promoting non-violent behaviour (with new subjects introduced for grades 8–11 to promote non-violent behaviour among students); strengthened response and support provided by government agencies at all levels; and improved monitoring and evaluation of progress and gaps.

According to the results of a survey carried out by UNFPA in 2015, the predominant characteristic of violence against women in Uzbekistan was psychological in nature, particularly verbal humiliation (28 per cent of respondents). 5.8 per cent of women were subjected to physical violence. The period 2017-2019 saw several important steps to eliminate violence against women. Key among these were (i) strengthening legislative and regulatory frameworks (including a new draft Law On the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the Family;’ (ii) stepping-up efforts to prevent violence against women; (iii) strengthening multi-sectoral support services; and (iv) improving the quality of statistical data and information. An important measure in the later area has been the creation of the “Oila” research center under the Cabinet of Ministers to promote the concept of ‘Healthy family – healthy society.’ Rehabilitation and adaptation centers have been set up in the

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regions of the country to provide psychological, legal and social support to survivors of domestic violence.

There is currently no dedicated law on violence against women in Turkmenistan and current legislation does not contain provisions for criminalization of “domestic violence”. However, the country’s legislative plan for 2018-2022 includes provision for a draft Law On the Prevention of Violence against Women in Family.’ The National Plan of Action on Gender Equality in Turkmenistan 2015–2020 also includes a commitment to conduct a survey on the prevalence, causes and consequences of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. In the meantime, the Law of Turkmenistan ‘On State Guarantees for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men’ guarantees the equal rights of women and men to protection against sexual assault, kidnapping and trafficking.

**Box 10: SPECA countries take action to address human trafficking**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Human trafficking</strong></th>
<th><strong>Afghanistan</strong></th>
<th><strong>Turkmenistan</strong></th>
<th><strong>Tajikistan</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Violence against women and girls is pervasive and requires systematic action at both national and international levels cross-border collaboration. All SPECA countries have put in place legislation and measures to address human trafficking in the region and protect and assist victims in line with international treaties and standards. Afghanistan has established an intra-ministry High Commission to Fight against Abduction and Human Trafficking. The Commission includes the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Independent Bar Association and two representatives from social organizations to protect and assist victims of human trafficking. In Turkmenistan, a priority has been aligning national legislation with international standards required amendments to the country’s Criminal Code as well as laws on employment, advertising and ‘On advocacy in Turkmenistan.' In Tajikistan, the Law on Combating Human Trafficking includes emphasis on the interaction between legal entities and non-governmental and public organizations.</td>
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**5.2 Early marriage continues to hold back the life prospects of young women**

Linked to the prevalence of violence against women in SPECA countries is the persistence of the practice of early marriage in the region. Although the practice is being progressively reduced by government policies and measures within the SPECA countries, early marriage remains a factor in holding back the life prospects of many young women, affecting their ability to undertake employment and education and bringing heightened health risks linked to pregnancy, including maternal mortality. As the Beijing+25 report from Kyrgyzstan observes, a girl from a poor family is more at risk of being forced into early marriage. The following survey highlights both current status of early marriage with SPECA and measures to eliminate the practice.

**Afghanistan:** According to Girls not Brides,13 35 per cent of girls in Afghanistan are married before or by the age of 18, with girls who are not in school three times more likely to be in this situation. Young women are often married to older men who are able to pay dowry or support bride’s family financially. While currently the legal marriage age is set by law at 16 for females and 18 for males, a new draft family law would standardize the marriage age at 18 to take account of the country’s constitution and international human rights standards.

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The Kazakhstán Code on Marriage and Family allows the registration authorities to lower the age of marriage by no more than two years below the standard age of 18 in the case of a pregnancy or a common child (early marriages). In 2018, 1,052 early marriages were registered, compared to 1,554 in 2012. The problem of child and forced marriage in Kazakhstan is linked to low levels of awareness of the rights of adolescent girls, weak enforcement of penalties against persons who abduct brides and illegal religious registration of marriages with minor girls. The Women’s League of Creative Initiative NGO believes that actual numbers of “unofficial” marriages (that are not registered with authorities) may be higher. A key element of the government response is the raising of public awareness of stereotypes that perpetuate violations of girls’ rights; the risks associated with early pregnancy and abortions; and rights and opportunities to get education, health and social services. The annual United Nations International Day of Girls is a major focus of such efforts.

Early marriage also remains an issue in Kyrgyzstán, although the number of girls married between the ages of 15-18 is declining (948 in 2014 to 408 in 2017). A girl forced into early marriage usually has no opportunity to continue education at school. The likelihood of pregnancy and childbirth in early marriages is higher and accompanied by risks of both psychological and physiological complications. The decline in early marriages is linked to a range of legal and public awareness measures taken in line with the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018-2020. These included legislative changes to bring regulations and other documents into compliance with the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Prohibition of Religious Marriage Ceremonies with Minors, and comprehensive campaigns aimed to raise awareness about negative consequences of early marriage and to inform religious organizations and the public of their illegality and unacceptability.

Key factors which contribute to the ongoing incidence of early marriages are the lack of economic and social opportunities for girls to exercise their rights; poverty growth and parents’ desire to marry off girls as early as possible; prevalence of a traditional hierarchical family model where girls have the lowest status; early sexual activity of young people; increased religious influences which allow girls to marry early; and a growing number of underage girls abducted for the purpose of marriage.

To prevent early marriages, Tajikistán amended its Family Code in 2010, raising the legal age of marriage from 17 to 18. The increase aims to ensure that girls exercise their right to education and prepare for independent life, as well as to implement provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are still many cases of parents or other relatives arranging marriages of girls below marriageable age and many men who enter into marriages with girls under the age of 18. In 2016–2017 and the first half of 2018, courts of Tajikistan heard 46 criminal cases, under which 89 people were convicted for crimes related to early marriage.

The proportion of early marriages in Uzbekistán has fallen sharply as a result of awareness-raising activities by the national Women’s Committee in collaboration with relevant state and non-state stakeholders. In 2016, the average marriage age was 22.6 among women and 26 among men. In order to prevent early marriages, court prosecutors, in collaboration with municipalities, the Women’s Committee, mahalla committees, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations carried out over 3,000 public awareness-raising activities in 2018 alone. As a result of such activities between 2014 and 2019, it is estimated that more than 3,000 early marriage cases were prevented.

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5.3 Discriminatory social norms driving gender inequality

The deep-seated and persistent influence of discriminatory social norms underpins and drives gender inequalities across all areas covered by this paper. A number of efforts have been made to address and reverse such influences among SPECA members. These include the establishment of a government-sponsored committee of mobile preachers in Afghanistan to raise awareness of women’s rights in Islam; a grass-roots campaign with faith-based groups and community leaders on gender-biased sex selection at birth in Azerbaijan; and a series of studies on the elimination of patriarchal stereotypes and the role, position and responsibilities of women and men in family and society in Uzbekistan. The latter were conducted under the oversight of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan. They indicated that a new model of Uzbek families is emerging: an innovative family which is aligned with requirements of the world economy and development in society.

The following case study from the National Beijing+25 report of Kyrgyzstan elaborates the influence of discriminatory social norms and efforts to address the impact of such norms.

Case study 1: Discriminatory social norms drive gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has seen a polarization of public views on women’s rights and gender equality over the past five years, with a growing tendency to perceive such concepts as “alien” and pro-western. A key element in such polarization has been a growing push back towards social norms premised on a women’s role being focused around home and the care of family, states the Kyrgyzstan National Beijing+25 Report. An analysis is cited of women’s images in commercial advertising which identifies women as most often portrayed in the roles of wife and mother in line with “stereotypical patriarchal thinking.” (1) The analysis states that “women who do not live up to the “female” standards of behavior and appearance are stigmatized as “different.”” It is in this context that the National Action Plan of Gender Equality 2018-2020 outlines specific measures and activities aimed at “building a culture of intolerance to gender discrimination and violence among women and men from all cultural and age groups of society.”

A related development is an increase in “radicalization” within Kyrgyzstan society, with women being increasingly drawn into extremist organizations and armed conflicts in other countries. A number of factors are identified by the country’s Beijing+25 report as contributing to this trend. These include social injustice, discrimination in both public and private life, poverty, unemployment, low levels of religious literacy and low levels of general awareness. Women from vulnerable groups (religious women, ethnic minorities, young rural women and women from transboundary communities) can be particularly vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

The Kyrgyzstan National Beijing+25 Report further summarizes programme analysis and lessons learned from UN Women projects on prevention of violent extremism in transboundary communities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These show an increase in the number of communities where mobility and participation of women, especially young rural women, is controlled by male family members. At the same time, UN Women projects on behaviour change through the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in closed patriarchal communities delivered impressive results in changing the behavior of men and women from vulnerable groups, with a growing number becoming agents of change in their respective communities. There is evidence available of the way that women’s engagement helps make peacebuilding and conflict prevention more effective, strengthens protection efforts, enhances radicalization and extremism prevention measures, and accelerates economic recovery due to a wider range of peace dividends. The positive effect of women’s leadership on sustainable peacebuilding and conflict prevention, management and resolution in Kyrgyzstan was validated by an evaluation in 2018 of the implementation of the


5.4 Women, the media and changing social norms

The media, public and private, exercises a major influence on social norms and behaviours. In line with BPfA commitments and the growing understanding of the role of the media in efforts to promote gender equality, all SPECA countries have taken a variety of initiatives to both increase the number of women working in the media and promote media content and visibility on gender issues. The following summaries highlight initiatives by SPECA countries to strengthen the role of the media as a vehicle for gender transformation, rather than one for reinforcing discrimination and stereotypes.

In Kazakhstan, where women accounted for 30.2 per cent of the total number of executives within Kazakhstan’s media in 2018, the government has been active in providing articles and other material promoting gender equality via national TV channels, national print media, regional media and internet resources channels. As a result of collaboration between UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the period 2017-2019, coverage of gender and the SDGs was the focus of training for over 45 journalists, representatives of the press services of governmental agencies and focal points for coverage of gender issues, and academic institutions. Regional secretaries of commissions for women’s affairs, family and demographic policy deliver annual trainings for journalists on gender-related media coverage.

Under Afghanistan’s national action plan for women, media houses are provided with training support to enhancing women’s role in management and leadership positions. Recent election periods have seen an increased number of women actively participating in media election campaigns. In Azerbaijan, measures have been taken to enhance women’s access to ICT, including through free wi-fi hubs, community technology centres and an annual ‘women in IT’ award. The Tajikistan Committee on Women and the Family actively uses media as a key vehicle to eliminate gender stereotypes, producing scores of programmes for national and local television channels to raise public awareness on issues such as domestic violence. The Women’s Union of Turkmenistan, in cooperation with the Parliament of Turkmenistan and participation of representatives of local authorities, held eight events involving 1,040 participants in 2017-2018 to promote women’s participation in the public and political life of the country, including through the media. In 2017, as part of the partnership between the Institute of the State, Law and Democracy of Turkmenistan and UNFPA, a guidance document was issued for journalists on professional coverage of gender issues.
Box 11: Promoting gender equality in the media in Uzbekistan

A key focus in Uzbekistan has been the support of women's media networks, including e-networks, as means of disseminating information and exchanging views. Supporting women in journalism is part of the role of the Creative Union of Journalists as well as the International Center for Journalist retraining. A number of grants have been provided to women’s media networks by the Parliamentary Fund of Support for NGOs and the Public Fund for the Democratization of Media. Increasing gender-related media content has also been a key focus, with cooperation between the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan and the National Television and Radio Company leading to around 2000 TV shows and over 3,000 radio programmes being aired in recent years on gender equality themes, along with over 300 articles in newspapers and magazines on the status of women in the country.

An increased interest by women in media roles is shown by the enrollment rates at the recently established University of Journalism and Mass Media of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, supported by a 30 per cent quota for part time undergraduate students which aims to attract young women. Currently the parity index of female students compared to young men majoring in journalism is 1.78 (or 64 per cent female students). Some departments offer classes on 'Gender and Media', which address the key concepts of gender equality, gender stereotypes and the principles of portraying women and men from the perspective of gender theory and practice.
6 Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

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<th>SDG thematic clusters</th>
<th>BPfA critical areas of concern</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions (SDGs 5, 16 and 17)</td>
<td>G. Women in power and decision-making</td>
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<td>H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women</td>
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Introduction: The Beijing Platform of Action states that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives into all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. All SPECA countries have constitutional and legislative commitments to gender equality in participation in public life, including in national parliaments and the public service. Drawing primarily on the national Beijing+25 reports of SPECA countries, this chapter examines the status and current developments within the region concerning legislative and strategic frameworks for gender equality; women in power and decision-making in national parliaments and the public service; national institutions for the advancement of women; gender responsive budgeting; and gender statistics to inform national policy making. This chapter particularly relates to SDGs 5, 16 and 17.

Key messages:

- **National enabling frameworks**: While recent years have seen significant progress within SPECA with respect to the development of national gender equality laws, policies, strategies and plans, the main challenge remains one of effective implementation in all countries, supported by adequate and sustainable resourcing.

- **Women’s voice, representation and leadership**: Although the situation varies across SPECA countries, considerable and systemic gender disparities persist in parliamentary and local government representation, the public service, business and other areas. All countries have policies and measures in place to increase women’s participation in leadership and decision-making in politics and the public sector, in particular. Although two thirds have gender quotas in place in the lower house of parliament (or equivalent national body), only one country, Uzbekistan, has currently crossed the 30 per cent threshold.

- **National women’s institutions**: Such mechanisms are in place in all SPECA countries, taking various institutional forms. Their roles however are affected to varying degrees by capacity weaknesses, under-resourcing and their relative marginalization within the overall system of government, including vis-à-vis finance and planning ministries and agencies.

- **Gender responsive budgeting (GRB)**: GRB is on the agenda to a greater or lesser degree in all SPECA countries as a relatively recent area of policy attention. Considerable potential exists for the sharing of GRB knowledge, experience and lessons between SPECA members, particularly to help accelerate progress in those countries yet to take substantive first steps.

- **Gender statistics**: All SPECA countries have taken initiatives to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of gender statistics, with impetus given by the BPfA and SDG Target 17.18. The strengthening of relevant capacities and systems within national statistical organizations has been a key area of shared focus.
6.1 Laws and gender strategies set directions for national action

All SPECA countries have a diverse architecture of laws, policies, strategies and plans at overarching, thematic and sector levels. In Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, first draft national gender equality strategies are awaiting approval or planned. The following summary highlights the overarching frameworks in each country, under which sit (for example) specific legal and programmatic measures in areas such as violence against women, participation in decision-making and leadership and women’s economic empowerment. The challenge, as highlighted elsewhere, is generally one of implementation, which in turn is particularly linked to political will, resourcing and addressing the impact of discriminatory social norms.

The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan provides the overarching framework for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, based on the pillars of participation, protection, prevention (of violence) and relief and recovery. The Ministry of Women Affairs is currently leading the preparation of the second national plan with a specific focus on the 12 areas of concerns adopted in Beijing Declaration. In addition, women’s economic empowerment is one of the 10 National Priority Programs approved within the Afghanistan Peace and Development Framework. Directions in this respect are provided by the Women’s Economic Empowerment National Priority Program.

In Azerbaijan, a draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment awaits approval by the Cabinet of Ministers. The plan will provide guidance on implementation of the Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality.

A number of laws, policies and strategies underpin Kazakhstan’s constitutional commitment to gender equality. Key among these is the Law On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, which is supported by the 2030 Concept of Gender and Family Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan’s 2025 Strategic Development Plan further embeds a commitment to achieving equal rights for women and men and eliminating all forms and manifestations of gender-based discrimination. Commitments are included to improving relevant laws and integrating gender impact assessments into the national and budget planning system.

The overarching legal framework in Kyrgyzstan is the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. This provides constitutional norms for the protection of citizens’ rights and opportunities. In this context, the National Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic on Gender Equality Until 2020, which was developed and approved in 2012 after extensive consultation, sets out national gender priorities for economic participation, education, access to justice and public life. The strategy is currently operationalized by the fifth National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2020. Financing requirements are identified separately for each action plan during the design process.

The National Strategy for Enhancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2015–2020 provides that country’s overarching framework for gender equality, reflecting the gender equality commitments in the 2030 National Development Strategy and the Mid-Term Development Programme 2016–2020. A key vehicle for implementing the strategy since 2017 has been a national Working Group on Improvement of Legal Acts on Elimination of Gender Stereotypes, Protection of Women’s Rights and Prevention of Domestic Violence. Three subgroups have been developing further legal measures to eliminate gender stereotypes, strengthen the protection of women’s rights and prevent domestic violence. At the time of Beijing+25 reporting, all recommendations of the subgroups were under consideration by the Executive Office of the President.

A milestone development in the case of Turkmenistan has been the 2016 amendment of the
country’s constitution in line with CEDAW recommendations to include an article providing state guarantees for gender equality in all areas of state and public life. Already in place at that time were the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men and the first National Plan of Action on Gender Equality 2015-2020. The latter includes measures to eradicate gender stereotypes, eliminate violence against women, improve women’s access to services, and increase their participation in public, political, and professional life.

The national Development Strategy of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 prioritizes strengthening women’s role in the government and society, active participation of women in peace-building processes, increasing economic independence, and ensuring the employment of women and young people, especially those living in rural areas. The development of a long-term National Development Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality is planned within this framework, drawing inter alia on a gender assessment of existing legislation.

6.2 Variable progress in women’s political representation

Women’s representation in national parliaments as of 1 January 2020 varied from 32 per cent in Uzbekistan to 16.8 per cent in Azerbaijan. Although two thirds of SPECA members have gender quotas in place in the lower house of parliament (or equivalent national body) only one country, Uzbekistan, has currently crossed the 30 per cent threshold. Kazakhstan’s quota system was only introduced in May 2020. Notably Turkmenistan has achieved a 25 per cent level of representation without temporary special measures being in place. In one country (Kyrgyzstan) the levels of women’s representation in governance at national level has declined despite the existence of a 30 per cent quota, showing that gender quotas alone are not sufficient to ensure an increased presence in parliament. Women’s representation at local government levels has also declined in Kyrgyzstan.

Table 6: Women in national politics: Status on 1 January 2020 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECA member</th>
<th>Parliamentary quotas</th>
<th>Government ministers (% number and global ranking)</th>
<th>Members of Parliament (Lower House)</th>
<th>Members of Parliament (Upper House)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
<td>27% of seats in the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) are reserved for women, comprising at least 2 women for each of the 34 provinces of the country.</td>
<td>9.5% 3 ministers Rank: 151</td>
<td>27% Rank: 67</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Azerbaijan</td>
<td>No temporary special measures currently in place</td>
<td>3% 1 minister Rank: 181</td>
<td>16.8 Rank 126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Republic of Kazakhstan</td>
<td>30 per cent quota for women and youth in election party lists (introduced 25 May 2020)</td>
<td>5% 1 minister Rank: 174</td>
<td>27.1 Rank 66</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
<td>30% quota for women in the</td>
<td>9.5% 2 ministers</td>
<td>19.2% Rank 114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Quotas/Measures Provided</td>
<td>Women's Representation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Republic of Tajikistan        | Jogorku Kenesh (the Supreme Council) | The possibility of introducing gender quotas is provided for under the National Strategy on Enhancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan 2011–2020 | 5.9% | 1 minister  
Rank: 173 | 19.0%  
Rank: 116 | 21.9% |
| Turkmenistan                 |             | No temporary special measures currently in place | 3.7% | 1 minister  
Rank: 179 | 25%  
Rank: 73 |
| Republic of Uzbekistan       |             | 30% quota in the Oliy Majlis/Supreme Assembly; 25% quota in the Senate | 8.0% | 2 ministers  
Rank: 158 | 32%  
Rank: 44 | 17% |


Note 1: Three SPECA members have women Parliamentary Speakers: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The only female head of state or government within SPECA has been Roza Otunbayeva, President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, 7 April 2010 - 1 December 2011.

Note 2: Data based on those provided in the national Beijing+25 reports provided by SPECA member countries.

Afghanistan: In line with the national constitution and various laws and frameworks, the Afghanistan Government has provided specific quotas for women’s inclusion in politics and decision making positions and national and local levels (27 per cent at national level and at least 20 per cent at provincial level). The national quota is based on at least two women being elected to the National Council from each province. A 25 per cent quota for women is further stipulated for district councils and at least 25 per cent of chairs in each of the council of the district should be assigned to women candidates.

To facilitate the movement of more women into senior leadership roles, a high level, multi-sector, multi-stakeholder task force is planned to be established under cabinet and Presidential purview. The task force will advocate for women’s leadership, enforce institutional accountability, and monitor the implementation of affirmative action policy and other measures for the promotion of women’s leadership and participation in governance at the central and provincial levels. This body will also investigate complaints of discrimination against women who are either in public office or seeking positions.
Box 12: Building gender balance into community development councils in Afghanistan

An important part of Afghanistan’s development architecture is the Community Development Council (CDC) system, particularly in rural areas. Each CDC has female and male sub-councils with five members apiece. One CDC represents around 300 families. The CDCs identify local development potentials and draft project proposals. The Beijing + 25 report states that the needs of women are increasingly taken into account in the local development process and project proposals are more needs oriented than in the past.

Azerbaijan saw the appointment of the first women Vice-President in 2017. The number of women in parliament has increased from 11 per cent in 2005 to the current 16.8 per cent. At the same time the representation of women at municipal level increased from 4 per cent in 2004 to 35 per cent in 2014. Increasing the number of women in local governance has been supported by the development of a set of national Guidelines for Leadership for Women in Local Governments. Leadership development and mentorship programmes are actively promoted by the government, with a particular focus on encouraging young and minority women’s participation. A distinctive feature of women’s participation in the public policy sphere is the Special Public Council within the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs. This consists of representatives from nine NGOs, six of which are headed by women. The council plays an important role in the preparation and improvement of gender equality legislation, ensuring public oversight of gender equality initiatives and progress, and contributing to decisions on the protection of women’s and children’s rights.

The Kazakhstan 2030 Concept of Family and Gender Policy sets a 30 per cent target for the representation of women in executive, representative and judicial authorities, as well as at decision-making levels in quasi-state and corporate sectors. A major step in this direction was taken in May 2020 with the adoption of 30 per cent quota for women and youth in election party lists. In addition, a proportional system to elect maslikhat (national parliament) representatives was introduced on 1 January 2019 under the Law on Elections. This is expected to improve women’s representation over time. Only four oblasts (local government units) have crossed the 30 per cent representation threshold. Women furthermore accounted for 66.8 per cent of members in Kazakhstan’s 10,202 election commissions at the time of Beijing+25 reporting. The Central Election Commission included a women’s representation of more than 40 per cent.

A further important sphere for women’s leadership and participation in decision-making is civil society. Kazakhstan is home to 22,398 NGOs, including more than 500 that focus on family and gender policy matters and are important contributors to female community empowerment. Women run 8,220 NGOs (36.7 per cent). There is an active national network of women’s leadership schools that brings together nearly 70 NGOs. All 17 regions of the country have active ‘clubs of women-politicians.’

Kyrgyzstan: In 2007, 25.5 per cent of MPs were women following the first elections after the introduction of the mandatory 30 per cent quota for women in the country’s Elections Code. However, by 2020 the level has slipped to 19.2 per cent, showing that quotas alone are not enough to sustain increased numbers of women in parliament. Similarly, the percentage of women in local legislative bodies decreased from 19 per cent in 2016 to 11 per cent in 2018. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018-2020 includes specific measures to ensure that no more than 75 per cent of persons of the same gender occupy “special political positions” in public and municipal bodies. The electoral legislation has been amended ensure that if a deputy’s term in office is ended between elections, a women’s place will go to a female candidate on the list, if available. In the meantime, however, the existing practice of “ousting” women from political parties after elections affects women’ representation in the national parliament.
Case study 2: Social norms and violence undermine women in power in Kyrgyzstan

A gender perception study by UN Women’s (2020) in Kyrgyzstan observed that people continue voting for men, because (i) women are supposed to fulfill “other” important roles as housewives and mothers first, before turning to the public and social life; and (ii) women politicians are commonly perceived as “assistants” to or “implementers” of political ambitions of their men colleagues, not as “leaders.” The study furthermore highlighted three key barriers that women have still to overcome to become equal to their men colleagues in the public sector: lack of family/public support (50/24 per cent), lack of experience in politics (46 per cent) and lack of financial support (42 per cent).

Women representatives at local and national level also raised the issue of violence against women during elections and political activities. This is a widespread problem in Kyrgyzstan, which institutions such as the Central Electoral Commission, National Parliament, national gender mechanism and law enforcement agencies do not recognize and address. Women candidates face threats and harassment from their rivals and male family members who insist that women leave the election race. Women members of the national and local parliaments particularly receive threats from their men colleagues when trying to raise the problems of corruption and violations of the law. Violence against women politicians is a major factor in discouraging young women to run in local elections. Out of 450 municipalities, 60 have no women representation in local councils. There are no women chairpersons in city councils and no women leaders in district and city administrations.


Tajikistan has also taken action in the past three years to accelerate the movement of women in leadership and decision-making roles. Initiatives have included the State Programme for the Education, Selection and Placement of Gifted Women and Girls in Leadership Positions in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2017–2022, with a focus on implementing Tajikistan’s commitments under CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs. The country’s National Strategy on Enhancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan 2011–2020 further promotes equal representation of women and men in the executive and representative bodies at all levels of governance and provides for the possibility of introducing temporary quotas for women’s representation.

Turkmenistan has achieved a degree of progress in women’s parliamentary representation without using gender quotas. The representation of women in politics is higher than average in the Central Asian region. The Speaker of the Parliament and the Authorized Representative for Human Rights (Ombudsman) are both women. At subnational level, women represented 20 per cent of total members of the regional people’s councils and the people’s councils of Ashgabat at the time of Beijing+25 reporting. 26.1 per cent of members of district and city people’s councils were women, and 21.9 per cent of local self-government members were women.

The introduction of a 30 per cent gender quota in parliamentary nominations in Uzbekistan saw women’s representation jump from 9.4 per cent to 16 per cent in 2017. However at local level, hokims (heads of local authorities) in 14 regions and Tashkent were all held by men in 2017. Out of 84 deputy hokims of viloyats (provinces), 16.67 per cent were women.

The Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan has signed memorandums with political parties and adopted an action plan to deliver practical measures to support the participation of women in public life at all levels. Special measures have further been developed by five political parties to increase the number of women and girls among their memberships, expand their opportunities to hold senior positions, and to allocate quotas for women in executive bodies. A nationwide girls’ club “Kizlarzhon” has also been created in every enterprise, organization, mahalla and educational facility, in order to increase
awareness about national and global events and prepare girls for participation in public and political life. The club has 2.5 million members.

6.3 Women’s representation in public service low, despite commitments

*Women's representation, voice and leadership within the public service across the SPECA countries is generally low, particular at senior and decision-making levels. In the latter case, the number of such roles held by women ranges from 39.9 per cent in Kazakhstan to 5-6 per cent in Uzbekistan. All SPECA countries have commitments, strategies and plans in place to increase the number of women within the public service, including in leadership and senior management roles. Such measures include the setting of specific targets, affirmative action steps (including quotas) and targeted training and professional support.*

Women make up 27.3 per cent of the civil servants and more than 11 per cent of decision-makers in Afghanistan. To increase the number of women in the civil service, recruitment procedures apply an affirmative action approach by granting five additional points to women during the examinations and ensuring that there is at least one woman on the Government Employment Committee. A policy has furthermore been approved by the Government of Afghanistan to increase the percentage of female civil servants by two per cent annually. The Election Law 2019 provides for increased gender equality in the appointment of members of the Election Commission, Complaints Commission and Heads of the Committees.

**Box 13: Progress in women’s representation in Afghanistan’s court system**

| Increasing the number of women at all levels of the judicial system is a vital part of the broader gender equality agenda of any society. In line with its National Action Plan for Women, the Afghanistan Government has undertaken specific steps to appoint women as members of the High Council of the Supreme Court. These steps include training courses for female judges, establishing the Female Judges Association and attracting women to the judicial stage (practice) period. Between 2008 and 2016, the representation of women in the judiciary increased from 4.7 per cent to 11 per cent. Supreme Court sub-units such as the Juvenile Court, Family Court, and EVAW Court are managed by women, and women are appointed as judicial councilors and work as members of various tribunals of the Supreme Court. |

Encouraging more women into public service roles through awareness raising and training is a priority in Azerbaijan in light of the current low levels of participation. Women account for less than a third of civil servants (28.6 per cent) and only 5 per cent of the heads of divisions. Overall, the share of women in positions classified as management in the civil service is 9.8 per cent. Although a President’s special order in 2006 specifies that at least one of the deputy heads appointed to each district and/or city must be a woman, only one executive head of a district and/or city is currently a woman.15

The 2030 Concept of Family and Gender Policy in Kazakhstan sets out an objective to ensure 30 per cent representation of women in state and quasi-state entities at the decision-making level. As of 1 January 2019, women accounted for 55.4 of civil servants, with the proportion of women in senior positions standing at 39.8 per cent.

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A recent key step to increase women’s representation in the Kyrgyzstan public service was the adoption of a decree on gender and ethnicity affirmative action. Young women, especially from ethnic and religious minorities, face significant barriers in their participation in political life, such as limited access to public service. As of 1 January 2017, the share of women within the civil service in Kyrgyzstan was 40.1 per cent. 29 per cent of top civil service positions with a special appointment procedure were held by women.

Tajikistan’s National Strategy on Enhancing the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan 2011–2020 provides for equal representation of women and men in all aspects of national governance, including the civil service. Inter alia the strategy supports the introduction of quotas in competitions to fill civil service positions at all levels and building the capacity and skills of women leaders. As of 1 January 2018, 18.9 per cent of managerial positions in the civil service were held by women. Currently the Head of the Executive Office of the President is female.

Uzbekistan has adopted a ‘social elevator’ strategy to (i) increase the share of women in mid-level positions in the executive branch of the government, and (ii) support the advancement of women from middle management to executive roles. The aim is to raise representation at senior levels from the current 5-6 per cent to 16-18 per cent. In partnership with the Academy of Public Administration, trainings are being conducted to develop women’s managerial and leadership skills to this end.

6.4 Institutional mechanisms for women play a crucial role within government

Although their organizational forms vary, national institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women play crucial advocacy, coordination and monitoring roles within each of the SPECA governments. Their positioning within governments also vary, ranging from being located under the President in Kazakhstan to falling under an Interdepartmental Commission for implementation of international human rights and humanitarian law in Turkmenistan. At the same time, their roles tend to be affected in practice by capacity weaknesses, under-resourcing and their relative marginalization within the overall system of government, including vis-à-vis finance and planning ministries and agencies. In all countries, the women’s mechanism is part of national SDG oversight, coordination and planning arrangements.

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs provides the main institutional mechanism for women’s advancement agency for women empowerment in Afghanistan. Its roots lie in the Bonn Agreement (2001) which laid the foundation for Afghanistan’s Constitution. Under the ministry’s supervision and guidance, state institutions are expected to mainstream gender in their policies, annual plans and activities, and ministries are encouraged to dedicate at least 30 per cent of their budget to this end. The Ministry of Women Affairs has been accepted as a member of the presidential legislative committee after a great deal of advocacy and has developed 28 policies for the purpose of promoting women’s empowerment. The Minister and Deputy Ministers of Women’s Affairs are members of various institutional processes responsible for the implementation of SDGs.

In Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs is responsible for formulating and pursuing government gender equality policy. 11 regional centres support the work of the national committee in rural areas. Women’s perspectives on national legislation is provided by a Special Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs within the National Assembly.

In Kazakhstan, the National Commission for Women’s Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy serves as the principle national institutional mechanism for the advancement of women. The
The National Commission on Gender is positioned under the President of Kazakhstan and led at Deputy Prime Ministerial level. The Regulations on the National Commission and its composition are endorsed by Presidential Decree.

Coordination of gender equality and women’s empowerment efforts at the local level is handled through regional commissions under local executive bodies (akimats) of regions and certain municipalities. Operational coordination is provided by the relevant ministries, for example the Ministry of National Economy (budget planning, national statistics, and trade); the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence (peace and security) etc. The National Commission is represented on the Steering Council led by the Deputy Prime Minister to oversee SDG implementation.

The two key national institutions for the advancement of women in Kyrgyzstan are (i) the National Council on Gender, a coordinating, consultative and advisory body and (ii) the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) represented by the Gender Department, which provides organizational, methodological, information and other support to the National Council. The Council is supposed to convene four times a year, but in practice it meets once a year. There are also other, informal national institutions advancing gender equality, such as the Forum of Women Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh. The Forum provides a platform to mainstream and promote gender-sensitive legislation and initiatives.

**Box 14: Multiple challenges affect roles of national women’s institutions**

The Kyrgyz National Beijing+25 report identifies several issues which affect the effectiveness of the National Council on Gender and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. To varying degrees, these reflect issues faced by institutions for women’s advancement in other SPECA countries. The issues include weak institutional and technical capacities; an approach to policy making which is often limited to adoption of laws and regulations which presented as an outcome in themselves rather than an instrument for achieving change; the marginalization of gender competencies within government functions and mandates; and a lack of understanding and gender awareness and knowledge among public servants at all levels.

The activities of the Council are furthermore assessed as not being systematic and are hindered by the staff turnover in ministries, agencies and provincial administrations in charge of gender issues. Council oversight is further limited by inefficient monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the weak harmonization of national strategies and programmes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Strengthening the staffing and financial capacities of the Committee for Women and the Family, Tajikistan’s main institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, has been a focus of government attention in recent years. This has included the establishment of Legal Department and an Expert Council on Gender Analysis of Legislation. A cross-government Gender Network has also been created to mainstream gender into the activities of ministries and other entities.

The scope of the Committee’s role includes coordinating the gender-related work of government agencies, NGOs and international partners; cooperating with legislative bodies and executive authorities, political parties, movements and NGOs; and monitoring the implementation of international obligations. Representatives of the Committee are members of all national bodies which are developing laws, programmes and strategies, including the National Development Council which inter alia coordinates the cooperation of development stakeholders with respect to SDG
Oversight of commitments to the advancement of women in Turkmenistan falls under an **Interdepartmental Commission** for implementation of the country’s international obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. The Commission *inter alia* coordinates the authorities responsible for the implementation of international human rights obligations and monitors legislative compliance with international standards. The Women’s Union of Turkmenistan is a member of the commission. The post of Ombudsman in Turkmenistan further plays a key role in the oversight and monitoring of implementation of human rights, including all aspects pertaining to gender equality.

The state-funded Women’s Committee of **Uzbekistan** is the largest and most influential women’s organization in that country, with units in all regions, districts, cities, labour unions, educational institutions and citizens’ self-governing bodies. The Committee initiates, coordinates and implements government policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving the status of women. It acts as both a coordinating structure with executive power, while having a vertical authority over deputy heads of territorial administrations in relation to women’s issues. This structure allows the Women’s Committee to participate in the development, negotiation and implementation of socially-oriented state programmes and projects across the country. To promote more women into leadership and decision-making roles, the Women’s Committee has generated a database including over 6,000 women-leaders, who could potentially serve as candidates in election campaigns for the Oliy Majlis (Parliament).

The work of the Women’s Committee is complemented by the Commission on Gender chaired by the Speaker of Parliament. The Commission participates in the implementation of state policy aimed at achieving gender equality and improving the social situation of women; considers appeals of state bodies and other organizations on violations of gender equality; and supports the implementation of measures to address occupational segregation and wage differences as well as to increase the economic participation of women.

**6.5 Gender-responsive budgeting**

*Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a key mechanism for putting gender equality at the centre of national planning and budget decision-making. The following three SPECA members have taken significant steps to this end, each with their own approach in collaboration with UN counterparts, particularly UN Women. Other SPECA members have commitments to introduce GRB under strategies for national development or gender equality (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Considerable potential exists for sharing of GRB knowledge, experience and lessons between SPECA members, particularly with respect to helping to accelerate progress in those countries yet to take substantive first steps.*

In the case of **Kazakhstan**, the Strategy of Gender Policy Implementation prioritizes “reinforcing the gender equality institute through state regulation and integration of gender impact assessment into the national and budget planning system and at drafting of regulations.” The Ministries of National Economy and Finance are accordingly co-developing proposals to introduce gender-responsive budgeting into the national and budget planning system. The initiative will also identify an authorized body that will be responsible for oversight and inter-agency coordination of gender policy, including the integration of gender statistics into the national and budget planning system.
Box 15: Afghanistan and Kazakhstan build capacity for gender responsive budgeting

Recent years in Afghanistan have seen an ongoing programme of GRB training for government officials, a GRB pilot programme involving six line ministries and the Ministry of Finance (to be expanded), a gender audit of the national budget in 2016, and the drafting of a GRB policy under which a steering committee and Technical Working Committee (TWC) were established. UN Women, UNDP and other international organizations have played important support roles.

Steps to introduce GRB in Kazakhstan are supported by continuous training of civil servants in gender-responsive budgeting in collaboration with the Academy of Public Administration, as well as by international cooperation through regular exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices. In 2017-2018, the Kazakhstan Ministry of National Economy implemented a joint project with UN Women to analyze state planning and budget documents of the Ministry of Agriculture from a gender perspective and provided gender responsive budgeting training to 218 civil servants. The project resulted in concrete propositions to amend and supplement regulations, which will be reflected in an impending ‘Plan for Integration of Gender-Responsive Budgeting into Existing System of State and Budget Planning.’ Kazakhstan has further collaborated with UN Women to study Austria’s experience in gender-responsive budgeting, on the basis of which training modules were designed, and GRB trainings were delivered for civil servants at the national and local levels.

Kyrgyzstan has also been actively promoting the integration of GRB (termed ‘gender-sensitive’ approaches) in national budget planning and implementation processes in partnership with international and nongovernmental organizations and other civil society members. However, while the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality until 2020 recognizes the approach, it has not yet been integrated into key overarching development strategy documents.

Important achievements to date have included (i) the introduction of a mechanism for gender-based assessment of the national budget and the Midterm Strategy on Budget Expenditures although this does not yet cover all local self-government bodies; (ii) the development of a gender-responsive and programme budget for the Ministry of Labour and Social Development; (iii) gender assessment standards for the national budget and an increased gender focus within budget circulars; (iv) a mechanism to ensure that expenditures under the social service procurement at national and municipal levels are explicitly gender-specific; and (v) the development of relevant capacities among government officials and civil society members, including at the local level.

A key barrier to the further development of GRB is an inability to conduct effective monitoring due to existing budget classifications which do not show how planned and actual expenses are shared between different social groups. Data on expenditures under social service procurement contracts are furthermore not publicly available. Currently programme budgets can be used only for tracking and analysis of planned budget expenditures that are explicitly gender-specific.

GRB is prioritized by Afghanistan’s National Action Plan for Women, with all ministries are encouraged to spend at least 30 per cent of their development budget for programmes and services that can empower Afghan women. The Government of Afghanistan began to work on GRB in 2005 after the establishment of a Gender Budgeting Group under the Ministry of Finance. GRB has now become part of public financial management reforms with the aim of institutionalizing the approach at national and provincial levels. The GRB Strategic Plan 2015 prepared by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Afghanistan aims at establishing enabling processes to move forward in implementing GRB, in line with the national development priorities. A key component of the approach is the establishment of GRB units within each government entity, with quarterly reporting
to the Administrative Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

The 2016 Gender Audit observed that GRB had yet to produce the desired results due to the weak institutionalization of GRB activities and objectives as well as a lack of expertise and coordination amongst ministries and budget units. Other constraining factors included the high proportion of the budget allocated to security which limited fiscal improvement in the economic and social sectors of the country.

The Uzbekistan Government has indicated an intention to introduce a phased implementation of gender budgeting in all sectors, especially in non-traditional sectors of the economy (such as industry, energy, transport, construction, ICT and finance); to increase the capacity of key participants in creating sectoral budgets to consider the interests of women and men; and to integrate sectorally-disaggregated gender budgets into national statistics.

6.6 Gender statistics: Providing the evidence base for gender equality policies

All SPECA countries have taken initiatives to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of gender statistics, although progress varies greatly across the region. Both the BPfA and SDG Target 17.18 have provided impetus for increased attention to gender statistics. To varying degrees, key gender statistics priorities across the region have included the strengthening of relevant capacities within national statistical organizations; increasing the publication of gender statistics and analysis at both overall national and sectoral/thematic levels; developing and improving national databases for gender statistics; and raising awareness across government systems of the use of statistics for public policy making and monitoring. Specific priorities and developments within SPECA countries are summarized below.

Afghanistan has seen a range of initiatives on gender statistics in the last five years. These include the promulgation of laws, regulations, strategies and programmes; the production of knowledge products on gender statistics (a third of government departments have produced user-friendly reports, policy briefs and research papers); and the use of more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) has further generated key national health and living standards surveys that have explicitly defined the lag in women’s development indicators. This has allowed government and international partners to target women’s empowerment programmes with greater accuracy and has established baselines against which the growth and progress can be measured. Guidelines have also been produced under the guidance of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to support the generation of sex disaggregated data by NGOs.

In addition to the ongoing improvement of relevant institutional and technical capacities, key further steps in Azerbaijan with United Nations support have included the development of a national gender statistics database; the reprocessing of existing data (e.g. the 2019 census) to produce more sex-disaggregated statistics; and the conduct of national surveys on the costs and prevalence of gender-based violence. Further surveys are planned on time-use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty and disability.

In Kazakhstan, steps to strengthen the availability of gender statistics have included (i) more and improved gender-related indicators to support the national 2030 Concept of Family and Gender Policy; (ii) increased use of gender-related indicators in the national sample surveys that are part of national statistical reporting (e.g. on violence against women, disability and the SDGs); and (iii) putting in place a centralized gender statistics web database, building on the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators. In 2018, the Kazakhstan Statistics Committee added a gender statistics
component to its website, covering 75 gender-related indicators over time, from 2000, including disaggregation by age, region, urban/rural.

Box 16 : Mapping the way forward for gender statistics in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan’s following three top priorities to develop national gender statistics over the next five years reflect similar priorities and initiatives across the SPECA countries, reinforcing the scope that exists for cross country collaboration and mutual support.

(i) expanding and developing administrative or alternative data sources to bridge gaps in gender data (specifically, on violence against children, gender mainstreaming in agriculture and transport, geospatial data, including price statistics, environmental and agricultural statistics);

(ii) generating accessible information products on gender statistics (through development of user-friendly publications, better access to websites of governmental agencies and organizations to official analytical reviews, scientific articles and national statistical reporting); and

(iii) improving the statistical skills of users to promote the assessment and use of gender statistics, including by NGOs, the media and governmental agencies.

Initiatives in Kyrgyzstan have included new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time-use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability and child labour). Apart from regular integrated household budget and labour force surveys, the National Statistics Committee (NSC) of the Kyrgyz Republic has conducted new household surveys in association with United Nations counterparts, including multiple indicator cluster surveys, time-use sample surveys and a Gender in Society Perception Study. Time-use surveys are conducted on a regular basis (once in five years).

Box 17 : Gender statistics challenges in Kyrgyzstan reflect those across the region

The Kyrgyzstan Beijing+25 report highlighted several challenges, some of which are also experienced in other SPECA countries. These include a lack of gender indicators within national statistics in areas such as participation of women and men in decision-making processes, production and social life; equality and non-discrimination in the law and access to justice; access of women and men to resources, education and healthcare; protection of women’s and girls’ rights; and the prevention of violence, including domestic violence. A further persistent problem is the lack of data on women’s unpaid care work (despite the five-yearly time-use studies), income of women and men in the informal economy, and the social status of labour migrants in receiving countries (employment, access to healthcare, education and social services). There are also gaps in available data on the most vulnerable groups of women: older women, women with HIV/AIDS and women with disabilities.

The State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan has developed a procedure for generating statistical reports on gender equality, which will guide the data collection on gender statistics. Six Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey rounds (MICS) have been conducted with technical support from UNICEF and UNFPA to collect internationally comparable data on the situation of children and women. At the time of Beijing+25 reporting, the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, in partnership with other national government entities and UNFPA, was preparing to organize a sample survey on the status of women in the family.
The pending adoption of the Tajikistan 2030 National Strategy for Statistics Development will provide impetus to improving gender statistics in the country, including the development of gender indicators in all sectors. A working group of the national Statistical Agency has been established to mainstream gender considerations into statistical reporting forms. In the meantime, Uzbekistan reports challenges in collecting gender-disaggregated data within the government system as the methodology for data collection has not been fully developed yet. Clearly strong potential exists for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to benefit from the more developed experience of other SPECA members in this field.
7 Peaceful and inclusive societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG thematic clusters</th>
<th>BPIA critical areas of concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful and inclusive societies (SDGs 5, 10, 16 and 17)</td>
<td>E. Women and armed conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Human rights of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L. The girl child</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Introduction: Four SPECA countries¹⁶ have adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325) as a foundation for accountability and national efforts to build peaceful and peaceful societies. For Afghanistan, in particular, the issue of women, peace and security has been a prominent factor in national politics. The following summary highlights initiatives and challenges in this regard in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. Examples are further given of actions taken to increase attention to the gender dimensions of disaster risk management. This chapter particularly relates to SDGs 5, 10, 16, 17.

Key messages:
- **Women, Peace and Security**: National UNSCR 1325 Action Plans have provided a key framework for both bringing together and providing greater transparency to the various dimensions of women, peace and security within the region. These dimensions range from voice and representation in policy and oversight bodies to increasing the number of women in security and police forces.
- **Disaster risk management and gender**: Although progress to date is highly variable across the region, there are examples of integrating gender considerations into policy and institutional practice which provide a basis for wider learning and application.

**Afghanistan**: Afghanistan’s National Action Plan (NAP 1325) on UNSCR 1325 provides the main national framework for promoting the engagement of women in peace and security. At the core of the NAP 1325 are women’s participation in peace negotiations and peace settlement; women’s participation in civil service institutions and security agencies; and women’s participation in election processes. The implementation period of the NAP 1325 covers two phases: phase one from 2015-2018 and phase two from 2019-2021, with capacity development support from UN Women. Progress has included the establishment of a roster of women in 34 provinces for participation in peace negotiations with the armed opposition in Afghanistan and abroad.

As a key strategic institution in Afghanistan’s peace process, the High Peace Council (HPC) comprises 65 members of which 18 were women in 2019. Four women are now in the executive leadership level and actively take part in the decision-making process at HPC, demonstrating participation beyond simple inclusion. 63 members of the provincial peace committees are women. HPC’s five-year strategic plan promotes the role of women in all sectors of the peace process. Supplementing the HPC is the Elite Women Advisory Board. Consisting of 66 members from 34 provinces, the board provides a consultation forum for the HPC.

**Box 18: Increasing participation by women in Afghanistan’s peace process despite persistent challenges**

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¹⁶ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
Increased participation by women in Afghanistan’s national peace process is reflected by the 30 per cent representation of women in the Loya Jirga (the National Grand Assembly) peace talks held in Kabul in 2019. Women chaired 13 of the 51 committees and were elected as two of the five Deputy Heads of Jirga. International efforts by OHCHR, UNAMA, UNDP and UN Women and a range of other international actors have provided valuable support to Afghanistan Government and civil society peace initiatives. The Ministry of Women Affairs has also recently launched a Provincial Peace Consensus campaign with the participation of 15,000 women lawyers. However, progress towards greater involvement of women in peace processes, particularly peace talks currently underway with the Taliban (1), remains constrained by persistent extremist views in national politics, patriarchal social norms and constant security threats.


Kyrgyzstan has implemented a range of peacebuilding and conflict prevention projects over the past two decades, including the adoption of its National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 in September 2018. The NAP1325 provides a regulatory framework based on three pillars: participation, prevention and protection, with an overall focus on women’s involvement in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, management and resolution.

However, the input of women and girls in peacebuilding and peace consolidation remains largely underestimated, underused and under-resourced. The Kyrgyzstan Beijing+25 report identifies a number of contributing factors. These include a poor understanding of gender aspects of conflicts; low engagement of women in peacebuilding activities at the local and national levels; a lack of institutionalization of gender-sensitive aspects of peacebuilding initiatives; negative public attitude to women’s participation; economic barriers linked to a lack of women’s access to financial resources; women’s time poverty caused by unequal distribution of labour between men and women; and community disagreements which strengthen negative images of other groups.

Box 19: Tajikistan and Azerbaijan improve the gender focus of disaster risk management

Tajikistan has been increasingly focusing on the introduction of gender approaches in disaster risk management policies, reflecting the fact that women and children are the most vulnerable groups in the event of a natural disaster. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy for 2019–2030 highlights gender issues. It stipulates that gender considerations should be introduced at all stages of disaster risk reduction. These should take into account the following two aspects: (i) the special needs and requirements of men and women, and other social groups most at risk, including persons with disabilities and older persons; and (ii) involving women and other social groups as participants and decision-makers in all key areas. In order to expand women’s leadership within the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, the Committee on Women and the Family, in conjunction with international organizations, is running educational programmes and trainings for women, especially at local level.

Azerbaijan has also taken a number of steps to integrated gender perspectives into disaster risk management. These have included training and other initiatives to support women’s leadership and participation at policy and programme level as well as in disaster situations on the ground. Priority has also been given to strengthening the evidence base and awareness on the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls in a disaster; ensuring access by women to relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation; and mainstreaming gender perspectives into relevant laws and policies.
Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SDG thematic clusters</th>
<th>B PfA critical areas of concern</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation</td>
<td>K. Women and the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(SDGs 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17)</td>
<td>I. Human rights of women</td>
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<td>L. The girl child</td>
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**Introduction:** The Beijing Platform for Action states that women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns, as well as approaches to natural resource management. The SDGs have subsequently provided an important framework for the integration of gender perspectives into policies and programmes in areas such as climate resilience and mitigation, energy and disaster risk reduction.

The Beijing+25 National reports indicated that progress in putting these commitments into practice across the SPECA countries remains largely “work in progress.” While Kazakhstan has initiated a number of specific projects and played an active international role on women and energy, other countries are still beginning to engage on the issue. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, initiatives to integrate gender and the environment remain at the level of individual projects and there are no women in national policy-making positions in either the Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration or the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry. Uzbekistan noted in its Beijing+25 report that a key factor in the slow progress to date has been the lack of qualitative and quantitative research on gender perspectives in natural resource management and the impact of environmental changes on vulnerable groups, including rural women, women with disabilities and pregnant women. However, with support of United Nations and other international organizations, the following actions taken in SPECA countries were highlighted by Beijing+25 reports from the region. This chapter particularly relates to SDGs 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17.

**Key messages:**
- While issues related to gender and the environment are generally recognized among SPECA members as an important dimension of the B PfA and SDG agendas, they are yet to receive systematic policy and programmatic attention across all countries. However there are examples of progress (generally in association with international partners) which provide a basis for wider learning and application.

The Afghanistan Ministry of Women’s Affair’s has played an active role with respect to women and the environment. In 2017, the ministry reviewed a number of environmental policies with a view to better integrating gender and justice components, including into planning and monitoring frameworks. These included the Policy on the Sustainable Development of the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Policy on Minerals for Ministry of Mine and Petroleum, and the Gender Policy of Ministry of Energy and Water.

Azerbaijan has initiated programmes which aim to link women, the environment and employment. The Agricultural Employment Project of the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, aims to increase environmentally–friendly rural employment, promote the use of green technology and improve entrepreneurial skills with a focus on increasing the number of women farmers. The Azerbaijan Rural Investment Project under the agriculture ministry further aims to improve environmentally friendly community-based infrastructure in five regions. The programme includes a women’s economic empowerment component under which women’s development groups receive training in areas such as business skills, accessing finance and marketing.
Joint initiatives with the United Nations in Kazakhstan have included a project on ‘Supporting Kazakhstan in Transition to Green Economy Mode,’ involving the Ministry of Agriculture and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, among others. Designed to implement green practices in public utilities, agriculture, and use of renewable energy sources in the water sector, the project prioritizes the participation of women living in rural areas.

A UNDP energy efficiency project portfolio included a comprehensive review of issues and actions related to the promotion of ‘clean and affordable energy for empowerment of women and girls in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.’ The review produced gender-sensitive policy recommendations to ensure gender equality in access to sustainable energy as well as to increase women’s participation in problem solving, the management of the energy and related sectors, and employment in the energy sector. In 2015, UNDP and the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture supported the development of green activities for communities that live close to protected natural areas, with priority on the role and participation of women.

Kazakhstan has also been active internationally on issues related to women and energy. The country hosted an international forum on Women for Energy of the Future during the International Specialized Exhibition “EXPO-2017” held in Kazakhstan. Attended by delegations from 25 countries, the forum was organized by the National Commission for Women’s Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy with support from the United Nations and other international organizations.

A leading force for promoting the role of women on environmental issues in Uzbekistan has been the national Eco-forum. This includes about 30 environmental NGOs, half of which have female leadership. The Eco-forum has created a programme on Gender and Environment, which involves women from across the country. A member of the Eco-forum is represented in the Public Council of the Central Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development. An annual national competition on environmental journalism has established a special category for ‘Women of the Mountains,’ which provides incentives to cover programmes and projects which aim to improve the situation of women and their adaptation to climate change.
Annex 1: References

National Beijing+25 reports of SPECA member States (2019)


Review of the Kyrgyz Republic on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action: Progress and challenges.


Supplementary references

Addati, Laura; Cassirer, Naomi; Gilchrist, Katherine (2014). Maternity and paternity at work: law and practice across the world. Geneva. ILO.


United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).


## Annex 2: B PfA 12 critical areas of concern and SDG 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beijing Platform for Action (12 critical areas of concern)</th>
<th>2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (targets under SDG 5: Gender equality and women’s empowerment)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Women and poverty</td>
<td>5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Education and training of women</td>
<td>5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls</td>
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<td>C. Women and health</td>
<td>5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices</td>
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<td>D. Violence against women</td>
<td>5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work</td>
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<td>E. Women and armed conflict</td>
<td>5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels</td>
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<td>F. Women and the economy</td>
<td>5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Women in power and decision-making</td>
<td>5a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women</td>
<td>5b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Human rights of women</td>
<td>5c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality</td>
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<td>J. Women and the media</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Women and the environment</td>
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<td>L. The girl-child</td>
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### Agenda for Sustainable Development – gender specific targets under other SDGs

| No Poverty (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1b)                      | Reduced inequalities (10.2)                                                            |
| Zero hunger (2.3)                                        | Sustainable cities (11.7)                                                              |
| Good health and wellbeing (3.7, 3.8)                     | Climate action (13b)                                                                  |
| Quality education (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4a)    | Peace, justice & strong institutions (16.1, 16.2, 16.7)                              |
| Decent work (8.3, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9)                    | Partnerships for the goals (17.18)                                                    |

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This list is illustrative and not comprehensive. Targets were only included if the related indicator(s) explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For further information, please consult chapter 2 in UN Women (2018) Turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York.