

CHINA
COUNTRY GENDER REVIEW

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CHINA COUNTRY GENDER REVIEW

Country Gender Reviews (CGRs)

The World Bank seeks to integrate gender analysis into World Bank Economic and Sector Work (ESW), Country Assistance Strategies (CASs) and projects (World Bank 1999a) because evidence has mounted that countries that discriminate on the basis of gender tend to have greater poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance and a lower quality of life. Conversely, gender equality is conducive to poverty reduction and economic growth (World Bank 2000a). Therefore, the Bank is preparing Country Gender Reviews which identify and analyze priority gender issues constraining development. They will be available for ESW, CAS and project task managers and staff who often lack resources to research gender concerns (Zuckerman 2000).

Acronyms

ACWF	- All China Women Federation
CASs	- Country Assistance Strategies
CCPC	- Central Communist Party Committee
CEDAW	- Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGR	- Country Gender Reviews
CIDA	- Canadian International Development Agency
CPC	- Communist Party of China
CWRS	- Chinese Women's Research Society
DFID	- Department for International Development
EA	- Environment Assessment
EAP	- East Asia and Pacific Region
ESW	- Economic and Sector Work
GDP	- Gross Domestic Production
IEC	- Information, Education and Communication
HIV/AIDS	- Human Immuno-deficiency Syndrome/ Acquired Immuno-deficiency Virus
JSDF	- Japan Social Development Fund
M&E	- Monitoring and Evaluation
MOLSS	- Ministry of Labor and Social Security
NGOs	- Non – Governmental Organization
NPC	- National People's Congress
NWCWC	- National Working Committee on Women and Children
PMO	- Project Management Office
PREMGE	- Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, Gender and Development Group
RAP	- Resettlement Action Plan
RWSS	- Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
SOE	- State Owned Enterprises
STDs	- Sex Transmitted Diseases
TB	- Tuberculosis
TRF	- Total Fertility Rate
TVEs	- Township and Village Enterprises
UN	- United Nations
UNDP	- United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	- United Nations Development Fund for Women
WDS	- Western Development Strategy
WHO	- World Health Organization
WTO	- World Trade Organization
WUAs	- Water User Associations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chinese women's journey over the last hundred years from feudalism to emancipation to full equality under the law has prompted justifiable pride in China that such radical social change could have been accomplished within a few generations. There is, however, no complacency on the part of the individuals, organizations and government officials working for the promotion and protection of women's rights in China. Many Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues are of the opinion that due to the socio-economic reform, the status of women, in some respects, has regressed somewhat over the past decade. The developmental gap between men and women is widening. In fact, the various gaps separating men and women's status, income, and power keep shifting in response to constantly changing social, economic, cultural and political realities in China.

Several trends related to the changing role of the State in citizens' lives, have and will continue to affect gender equality in China. These include devolution of central government responsibilities to lower administrative levels; increasing reliance on the rule of law; the emergence of NGOs and the participation of civil society in the policy and legislation process; the deepening of economic reforms and accession to the WTO; the disappearance of the "iron rice bowl" and gradual creation of a social security system; introduction of market forces in health care and education; and the growth of rural-urban migration and rapid urbanization. These social and economic shifts interact with the deep underlying cultural beliefs about gender roles, which – despite 50 years of advocated equality – remain institutionalized and socialized.

This CGR (Country Gender Review) describes the enabling environment for gender equality in China, and outlines some of the key challenges to gender equality, as well as data and analysis gaps. It presents stakeholder-identified priority areas to promote gender equality. A summary gender analysis of the Bank's existing project portfolio is presented, followed by an outline of possible World Bank interventions.

The **enabling environment for gender equality** in China includes the following elements: a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework; international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW; the adoption of five- and ten-year comprehensive programs for the development of women; the evolution of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) into a more advocacy-oriented non-governmental organization overlapping with government policy-making bodies; the increasing involvement and effectiveness of civil society in promoting gender equality and in providing services to women (including coalitions of scholars, NGO activists, and staff of government and quasi-government organizations).

However, there are still formidable **barriers to gender equality**. Key challenges identified by Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues include:

- a) the feminization of poverty, in both rural and urban areas – a phenomenon that is difficult to document but for which there is ample evidence in many regions of the country;
- b) the increasing inequality in the labor market, in terms of income gaps, discrimination in hiring and firing, unequal access to credit for male and female farmers and entrepreneurs, and the uneven impacts of economic reform on women and men;
- c) the uneven gender impacts of the introduction of market forces in education and health care;
- d) The implementation of the family planning program, which does not take the measures to change the traditional preference for male children especially in rural areas, and yield gendered impacts such as the imbalanced sex ratio at birth – 117 males to 100 females in 1999;

- e) the lower social status of women and girls which increases their vulnerability to abuse, trafficking, and suicide – the suicide is often seen among Chinese women, especially young rural women and,
- f) little progress over the last decade in women’s participation in political decision-making and governance.

Given the above background, Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues identified the following areas as **priorities for gender equality interventions** :

- a) legal and civil society reforms to improve the enabling environment and reduce gender gaps – including greater clarity on whether or not equality rights have legal precedence over the rights of enterprises or village committees, revision of some legal statutes, greater gender awareness among public officials and legal/judicial personnel, capacity development and a stronger role for civil society groups;
- b) measures to identify and address the growing feminization of poverty – including gender-sensitive research and analysis, gender-sensitive poverty reduction strategies, and better enforcement of equality guarantees in labor and land laws;
- c) measures to address gender inequalities in the labor market, including targeted labor adjustment programs, reform of discriminatory retirement policies, development of maternity insurance programs;
- d) measures to mitigate the uneven gender impacts of market reforms and other changes in the provision of health care and education, and to address the negative gender impacts of the family planning policy, including gender-sensitive research, analysis and policy formulation;
- e) measures to mitigate the vulnerability of women and girls to violence, abduction, and suicide – including legislation, awareness-building, and direct interventions;
- f) measures to improve the participation of women in political decision-making and administration at all levels.

The **World Bank portfolio review** concluded that gender is considered only to a limited extent in current Bank activities in China, and that there have been numerous missed opportunities to consider the gender implications of important issues such as poverty reduction, resettlement and labor market shifts (e.g. migration and state-owned-enterprise (SOE) restructuring).

Possible areas for World Bank intervention identified in this CGR include:

- a) research and analysis, including technical assistance in generating sex-disaggregated data and in gender-sensitive analysis to support the development of social policy, social programming and legislation;
- b) policy-oriented research in such areas as regulatory and enforcement frameworks for equality rights protection, instruments to support the growth of the not-for-profit social services delivery sector, gender-sensitive modalities for the delivery of urban and rural social services and to promote the greater participation of women in public governance;
- c) support of civil society, specifically the budding women’s NGO movement and network of scholars specializing in gender issues, by contracting their services and by encouraging partners to explore linkages with gender scholars, activists and NGOs for the delivery of services.

In **World Bank lending operations** there is scope for developing with Chinese partners projects which target directly some of the barriers to gender equality identified in earlier sections of the CGR, as well as for more effectively mainstreaming gender equality into new and existing Bank projects, supported by capacity building on gender equality for Bank staff and partners in China.

Given the size of and regional and local differences in China, this CGR is not meant to be a comprehensive report. Rather it is hoped that CGR will be catalytic by encouraging more dialogue between the Bank and its partners in China on the relevance of gender equality to the effectiveness of development assistance, and ultimately to economic growth. For China, the benefits of reducing existing gender gaps will be improved economic efficiency, growth and social stability (World Bank, 2000a).

INTRODUCTION

Chinese women have traveled an amazing road over the past hundred years, from feudalism to emancipation, to equality under the law. Gender equality – the fact that “women hold up half the sky” , as Mao Zedong said – is one of the pillars of the modern Chinese state. As China’s President Jiang Zemin stated during the opening ceremony for the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995: “We in China have made gender equality a basic state policy in promoting social development.” There is justifiable pride in China that such radical social change could have been accomplished within a few generations.

But while there is pride, there is no complacency – at least not on the part of the individuals, organizations and government officials working for the promotion and protection of women’s rights and interests in China. They realize there are further challenges ahead before full equality can become a reality in fact, not only in law. Many Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues consulted are of the opinion that in some respects, the status of women has suffered some reversals over the past decade. In fact, the various gaps separating men and women’s status, income and power keep shifting in response to constantly changing social, economic, cultural and political realities in China.

Several factors, which together reflect the *changing role of the State in citizens’ lives*, have and will continue to affect gender equality in China. Some of these factors are:

- The gradual devolution of central government responsibilities to lower administrative levels, which weakens the government’s control over policies and programs (while this may help direct attention to local priorities in many cases, in others it may lead to selective interpretation or enforcement that could be detrimental in terms of gender equity);
- The increasing reliance on the rule of law;
- The emergence of NGOs and the participation of civil society in the policy and legislation consultation process;
- The deepening of economic reforms, the promotion of economic development, the reform of the SOE sector and accession to the WTO;
- The gradual disappearance of the “iron rice bowl” social environment and the gradual creation of a social security system;
- The “marketization” , or introduction of market forces, in health care and education;
- Rural-urban migration and the rapid urbanization of China;
- Diversified culture and introduction of market economy;
- Changing social marriage and family mores as the State relaxes control over individuals’ behavior.

There are deep underlying cultural beliefs about gender roles, which – despite Chinese government advocated gender equality in past 50 years – remain institutionalized and socialized. These beliefs are still voiced today – most often in the countryside – and they continue to influence the direction and pace of social change in China. They are:

- The preference for a boy over a girl – since sons carry the family name, inherit the assets, take care of their aging parents and perform the filial funeral rites;
- The belief that “men are strong and women are weak”, men take care of “big, important, outside things” while women take care of “smaller, less important, inside things” , “ women are inferior to men”;

Because of China's size and diversity, the gender picture is uneven across regions, between rural and urban areas, and among different nationality groups. But overall, there is a great determination in China to make progress in this area. The government has made international commitments to eliminate gender discrimination and has been documenting its progress. In some cases, international cooperation assistance has been used to explore new policies or tools to promote and protect women's rights and interests; successful models are rapidly disseminated.

This CGR describes the enabling environment for gender equality in China. It also outlines some of the key challenges to gender equality, as well as data and analysis gaps identified by Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues, and presents stakeholder-identified priority areas to promote gender equality. A summary gender analysis of the Bank's existing project portfolio is presented, followed by an outline of possible World Bank interventions. It is hoped that the present document will form the basis for continued dialogue between the Bank and its partners in China on the relevance of gender equality to the effectiveness of development assistance, and ultimately to economic growth.

THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN CHINA

China's laws guaranteeing and promoting gender equality are enlightened by any standard and could serve as a benchmark for many other countries. There is also a network of organizations throughout China that supports, and advocates for, greater equality. As a whole, this provides the environment enabling progress towards full equality between women and men, boys and girls in China.

Regulatory framework

The cornerstone for gender equality is the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. It states that women and men are equal, and are equally entitled to education, health care, inheritance and property, political participation and employment. Most legal statutes include a clause stipulating men and women are to be treated equally, or describe how the rights of women are to be protected (for instance, the special provisions under the Labor Law for maternity leave).

Gender equality was given further impetus once China ratified in 1980 the UN *Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and promulgated in 1992 the *Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests* (*The Women's Law*). The latter confirms women's equality with men in the political, economic, social and private spheres, including stipulation that women have equal rights to own property, contract farmland and get a job¹. Further, the legislation calls for the government to take affirmative action in order to promote greater participation of women in the political process.

Key laws guaranteeing gender equality include:

Marriage Law	1950 2001	Women and men are guaranteed virtually the same legal rights with respect to marriage Domestic violence is proscribed
Law of Succession	1985	Men and women are equal in their right to inheritance
Compulsory Education Law	1986	All children aged six years and over must attend school to receive compulsory education through grade nine regardless of their sex, nationality, and race
General Rules on Civil Law	1986	Women enjoy the same civil rights as men
Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests	1992	Women's rights are equal to men's in political, economic, cultural, and social life, and with regards to property, marriage, divorce and the family
Health Protection Law of Mother and Children	1995	Special health services should be provided for maternity care
Labor Law	1995	Women and men are equal in their labor and social security rights such as employment , laboring standard, salary, occupational security, professional training, insurance and welfare benefits ,etc.

¹ Regarding employment, however, the Women's Law states that some work is unsuitable for women. There is controversy over whether this actually restricts women's work opportunities.

China and the international community

The Fourth World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum, held in Beijing in 1995, proved to be a catalyst for the women's movement in China. Thousands of women's rights activists and scholars working with the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), universities, government and non-governmental organizations were exposed to international trends and schools of thought on gender equality. The two years leading to the events saw the creation and growth of dozens of women's NGOs; most of those organizations have matured and expanded since then (China Women's Studies Association 2000). The seeds of China's most recent actions against domestic violence (specifically, amendments to the Marriage Law proscribing spousal abuse), and civil society's initiatives to curb it, were sown during the meetings and discussions that happened at the 1995 Conference (Wang 1999; China's Working Group Against Domestic Violence 2000; Zhu 2001).

Government commitment

Furthermore, the Chinese government signed the Beijing Declaration and endorsed the Platform of Action – and is therefore committed to document and publicize progress towards key gender equality goals. In 1992, the government created the National Working Committee on Women and Children (NWCWC) under the State Council, which comprises leading officials from all 24 ministries and 5 “mass organizations” such as the All China Women's Federation (ACWF). The NWCWC oversees, coordinates and monitors the government's *Program for the Development of Chinese Women* (1995-2000). The Chinese government's latest commitment to gender equality is expressed in the May 2001 State Council endorsed *Program for the Development of Chinese Women* (2001-2010) – also to be monitored by the NWCWC.

Organizational development

The ACWF itself, because of its original mandate and the changing role it is playing as a bridge between civil society and policy makers, is an important part of the enabling environment for gender equality in China. Although in some ways functioning as a quasi-governmental agency – and circumscribed to a certain extent by its close association with the government - the ACWF is still the largest non-governmental women's organization in the country and a major stakeholder on women's issues. The ACWF is linked to the NWCWC (currently the Vice President of ACWF is the Director General of NWCWC, and the NWCWC's secretariat is located within the ACWF). In this and other ways the Federation is increasingly acting as a channel for policy and legislative advocacy – sometimes representing women's interests rather than interest of the government on some key policy issues (See the Urban Employment section below). As one activist puts it: “The emergence of problems concerning women under reform has made the ACWF more conscious of its role in representing women's rights.” (Gao 1999).

Civil society involvement

There is a very active and committed women's movement in China – a movement that has its roots in the work of women activists (many of them Communist Party members) in the first part of the 20th century. China's feminist movement is composed of scholars working in universities and research institutes, people who are involved with non-governmental organizations that have been created over the past 20 years, and cadres who work within governmental or quasi-governmental organizations such as the ACWF. The research, networking, public information and policy advocacy work done by this segment of civil society has served to advance gender equality rights in China (Gao 1999). Increasingly linked to international women's networks, this movement nonetheless takes a pragmatic approach to social change,

recognizing and accepting social and political conditions in China. For the most part, activists in China see themselves in a dynamic partnership with the authorities, rather than in an adversarial relationship.

Finally, the government is now encouraging both public discussion of a wider range of social problems, and public debate over policy options and legal remedies. As the recent polemic over the amendment of the Marriage Law demonstrated, there are opportunities for civil society to be engaged in this process. In addition, the media has shown considerable interest in reporting on issues of direct relevance to women's rights (domestic violence and trafficking in women and children, for instance). This is generating a certain optimism among NGO activists, scholars and ACWF, since building social consensus around the need to protect and promote women's rights and interests is key to achieving gender equality in any country.

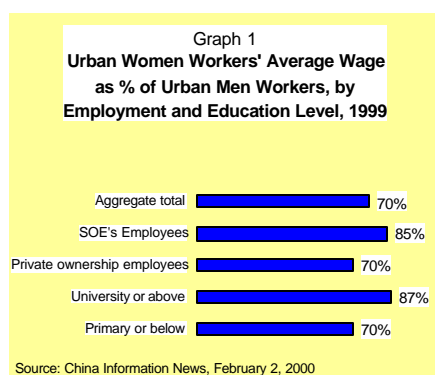
Economic growth and social development

The rapid social and economic development in China over the past two decades has created the right conditions for the development of women. The high economic growth provided financial support for women's program, allowing a great number of women to take part. The higher economic growth rate has provided the government with more money to invest in education and health, which improved women's access to those services.

KEY CHALLENGES TO GENDER EQUALITY

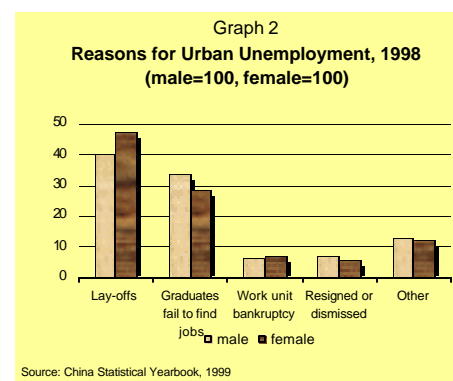
Increasing gender inequality in employment

China has achieved greater female participation in the workplace than have many other countries. Women currently comprise 46 percent of the total workforce (formal, informal and agricultural), up from 44 percent in 1982 (China Daily, May 13, 2000; United Nations 1997). Women received 80 percent of the pay men received in the rural industrial sector in 1985, and 88 percent of men's pay in the state sector in 1987 (World Bank 2000b). However, the income gap has been increasing since then with deepening labor market liberalization. By 1990, women earned 83 percent of men's pay and by 1999 only about 70 percent (Graph 1)². For the most part, the gender gap in pay is explained by the concentration of women in low--wage sectors. Additionally, men have consistently occupied most managerial and higher skilled positions—hence the better paying jobs. The share of female administrators and managers was under 12 percent in 1997 (UNDP 1997b).



As market liberalization and structural reforms deepened over the past 20 years, contradictions progressively emerged in the labor market. Because economic units are responsible for their own profits and losses, the imperative of competition increasingly takes precedence over the protection of equality rights. Scholars and activists consulted during the CGR revision identified the growing gender inequality in the workforce between men and women as a key issue of concern. The gender-differentiated effects of economic reforms as they pertain to employment include:

♦ The pre-reform “iron rice bowl” that provided lifetime employment with guaranteed welfare benefits (including housing, health care, education, pensions, recreation and amenities³) has been phased out. Conforming to global trends, the transition has spurred the creation of contractual, temporary and informal sector jobs which do not enjoy the same social protection as state sector jobs – especially key for women during their child-bearing years. As in many other countries, China is having some difficulty monitoring and enforcing its own Labor Law, especially in the private sector – let alone the informal sector⁴. State affirmative action policies have receded while traditional gender stereotypes and values have re-emerged, including increasing gender discrimination in the labor market. Women are often employed in lower status, lower paid jobs. During the transition, women have had a harder time than men obtaining and keeping jobs. Job advertisements often specify applicants should be male, or young, attractive women although such job discrimination flouts the 1992 Women's Law.



² A more recent study indicates that in 1999, Beijing women workers' income was only 73% of men's, compared to 86% in 1995 and 87% in 1988. The survey analysis found only minor differences in education levels between the men and women surveyed (Ji 2001).

³ Chinese workers in SOEs received amenities such as soap, toilet paper and even theatre tickets from time to time.

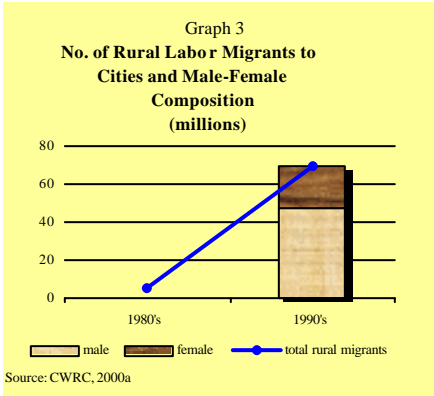
⁴ Personal communication to CGR revision consultants.

- ◆ Urban unemployment has been rising rapidly. It is estimated that the total real urban unemployment rate in 1998 was around 8% (UNDP 1999b). Women have borne a disproportionate share of the lay-offs, especially early on during the restructuring of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), since the sectors targeted for retrenchment were those where women formed the majority of the workforce (UNDP 1997b). Official statistics indicate that in 1998, some 48 females were laid off for every 40 males laid off (Graph 2). More recent lay-off figures released by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MOLSS) indicate 50% of laid-off workers are women⁵ - still a disproportionate amount considering women form roughly 38% of the formal workforce (China Statistical Yearbook 1999). There is considerable regional variation however - in heavily industrialized Liaoning Province, 62 percent of the nearly one million 1998 layoffs were women (China Women's News, April 18, 2000).
- ◆ The government has attempted to deal with rising unemployment in part by restricting the supply of labor. Of relevance to women activists and researchers is the debate surrounding the concept of "periodic employment" which was to be included in the 10th Five-year Plan. The debate that raged in March 2001 prior to and during the 2001 National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference sessions, spilled over into the national press. Periodic employment would allow workers to interrupt their careers for a number of years while attending to family duties; they would not be paid during this time. The provision did not target female workers specifically, but the public debate that ensued made it clear that it was women who were expected to stay home. Periodic employment was struck from the 10th Plan, following strenuous opposition by the ACWF and others (Liu 2001). However, the Plan now allows for "multiple forms of employment", which can include the concept of periodic employment. The ACWF and other women's rights activists fear that women will have to bear a disproportionate share of the pain of economic re-adjustment and believe this should be better documented, researched and monitored.
- ◆ Rural-urban migration, severely restricted until the reforms,⁶ is now an accepted form of poverty reduction, although most of the migrants are still unable to change their legal residency status. By the 1990s, close to 70 million rural people had migrated to the cities for jobs, about two-thirds of them men and one-third women (Graph 3). Today, the estimated migrant population is 105 million (Rural Women Knowing All, 2000). Recently the rate of increase of female out-migration surpassed that of males, although the absolute number of male migrants still exceeds that of females (Nyberg & Rozelle 1999). Male migrants tend to work in construction and heavy industry while female migrants predominate in services and light manufacturing including domestic work, textiles, food-processing, electronics and other labor-intensive industries (Huang 1999). In industry, rural women usually - work in township and village enterprises (TVEs); rural unmarried girls tend to work in coastal, export-oriented industries for a couple of years and then return home (UNDP 1999b). Many rural migrant women also work as domestics or in retail or food-service businesses in the cities. Rural migrants are often working in enterprises where Labor Law standards are not strictly enforced. In addition, women migrants have trouble accessing health care for themselves (with key concerns surrounding reproductive health and prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS) and legitimate health and education services for the children who accompany them (Liu 2000; Rural Women Knowing All 2000).

⁵ MOLSS interview March 3rd 2001 with CGR revision consultant.

⁶ Migration controls were enforced through the Residence Permit system. Food, housing and other basic needs could only be obtained in the locality stamped in one's Residence Permit. Without such a permit, migrants have to pay high fees for health care or schooling for their children.

- ◆ Until some 10 years ago, people were placed into jobs by the government. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) and government organizations had to take in personnel assigned to them. In contrast, women and men now compete for the same jobs in the public and private sectors. In this competitive market, women are disadvantaged by their lower educational status, the skills they have, the nature of their social networks and their lower social status than men (Croll 1995; Qiu 2001). Employers, including government agencies, do not like hiring females due to their negative expectation to women’s skill and their maternity and reproduction period. There is evidence that even government departments, which would be expected to uphold non-discrimination clauses of the Labor Law, have openly discouraged female university graduates from applying for employment at recruitment fairs (UNDP, 1997b).



- ◆ Women constituted 39 percent of the self-employed and 35 percent of owners of private and individual businesses by 1996 (UNDP 1999b). Due to the barriers they face, women entrepreneurs tend to start micro enterprises and businesses in the service sector, where the capital required is less allowing them to use informal credit sources (Qiu, 2001). Although women compose almost 40 percent of the self-employed and more than half of the full-time farmers, they have much less access to credit than men (Rahman 1995; Cabral 1998; Du 2000; Lin 2001). Men borrow the lion’s share of the credit available in the formal sector, and until recently borrowed the majority of informal sector loans as well. Today, in contrast, two thirds of informal credit borrowers are women (Tsai 2000). Micro-credit programs targeted to women so far consist of scattered small-scale pilots (Jiang 1997a; Du 2000).⁷

Relative poverty of women becoming more serious

Poverty in post-1949 China has been found mostly in the countryside, but is now growing in urban areas as well (UNDP 1997b). Poverty is caused by a confluence of factors and has multi-faceted impacts – from poor nutrition and health, to low standards of living, to lack of choices and opportunities. If it could be identified that a majority of China’s poorest are women and children, poverty reduction strategies would have to be targeted to women in order to produce optimal results. However even if this were not the case, since poverty is experienced differently by and has different impacts upon men and women, boys and girls, poverty reduction strategies, in order to be effective, must take into account the different constraints and needs of men and women.

In the last twenty years, China has experienced a tremendous decline in **overall** poverty (World Bank 2000c). During the 1980s and 1990s, GDP growth exceeded 10 percent annually. Indeed, spurred by rapid economic growth and market liberalization, millions of Chinese were lifted out of poverty⁸. All studies concur that poverty is increasingly concentrated in the Western provinces, especially in the

⁷ Interview with Michael Goldberg of CGAP, May 30, 2000.
⁸ China’s and the World Bank’s estimates for the number of people still living in abject poverty differ due to different poverty determination methodologies. China estimated that by the end of 1999, there were still 34 million people living below the poverty line in the countryside (PRC 2000).

remoter mountainous areas (World Bank 2000c; Nyberg & Rozelle 1999)⁹. Whereas less than half of China's poor lived in the west in the late 1980s, the proportion reached more than two thirds by the late 1990s (World Bank 2000c). Ethnic minorities compose a disproportionate number of the poor. Although they represent less than 9 percent of the total population, they account for some 40 percent of the absolute poor who live in the deepest poverty¹⁰. These economic disparities have in part impelled the government to launch its massive regional intervention, called the Western Development Strategy (WDS).

With few exceptions, most studies argue that women are not over-represented among China's poor (Nyberg & Rozelle 1999; World Bank 2000c). However, sparse or no data substantiate this position. Existing Chinese poverty data at best disaggregate to the household level but more commonly only to the county level. The assumption that households pool income and allocate resources for consumption, production and investment equitably obscures differences in income distribution between males and females within the household (World Bank 2000a).

However, Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues assert that there has been a feminization of poverty (China Women's Studies 2000). This assertion is supported by circumstantial evidence. In rural areas, women are increasingly shouldering farming tasks as men migrate to off-farm labor (Croll 1996; Lin 2001b). However, there is some uncertainty regarding the extent of the migrants' remittances; households may be too short of labor to engage in more profitable forms of farming; and the increased burdens on these women leaves them "tired and exhausted" (Croll 1996). In fact, the greater the proportion of non-farm activity for rural households, the greater is the share of farm work performed by women (Lin 2001b). In poorer areas of the country, where farm incomes are already low, were remittances to become irregular or reduced, the feminization of agriculture could well be equated with the feminization of poverty.

Some scholars are concerned that China's entrance in the WTO may well lead to the reduction in farm income, with declining economic status reinforcing the relatively low social status of women in the countryside (Lin 2001a). In addition, a combination of rising divorce rate and the difficulties encountered in land redistribution post-divorce¹¹ may make women more economically vulnerable since land is still the lifeline for most rural Chinese.

There is also ample evidence that illiteracy and lack of education are concentrated among Chinese women and girls in poor counties (World Bank 1999b). In many of the poorest villages, nearly all girls and about half of the boys do not attend school and remain illiterate (World Bank 2000c) – further limiting their ability to both increase farm productivity through technical change or to access off-farm employment, most of which requires middle-school education (Lin 2001a). There is also evidence that girls in poor areas obtain less health care and less nutritious foods than boys (Zia 2000). Since poverty is multifaceted, and is both caused by, and results in conditions such as poor health, illiteracy, low education levels, low income and social and psychological insecurity, it appears that Chinese women might be over-represented among the poor.

Urban poverty is a relatively new phenomenon in China and has been linked to the decreasing earning power of many households due to economic restructuring and lay-offs (including unpaid furloughs) as

⁹ Under China's administrative system, villages are grouped into townships, and townships into counties. China has some 2,275 counties covering rural populations living outside of cities and towns (Division of Administrative Areas in China).

¹⁰ Minority autonomous counties accounted for three quarters of all nationally designated poor counties with annual per capita incomes below 400 yuan (US\$48.32) and more than four fifths of nationally designated poor counties with annual per capita income under 300 yuan (US\$36.24).

¹¹ Land was redistributed to rural households in the early 1980s, with the government's commitment that there would be no change in policy for 30 years. Subsequent land reallocation has been delegated to village committees, and requires the approval of a majority of the village population.

well as the influx of poor rural migrants. Women appear to be disproportionately represented among laid-off workers, suffer from higher unemployment rate and have greater difficulty finding alternate employment (Kerr 1996; China Women’s News, 18 April 2000). Even if they can be reemployed, their salaries are generally lower than before. Women form a large proportion of the old age population in urban area and most of them have no income resources or have lower pension than men (Women are forced to retire earlier than men, leading to lower pension benefits) (China Women’s Studies Association 2000). Another factor is that the number of female - headed households is increasing as the divorce rate rises. And while most migrants are still men, women are joining their ranks at an increasing rate (Nyberg and Rozelle 1999). Little research has been done so far on the gendered aspects of urban poverty.

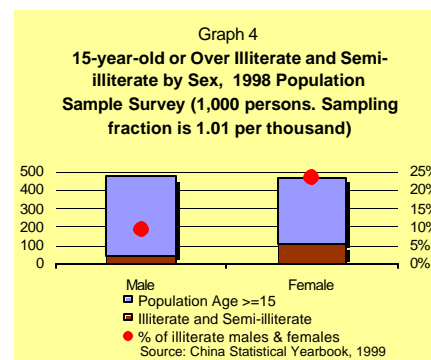
Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues consulted during the course of the CGR revision see the feminization of poverty as a major barrier to gender equality. Growing inequality in terms of access to and use of resources, as well as in terms of choices and opportunities, inevitably reinforces women’s traditionally lower social status. Lower status exacerbates marginalization. And growing gender inequality does not provide the optimal enabling environment for economic growth and development (World Bank 2000a).

The Chinese government has adopted various approaches to reduce poverty, from regional development (WDS) and economic diversification (the creation of off-farm income through township and village enterprises (TVEs)), to community and household-based strategies (micro-finance, and most recently participatory village planning). Now the government is trying to give priority consideration to women in some poverty reduction projects. But at this time and for the most part, policy makers do not take gender into account during planning or implementation of poverty reduction programs¹². It would appear they have not studied or incorporated gender-sensitive approaches, which have been proven effective in many other regions of the world¹³.

Gender Inequality of Education Opportunities brought upon by the “marketization” of education

One of the more spectacular gender equality achievements of modern China has been in education. To overturn traditional thinking which considered investment in girls’ education a waste for the family – since girls will marry and their knowledge will only benefit their husbands’ households – the Chinese government has energetically promoted education for all since 1949. It has financed continuous anti-illiteracy campaigns and required parents to enroll all sons and daughters in school – at present, the government is enforcing 9-year compulsory education throughout most of China¹⁴. The 1988 Regulation for Eliminating Illiteracy, the 1986 Law of Compulsory Education, and the 1995 Education Law - all emphasize gender equality. There has been marked progress in reducing illiteracy and raising school enrollment and completion levels.

However, a major barrier to gender equality remains the education gap that exists between women and men in China, and particularly in the countryside – a gender gap that could be getting wider as a result of the “marketization” of education.

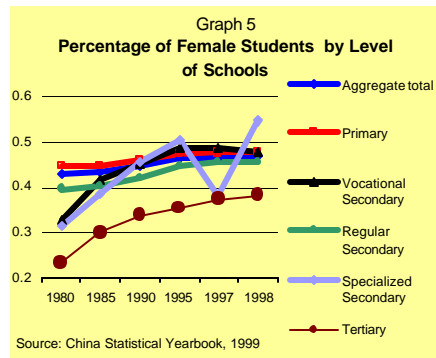


¹² Personal communication to CGR revision consultants.

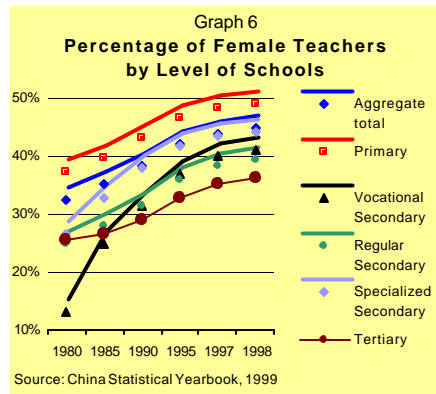
¹³ For instance, despite the feminization of agriculture, surveys indicate that most technical training courses are given to men, even if they are not the ones who will apply the new techniques (Lin 2001a). Yet adoption of technical change in agriculture is a major determinant of farm productivity and rural incomes (Fan et al. 2000).

¹⁴ In the most remote areas where population density makes school attendance difficult, the government is promoting 6-year compulsory schooling as a first step.

Illiteracy has not yet been completely eradicated. It is now mostly a rural problem and it affects women more than men. Some 70 percent of China's 240 million illiterates or semi-illiterates are women (China Women's News, April 11, 2000). But illiteracy is being reduced among younger cohorts. Whereas 42 percent of Chinese women over 25 were illiterate in 1990, less than 26 percent of women over 15 were illiterate in 1998. This compared to 9 percent illiterate men over 15 years of age in 1998 (WISTAT 1999 and Graph 4).



School enrollment rates have climbed steadily and gender imbalances in education are declining. By 1998, 99 percent of all children were enrolled in primary school and 48 percent of these pupils were girls (Graph 5). At the secondary and post-secondary levels, female enrollment totaled 46 percent and 39 percent respectively. While girls' enrollment still lags, the gender gaps are declining. A small gender gap remains in vocational schools, but vocational training curricula still reflect gender stereotypes. Girls typically learn service sector skills including languages, secretarial tasks, hotel administration, catering, waitressing and housekeeping, while boys tend to study industrial trades.



High enrollment data mask high dropout rates, particularly of girls (Jacka 1997; Meng 1996). There are several reasons for this. Since the government imposed tuition fees on all parents beginning in the mid-1990s, poorer rural parents have often taken their daughters out of school, because they can't afford the school fees and need them at home to work (UNDP 1997b). Upon marriage, rural girls move to their husband's family, sometimes in far-away villages, yielding no returns to their own parents for any investment in their education. Another reason for female dropouts is the increasing employment available for teenage girls as domestics in better-off households, in rural townships and village enterprises (TVEs) and in urban enterprises (Meng 1996; Zhang 1999). Several other factors

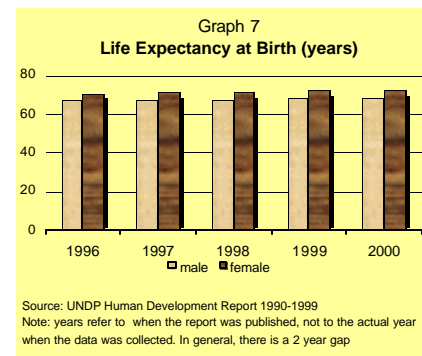
influence parents in remote and minority areas from sending their daughters to school: (a) the education condition is relatively poorer, (b) the school is far away from their home and transportation is not convenient, (c) most teachers are male in rural areas and (d) concerns over their daughters safety. The education department of the government has not taken any specific measures to address the issues which affect girls' enrollment. Female dropouts are such a conspicuous problem that non-governmental charitable programs, such as the Spring Bud Project of the ACWF, have been set up to keep poor girls in school – reaching only a minority of dropouts however.

Higher illiteracy rates for women and lower education levels for girls have obvious impacts on economic opportunities and social status. These trends are of key concern to the Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues consulted during the course of the CGR revision.

A positive indicator for future education trends is that the gender gap among school teachers has been decreasing. In 1998, female teachers comprised 47 percent of primary and 36 percent of secondary schools teachers compared to 37 percent and 25 percent respectively in 1980 (World Bank 2000b). This is positive because female teachers provide a role model for young girls, encouraging them to stay in school (Graph 6).

The side-effects of “marketization” of health care, and family planning approaches

The Chinese government has made public health a priority since 1949. Through a massive preventive health program which dispatched physicians and “barefoot doctors”¹⁵ to remote rural areas and provided national health insurance to all Chinese, health indicators improved markedly. Between 1950 and 1990, life expectancy at birth doubled from 35 to 70 years (Yu 1997). However, it has leveled off since the early 1990s. Today, female and male life expectancy are 71 and 68 years respectively (Graph 7). These are remarkably good indicators for a low-income developing country¹⁶. Men’s poor health behavior is also one of the factors contributing to their shorter life expectancy. Some 63 percent of men but only 4 percent of women smoked in 1996 compared to 61 percent of men and 7 percent of women who smoked in 1984 (WHO 1997). Even though female life expectancy is slightly higher than men’s—a common phenomenon worldwide – women’s healthy life expectancy is lower than men’s. This means women on average suffer through ill health longer, and therefore have a lower quality of life than men.



From a public health perspective, there is considerable concern about the impacts of health system reversals during the transition to a market economy. Free health insurance is becoming rare. With the dismantling of agricultural communes during the 1980s, rural residents (roughly 70 percent of the total population) lost access to free health services. A similar phenomenon has happened in urban areas with the closure and downsizing of state-owned-enterprises (SOEs), which provided their workforce with free or low-cost medical care. The result of on-going health system reforms in urban areas is that individuals share a higher proportion of the health care expenditures, which will inevitably lead to increasing of health care expenditures of individuals or families. The result of this will have negative impacts on women’s health and quality of life.

Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues consulted as part of this CGR¹⁷ felt that gender-equitable access to health care was most threatened by the introduction of market forces in the health care system. In large part due to their reproductive role, women tend to be heavier users of health care services for themselves and their children. Yet their ability to access these services now depends on their income levels. Basic reproductive health services must be paid for in the countryside as in the cities¹⁸, and when paid services exceed the capacity to pay, women’s access to these services is negatively affected (UNDP 1997b). Whereas from 1950-85 health care expenditures in China were overwhelmingly public for urban citizens with formal employment, today 75 percent of health spending consists of private, out of pocket fees (WHO 2000). Rural families tend to spend scarce resources on men and boys’ health care rather than on women and girls’ (Zia 2000; Pearson 1995). Elderly women, who constitute the majority of China’s aging population, with 110 women for every 100 men above 60 years of age, are especially vulnerable to health problems (United Nations 2000). The more difficult access to medical services for women is linked directly to public healthcare expending cutbacks.

¹⁵ Barefoot doctors were paramedics, often of local origin, trained in basic preventive health care. Barefoot signified their grassroots nature since like the peasantry, they might not have afforded shoes.

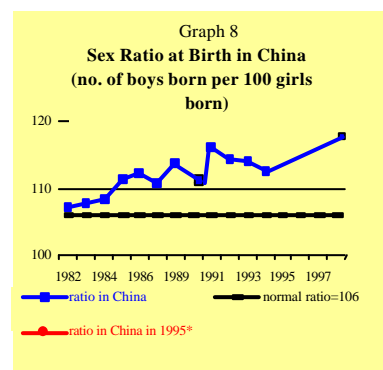
¹⁶ China had a per capita GNP of US\$750 in 1998, ranking it in 149th place among 206 countries (World Bank 1999c).

¹⁷ Consultations conducted by the CGR revision consultants.

¹⁸ Health expenditures directly related to family planning are usually covered by government budgets.

China's family planning policy, while successful in bringing down the TFR (total fertility rate) nationwide, has also had unplanned impacts on health and demographics. The one-child policy¹⁹ introduced in the late 1970s is now widely adhered to in cities, where parents for the most part treasure girl babies as well as boys. Some urban parents cite the advantages of one child -- it permits parents to invest more in the single child, it permits the mother greater freedom and development space to pursue a career and further education and it permits better access to maternal health care.²⁰ Rural families still overwhelmingly prefer sons. Their preference for male offspring, common in some Asian countries (such as in China, Korea etc.), is attributed to the need for more hands on the farm and to the traditional role of sons as social security for their aging parents – a practical necessity in the absence of universal social security.

Family planning enforcement is uneven in rural areas, and many families will have multiple children to ensure the survival of sons. China's unusual 1999 child mortality rate, 40 for 1,000 females and 35 for 1,000 males under five years, also reflects the preference for sons and the better level of health care often provided to them, especially in poorer regions where overall access to health care is more difficult (Zia 2000). Furthermore, the under-reporting of female births, as well as the suspected female infanticides, abandonment and abortion of female fetuses²¹, are believed to have resulted in the dramatic sex imbalance of 117 boys born for every 100 girls in 1999²² compared to 111:100 in 1990, and compared to the global average standard of 106 boys per 100 girls (Graph 8). There are growing social problems resulting from China's sex imbalance among newborns.



Another health problem with gender implications is the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS. China reported 500,000 cases in 2000 compared to 400,000 in 1999 (UNAIDS 2000b). So far the predominant group affected is male drug users, but the incidence of female infection is rising in recent years, especially among sex workers (most of which are women). Over 1987-88, the male to female ratio of reported HIV/AIDS cases was 2.04:1 but by 1999 this ratio was 1.39:1 (CWRS 2000). To be effective, prevention programs need to be specific and gender-targeted.

Lower social status increases the vulnerability of women and girls

No society is free of gender-related violence, but not all countries tackle the issue head on. There has been a growing awareness about this in China – and a growing determination to curb its various manifestations. Of particular note are the campaigns to fight domestic violence and to crack down on criminals who traffic in women and children. While these problems are often manifestations of the low status of women in society – so low that they can be bought and sold as chattels – they are also contributing factors to growing gender inequality. The roots of these problems are difficult to address in a development context because they have to do with age-old mentalities, yet Chinese NGOs and scholars

¹⁹ Family planning policies vary depending on household status, ethnicity and local enforcement practices. Urban couples are only allowed one child ; in some rural areas, families can try for a second child if the first-born is a girl ; ethnic minority couples are allowed to have more than one child, although government officials and party members are strongly encouraged to have only one child.

²⁰ Interview with Song Li, June 29, 2000, World Bank, Washington DC.

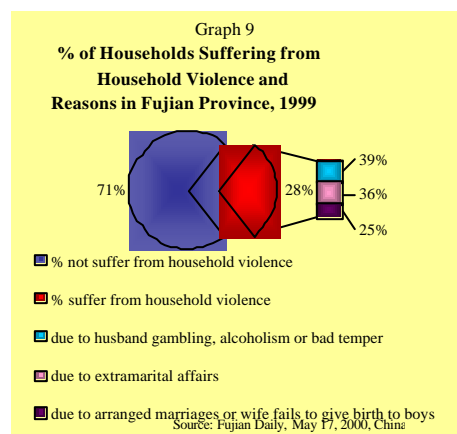
²¹ While it is illegal to use ultra-sound technology to determine the sex of the fetus (a practice which is suspected to contribute to the abortion of female fetuses), local enforcement is notoriously difficult.

²² 2000 census figures, based on 1999 data.

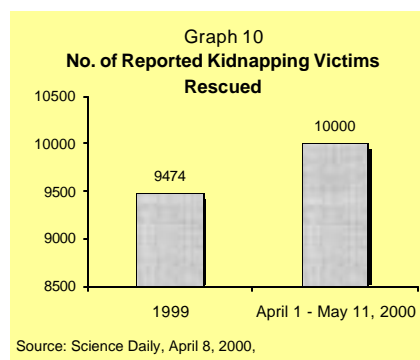
believe that development programming can help either curb the symptoms or mitigate the effects of these problems.

National data on domestic violence are scarce but provincial data indicate that domestic violence was reported in close to 30 percent of Fujian households in 1999 (Graph 9). Some 25 percent of divorces in 1994 were attributable to domestic violence. Two national surveys on the status of women have also shown that 25% of urban women and 33% of rural women have suffered from occasional to repeated abuse from their spouse (Wang 1999). It was the gradual increase in media reports on domestic violence following the 1995 World Conference on Women, and the open debate during the process leading to the amendments to the Marriage Law in 2001, which have created a growing social consensus around the issue.

Civil society has rallied to take action. “Mass organizations” (such as the ACWF) and people’s mediation committees have been involved in the resolution of domestic disputes since 1949 (Wang 1999). NGOs have set up counseling services, drop-in centers, and in some cases have set up shelters for victims of domestic violence (Wang 1999). Telephone hotlines staffed by volunteers and dealing specifically with domestic violence are now providing counseling in Xi’an, Beijing and other cities (Gao 1999). Legal aid centers are assisting women in taking their cases to court. In some cities, women’s centers are cooperating with police and hospitals – providing training on domestic violence, which is yielding an increase in the number of referrals and of charges laid²³. However, it is difficult to provide financial and practical support for victims of domestic violence who must leave their homes; there is a lack of effective institutional framework for enforcement (such as systematic training of police, systematic recording and reporting of domestic violence data); and the fact that the onus is on victims to lay charges and take their case to court.



Trafficking in women and children – the criminal act of selling women and children as commodities under compulsion – also threatens women’s personal security. The 1992 Women’s Law and other legislation explicitly prohibit trafficking; yet, it seems to have reappeared and grown since market liberalization in the early 1980s (Zhuang 1993). There is a flow pattern from the poor southeastern provinces (Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Hunan) to the northeastern and coastal provinces (Shandong, the southern part of Hebei, the northern part of Jiangsu, Fujian and Henan). There is also a flow from mountainous and border regions to the inland regions (Zhuang 1993). Some of the trafficking is trans-border, involving neighboring countries such as Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam.



Although data on female abductions are not available, there are some reports on the number of women rescued. During five weeks in 2000, over 10,000 females were freed from their abductors (Graph 10). There are indications that some communities are reluctant to report cases of trafficking in their midst, and women’s groups are also concerned about the woman’s rights once such cases are uncovered, especially

²³ Personal communication to the CGR revision consultants.

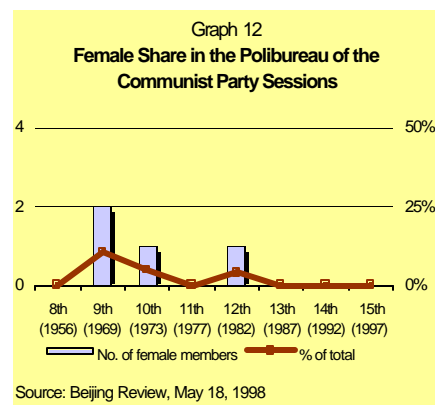
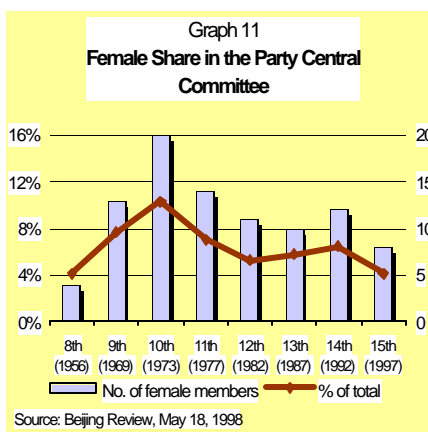
when they have already given birth to children. It is also widely believed by activists that the growing demographic shortage of women will only exacerbate this problem.

Of growing concern in China is also the unusually high rate of female suicide, especially among rural women. Suicide accounts for 4.5 percent of female deaths in China, whereas worldwide 1.6 percent of female deaths are due to suicide (Murray 1996). In fact, China is the only country where more women than men commit suicide. The female suicide rate is 40 percent above the male rate (Cabral 1999). In 1990, 56 percent of female suicides occurred among women aged between 15 and 29 years of age (Murray 1996). The rural female suicide rate is three times the urban rate (MacLeod 1998). Reasons for China's high female suicide rate, especially in rural areas, are very complex but may include women's increased farming and domestic workloads as husbands migrate to urban areas, domestic violence, forced marriages, and being mistreated in their husbands' households. Ingesting pesticides – very potent and widely available in the countryside – is the most common way to commit suicide for rural women. There is some research within the Chinese psychiatric community on the extent and the causes of female suicides and potential interventions. There are also efforts to change the composition of certain common pesticides, to cut down on the rate of successful suicides²⁴.

Little progress has been made in the participation of women in the decision-making process

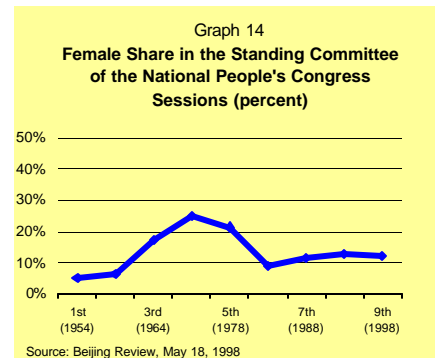
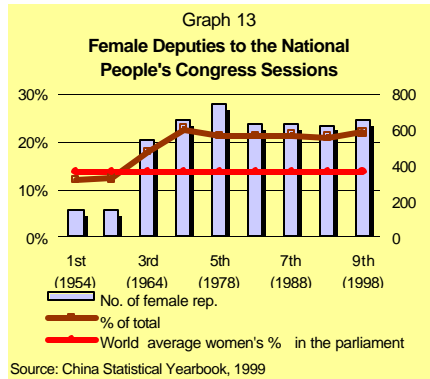
In China as elsewhere, women were mostly absent from the political ranks until the last few decades. Following 1949, the Communist Party of China (CPC) made serious efforts to involve women in decision-making. But men still hold the majority of senior political and government posts at all administrative levels – in China as in most other countries. Women have made gains, but there also has been backsliding in certain areas. Women's participation in the political process is something all Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues identify as a necessary ingredient to the realization of gender equality – although not a sufficient condition, women's participation in the political and decision-making processes is a necessary condition to the achievement of greater gender equality through the adoption of gender-sensitive policies, legislation and administrative measures.

In the Central Communist Party Committee (CCPC), the most important political organization since 1949, women's share of seats in the Central Committee rose and peaked at 10 percent in 1973 but fell back to about 5 percent by 1997 (Graph 11). There is almost no female seat in recent years on the most important CCPC decision-making body, the Politbureau (Graph 12). Despite adherence to the principle of gender equality, the CCPC has remained heavily male-dominated (Gilmartin 1993).



²⁴ Personal communication to the CGR revision consultants.

Women tend to have higher representation in the People's Congresses, which are subordinate to the CCP - typically just surpassing 20 percent, both in the central National People's Congress (NPC) and at lower levels (Graph 13).



An informal central quota and formal quotas in about two thirds of the provinces make this level of representation possible (Jiang 1997b). However, women's participation in the higher level NPC Standing Committee has declined to about 10 percent of representatives after peaking at 25 percent in 1975 (Graph 14).

Perhaps the most significant political reform initiated by the Chinese government since 1989 has been the introduction of competitive village elections in which both women and men participate freely (Thurston 1998). Elected Village Committees typically comprise a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and two to four members. Some Village Committees, but not all, have women members who tend to also be the village Women's Federation representatives.²⁵ However, a recent survey of Shandong province villages in 1999 indicated a significant drop in female representation among the leadership (UN Task Force on Gender 1999). In fact, there is a concern that the participation of women in leadership positions at all administrative levels and throughout government departments will decline when the present senior generation of female leaders and directors retires – in part because there has not been active recruitment and promotion of younger women with leadership potential over the past 10-15 years²⁶.

Chinese women officials are most often given social portfolios such as education and health, the environment, protection of rights of women/children/the disabled, and social security (Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung 1994). Men dominate the more powerful and wealthy portfolios such as national security, finance, construction, energy, water and foreign relations. These divisions perpetuate female stereotypes and exclude women from most decision-making in the critical areas of economic reform, especially in poorer rural areas.

The provision on retirement age of men and women in the Government Civil Servant Regulation (60 years old for men and 55 for women) puts women at a disadvantage for promotion to higher management and for participation at the higher levels of the bureaucracy. In addition, because women have to retire earlier than men, their total years of service is less than men and hence their pension benefits are lower.

²⁵ Each village has a women's federation member responsible for village family planning and other women's issues. Interview with Ann Thurston, April 24, 2000, Washington, DC.

²⁶ Personal communication to CGR revision consultants.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR GENDER EQUALITY INTERVENTIONS

During consultations with Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues, the following priority areas for gender equality interventions were identified. The priority areas presented in this section are not listed by order of importance.

Legal reform and civil society : the enabling environment for a reduction of the gender gaps in China

- The Chinese government and judiciary need to clarify whether or not equality rights have legal precedence over other rights, such as the enterprise's right to economic efficiency (hiring and firing workers without consideration of gender equality provisions in the Labor Law), or the village's right to redistribute land (without consideration for gender equality provisions in the Land Contracting Law). Gender equality will be included in the law reform process now underway in China.
- Legal statutes that include gender equality provisions need to be revised; the gender equality clauses need to be more specific and clear penalties must be specified for infringement of these provisions.
- The government needs to reconsider Marriage Law clauses dealing with domestic violence. Specifically, it should not be incumbent upon the victim to lay charges. In addition, there should be no tolerance of domestic violence, even in cases where the injuries are deemed "slight". The government should provide for an institutional framework for enforcement, including training of relevant personnel, requiring local authorities to report accurately the incidence of domestic violence (at present there are no guidelines for this, and domestic violence complaints are often recorded as family disputes), etc..
- There needs to be better gender awareness of judges, public security and other relevant personnel responsible for the enforcement of statutes that include gender equality provisions (such as the Marriage Law and the Law for the Protection of Women and Children).
- There needs to be greater awareness on the part of society at large of the rights of women and how those rights are protected. Public information, particularly on legal recourse open to women who feel their rights have been violated, needs to be better disseminated – particularly in more remote areas.
- Women's rights activists, women researchers and NGOs dealing with gender issues indicate there is considerable scope for capacity building and technical assistance to strengthen the ability of Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues to effectively promote and protect gender equality.
- NGOs that support gender equality – such as women's legal aid centers, domestic violence telephone hotlines, battered women shelters, etc – need assistance with fund-raising and organizational issues, in order to become more sustainable.
- In addition, the government needs to clarify its policy towards the NGO sector, and find ways to promote philanthropy (through market-based or fiscal mechanisms).

Poverty reduction : minimize the relative poverty of women

- There needs to be improved analysis of gender as it relates to poverty in rural areas, among the migrant population and in urban areas. Two aspects need to be documented: is there indeed a feminization of poverty; and does poverty have a different impact on women and girls, than on men and boys? Rigorous research will allow planners to improve the targeting of poverty reduction programming.
- There must be a rigorous examination of the gendered impacts of accession to the WTO on rural areas – particularly poor, more isolated areas – as well as on migrant populations and the urban workforce.
- Notwithstanding the need for fundamental socio-economic research, policy makers need to take better account of gender in the existing poverty reduction strategies. Possible areas of intervention include: gender sensitive participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation methodologies for poverty reduction programs; ways to mainstream gender in regional development strategies and programs; gender-targeted poverty reduction programs, such as technical training and the provision of micro-credit for women who are now responsible for the lion's share of farm labor in many areas.
- Landlessness in rural areas and joblessness in towns and cities are major contributors to poverty; there is some evidence that women are more vulnerable than men in these respects. There has to be targeted efforts at reducing the gender gap with respect to the access and control of resources and employment – hence the government should strengthen the enforcement of gender equality clauses in the Labor Law and the Land Contracting Law, among others.
- With the deepening of rural and urban economic reforms and changes to the residential registration system, more and more rural residents will migrate to the cities. This is bound to exacerbate the existing unemployment situation in urban areas. Moreover, women will form a large proportion of new migrants and employment would be more challenging for them in urban area. Unemployed female migrants may become a major part of the future poor urban population if government does not take active measures.

Employment : Mitigate gender inequality in the labor market

- Identified needs by Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues include the design and pilot testing of labor adjustment programs that would effectively target total female unemployment – ranging from labor supply and demand assessment, skills evaluation, employment counseling, and job placement, to promotion of sustainable self-employment. Training and employment services should offer women a wide range of options. Women workers should not be pushed into low status and low pay service sector jobs.
- Improved monitoring and enforcement of the gender equality provisions of the Labor Law are necessary. The disproportionate lay-offs of women workers during the SOE reform process should be re-examined. In addition, the government needs to determine to what extent it will regulate the sex ratio of employed workers in sectors which are now left mostly unattended (private sector, TVEs, collectives and the informal sector).

- The government needs to re-examine the gender gap in the age of retirement between women and men. If restricting the labor supply is chosen as a labor market adjustment strategy, then restrictions should not disadvantage workers of one sex over the other.
- Other identified needs are: modalities to establish a sustainable, effective maternity insurance program; policies and mechanisms to deliver public services to migrants; and modalities to enforce the sex discrimination clauses of the Labor Law.

Education reform : eliminating gender inequality

- There needs to be improved data collection and analysis of gendered effects of education reforms, particularly in poor areas. Enrollment rates and completion rates need to both be considered in order to capture the problem of female drop-outs.
- Identified needs include innovative, sustainable provision of free or low-cost education to poor areas; programs to stem the problem of female dropouts; programs and/or tuition-funding mechanisms; programs to create more chances of getting educated to encourage greater participation of young women in tertiary education – particularly university; programs to fight sex stereotyping in the education system (e.g. in curriculum, textbooks and teacher training).
- Review the gender issues of on-the-job training and establish projects and institutional mechanism in some communities and regions to ensure women have equal access to training on-the-job. This is very important for improving the competence of women.

Health care reform and family planning : minimizing the side-effects of health care and family planning “marketization”

- There needs to be improved documentation of the gendered impacts of health care reforms, particularly in poor areas. If key health indicators such as maternal mortality and infant mortality are increasing in poor areas or among the poorest of the poor, policy-oriented research would be required to explore program options to mitigate these effects.
- There needs to be in-depth social studies on the complex impacts, both positive and negative, of the family planning policy and the growing sex imbalance at birth. Studies should investigate the reasons for, and measures to ameliorate, the sex imbalance at birth and the greater death rate of female infants
- Other identified needs include exploration of policy options to improve the delivery of health care and to promote effective, gender equitable family planning (such as the establishment of a dependable rural pension scheme); policy options to deal effectively with prevention of HIV/AIDS, particularly among sex workers; minimizing the pressure of women’s twofold roles in the society and improving mental health of women.

Women’s social and economic status : Minimizing the vulnerability of women and girls

- It is understood by Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues that women’s lower social status is rooted in traditional attitudes, which only time, economic growth and increased opportunities for women will change. However, changing attitudes requires concerted efforts in

terms of public information and in terms of adoption of powerful symbols, such as increasing the visibility of women in governance at all levels.

- Identified needs include: assistance with analysis of the extent of domestic violence, and the design of policies and sustainable programs to curb it; assistance with the design of effective policies and measures to curb trafficking in women and children; assistance with policy, program design and community resources dealing with outreach and prevention of female suicides.
- Avoiding the use of terms and image which perpetuate sex stereotyping and hence gender discrimination in the media.

Political participation : Increasing women’s participation in management and the decision-making process

- Identified needs include policy research on, and development of feasible options, regarding affirmative action programs for the public service and in politics.
- Village elections may have led to a reduction in the number of women elected to village committees (UN Task Force on Gender 1999); trends and causes should be studied and documented. Were women to be gradually excluded from grassroots politics, effective options should be explored to promote the participation of women.
- Gender awareness and gender equality (the whys and wherefores) should be included as part of the regular curriculum taught in schools and universities that train public officials.
- Pay attention to capacity building of female official with potential; advocate men and women share family chores, and change the traditional belief that “men take care of outside things and women take care of inside things” , which has negative impacts on women’s political participation, through the media and other channels.

WORLD BANK GENDER PORTFOLIO REVIEW

This section examines the extent to which the Bank portfolio addresses the issues raised in the previous sections. Is there scope for broader Bank interventions? The portfolio review analyzed all 11 pieces of ESW produced during 1997-2000 and a sample of 23 of the 97 projects under implementation across sectors (Slø k 2000). Tables presenting the numbers of Reports Available and Reviewed and the detailed Gender Portfolio Analysis (World Bank 2000d) are among the available Background Documents listed at the end of this report.

Overall, the Bank portfolio of ESW and projects in China only considers gender to a very limited extent. While the CAS (1997) integrates gender issues into the social sectors it was not addressed in other areas such as agriculture. Most of the Bank ESW and projects reviewed missed opportunities to consider gender implications of important issues like poverty reduction, resettlement and labor market shifts such as migration and state-owned-enterprise (SOE) restructuring. Addressing the gender-differentiated effects of these Bank-supported interventions would contribute to reducing poverty. The chart below summarizes sector-specific findings. These sector findings are not presented in order of priority.

WORLD BANK GENDER PORTFOLIO REVIEW FOR CHINA - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY SECTOR

Labor, Technical Assistance, Industry		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Market Development (1996) • Pension Reform (1999) • Enterprise Reform (1999) • Shenyang Industry Reform (1995) • Technology Development (1995) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China's Management of Enterprise Assets: The State as Shareholder (Economic, 1997) • Enterprise Reform in China. Ownership, Transition, and Performance (Economic, 1999). 	<p>Gender was not mainstreamed or mentioned in any of these projects or reports except for the Labor Market Development Project which made brief policy suggestions on unemployment insurance for pregnant workers. Missed opportunities to address gender concerns included the sex-disaggregated effects of (un)employment, distribution of managers and workers, wages, benefits, job descriptions, pensions, and proliferating informal sector workers. Moreover, most of the projects and reports addressed SOE restructuring but failed to discuss women's disproportionate burden of the layoffs.</p>
Education		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Education in Poor/Minority Areas (1995) • Vocational Education Reform (1997) • Fourth Basic Education (1997) • Higher Education Reform (1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Goals for Chinese education in the 21st Century (Sector, 1999) • China Higher Education Reform (Sector, 1997). 	<p>Gender was integrated well or mainstreamed into one (China Higher Education Reform) of two ESW reports and two (Basic Education in Poor/Minority Areas Project and the Fourth Basic Education Project) of four projects reviewed. Contrary to evidence cited in this CGR about discrimination against females in the labor force, the Vocational Education Reform project states that this is not a serious issue and that female graduates do not encounter job discrimination. It would be valuable to provide sex-disaggregated data on male and female enrollment by subject and follow up employment opportunities and wages. Country follow-up work would benefit from analyzing sex-disaggregated enrollment and dropout rates, especially at the secondary level, and curriculum content, including that used in vocational training. Follow-up higher education reform should enhance opportunities for females in scientific streams.</p>
Health		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Maternal & Child Health (1995) • Health Nine (1999) 		<p>The Comprehensive Maternal & Child Health Project focused on mothers and children but excluded men's role in reproductive health. It also failed to address China's significantly higher female than male infant mortality rates. The Health Nine Project mainstreamed gender well and included both women's and men's reproductive health concerns.</p>
Transport		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products</i>	<i>Analysis</i>

	<i>Reviewed</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henan Highway (1993) • National Highways III (1998) • Guangzhou City Center Transport (1998) • Fujian Highway II (1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China: Forward with One Spirit: A Strategy for the Transport Sector (1998) 	Gender issues were not mentioned in any of the four projects although the resettlement component of all the projects could have included sex disaggregated data on issues discussed including who is being resettled, land ownership, name on the housing contracts and employment opportunities. The Guangzhou project could have examined safety issues for women using public transport. In the ESW report, Forward with One Spirit, gender is not mentioned. It could have examined how men and women use roads differently, eg how improved access to transport could impact women's and men's access to jobs, health care and education, and analyzed how increased transport sector competition affects men and women differently.
Poverty, Rural and Agricultural Development		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qinba Mountains Poverty Reduction (1997) • Anning Valley Agricultural Development (1999) • State Farms Commercialization (1998) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming Rural Poverty (2000) • Accelerating China's Rural Transformation (1999) • Rural China: Transition and Development (1999) 	All three substantial pieces of ESW analyzed rural poverty and related issues such as water collection, land tenure, extension services, and labor allocations, without analyzing differential effects on men and women. To some extent, the reports discussed services for the poor like micro credit without considering gender impacts. These analyses asserted that poverty was not being feminized without providing substantiating data. Future rural analyses should address these gender concerns. Gender considerations were included in many of the Qinba and Anning Valley project components but they could be enhanced by examining sex disaggregated data for the labor, resettlement and migration issues. Gender was not considered in the State Farms Commercialization Project despite differential impacts of agricultural and rural reforms on the welfare of individual men and women.
Power		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East China (Jiangsu) Transmission (1998) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power Trade Strategy for the Greater Mekong Sub-region (1999) 	Gender was not mentioned in either of the power reports reviewed, but it was not relevant to the ESW which addresses aggregate, not household, power needs and uses. The Jiangsu resettlement component could have included sex disaggregated data on who is being resettled, land ownership, name on the housing contract, and employment possibilities in the resettlement area.
Environment and Water		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shanghai Environment (1994) • Liaoning Environment (1995) 		Gender issues were considered in the water and sanitation project but were not mentioned in either of the environment projects. Missed opportunities to include gender issues were in the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th Rural Water Supply & Sanitation (1997) 		social development evaluation of the Shanghai project and in the resettlement component and provision on infrastructure and services of the Liaoning project.
Other Sectors		
<i>Projects Reviewed</i>	<i>ESW Products Reviewed</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China 2020: Development Challenges in the New Century (Sector, 1997) China. Weathering the Storm and Learning the Lessons (Economic, 1999) Country Assistance Strategy (1997). 	China 2020 and Weathering the Storm hardly took gender into account. These reports lacked sex-disaggregated data and opportunities were missed to address gender issues, especially in the labor market analysis. Gender is well integrated into the CAS discussions of human development but the CAS did not address gender issues in the analysis of rural development/agriculture, rural poverty, the environment and infrastructure. The CAS data appendix did not disaggregate infant mortality, under five mortality, nutrition, labor force participation, wage gap and other statistics by sex although there are important sex differences and sex-disaggregated data are available.

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR WORLD BANK INTERVENTION

Research and analysis

- Solid sex disaggregated data has been identified as fundamental to rigorous and sophisticated gender analysis. The National Bureau of Statistics has started to conduct pilot gender-sensitive household surveys (funded by UNIFEM and other donors), and some census data identify the sex of respondents. But this work needs to be expanded and systematized. Assistance is also needed for some NGOs particularly relevant research institutions to collect and analyze the gender disaggregated data and the methodologies used to track changes in gender.
- Technical assistance is required in the areas of gender analysis for the purpose of social policy, social programming and legislation. Of particular importance is sector-specific gender analysis.
- Technical assistance is required to help the government to produce operational manual for gender analysis and gender sensitive approaches to project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It would be useful to introduce Chinese officials to successful experiences and methods used in other countries.

Policy oriented research

- There is a need for research into effective regulatory and enforcement frameworks for equality rights protection (including market based instruments).
- There is a need for research into financial and fiscal instruments to support the growth of the not-for-profit social services delivery sector (of which women's NGOs are a part).
- There is a need for developing gender-sensitive modalities for the delivery of urban and rural social services.
- There is a need for developing modalities to promote the greater participation of women in public governance, including effective public information, training and consensus building around shared goals with respect to gender equality.

Support of civil society

- The Bank should explore ways to support the budding women's NGO movement, as well as the network of scholars specializing in gender issues. This support would fulfill two goals: increasing the profile and credibility of indigenous gender experts, and providing them with capacity building opportunities. This support could take the form of contracts for specific purposes (implementation of a pilot project, funding of research activities), or of the inclusion of these gender experts on Bank missions, etc.
- World Bank loan projects, the Bank should explore partnerships with gender scholars and NGOs. While there is great reluctance still to form such partnerships in China, there is a growing recognition that some services can best be delivered by the not-for-profit sector (especially social services). Public information campaigns dealing with environmental

issues for instance, are in some cases relying on the participation of NGOs. The Bank should be proactive and help facilitate such partnerships.

World Bank Lending Programs

- There is still more scope for mainstreaming gender issues into Bank projects:
 - Gender analysis should be included as a matter of course in projects decision; this means sex disaggregated data (where relevant) should be collected as part of project baseline and regular monitoring activities. Such gender analysis could be conducted by Chinese gender specialists.
 - Missions could include multi-disciplinary sector-specific gender experts in order to help partners develop coherent and effective, targeted gender strategies.
 - Collection of gender data should be part of project monitoring and evaluation.
 - Gender awareness training that is sector-specific should be built into the project preparation and implementation phase in order to ensure full ownership and understanding of gender goals on the part of project partners (men and women).
 - Specific activities and budgets should be developed during regular work planning to ensure progress towards the project's specific gender goals.
 - Targets and/or quotas for women's participation in various aspects of project work should be considered. Best practices for gender integration in China shows that the target approach works and is not unduly resented (targets being a normal practice of Chinese government).
 - World Bank task team leaders need to be perceived as supportive of gender mainstreaming, otherwise partners will not take the issue seriously.
 - Each project should have a Bank and a partner gender focal point, responsible for the implementation of and reporting on the gender strategy.
- Capacity building activities on the gender front should be developed to support individual projects. Bank tools and checklists dealing with gender should be available in Chinese and made available to partner staff. Training workshops on the Bank's gender policies and practices, and on project gender mainstreaming could be convened to familiarize partners. The Bank could sponsor workshops on gender equality to promote discussion of the most recent relevant gender research and policies.
- At present, the pipeline of proposed projects also is under review in an effort to identify sector-specific interventions.

CONCLUSION

Over the past hundred years, China has made enormous progress towards gender equality. It is now legitimate for women to undertake careers in virtually all walks of life. Most indicators – economic status, health, education, political participation - show that women’s status has for the most part increased. The transition to a market economy is adding new complexities to the process of emancipating women. Encouraging signs include the growing engagement of civil society in the public debate, as well as the fact that women comprise about 40 percent of the newly self-employed and more than a third of private business owners. These facts indicate women are grasping opportunities to take charge of their economic and social lives.

On the other hand, gender-based crimes – problems such as trafficking in women, prostitution, female infanticide - have reappeared and grown over the past 20 years. China’s female suicide rate is the world’s highest. Some of the equality gains made by women in the workplace and in politics appear to be slipping. Ancestral ideas about gender roles – especially in a country as vast and as diverse as China – cannot be expected to change over the course of a few generations.

The process of constructive, equitable change needs to be encouraged and supported. The Bank can play such a role with its partners in China, by providing technical assistance in the areas of research and analysis, exploration of policy options, design and implementation of sustainable interventions, as well as evaluation and monitoring of gender results achieved. The Bank can be seen to support gender equality and can prove this support by ensuring gender equality is mainstreamed in its projects and programs. For China, the benefits of reducing existing gender gaps will be improved economic efficiency, growth and social stability (World Bank, 2000a).

APPENDIX A : METHODOLOGY

This report is the result of a desk study, followed by revisions conducted by consultants in China. The process involved:

- ◆ **Stakeholder consultation.** China gender specialists, especially in-country, including leaders of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's studies centers and others were each asked to identify about a half dozen most critical gender priorities.²⁷ Then the Bank East Asia and Pacific Region (EAP) gender coordinator, the Beijing country office Gender Specialist, and staff of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, Gender and Development Group (PRMGE) and other units were consulted about the Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues' priorities. Bank staff endorsed the Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues' priorities and requested that the framework for the CGR analysis be the transition from a central planning economy to a market economy.
- ◆ **Data collection.** Extensive sex-disaggregated data were collected, reflected to some extent in the CGR graphs and data contained in the report. We also compiled a set of more extensive China Gender Statistics and prepared additional China Gender Graphs available in the Background Documents listed at the end of the CGR. Data were collected from government, civil society, international agency and academic publications and studies. The bulk of the data consist of official statistics, which even government officials claim are often unreliable. There are large gaps in the sex-disaggregated data available. For example, consumption and welfare data have not been collected in terms of intra-household distribution so it is impossible to know if men or women and girls or boys receive more or less education, nutrition and health care. At EAP's suggestion, gender information was sought in newspapers to complement official statistics.
- ◆ **Literature research.** Library and web publications and documents prepared for the Beijing Plus Five Symposium were reviewed. Detailed analyses of each of the priority gender issues discussed below are available in the Background Documents listed at the CGR end.
- ◆ **Bank portfolio analysis.** A portfolio analysis assessed the extent of gender integration in the China CAS, ESW and a sample of projects. The CGR contains a summary of this analysis. The detailed portfolio analysis is available in the Background Documents listed at the end of the CGR.
- ◆ **CGR revisions.** A consulting team already working for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) on gender equality issues in China was retained to undertake revisions and updates of the CGR draft. The consultations they had already conducted with key Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues on behalf of CIDA informed the revisions.

²⁷ A full list of Chinese researchers and scholars on gender issues consulted is contained in the Background Documents available at <http://worldbank.org/gender/cgr/>.

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