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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BCA	Biennial Collaborative Agreement
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CA	Central Asia
CADAP	Central Asia Drug Action Programme
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CODEV	Working Party on Development Cooperation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of a Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG DEVCO	Directorate General Development and Cooperation
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EGP	Enterprise Growth Programme
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
Etrap	district (Turkmenistan)
EU	European Union
EU RF	European Union Results Framework
EUD	Delegation of the European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GFMIS	Government Financial Management Information System
GFP	Gender Focal Point
Ghengesh	Representative decision-making body (Turkmenistan)
GIZ	German Development Agency – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GNI	Gross National Income
GONGO	Government-organized non-governmental organization
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus / Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICNL	International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFCA	Investment Facility for Central Asia
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRKO	Information Resource Centre of 'Keik Okara'
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
Kalym	bride price
Khakim	Mayor (Turkmenistan)
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MDR-TB	Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis
Mejlis	Parliament (Turkmenistan)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFI	Micro-finance institution
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	Measles, Mumps, Rubella
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRAP	National Human Rights Action Plan
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PPCM	Programme and Project Cycle Management
PwD	Person with Disabilities
R&D	Research and Development
RAS	Reimbursable Advisory Services
ROB	Results Oriented Budgeting
SBS	Small Business Support
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
STEPS	WHO STEP-wise approach to chronic disease risk factor surveillance

TA	Technical Assistance
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TMT	Turkmen manat
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children
UNRCCA	UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollar
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
Velayat	region
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
YPEER	National Youth Centre (Turkmenistan)

1 Executive Summary

The Gender Study for Turkmenistan was carried out in-country during 30 October – 26 November 2017 by the consultant team made up of Ms. Helen Dubok (Team Leader) and Ms. Dilbar Turakhanova (Gender Expert). The objectives were to provide the EU with a review of the gender situation in Turkmenistan in order to provide an understanding of whether gender inequalities persist both formally and informally, and to provide specific country recommendations to improve the gender situation and the elimination of discrimination through EU assistance.

Turkmenistan is party to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol. In addition, it has ratified all international UN treaties including the Human Rights Bill. It has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, and the Convention on Reduction of Statelessness. Turkmenistan has ratified only nine ILO Conventions of which all eight fundamental Conventions including ILO C100 - Equal Remuneration and ILO C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). It has also ratified ILO C138 and 182 prohibiting child labour¹. This is the lowest ratification rate of ILO instruments in the region.² Ratification and respective implementation in the national legislation of such technical ILO Conventions as ILO C103 on Maternity Protection and ILO C156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities help to establish not only the access of women to the labour market, but also the access of women to quality work implying regulation of working conditions, access to social protection and work-family policies to enable working women to secure, retain and progress in employment without discrimination. The New Constitution of Turkmenistan adopted in 2016 establishes the principle of equality of rights, freedoms and opportunities for women and men, and responsibilities for violation of this principle. During 2015-2016 the Government adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2020; a National Action Plan on Human Rights for 2016-2020, and a National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2016-2018.

There are acute limitations in accessibility of national data for the general public in Turkmenistan. Up-to-date information and national statistics are unavailable. Gender statistics in the country are mostly unobtainable and official statistics are unreliable. The factual situation regarding gender is therefore difficult to uncover and assess.

Both direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls is evident, which impinges on their access to human rights, education, employment and opportunities. The Labour Code remains overly protective of women as mothers and stipulates restrictions on their working time. There is no law which specifically prohibits sexual harassment, although anecdotal evidence suggests that sexual harassment takes place in the workplace. Anti-discrimination laws do not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, and the Government does not provide legal protection or recognition of their gender identity. Anecdotal evidence suggests that domestic violence against women is common although unreported, and that victims are unaware of their rights or are afraid of increased violence from husbands and relatives following formal complaint.³ Approximately 6 percent of girls in Turkmenistan are married before their 18th birthday⁴ although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18 years. Although polygamy is prohibited by law, it is practised without any legal repercussions. The custom of paying for a bride, known as '*kalym*', has seen a revival in Turkmenistan in the years since the Soviet period, when it was officially banned. A strict dress code is imposed on female students in higher education institutions obliging them to wear Turkmen national dress comprising ankle-length embroidered dress and skull-cap, regardless of their ethnicity. Despite the ban on the involvement of minors in cotton harvesting, children were observed working in cotton fields during the 2017 cotton picking season⁵ and local authorities have been involved in promoting child labour in cotton harvesting. Despite the law which prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, persons with disabilities encounter discrimination and denial of work, education, and access to

¹http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103551

² Kazakhstan ratified 24, Kyrgyzstan 53, Tajikistan 50 and Uzbekistan 14 ILO Conventions.

³ United States Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkmenistan

⁴ UNICEF *State of the World's Children* 2016

⁵ www.Alternative News of Turkmenistan 05.11.2017

health care and other state services because of social and cultural biases.⁶ While legal guarantees provide for equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, ethnic minorities face language barriers in obtaining State employment and in communicating with State and public institutions.⁷

On the surface, there is gender parity in education with regard to school enrolment, however the quality of education at every level is poor and education standards are low. Only 18 percent of the population has access to internet. The education sector is also characterized by corruption linked to university enrolment and examination scores.

Patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes persist, and a woman's role is to get married and become a mother. Such stereotyping is a root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in public and political life and in the labour market. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women in rural areas are more exposed to the negative impact of stereotyping, entrenched customs and traditions. Men are considered heads of household even if the wife is the primary breadwinner. Rural women are also less likely to be aware of their legal rights or of their position regarding inheritance. Women in rural areas rarely initiate divorce and there is high social stigma and discrimination against divorced women and their children.

There are some shortcomings in the institutional and legal framework on GEWE in the country. It is not clear whether the 2015 Law "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men" fully guarantees gender equality regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms in economic, social and cultural fields, or any other field as stipulated in CEDAW.⁸ The Law guarantees mainly civil and political rights. There also appears to be no clear definition of discrimination against women prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination in both private and public spheres.⁹ The national machinery for the advancement of women is fragmented across different agencies (the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Interagency Commission on Human Rights, and the Human Rights Ombudsman). This weakens its effectiveness in ensuring that gender equality policies are properly developed and fully implemented. Domestic violence is still not criminalised and is only now entering public discourse in Turkmenistan.

The main barriers to achieving gender equality in Turkmenistan include the lack of political will to eliminate stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes that discriminate against women in society. No significant effort is being made by government bodies to modify these, and a general lack of awareness among government bodies of fundamental and substantive gender equality which concerns the rights of the individual. A legal culture which is supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination is absent; a conducive environment allowing for the establishment of independent women's organizations to take forward gender equality and women's empowerment in the country is lacking; and there is gender-bias in the family which favours investing in boys' education over that of girls.

The EU, as important donor¹⁰, has political leverage and is influential with the Government. There is space to conduct effective policy dialogue on gender issues in relation to country's National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2015-2020) which includes activities related to gender-based violence and discrimination. The EU is also well placed to lend its support to promoting gender equality, and to efforts being made by the country's National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, as part of the country's national gender machinery.

Based on an analysis of the current gender situation in the country, priority gender objectives have been identified to which the EU can add value. These are: 'Girls and women free from all forms of violence against them (VAWG) both in the public and private sphere' (Objective 7); 'Equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational education and training (VET) free from discrimination' (Objective 13); 'Equal access by women to financial services, productive resources including land, trade and entrepreneurship' (Objective 15); 'Equal rights and ability for women to participate in policy and governance processes at all levels' (Objective 17); 'Challenged and changed discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes' (Objective 19); and 'Equal rights enjoyed by women to participate in and influence decision-

⁶ United States Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights 'Turkmenistan Human Rights Report 2016'

⁷ UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2017) 'Concluding observations on the eighth to eleventh periodic reports of Turkmenistan' 7 February 2017

⁸ CEDAW Article 1 reads: 'The term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.'

⁹ CEDAW Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Seventieth Session (2017) 'List of issues and questions in relation to the fifth periodic report of Turkmenistan' Item 4 of the provisional agenda 2–20 July 2018.

¹⁰ Responsibility for EU DCI operations in Turkmenistan is with EUD Kazakhstan

making processes on climate and environmental issues' (Objective 20). [SP: It would be useful to add specific numbers of the identified GAP II priority objectives.].

It is recommended that DCI projects collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights which has the mandate and capacity to work on GEWE in the country, to raise awareness amongst project staff and provide capacity building on how to identify and address the important gender issues related to their sectors and link them to SDGs. Gender analyses of each sector can then be produced, and gender mainstreaming actions can be designed. Log frame indicators can also be made more gender-sensitive.

New gender equality projects which are considered of high priority in Turkmenistan include support for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2015-2020 in partnership with the UN; support for the implementation of CEDAW recommendations to Turkmenistan; strengthening and support to the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, and interventions which address gender-based violence.

There is also scope for the EU to promote / formulate a regional Central Asia programme on GEWE with a focus on: building knowledge of Central Asia partners; sharing best practice on legal and institutional framework for GEWE and its effective implementation; gender research; use of gender statistics in policy formulation, and gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in national development. This could be between Central Asia countries and selected EU Member States. Eastern European Member States which have a similar historical Socialist past and context, would be well-placed as partners, thereby improving relevance and effectiveness for Turkmenistan.

2 Introduction

This report contains the findings of the Gender Study for Turkmenistan which was carried out in-country during the period 30 October – 26 [SP: on page 1, 26 November is mentioned; please make these dates consistent] November 2017 by the consultant team made up of Ms. Helen Dubok (Team Leader), and Ms. Dilbar Turakhanova (Gender Expert).

The objectives of the assignment were to produce a gender analysis and study for Central Asia which will provide the EU with a review of the gender situation in each of the five countries of the region – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The specific objectives are to provide an understanding of whether gender inequalities persist both formally and informally in each country, and to provide specific country recommendations on issues to be addressed to improve the gender situations and contribute to the elimination of discrimination in each of these sectors through EU assistance.

2.1 Expected Outputs - Response strategies for Turkmenistan

Proposals were to be made concerning the objectives and opportunities for policy and political dialogue in Turkmenistan which could contribute to strengthening coordination between EU institutions and EU Member States regarding burden-sharing for the implementation of GAP II objectives based on identified gender-related initiatives by Member States in Turkmenistan. The specific outputs are:

- A minimum of three objectives from GAP II selected (one per each thematic priority) to contribute to existing programmes / projects or future programmes / projects of DCI (i.e. those active in the bilateral focal sectors of intervention, and those of Non-State Actor / Local Authorities thematic programme);
- Proposed adaptation to programmes in order to incorporate these objectives and adequately measure their impact;
- Following consultation, identified and formulated new actions where relevant and possible;
- Identified results for gender equality that will be achieved through existing DCI programmes, and proposed indicators and processes to adequately monitor these results through data-gathering and tracking;
- Identified priorities for forthcoming in-country calls under the EIDHR instrument and possible CSO/LA instrument.

This report contains the detailed findings, proposed gender objectives and priorities for Turkmenistan.

3 Methodological note

The Consultants employed a combination of data collection techniques for the Turkmenistan Gender Study as follows:

- Desk review of secondary data including statistics, survey reports and publications
- Key informant interviews in Ashgabat
- Interviews with public organizations
- Meetings with EU implementing partners
- Meetings with key government bodies and national organizations

Secondary data and literature was reviewed to assess the country's gender situation and to inform the development of method for in-country information-gathering.

Participants selected for stakeholder interviews and meetings were identified according to sector, and specialism. Interviews aimed to gather qualitative data on how the entity / organization functioned and which issues were the focus of its operations. In addition, information was collected related to their experiences; views and perceptions of gender and legal issues; the impact of the organizations on beneficiaries and participants; stakeholders' knowledge and views on relevant law and policy relating to gender equality and empowerment issues, and practice and outcomes in actual situations.

The entities and people met in-country included:

- International Organizations: UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, OSCE, IOM.
- International lenders: EBRD, World Bank
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Education; Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health, Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, National Statistics Committee
- Women's Union, Youth Union
- Implementing partners of EU-funded projects
- ICNL, 'Yenme', Centre for the Disabled, 'Keik Okara' (Public Organizations)
- EU Member States (representatives from GIZ, UK Embassy).

The full list of people / entities met is contained in the annex.

3.1 Difficulties experienced

3.1.1 Knowledge / information gaps

There are acute limitations in accessibility of national data for the general public in Turkmenistan. Up-to-date information and national statistics are unavailable. Gender statistics in the country are mostly unobtainable and official statistics are unreliable. Official legislation as well as adopted national policies and strategies are also not available for review and assessment to determine the effectiveness of enforcement of international commitments on gender equality by the State. The factual situation regarding gender equality both formal (equality in legal status) and substantive (equality of results) is therefore difficult to uncover and assess.

These critical gaps in knowledge and information are a major constraint to detailed gender analysis in Turkmenistan.

3.1.2 Other difficulties

ADB did not agree to meet with the team, as part of the 'mapping of actors' exercise, explaining that all relevant information could be found on the ADB website.

4 Current situation

4.1 Legal and human rights framework

Turkmenistan is party to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol. In addition, it has ratified all international UN human rights treaties. It has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, and the Convention on Reduction of Statelessness. Turkmenistan has ratified only nine ILO Conventions including all eight fundamental Conventions, among which ILO C100 - Equal Remuneration and ILO C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). It has also ratified ILO C138 and 182 prohibiting child labour¹¹. This is the lowest ratification rate of ILO instruments in the region.¹² Ratification and respective implementation in the national legislation of such technical ILO Conventions as ILO C103 on Maternity Protection and ILO C156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities help to establish not only the access of women to the labour market, but also the access of women to quality work implying regulation of working conditions, access to social protection and work-family policies to enable working women to secure, retain and progress in employment without discrimination. The New Constitution of Turkmenistan adopted in 2016 establishes the principle of equality of rights, freedoms and opportunities for women and men, and responsibilities for violation of this principle. During 2015-2016 the Government adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2020; a National Action Plan on Human Rights for 2016-2020, and a National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2016-2018. These plans take into account recommendations of the UN human rights committees and recommendations accepted by the State in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights (UPR). In 2015 the Government adopted the Law “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men”. It establishes the definition of sex-based discrimination and equality between women and men in civil rights and political rights. It is not clear however if the definition prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and discrimination in public and private spheres. Furthermore, it is not clear whether equality of women and men in social, economic, cultural and political spheres is fully ensured by this Law.¹³ The Law guarantees mainly civil and political rights. In cases of violation of this law, victims can submit a complaint to the competent government body responsible for gender equality (the exact name is not specified, and the agency has not as yet been established). In the case of disagreement with the decision made, victims may appeal to the court. Criminal and Administrative Codes establish criminal and administrative liability for direct and indirect violation of rights on various grounds including sex. A non-discrimination and equality clause has been introduced to other core legislation, such as the Law on Courts, and the Criminal Procedural Code etc.¹⁴ Turkmenistan has not as yet adopted a separate law on domestic violence which currently is not criminalised.

4.2 Policy framework at national level

As mentioned, in 2015 the Government adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2020. This plan outlines the overall strategy and priority directions of State policy on gender equality, and establishes a holistic approach to mainstreaming gender in all spheres of life in Turkmenistan. The Plan establishes 14 targets and 60 activities around the following areas: (1) improving legislation in line with CEDAW recommendations and gender equality principles; (2) national mechanisms to promote gender equality; (3) targeting stereotypes; (4) identifying priority areas to address gender-based violence; (5) greater participation of women in social, political and professional life; (6) access to health services and sexual education; (7) women in detention; (8) and data collection to monitor and evaluate the National Action Plan. It specifies resource allocations from State and local budgets, and the development of special programmes and specialist inputs as well as gender analysis¹⁵. In 2015 Turkmenistan was elected to the Executive Council of UN Women

¹¹ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11200:0::NO:11200:P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103551

¹² Kazakhstan ratified 24, Kyrgyzstan 53, Tajikistan 50 and Uzbekistan 14 ILO Conventions.

¹³ List of issues and questions related to fifth periodic report of Turkmenistan, CEDAW, July 2018, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fTKM%2fQ%2f5&Lang=en

¹⁴ Fifth Periodic Report of State Parties due in 2016 Turkmenistan, submitted to CEDAW on 15 November 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/TKM/CEDAW_C_TKM_5_6022_R.pdf

¹⁵ <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/turkmenistan>

for the period 2016-2018. Data regarding implementation progress of this National Action Plan is not available. Gender statistics in the country are mostly unavailable and official statistics are unreliable. The real situation regarding women and men in Turkmenistan is difficult to reveal and assess¹⁶.

4.3 Political setting

Turkmenistan is a presidential republic that is rated as a consolidated authoritarian regime with a democratic score of 6.93, where a score of 7 indicates the most non-democratic state in the world (Freedom House data).¹⁷ The current President was first elected in 2007 and then re-elected in 2012. The unicameral Parliament of Turkmenistan consists of 125 members from five parties. Seven members of Parliament are independent. All parties support the President and there is no official opposition in Turkmenistan. All branches of State power are under tight control by the President and do not provide a proper system of checks and balances. The Government system is highly centralised and functions in top-down manner. National and local elections are not transparent and fair. There are legal restrictions in the right to vote. Nationals who did not reside in the country for the last ten years as well as prisoners are not allowed to vote. There is no continuity and effectiveness of public administration due to the constant rotation of top officials and arbitrary dismissals by the President. Turkmenistan recurrently reports on its commitment to fighting corruption. High level officials have been dismissed from office due to corruption charges and these cases have been extensively covered by local media. However, based on the Transparency International Index, Turkmenistan ranks 154 of 176 countries, which is the lowest ranking in the Central Asian region and puts Turkmenistan in the group of the most corrupt countries in the world.¹⁸ Reportedly, grand and petty corruption is prevalent in the country affecting the effectiveness of public service provision and quality of services, especially in education and health sectors.¹⁹

There is complete political control over the population. The President and his ideology are promoted through the media. Despite legal provisions of free media and the prohibition of unlawful censorship, there are no independent free media in Turkmenistan. Access to information from alternative sources is discouraged. The Government ordered the removal of all privately-owned satellite dishes which aired news from outside of the country. Journalists are harassed for reporting problematic issues, such as shortages of water and electricity. Internet penetration in Turkmenistan in 2016 was estimated at only 18 percent of the total population and is the lowest in the Central Asian region. Many websites are blocked.

There are concerns about the freedom of movement both within and outside of the country. Reportedly, prior to the Asian Martial Arts Games in 2017, the internal movement of people from the regions to Ashgabat was restricted and this ruling was maintained after the end of the Games. These restrictions prevent rural people from finding employment opportunities in Ashgabat. It is estimated that up to 40,000 people are restricted from traveling outside the country for various reasons, including political reasons, alleged access to classified information, affiliation with certain religious groups and so on. People included on the list are not aware about these restrictions and may find out only on arrival at the border crossing check points while attempting to leave the country. They are neither informed about the duration of such restrictions or their reasons.²⁰

Mechanisms of public participation in country governance and implementation of public policies do not exist. The legal environment in the country for the functioning of NGOs is restrictive. There is a marginal number of independent NGOs in Turkmenistan which act mainly as service providers for vulnerable population groups. NGOs have limited opportunity to participate in the formulation of public policies; discussion of the effectiveness of policy implementation, or monitoring of public policies. There are currently slightly more than 100 NGOs in total in the country, which are known as public organizations. Despite a clear and transparent process of NGO registration, very few NGOs are registered each year. Foreign NGOs are not able to register branches, and NGO access to external funding from foreign organizations is also restricted. Any foreign grant

¹⁶ Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013), Women: Turkmenistan's Second-Class Citizens Equal only to Injustice and Vulnerable to Arbitrariness, Report 2, 2013.

¹⁷ Freedom House (2016), Turkmenistan. Nations in Transit, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/turkmenistan>

¹⁸ <https://www.transparency.org/country/TKM>

¹⁹ BTI 2016. Turkmenistan Country Report,

https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Turkmenistan.pdf

²⁰ Ibid; Freedom House (2016), Turkmenistan. Nations in Transit, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/turkmenistan>

given in cash, in-kind or as technical assistance must first be registered in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) by the donor or sponsor. MFA then sends the proposal to Government agencies for appraisal. In the event of a positive response, the recipient organization must submit the proposal to a special Government commission for approval. Upon approval, the NGO must register the new project with the Ministry of Justice. In 2017 an amendment was introduced to the Law on Public Associations specifying that ‘foreign budget organizations’ are excluded from the list of possible funders of NGOs. The definition of ‘foreign budget organization’ however, is not explicitly established by the Law. It is believed that this provision restricts the opportunities of NGOs to benefit from foreign state organization funding.²¹

At the global level, Turkmenistan has a status of constant neutrality in accordance with the UN General Assembly Resolution adopted in 1995.

Turkmenistan legislation does not establish quotas for the political participation of women. In 2016, women accounted for 27.42 percent of the total number of Turkmen Parliament members. On average women make up less than 20 percent of members in local representative bodies. Women also occupy some senior positions such as Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan in the UN, and Ambassador to China. Women also work in the judiciary occupying 45.7 percent of positions, but only 15 percent of them occupy positions as judges or department managers.

4.4 Overall economic situation

Turkmenistan is an upper middle-income country, and the economy is still in the process of transition. The high reliance on rich natural resources (oil and gas) has contributed to delays in implementing government reforms aimed at liberalizing trade and prices, and the establishment of market regulations. The State retains tight control over the economy including deciding on economic policy. Reforms such as the privatization of large enterprises; the establishment of accountable, transparent and inclusive governance, and competition policies, have been neglected.²² The sharp decrease in world prices of Turkmenistan’s main exports - oil and natural gas, has contributed to reductions in budget revenues. Due to forecasts of on-going low world prices for natural gas and oil, together with a slowdown in the Chinese economy – the main trading partner of Turkmenistan, the economy is likely to remain vulnerable to external shocks. In 2015 the Government performed well in managing external shocks by devaluing the national currency, and suspending large public investment projects. Structural reforms aimed at diversifying the economy are nevertheless required to ensure the resilience of the Turkmen economy.²³ Despite these problems, the Government managed to maintain its commitments to social sector spending. It is estimated that approximately 70 percent of the national budget is allocated to social and public services including more than 40 percent spent on education.

Government commitments to social development are outlined in several national strategies such as the National Programme of Social and Economic Development of Turkmenistan for the period 2011-2030, and the National Programme of the President of Turkmenistan on changing social and household conditions of populations in villages, settlements, *etrap* (district) towns and *etrap* centres until 2020. These programmes are aimed at social wellbeing, sustainable development, and economic wellbeing of the population through State investment in construction and reconstruction of social and industrial infrastructure, job creation, and increasing household income and so on.²⁴

The strategic document ‘Programme of the President of Turkmenistan on Social Development for the period 2018-2024’ was adopted by the Council of Elders in 2017. One of its objectives is to diversify the country’s economy to lessen its dependence on the oil and gas sectors. It is further aimed at improving employment, social protection and living and social conditions of the population. Another objective is to increase the production of domestic goods for import substitution and provide the domestic market with locally-produced food products. Due to restricted access to this Programme it is difficult to assess the degree of effective mainstreaming of gender concerns into the proposed social development of the country.

Since 2014 the Government has taken a number of measures to reduce public investments, in particular the

²¹ <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/turkmenistan.html>

²² <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkmenistan/overview>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Fifth Periodic Report of State Parties due in 2016 Turkmenistan, submitted to CEDAW on 15 November 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/TKM/CEDAW_C_TKM_5_6022_R.pdf

gradual increase of public utility rates for electricity, water and gas. In November 2017, the IMF completed its assessment mission to Turkmenistan and recommended pursuing further increases in public utility rates and a reduction in public investments. The IMF also recommended adjusting the currency's exchange rate and an easing of foreign exchange regulations. Turkmenistan was also advised to improve the quality of macroeconomic and financial data and disseminate it more widely in order to improve the investment climate and allow potential investors to better understand economic trends and assess risks.²⁵

There is a considerable gender gap in labour force participation between women and men. Based on World Bank data, in 2010 46 percent of women of working age (15 years and older) compared with 76 percent of men of similar age participated in the labour force. One quarter of all employees work in the agriculture sector which is one of the lowest paid sectors in the country. The next largest employer is the education sector which employs 13.1 percent of all employed persons. This is followed by manufacturing which employs 12.8 percent. The remaining population in employment works in sectors such as water; energy and gas supply; construction; retail and trade, and health. The labour market in Turkmenistan has a strong gender dimension. Women's labour is highly concentrated in agriculture (representing 43.6 percent of all employees in the sector) followed by manufacturing (11.1 percent) and education (11.6 percent). In 2015 the most highly paid sector in Turkmenistan was the mining industry where the monthly wage was approximately 1659.9 TMT (Turkmen Manat), equivalent to approximately EUR 439. Women represented only 0.5 percent of the total number of employees in mining and their salaries were less than those of men. Together with the agriculture sector, other low-paying sectors include entertainment, culture and other services. The average monthly wage in agriculture was 978.40 TMT or approximately EUR 260. Women receive slightly lower monthly wages than men. This gender wage gap would indicate that women are employed in lower level positions in this sector or perform unskilled work.

Government data regarding the informal sector is also available. Based on findings from the 2016 LFS report, 7.5 percent of the surveyed population worked in the informal sector, of which, 29.4 percent of the total number of people employed were women. National statistics revealed that there were more unemployed men than women officially searching for work. In 2015, women accounted for 29 percent of the total number of registered job-seekers.²⁶ NGOs report numerous violations of women's rights in employment, such as employers' unwillingness to formally conclude labour contracts; employers' reluctance to hire women due to the substantial legal maternity protection measures which are stipulated, and employers' unwillingness to provide women with maternity and child care leave, or pay the required allowances to the level established by law. Turkmenistan does not have free and independent trade unions and it is almost impossible to defend labour rights in the country.

4.5 Socio-economic situation

The population of Turkmenistan is 5.4 million inhabitants. Data on poverty levels, income distribution and the demographic situation are not available. Findings of the population census conducted in 2012 have not been released to the public making it difficult to assess the current social and demographic trends in the country. NGOs have reported a reduction in the birth rate despite Government incentives to boost the national birth rate. Exact data related to the access of boys and girls to education is also not available. The latest statistical data available dates back to 2011. It indicates that there is gender parity in enrolment of boys and girls for primary and secondary education. At the level of tertiary education, more girls than boys are enrolled in tertiary institutions. In 2016, the Government reported gender parity at all levels of education, although acknowledged that there was gender segregation for some subjects. The share of women studying technical subjects related to industry, agriculture, transport and communication, and law, ranges from 20 to 30 percent.²⁷

There has been a notable reduction in maternal mortality rates. Due to reforms in the health sector, the maternal mortality rate has decreased from 6 to 3 per 100,000 births.²⁸ However, this statistic could be unreliable, as health care staff are pressured to report lower numbers of maternal mortality cases. Data is also manipulated so that the official cause cited for maternal death, is not related to pregnancy or delivery. Good

²⁵ <http://www.imf.org/ru/News/Articles/2017/11/10/pr17432-imf-staff-concludes-staff-visit-to-turkmenistan>

²⁶ Fifth Periodic Report of State Parties due in 2016 Turkmenistan, submitted to CEDAW on 15 November 2016, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/TKM/CEDAW_C_TKM_5_6022_R.pdf

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

quality health care is not accessible or freely available for pregnant women or for the general population. People are compelled to pay for hospital services and purchase their medication. The quality of training to health care staff is also very low and midwives are generally insufficiently skilled. Prior to delivery, women are expected to cover the costs of all drugs and medical equipment that will be used during labour. In addition, women feel obliged to bribe health care personnel to avoid having Caesarean sections automatically performed on them. Poor families and women in rural areas are particularly vulnerable because they have fewer financial resources and are unable to afford health care. It may be assumed that home deliveries are widely practiced in rural areas. Data on the prevalence of diseases such as HIV/AIDs and tuberculosis which are reported by the Government may also be distorted.²⁹ In addition, the 2016 Law on Controlling the Spread of Disease caused by HIV establishes an excessive list of cases where compulsory HIV testing of individuals is required without the need for obtaining prior consent. The law also prescribes compulsory HIV testing of foreign nationals and stateless persons; persons about to get married; pregnant women, and people suffering from sexually transmitted diseases.³⁰ Such an extensive list contravenes WHO and UNAIDS recommendations which require compulsory testing only in two cases: (1) screening for HIV and other blood-borne infections of all blood destined for transfusion or for manufacture of blood products; and (2) screening of donors prior to all procedures involving transfer of bodily fluids or body parts, such as artificial insemination, corneal grafts, and organ transplants.³¹

4.6 Socio-cultural context

Published population data does not provide any estimate of ethnic composition. NGOs report that there are several minorities in Turkmenistan such as Russian, Uzbek, and Kazakh. There is evidence that minorities face discrimination in access to education on the basis of ethnicity. Degrees obtained abroad must be verified in Turkmenistan in order to be recognized, and a Turkmen language exam has to be taken. National minorities are also prohibited from employment in public services on the basis of ethnicity.

Data on the prevalence of violence against women is not available. Domestic violence has only just entered public discourse in Turkmenistan. The National Action Plan envisages implementing studies on the prevalence of violence against women including the types of violence and reasons behind it. Based on the findings, consultations are envisaged about the criminalisation of violence against women and other response strategies. The Government openly admitted that previously public debates around domestic violence were not possible, because it was perceived as a private matter which did not require any outside intervention. As already mentioned, in Turkmenistan, domestic violence is not criminalised.³²

Large families that were common 17 years ago, are rather the exception now in modern Turkmenistan. Maternity benefit and family allowances are low and discourage women from having children. In addition, there are demographic reasons for the low birth rate such as a relative scarcity of men in the population. Polygamy is illegal in Turkmenistan, but has become very common among women who are motivated to marry for financial and social security reasons. Turkmen society holds rigid stereotypes about the role of women, and it appears that women are prepared to get married at any expense.³³ Gender stereotypes are also channelled through official institutions. For instance, the national dress code is imposed on women studying in educational institutions and working for public organizations or offices. Gender politics is also built around the marital status of women. The Minister of Education was ordered to hire only young single women for the position of secretary to principals of schools and kindergartens. In other provinces, only married women are eligible to be hired for technical posts to local executive governments.

International NGOs report serious violations of freedoms in Turkmenistan particularly freedom of movement and freedom of expression. People are prosecuted on politically motivated charges. Urban housing development is also a cause for serious violations of human rights. Residents have been forced to remove external air conditioners, wooden windows, and satellite dishes in order to preserve the pleasant view of the

²⁹ Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013), *Women: Turkmenistan's Second-Class Citizens Equal only to Injustice and Vulnerable to Arbitrariness*, Report 2, 2013.

³⁰ Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan, Human Rights Committee, April 2017, p. 32.

³¹ http://www.who.int/hiv/events/2012/world_aids_day/hiv_testing_counselling/en/

³² Ibid.

³³ Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (2012), *Review of Turkmenistan under the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, submission to the United Nations Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 53rd session, Geneva, 1-19 October, 2012.

city³⁴.

4.7 Government, civil society (in particular women's organisations), international community and private sector response

The newly adopted Law “On Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men” established a new national mechanism for gender equality. The Law envisages the establishment of a competent body proficient in gender equality issues, responsible for implementing a unified State gender equality policy; the adoption of legislation on gender equality; the development of plans for implementing gender equality policies; reviewing complaints and appeals of victims of discrimination and protection of their interests in courts; awareness-raising on gender; the control over implementation of gender equality activities by other State bodies, local executive bodies and local self-governments; reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers, and cooperation with international organizations. The powers of the mechanism are quite comprehensive. The competent body has not as yet been established. Reportedly, the reason for this is the shortage of qualified personnel to fill the position of the Head of this authority as well as subordinate staff. Currently, the responsibility for gender equality is shared between the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights; the Interagency Commission on ensuring implementation of Turkmenistan's international obligations on human rights, and the recently established Human Rights Ombudsman. The same law also explicitly establishes responsibility for implementing gender equality policy by other State bodies and local executive authorities. The role of NGOs is also specified in the Law. NGOs can participate in implementing programmes on gender equality and may propose candidates for elections and support candidates committed to promoting gender equality. They may also initiate activities on gender equality and participate in decision-making on gender equality issues at all levels of government. At this stage however, it is not possible to assess how these provisions are to be enforced in practice. There are no women's NGOs or NGOs working exclusively on gender equality issues in Turkmenistan.

Gender equality issues in Turkmenistan are widely supported by UNFPA and UN Women. They have supported the development of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality; the dissemination of information about CEDAW and its Optional Protocol and the National Action Plan, and gender equality issues among various stakeholders including civil servants. The UN plans to support the Turkmen Government in setting up a centralized national entity on gender equality with a clearly defined mandate, responsibilities and resources.³⁵ In general, there are very few investments from the international community to Turkmenistan. In addition to UN agencies, the following donors/lenders have provided assistance: ADB, EU, GIZ, JICA, OSCE, TIKA, and USAID. Areas of support include agriculture and rural development; border security and support to the prevention of trafficking in narcotics and human trafficking; the strengthening of the national education system; energy management and security; environmental management; finance and banking system reform; governance and rule of law (elections and human rights); water supply and irrigation, and trans-boundary water management.³⁶

There are national organizations such as the Women's Union, Makhtumi Youth Union, and National Trade Union Centre that work on gender equality issues, but they are under Government control.

4.8 Mapping of other actors with mandate and capacity to act for gender equality

UN Women

The UN Women programme in Turkmenistan - part of the UN Women Kazakhstan Multi-Country Office, has been operational since 2015 and focuses on initiatives in women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Together with the Women's Union, it has raised awareness on gender equality among newly-elected local municipal officials and non-profit organization representatives in five

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ United Nations – Turkmenistan Partnership Framework for Development, 2016-2020, [http://www.tm.undp.org/content/turkmenistan/en/home/operations/legal_framework/jcr_content/centerparsys/download_6/file.res/UN%20Programme%20Framedowrk%20Document%20\(UNPFD\)%202016-2020%20English.pdf](http://www.tm.undp.org/content/turkmenistan/en/home/operations/legal_framework/jcr_content/centerparsys/download_6/file.res/UN%20Programme%20Framedowrk%20Document%20(UNPFD)%202016-2020%20English.pdf)

³⁶ Ibid.

regions of Turkmenistan. Based on consultations with national partners and priorities defined in Turkmenistan's National Action Plans, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Turkmenistan-United Nations Partnership Framework for Development, UN Women aims to provide technical support to ensure that gender issues are central to the country's labour and social protection programmes and works to strengthen national capacity on reporting, monitoring and implementation of CEDAW and other human rights obligations relating to gender equality.

Co-led by UN Women and the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan, a consultation with representatives of 13 national Turkmenistan ministries and agencies was organised in 2016 to discuss the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular, nine proposed targets to achieve SDG 5, which aims to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. UN Women has delivered training in gender-responsive budgeting to selected Ministry representatives and the State Statistics Committee. However, the concept of gender budgeting is new for Turkmenistan, and there is currently little scope for introducing the approach, since current state budgeting in the country is essentially top-down and non-participatory.

UN Women organizes the Donor Coordination Group in Turkmenistan (which has included the UK Embassy, GIZ, OSCE and USAID) which meets occasionally to share information. It also participates in the Human Rights, Youth, Gender theme group among the in-country UN agencies. Following a recent analysis of work plans using the UN Gender Scorecard assessment, it was found that most expected outputs of UN programmes were gender-blind. UN Women has therefore committed to providing recommendations to make activities more gender-sensitive where necessary, particularly for climate-resilience actions.

The major constraint to effectiveness of UN Women in Turkmenistan is a lack of secure resource base from core funds caused by the impact of the global economic crisis, together with a less than expected funding commitment received from Turkmenistan. Activities have thus remained small-scale.

UNRCCA (UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia)

The goal of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) is to assist and support the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in building their conflict prevention capacities through enhanced dialogue, confidence building measures and partnership in order to respond to threats and emerging challenges in the Central Asian region. It is a political Secretariat established under the UN Security Council, and former Moldovan minister, Ms. Natalia German was appointed head of UNRCCA in September 2017.

Contentious issues in the region which are discussed include the division of water from transboundary rivers, and border issues such as demarcation, security and cross-border movement. Transnational threats include terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime, and drug trafficking.

Gender equality is addressed by UNRCCA, and conflict prevention is looked at from a gender perspective to assess how women and men can be effective actors in the prevention of conflict. The guiding document in this respect is UNSCR 1325. During the 2010 inter-ethnic clashes in nearby Kyrgyzstan, it was seen that women played an important role in de-escalating the crisis, and so UNRCCA actively engages with women's groups and associations in the region to discuss ways of conflict prevention. In 2011, all five Central Asian countries agreed to adopt a joint regional counter-terrorism plan. Capacity building was delivered, and events were organized on combating terrorism, and how the media should address terrorism. Governments were encouraged to nominate female focal persons.

As part of the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy a regional workshop entitled 'Recognizing and Responding to Radicalization that can lead to Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia' was organized in 2016 to foster better understanding of the causes of radicalization and possible responses through the exchange of best practices at regional level and beyond; and to promote strengthened partnerships between state actors, civil society and communities to address the root causes and consequences of the phenomenon.

UNRCCA in Turkmenistan currently chairs the UN Group on Human Rights, Youth and Gender, and in collaboration with UN Women, UNRCCA takes part in national and regional events related to the role of women in the peace and security agenda.

UNFPA

The UNFPA's 'Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment' (2011) states that its core missions are to further sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and support high-quality national-level data collection. These are considered pillars of poverty reduction, and the realization of gender equality and development.

UNFPA assistance in Turkmenistan began in 1992 with the supply of reproductive health commodities and training. Programmes continue to strengthen reproductive health care and promote outreach to young people. UNFPA also helps to integrate reproductive health in emergency preparedness and population issues in development planning. Legal reviews and strengthened human rights protections, among other measures, aim to advance gender equality.

Gender equality is one of the key priorities of UNFPA's mandate in Turkmenistan and is prominent in its new Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021. It has been significantly affected by a recent 30 percent cut in funding made by the new US Administration to its budget, and alternative funding will be provided by Nordic countries. Key UNFPA priorities will be population data and statistics, youth empowerment and reproductive health. UNFPA has assessed that data in Turkmenistan is not currently adequately disaggregated by gender, location or age, which constrains analysis of population development. Regarding youth empowerment, UNFPA promotes access to age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health. Because of stereotyping and deep-rooted traditions, women are unable to decide for themselves how many children to have. Usually, husbands and mothers-in-law decide on the number of children and spacing, and traditions are considered difficult to break.

Together with government agencies, UNFPA has developed a survey questionnaire to study the incidence of domestic violence. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject, the official name of the study is 'The Status of Women in Families.' The study will be elaborated by three collaborating agencies: the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, responsible for methodology development and final report drafting; the Ministry of Health, responsible for data collection from family doctors, and the State Statistics Committee for data processing. The study will be nationwide and will survey 2,500 households. The study design process has been challenging, and as of November 2017, final approval of the questionnaire was still pending.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education sex education has been integrated into school curricula since 2011, as a mandatory course for pupils in Grades 7-11, covering reproductive health rights and family planning. The course was designed by UNFPA and capacity building was delivered to teachers in standardized methodology. However, UNFPA is constrained by government disapproval of certain terms such as 'menstruation' and 'teenage pregnancy' which hinders effectiveness and clarity.

There are gender issues related to the reproductive health of men. Although male sterility may be a significant factor, it is usually the woman who is blamed for any infertility in the family. Access to counselling and consultations for men is currently not widely available.

UNDP

UNDP has been operating in Turkmenistan since 1995. Its priority areas are in line with the SDGs and include: climate change adaptation and resilience, environment and energy efficiency; economic diversification and inclusive growth; governance, rule of law and access to health services; and quality of statistics for the implementation of the global development agenda. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is central to the mandate of UNDP and intrinsic to its development approach. This includes advocating for women's and girls' equal rights, combating discriminatory practices and challenging the roles and stereotypes that affect inequalities and exclusion.

Under the current Turkmenistan country programme document 2016-20, there are no targeted projects dealing with gender equality, although gender aspects are mainstreamed in all projects. UNDP's quality assurance system involves designating gender markers to each project, and reporting against the marker is done annually. Its main partners are the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, State Statistics Committee and the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights. Implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan is supported by the Ombudsman's Office and Civil Service Academy.

A series of meetings held with Government partners in 2017 to address mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS) of the SDGs into Government institutions, concluded that the Government was still in

need of support to effectively integrate SDGs into national planning and financing.

UNDP is currently active in promoting the SDGs and in particular Goal 5 dealing with women's empowerment. It has previously collaborated with the Society for the Deaf and Blind to include deaf women into vocational education programmes. The lack of access to business advice for women entrepreneurs has been identified and one of UNDP's pipeline projects will include delivering business training courses for female entrepreneurs to be funded by the Embassy of Israel.

UNICEF

UNICEF has developed a new Gender Action Plan for 2018-21 which specifies how it will promote gender equality across the organization's work at the global, regional and country levels, in alignment with its Strategic Plan.³⁷ The GAP contains details of the gender dimensions of expected results across the outcome areas of its Strategic Plan, along with indicators for measuring success.

In the Turkmenistan office, there is a gender focal point who is expected to support gender mainstreaming in UNICEF programmes, although this function is in need of strengthening as it is considered to have become largely mechanical and ineffective. It was concluded that gender assessments need to be more applicable and meaningful, and it has been recommended that the UNICEF gender focal point in Turkmenistan should ideally be at a more senior management level.

The current Turkmenistan programme covers the period 2016-2020. One of its four main pillars deals with child survival and wellbeing. Infant mortality rates in Turkmenistan are considered high (at 23 per 1,000 live births in 2015), and the quality of available sex- and age-disaggregated data in-country is considered very weak. Mortality rates are higher among boys than girls. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health in strengthening neo-natal services. A major limitation is the insufficient number of nurses to carry out home visits of families with infants.

A second pillar involves early child learning up to 100 days. The focus is on pre-school institutions where the quality of curricula is being improved by adding a play component. The integration of children with development delays and disabilities into preschool facilities is also being piloted. For both components UNICEF collaborates with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to create multidisciplinary teams for identifying children with learning difficulties. Currently, only approximately 46 percent of children aged five years attend preschool institutions which is considered very low for a high middle-income country. There is a significant difference between attendance at preschools in rural and urban areas, although no significant difference between boys and girls. The recent ten-fold increase in preschool fees has already negatively affected child enrolment rates and female participation in the labour force. UNICEF intends to produce a position paper on early child development because it is considered a crucial investment and an effective approach to preventing gender discrimination from an early age. Preschool education is provided free of charge in many upper middle-income countries from the age of three years.

Children with disabilities are based in a network of six residential care institutions and rehabilitation centres throughout the country for children aged 3-17 years – one in each province and one in the capital. These facilities are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education which provides a package of services, including health, education, and family counselling. The provision regulating these facilities is that a child is kept in residential care upon the written request of parents. The number of children residing in these facilities is increasing and may be due to economic factors and the fact that three meals are provided to each child per day. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of children with severe and combined disabilities is increasing. The most vulnerable families are those with single parents who have lost the main breadwinner. There is also a tendency to conceal disabled children, and families are reluctant to disclose that they have disabled child because of social stigma. Children with Down's syndrome and autism are not classified as disabled. The exact number of disabled children is not available to the public, although approximately 17,300 children receive disability benefits.

UNICEF is currently preparing for the next MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey) in 2019. The quality of the previous survey (2015) was not up to expected standards, and mortality data was considered to have been under-estimated. A second concern was related to the disciplining of children which appeared to be under-

³⁷ UNICEF (2017) 'UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021' UN Economic and Social Council. United Nations Children's Fund Executive Board Second regular session 2017 12-15 September 2017.

reported. This may have been caused by inaccurate data recording or misunderstanding by respondents, who did not consider both psychological aggression and physical violence as methods for disciplining children.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO's global gender strategy was approved in 2007, and requires the integration of gender analysis and actions into its work. In 2011, the WHO developed a manual on gender mainstreaming for use by health managers, which was developed by its Department of Gender, Women and Health. The purpose of the WHO's gender strategy is to enhance, expand and institutionalize its capacity to analyze the role of gender and sex in health, and to monitor and address systemic and avoidable gender-based health inequalities. Because of social (gender) and biological (sex) differences, health risks are considered to be different for men and women, and different responses from health systems are experienced. Health-seeking behaviours and outcomes also differ. Rigid gender norms affect men's health significantly by assigning them roles that promote risk-taking behaviour and cause them to neglect their health. Gender mainstreaming aims to institutionalize gender equality across sectors. Given the powerful impact that gender has on the health of women and men, the WHO considers it imperative that health managers be equipped with the skills to address gender-based health inequities in their work.

The WHO Country Office in Turkmenistan was established 1995 to assist the Government in developing its health policy, health system and public health programmes addressing the main health needs of the country. Priorities for joint work are set out in the biennial collaborative agreement (BCA) between WHO/Europe and Turkmenistan for 2016–2017. Gender issues are discussed in monthly meetings of the UN theme group on Human Rights, Youth and Gender.

Turkmenistan became a party to the WHO Framework on Tobacco Control in August 2011. The prevalence of smoking and alcohol in the population is relatively low and the main health issues revolve around the lack of sufficient physical activity and poor diet. Although the law prohibits smoking in all indoor public places and indoor workplaces it is not effectively enforced.

Cervical cancer is a significant problem and a nationwide free vaccination programme against the most common high-risk types of human papilloma virus (HPV) is now available for girls and boys aged nine to 12 years.

Turkmenistan is a high Tuberculosis (TB) priority country. The TB incidence estimate for 2015 was 70 per 100,000 population, with the multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) rate estimated at 16 per 100,000 population. Disease is more prevalent amongst men.³⁸ The MDR-TB rate in new cases is estimated to be 14 percent and in retreatment cases as high as 38 percent. Rates of MDR-TB likely result from a number of underlying causes, including improper prescribing practices, misuse of medicines, and inadequate quantification and supply planning resulting in stock-outs of TB medicines.

Decision-making and managerial interventions aimed at overcoming these challenges have been limited by a lack of reliable gender-disaggregated data in the country, and weak national information systems.

International Organization of Migration (IOM)

IOM opened its office in Turkmenistan in 1997 and has a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the Government. Its thematic areas include combating human trafficking and assistance to migrants; migration and health issues and access to health services; migration and emergency (disaster risk reduction); migration and integrated border management in partnership with State migration, border and customs services, and operational movement.

Gender is a cross-cutting issues in all its projects. IOM's Gender Equality Policy 2015–2019,³⁹ formalizes and codifies the Organization's commitment to addressing the needs of all beneficiaries of

IOM services, and ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment of all staff members within IOM. The Policy introduces accountability elements for implementation, and believes that gender equality is central to the causes and consequences of migration, and it is not possible to meet the IOM objective of safe, humane and

³⁸ World Health Organization. Global Tuberculosis Report, 2015.

³⁹ IOM (2015) 'IOM Gender Equality Policy' 106th Council Session. C/106/INF/8/Rev.1. Original: English 19 November 2015. International Organization for Migration.

orderly migration for all unless gender equality is taken into account.

IOM is also a service provider to migrants in-country and provides assistance to trafficking victims through rehabilitation programmes. It collaborates closely with IOM in Turkey and Russia.

Turkey is the principle country of destination for Turkmen migrants because of its free visa regime allowing visitors to stay for up to 30 days without a visa. Traffickers hold migrants' passports whilst men work on construction sites or in textile factories. The majority of trafficked female migrants work as domestic servants. Housing conditions are usually poor and there is no access to health services.

In previous years, the majority of trafficking victims were women, however the majority are now men who are victims of forced labour. The priorities and needs of male and female victims differ. Male victims need health care support, and are reluctant to be housed in hostels. In comparison, female victims mainly require shelter and psychological support. Medical and rehabilitation needs are identified on a case by case basis. Following rehabilitation, victims receive vocational training and are supported in establishing income generating activities such as sewing, construction and computer skills. They are also eligible for grants to purchase small-scale equipment.

A National Action Plan on Anti-trafficking has been formulated and standard operating procedures for identifying victims of trafficking have been elaborated. Gender concerns have been incorporated into procedures and programming with law enforcement agencies and civil society. IOM delivers capacity building to law enforcement agencies, and stipulates that training participants should be gender-balanced.

Availability of data is one of the main challenges for IOM, and accurate labour migration statistics are not available, although this information is known to law enforcement agencies. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of men migrating in search of work is growing and destination countries now include the United Arab Emirates and Cyprus.

OSCE

The participating States of OSCE have adopted measures in support of gender equality, and the 2004 'Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality' provides the main framework for its activities. Specific responsibilities are assigned for field operations as well as to participating States, including: ensuring that all OSCE policies and activities are gender mainstreamed; providing staff with gender mainstreaming training; increasing the representation of female managers in senior positions, and promoting the role of women in conflict prevention and peace reconstruction processes.

OSCE in Turkmenistan is perceived largely as a security organization that does not address gender issues as such. Its mandate covers a wide range of activities, from arms control, border security and the fight against terrorism and human trafficking, to economic and environmental activities; good governance; human rights protection; gender equality; the rule of law; and media reform.

In the field of gender equality, it supports a national civil society organization ('Keik Okara') on a number of awareness-raising projects targeting gender equality and domestic violence issues. It assists the organization to operate a support centre for victims of domestic violence which has been operational for ten years, including a hotline support service for victims, and provides legal and psychological consultations for domestic violence victims. The Ashgabat shelter is small, and can accommodate only four women and their children.

The OSCE Centre has organized workshops and seminars on gender legislation reform and good law enforcement practices to prevent domestic violence.

OSCE has also organized seminars and training courses to assist the country in its fight against trafficking in human beings. It holds seminars for officials on victim protection and anti-trafficking standards and collaborates in preparing basic curricula for the Institute of the Ministry of the Interior.

In the field of human rights, the OSCE Centre organizes seminars and training courses for officials from the judiciary and legislative authorities, law enforcement, legal practitioners, and human rights researchers to familiarize them with international human rights standards. It also trains prison officers on prisoners' rights and organizes human rights lectures at universities and institutes.

In the field of rule of law, OSCE runs training on legislative techniques for representatives of parliament and other law-making institutions. The recent Law on Ombudsman was adopted in 2016 and a new Ombudsman - Ms. Yazdursun Gurbonnazarova who was one of the Law's authors, was appointed in 2017. OSCE sponsored her visit to Finland to observe the workings of the Ombudsman's Office in Helsinki. Ms. Gurbonnazarova was

previously a Member of Parliament, Head of the Legislation Committee and Head of the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights.

The OSCE Centre's main constraint in Turkmenistan is its very limited budget for implementing any extensive activities.

Donors

USAID

In 2017, US President Donald Trump considerably reduced programmes administered by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) by cutting down and partially cancelling funding for the post-Soviet countries. Pursuant to this decision, USAID will completely leave those countries in the region with the smallest budgets such as Turkmenistan which had funding of USD 3.9 million per year, (in addition to Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan). In recent years, USAID has conducted training for Turkmenistan's agencies and State-run organizations, including the (former) Ministry of Economy, and oil and gas companies, and organized overseas trips for Turkmen diplomats to share experience. Since 1992 USAID allocated approximately USD 100 million for programmes to facilitate economic growth; the social sector and non-government initiatives.

International Finance Institutions

World Bank

The World Bank's involvement in Turkmenistan has been limited, and the prospects for a more comprehensive medium-term programme are still not well-defined. The Government's preferred instrument for dialogue with the World Bank is knowledge-based. The World Bank's 'Country Engagement Note' identifies its proposed programme activities as: improving data for policy-making and governance; financial sector modernization; enhancing competitiveness; and managing natural resources efficiently. The programme is funded primarily by the Government of Turkmenistan through reimbursable advisory services (RAS), supplemented by World Bank Group advisory and analytical services, as well as development partner and trust fund support.

The key initiatives that could enhance the quality and relevance of the government's economic analysis and policy making have been identified as welfare measurement and monitoring, macroeconomic modelling and forecasting, public investment management and civil service capacity building,

Welfare measurement and monitoring could facilitate the design of gender-informed policies to improve living standards and promote equity and, at the same time, assist the Government in assessing the impact of reforms such as the elimination of utility subsidies and/or the introduction of more targeted social assistance programmes.

Statistical capacity in Turkmenistan, especially in the design and collection of household income and expenditure survey data, has been assessed as low. There has been very little exposure to international practices and experience, and the capacity of the State Statistics Committee has not benefited from new knowledge or training in the field of welfare measurement. The country conducts periodic household surveys, but has limited knowledge of how to measure monetary and non-monetary welfare or to ensure the quality of household surveys. Currently, the Committee produces summary tables based on the official survey but this information is insufficient to monitor welfare. The culture of using data to inform policy is also under-developed. This is the major constraint identified by the World Bank in its assessment the country's capacity to monitor population welfare; develop a targeted safety net; measure poverty levels and assess the proportion of middle class in the population.

A new World Bank project, funded through reimbursable advisory services will provide technical assistance to the State Statistics Committee especially the department responsible for conducting household surveys, and will transfer knowledge on best practices of welfare measurement and monitoring, including an introduction to CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) methodology based on available survey software.

The TA project has been approved and signed by the Government, and experts and consultants are in the process of being identified. Because of the lack of national expertise in Turkmenistan, the World Bank Team Leader for the project is based in Kyrgyzstan.

Asian Development Bank ADB

ADB's new Country Partnership Strategy 2017– 2021 aims to assist Turkmenistan in becoming a key catalyst for regional cooperation and integration by diversifying its markets and repositioning the country as a trade and transit hub.

Its gender-related activities are to be based on the country's National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2020; existing gender and development machinery in Government, and collaboration with other development partners including UN agencies and national organizations. A project-by-project approach will be undertaken to incorporate gender issues at the operational level starting with the energy, transport and finance sectors. In an up-coming SME financing project, there are plans to include gender-related components that target and support women-led businesses and SMEs with 50 percent women in senior management. Further, ADB plans to include gender issues as part of its policy and strategic dialogue with the Government in order to strengthen engagement with the country on gender issues during the implementation of the ADB Country Partnership Strategy.

EBRD

EBRD has been active in Turkmenistan since the country's independence and to date has invested approximately USD 250 million in 56 projects. The largest share of investment is in industry, commerce and agribusiness. EBRD is also active in financial institutions, energy and infrastructure.

EBRD's Strategic Gender Initiative showed that Turkmenistan had large gender gaps in a number of areas, and is therefore included as a priority country for its gender work. In the industry, commerce and agribusiness sectors, EBRD policy is to encourage clients to promote equal opportunities in the workplace, and provide support to women where necessary. In the infrastructure and energy sectors, EBRD is to ensure that services are designed and implemented in a way that is responsive to the needs of both men and women. In the financial institutions sector, EBRD is to work with clients to identify ways to support women entrepreneurs, by facilitating their access to finance and supporting their business activities. Female-headed enterprises are concentrated mainly in areas such as consumer services, education and science, while male-headed businesses tend to operate in industry, agriculture and construction. EBRD's research has also found that businesses run by women are closed down more often than businesses owned by men. The main reason for the closure is the shortage of the capital.

EBRD currently supports private sector development through its small business support (SBS) operations aimed at achieving enterprise change in potentially viable micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and contributing to the development of a sustainable infrastructure of local business advisory services. The SBS operations comprise two complementary programmes, the Enterprise Growth Programme (EGP), and Business Advisory Services (BAS). Some progress has been made to develop the SME sector and local SMEs may hold foreign currency accounts to conduct import/export operations without being required to have a license or permission from the Cabinet of Ministers. MSMEs however remain constrained by access to finance, excessive state interference and poor management skills. They also lack opportunities for networking and experience-sharing, and their access to information about good practices in business management is limited due to inadequate business support services.

There is a growing consultancy industry which is concentrated in Ashgabat and available services include audit, legal consulting, management consulting, and management information systems. However, the market for services remains highly fragmented and weak and will need further support in professionalizing and consolidating the sector.

One of EBRD's pipeline projects will focus on vocational education in collaboration with GIZ. The beneficiaries will be private (for-profit) educational institutions such as the School of Law and Business. A variety of courses will be developed in business-related disciplines with the aim of creating young business professionals.

Civil Society

Civic space in Turkmenistan is currently rated as 'closed' by the CIVICUS Monitor, which is the most serious category.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ CIVICUS Monitor: Turkmenistan. September 2017. The CIVICUS Monitor provides regularly updated information and analysis on the space for civil society and citizen activism in every country.

As mentioned earlier, the registration process for NGOs is bureaucratic and subject to State assessment. Unregistered NGO activity is illegal and punishable by fines, short-term detention and confiscation of property. The Government does not allow independent groups to carry out human rights work inside the country, and activists face the threat of government reprisal.

Recent amendments to the Law on Public Associations adopted by Parliament in 2017 were restrictive with no improvements in the legal environment for civil society. A Code on Administrative Violations which came into effect in 2014 does however limit the power of the Ministry of Justice to suspend the activities of a public association and makes this the exclusive prerogative of the courts. Unfortunately, the Code also contains restrictive provisions, including penalties for anyone involved with an unregistered public association, including the founders, funders and members.

Public associations are the only active legal form of civil society organization in Turkmenistan and are permitted to pursue both public benefit and mutual benefit purposes. The law refers to 'common aims' or 'common interests' that members can pursue collectively. Public organizations / associations that provide assistance to disabled persons and conduct educational activities are exempt from income tax and value-added tax.

Only a small number of organizations have successfully been registered in recent years. Foreign non-profit organizations have been unable to establish branch offices in Turkmenistan.

The Ministry of Justice has extensive authority to intervene with the work of public organizations and they are obliged to inform the Ministry about all their events. Ministry representatives can participate in internal public organization meetings. Public organizations must register every grant received with the Ministry of Justice before funds can actually be received.

The Government promotes government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) in support of the regime. These large organizations are part of a national movement known as 'Galkynysh' (Revival), which includes the Democratic Party, The Union of Entrepreneurs, the Women's Union, the Centre for Trade Unions, the Organization of War Veterans, and the Magtymguly Youth Union.

International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

ICNL has been operating in Turkmenistan since 1997 with the objective of improving the environment for civil society. The focus of its work is the Law on Public Associations. The current law, adopted in 2013 incorporates several proposals submitted by ICNL in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights and Parliament (*Mejlis*), to ensure compliance of the Law with Turkmenistan's international obligations on human rights. While the procedure for receiving foreign aid is relatively straightforward requiring the donor to send project proposals to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval, many foreign donors are reluctant to accept this procedure.

However, the recent amendments to the law have impacted negatively on public associations, forbidding foreign nationals and stateless persons from membership of public organizations. This ruling could be considered as discriminatory as it does not apply to GONGOs such as the Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists which are exempt and can allow both foreigners and commercial enterprises as their members.

Independent civil society organizations in Turkmenistan do not participate or engage with the Government in policy making. The majority of the 118 registered CSOs are GONGOs, and only approximately 30 of these are independent organizations and active in lobbying and legislative analysis. These include 'Agama' specialised in emergency relief and border control, 'Polet', 'Yenme', 'Yashyl', 'Shugle', 'Anynch Vepa', the League of Radio Fans', and the 'Union of Guitar Players' working closely with the Committee on Nature Protection and Environment, and instigator of several related laws. All of these organizations have built up their capacity to effectively propose recommendations to State bodies for addressing social issues and environmental problems.

ICNL does not work directly on gender issues, although in the course of its work it has conducted training for women with disabilities on how to establish public associations to defend the rights of its members in the context of the country's 'Law on State Guarantees for the Equality of Women and Men'.

The Law on Volunteering which came into effect in 2016 establishes a legal framework for volunteerism and provides the space for people to join together as initiative groups at the local level. They have their own objectives and priorities and in many cases, receive support from local self-government bodies. Although

unregistered, they are able to function as a group and in rural areas, have worked together on community development schemes such as bridge construction and irrigation canal cleaning.

ICNL also supports individual initiative groups wishing to establish themselves as public associations, by preparing documentation for their registration with the Ministry of Justice.

In 2016 ICNL together with UNDP, participated in an open dialogue with the Regional Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for Central Asia, on civil society development in the country and the contribution of NGOs to the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), as well as aspects related to the functions of Human Rights Ombudsman. It was agreed that awareness-raising of human rights should begin at an early age as part of school education curricula.

Public Organization ‘Yenme’

‘Yenme’ (‘Overcoming’) was created in 2012 to provide support to vulnerable groups such as children and adults with disabilities, victims of trafficking, the elderly and the poor, on the basis of the fundamental principle – ‘We are different, but equal’. Its main activities include rehabilitation for trafficking victims; provision of social support; psychological and legal assistance; and establishing a database of people with disabilities seeking employment. It has implemented several projects in collaboration with IOM and UNICEF, and with funding from the US Embassy and the Embassy of the United Kingdom.

For the last seven years, ‘Yenme’ has operated a shelter for approximately 30 male and female victims of trafficking funded by IOM providing rehabilitation and reintegration services for victims. The majority of victims have returned from Turkey. Skills training to victims includes computer skills, accounting and sewing. The rural population is considered to be very vulnerable to forced labour and trafficking because of high unemployment, and so awareness-raising activities are implemented warning of the risks of out-migration.

People with disabilities in rural areas are considered particularly disadvantaged because of low legal awareness of their rights and social stigma attached to disability by the older generation.’ Yenme’s’ main programme currently is rehabilitation of children with disabilities through art therapy.

Women with disabilities and women in low income families are considered very vulnerable to domestic violence and ‘Yenme’ provides legal and psychological services to address this. Advocacy campaigns for women with disabilities are implemented and problems are addressed in cooperation with State bodies. Reproductive health rights of disabled women are frequently violated and they are pressured by doctors to have abortions. As part of awareness-raising amongst the medical profession, members of the Kazakh disabled persons’ NGO ‘Shyrak’ were invited to Turkmenistan to share successful experiences of disabled women who have given birth to healthy children.

‘Yenme’s’ long term aim is to establish a skills training centre for persons with disabilities which will allow them to enter the labour force. Currently, VET institutions are inaccessible to them because of inappropriate infrastructure.

Public Organization - Centre of Support for the Disabled

The Centre of Support for the Disabled is the only organization in Turkmenistan where all its staff members are disabled people. The Centre works with the physically handicapped and those who have suffered physical injuries in Ashgabat and in the regions. A Sports Hall free-of-charge has been donated to them by the State.

The aim of the Centre is to help the disabled by providing them with needed wheelchairs, artificial limbs, crutches and walking frames and also pay for medical treatment where possible, in addition to providing financial contributions to its members for family wedding and funeral costs. Cultural events and competitions have been organized, as well as summer camps in mountain areas, through funding from USAID, OSCE, UNICEF, and private companies such as Dragon Oil, Petronas and individual entrepreneurs. ICNL provides the Centre with legal assistance when there are questions with the Ministry of Justice.

While there is no overt discrimination against people with disabilities in Turkmenistan, there is a lack of facilities to allow ease of movement in cities and access to local transportation. Despite being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the State has only just begun to address the needs of the disabled. Disabled women continue to be discriminated against by doctors, who pressure them into not having children. There is still a need to work with society to change perceptions about disabilities. The issue of inclusive education is only now beginning to be accepted. Special parking spaces for the disabled have now also been allocated near shopping centres to improve physical access.

The Centre is also involved in lobbying for increases in the disability pension. Whilst it is more substantial than the ordinary pension in financial terms, it is insufficient for covering a disabled person’s medical bills.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has for the first time requested public organizations to supply them with data concerning the number of disabled people in employment. Currently there is no reliable data concerning the employment rate of people with disabilities in the labour force.

The main problem facing people with disabilities is access to education. Very few disabled people are able to enter University to continue studies despite the quotas allocated to them. VET institutions such as colleges and lyceums offer education on a fee basis, and if a disabled person passes the entrance exam, then the Centre will cover his/her fees. However, many educational institutions are not equipped for access by the

disabled, either into the building or any of the workshops. In city and provincial VET institutions, the situation is slightly better than at district and village levels, which is much worse.

The Centre has submitted policy recommendations to the magazine 'Democracy and Law'. The main problems to be addressed concern the method for determining the level and extent of an individual person's disability. The currently system is considered onerous and lacking in transparency. Another priority issue concerns tax legislation. While in previous years it was possible for private companies to claim tax deduction for charitable work, in the current tax code, there are no incentives for the private sector to undertake charitable work.

The Centre has submitted a project proposal to the EU focusing on the creation of jobs and income generating activities for people with disabilities. These include greenhouse vegetable production, and car repair workshops.

Public Organization 'Keik Okara'

'Keik Okara' was founded in 1998, as a Society for the Protection of Patients' Rights, and registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Justice in 2004 as the first officially registered non-governmental organization in Turkmenistan after the introduction of the 2003 Law on the Registration of Public Associations.⁴¹ In 2005, with USAID funding, 'Keik Okara' established a Family Support Centre offering training, seminars, workshops, and events on issues focused on strengthening the role of the family in the community.

In 2006, with financial support from OSCE, activities expanded into areas of social, economic, psychological, and legal issues. Basic concepts of healthy living (anti-drug use, nutrition, healthy cooking) were combined with ethics and family traditions in order to prepare young people for the responsibilities of adulthood. 'Keik Okara' has worked with UNHCR since 1998 on refugee and asylum issues, providing asylum seekers with information and assistance, and assisting them in obtaining citizenship. Countries of origin of asylum-seekers are Afghanistan, Armenia, Russia (Chechnya) and ethnic Turkmens from Tajikistan. The number of refugees has now decreased significantly from approximately 15,000 refugees in previous years down to 22. The legalization of stateless persons is another area of work. There are large numbers of people who served in the army outside Turkmenistan, or lived in other countries of the Former Soviet Union and when they returned to Turkmenistan faced problems in proving nationality. The organization assists them in obtaining evidence of nationality and passports.

In addition, training has been given to local authorities and individuals on women's issues and questions related to HIV/AIDS. In 2007, with the support of the UK Embassy, the organization established the 'Information Resource Centre of Keik Okara' (IRCKO) with a computer lab to offer Internet access as well as training in computer literacy, sustained by volunteer staff. In 2008, again with UK Embassy support, 'Keik Okara' implemented workshops focused on preparing young people for future occupation in social work, public organizations, and social activism more generally.

As mentioned earlier, OSCE currently supports 'Keik Okara' in operating a shelter for victims of domestic violence, together with a domestic violence hotline and the provision of free legal consultations and psychological assistance to victims. Seminars have been organized to raise awareness about domestic violence and how to prevent it. Information is disseminated amongst other organisations about its services and adverts are placed in newspapers informing the public about free consultations offered on family problems.

In the coming year the organization would like to expand its work with young people and implement a training programme dealing with gender, team building, leadership, legal awareness, and improving skills for the job market. Contacts have been made with commercial enterprises and it is hoped this will improve opportunities for young people to find employment

EU Member States

Germany

GIZ

The German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is a service provider in the field of

⁴¹ Clement V. (2009) 'Creating Space for Civil Society in Turkmenistan' The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research University of Washington. Seattle. USA.

international cooperation for sustainable development and works on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Gender equality is considered an essential factor for achieving sustainable change. The goal of the GIZ's Gender Strategy is to comprehensively promote gender equality – both within partner countries, as well as throughout the entire company. GIZ states that it is committed to advocating women's rights and realising equal opportunities for men and women.

As standard procedure, GIZ is obliged to inform BMZ about how it is complying and contributing to achieving BMZ's GAP II. Gender analysis is an obligatory requirement of GIZ's project proposal preparation, and during the project cycle, gender analyses are to be undertaken by both national and international gender experts from GIZ headquarters.

In Turkmenistan, GIZ does not implement any specific gender-targeted projects. In addition to implementing the EU-funded CADAP programme it implements BMZ-funded regional projects in water management; national protection; a management training programme, and a rule of law programme which focuses on legislation geared towards the market economy, in the fields of civil law, civil procedure, and economic law. The project's key partners in the rule of law programme are the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court, as well as the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights.

For the management training programme, study tours to Germany are organized so that local entrepreneurs can visit German companies and learn best practice. Study tour participants are gender-balanced.

GIZ will be the implementing partner for a new EU-funded Technical Assistance VET project in Turkmenistan which is due to start in 2018. At the time of writing, the financial agreement between the EU and Turkmenistan was to be signed shortly.

Embassy of United Kingdom

The Embassy of the United Kingdom has a small grant programme to finance NGO projects in the country, and currently plans to support the NGO 'Bosfor' which aims to build the capacity of recently-graduated women in business development. Regarding the Embassy's gender policy in Turkmenistan, it aims to be gender neutral, and when possible, take forward gender equality.

A previous six-month project which closed in 2013, was implemented by a local NGO in Ashgabat and Balkanabat and delivered training to women on how to make carpets and handicrafts, with the objective of making them independent entrepreneurs. UK-funded NGO projects must receive prior approval from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for economic development activities, or from the Ministry of Justice for actions in other sectors.

Approximately 3-4 Chevening scholarships are awarded by the Embassy each year, allowing students to study for higher degrees in the United Kingdom. In awarding scholarships, the Embassy aims for gender balance.

The Embassy also operates the John Smith Fellowship which awards fellowships to 3-4 people per call. Fellows spent 40 days overseas and on return, produce business plans on further development of their work. Some of the submitted plans have been geared towards gender equality and the promotion of access to information through the internet.

Ministries and Government agencies

National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights

The National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is a government body, established in 1996 with a mandate to support democratization and monitor the protection of human rights. In the past, it has played an unofficial ombudsman's role in resolving some petitions submitted by private citizens. The Institute has a staff of 50 and topics covered include migrant rights child rights, the rights of persons with disabilities and neutrality.

The Institute's mandate also includes coordinating the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and can be considered as part of the country's national machinery for the advancement of women. However, its resources are very limited, and currently there is only one specialist responsible for gender equality issues. Together with Members of Parliament, legislation is reviewed to assess gender sensitivity. Findings have shown that the gender dimensions of laws and regulations are frequently lacking.

The role of mass media in combating stereotypes is considered critical, and the issue of raising awareness of gender equality and combating stereotypes is closely related to building the capacity of mass media. The

Institute considers it important to ensure that the media can raise and address gender issues objectively, correctly, adequately and professionally.

In combating stereotypes in the media, the Institute collaborates with UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF. A programme on gender education, and gender and policy for public servants is also being elaborated.

The Institute is able to draw on a network of gender focal points in line ministries to report on activities and collect data in the context of monitoring the National Action Plan on Gender Equality, although because of capacity constraints, it is unable to undertake extensive situational analyses.

It has been instrumental in amending the Labour Code of Turkmenistan, permitting women to undertake shift work and night work. In addition, the Institute successfully lobbied Parliament to amend the Labour Code to allow women with children under three years to undertake business trips as part of their job, from which they were previously forbidden.

In 2018, the Institute will implement a nationwide survey on domestic violence in collaboration with the State Statistics Committee and the Ministry of Health. Based on the analysis of findings, proposals will be made concerning the need or otherwise to establish a separate domestic violence unit under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or whether a separate law on domestic violence should be considered mandatory. Training on domestic violence has already been implemented for law enforcement staff.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Economic policy aims at supporting the country's transition to a market economy and greater industrialisation. According to the Programme of Social Development for 2011-2030, the planned GDP growth target is from 6.2 percent per annum to 8.2 percent per annum for the period 2018 – 2024. The programme also contains the objectives and priorities of individual sectoral programmes for 70 economic sectors in the country.

The country's goal is to increase economic diversification, create jobs, reduce its dependency on oil and gas and move away from exporting raw oil and gas, to exporting processed products. To this end, there is a programme to promote import substitution and increase exports. It envisages the construction of special storage facilities for wheat, and the establishment of greenhouses for vegetable, fruits and cut-flower production. The investment climate in the country is considered favourable to foreign investors. Social development has always been prioritised in the country, and in previous years, between 70-80 percent of the national budget has been allocated to social spending.

Ministry of Education

Education is free in Turkmenistan, and since 2013, twelve years of schooling has become mandatory. Because of strict monitoring by educational authorities and teaching staff, drop-out rates and school attendance rates are closely monitored and are not considered significant issues of concern. Student selection to Universities and VET schools is undertaken independently by each university or school, and currently there is no unified entrance examination.

As part of reforms in the education sector outlined in the National Programme of Social Development until 2030, a system of digital education is to be introduced. In addition, the quality of secondary and preschool education is to be improved; and the number of qualified technical specialists is to be increased. One of the reform objectives is to introduce three languages of instruction – Turkmen, English and Russian. In previous years, children could also be taught in the Uzbek language, but this has now been discontinued. Reportedly, children in school may currently learn German, Japanese, Chinese, and French.

As part of higher education reforms, universities are transiting to providing two-stage higher education – Bachelor's and Master's degrees, although further technical assistance, possibly from the EU would be welcomed to share experiences regarding effective reforms.

The Ministry of Education has collaborated actively with the EU in the framework of the Central Asian Education Platform and Erasmus programmes.

Ministry of Justice

The main functions of the Ministry of Justice are drafting legislation; expert analysis of legislation and international agreement drafts; implementation of mutual legal assistance agreements on civil and family

issues; protection of interests in international courts and arbitration; registration of legislation developed by the ministries and agencies; and registration of public organizations and religious organizations. Approximately 80 percent of Ministry staff are female.

The Ministry estimates that there are approximately 118 public organizations in the country, of which 50 are sports organizations. There are approximately 14 cultural and scientific organizations; and approximately ten public organizations which deal with the disabled, youth and environmental issues. The Ministry also provides methodological and organizational support to the Notary and civil registration bodies, local self-governments and the Bar Association.

In 2016 the Ministry was involved in developing the roadmap and monitoring and evaluation framework of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2015-2020. The main priority is to ensure that legislation is in line with international standards on gender equality. The working group on human rights within the Ministry has collaborated in preparing for the nationwide study on the incidence of domestic violence which will be implemented in 2018. It is hoped that violence against children will form a part of the study.

At university, courses on human rights and gender equality are mandatory for law students, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities and child rights. The law on administrative procedures which enters into force in 2018 guarantees a complaints procedure which includes the possibility of filing complaints by email. Procedures have been simplified and the time period for complaints review has been shortened. By law, free legal aid may also be provided to individuals in certain civil and criminal cases.

Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy

Development of the agricultural sector is a priority for the Government and the Programme of Social Development for 2018-2024 states that agricultural development is one of the priority areas.

The sector is managed by several agencies in Turkmenistan: The Ministry of Agriculture, the State Committee on the Protection of Land Resources and Nature, and the State Committee on Food Industry supervised by the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers. Ministry staff is gender-balanced, and approximately 40 percent of civil servants are female.

Land for farming is leased out by the State on long-term leases. It is estimated that 50 percent of land leaseholders are women. Low-interest loans are available (at one percent interest rate) to finance agricultural enterprises. Average farm size is 2-3 hectares for cotton-growing. Irrigation water is supplied free of charge.

The responsibility for maintenance of irrigation infrastructure and canals is with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy. All arable land is irrigated and there is a high demand for water which is drawn from transboundary rivers such as Amudariya, Murgab, Surbar, and Tehen Rivers. There is no system of water users' associations in Turkmenistan and water management functions are carried out by dekhans' organizations. To ensure access to clean drinking water for all, water purification plants are being constructed in all provinces as part of a special Presidential programme to supply the regions with potable water.

The Programme of Social Development promotes the development of four main arable crops: wheat, cotton, rice and sugar beet, and the expansion of fodder crop production, vegetables, melons, fruits and grape. Crop rotation by farmers is to be promoted and adopted. The construction of crop processing plants, cotton ginning factories, and grain elevators is projected and the introduction of water saving irrigation technologies is envisaged. In order to improve water efficiency, the irrigation infrastructure will be renovated and watering regimes will be made more effective in the context of adaptation to climate change. Turkmenistan has an economic advantage for growing certain vegetable crops because of high luminosity and extensive hours of sunlight.

In the future, priority will be given to adapting to climate change. There is already a noticeable increase in atmospheric temperature; and more frequent extreme weather events such as drought and torrential storms. More water saving technologies will be introduced such as drip irrigation and the use of sprinklers.

Ministry of Health

In 2015 the national health programme for 2015-2025 based on the SDGs was adopted and a special inter-agency group chaired by Vice Prime Minister monitors its implementation. Since 2013 the Ministry also implements a Strategy on Non-Communicable Diseases based on the WHO's global declaration framework and indicators. In addition, there is a programme on TB prevention, as well as special programmes on

nutrition, and the health of children, adolescents and mothers.

Reproductive health services are integrated into family medicine provided through health points. Consultations on family planning and contraceptive use is provided by family doctors. Contraceptives were previously procured and supplied by UNFPA, but as of 2017, the Ministry of Health funds the purchase of contraceptives although procurement is still through UNFPA. Since 2016, boys and girls are being vaccinated against the human papilloma virus to prevent cervical cancer, and coverage is approximately 95 percent of the total age group.

Mother and child health is a priority for the country and support to women is provided at three levels. Healthy women with normal pregnancies are able to have their babies in the maternity wards of district hospitals (first level). Women with complications and premature births, are cared for in maternity hospitals either at district level or in hospitals serving several districts (second level). Women who have given birth prematurely at 22 weeks, or new babies with health problems are sent to specialised mother and child centres located at province level and in Ashgabat. Specific equipment necessary for each level of care is available in the appropriate facility. All doctors have been trained in treatment protocols and protocols for deliveries for each specific level.

Primary health care services are free-of-charge for children, pregnant women, the disabled and those with chronic disorders such as kidney disease, cancer, asthma, TB and so on. Family medicine and emergency treatments are also free, and child immunisation is also free of charge. A health insurance scheme provides a 50 percent discount on all health care services and drugs and for one stay at a health sanatorium. Health services are also available from private health clinics, but are fee-based, as are private pre-natal health centres for women.

Mortality rates are higher for men than for women, and the most common cause of death is cardio-vascular disease. In 2015, the Law on Protection of Health was revised to include a provision that each individual is responsible for his/her health. Annual medical check-ups free-of-charge are now compulsory for Government servants once a year to identify existing health conditions which can be subsequently followed up with family doctors. There is a gender difference in health awareness, and women are more active in seeking out medical advice.

In the framework of the 'Village' programme 2008-2020, health facilities in rural areas are being repaired and upgraded, together with water supply systems, school buildings and sport and cultural facilities, with funding from local authorities. The Ministry of Health is funding equipment and drug procurement for these. It is estimated that approximately 75 percent of such essential infrastructure has so far been renovated.

Each year in Spring the Ministry of Health implements an awareness-raising campaign on the prevention of typhoid through the network of family doctors, TV and radio to disseminate information on how to protect against typhoid and other intestinal infections for children.

The Ministry of Health is currently cooperating with the Ministry of Health of the Federal Republic of Germany and the University of Munich hospital to build the capacity of national medical staff, through exchange visits and staff secondments.

Women's Union

The Women's Union is a government-organized association and one of the largest organizations in the country. Its objectives are to protect the health of the mother and child; promote the active role of women in society; develop women's leadership, and support the traditions of Turkmenistan. It comprises a centre for women scientists who are members of the Academy of Science, and a centre for business women who are influential female entrepreneurs.

All provincial deputy *khakims* are chairpersons of the Women's Union at province-level. Every district deputy *khakim* chairs the district-level Women's Union. The Women's Union Central Council is made up of province chairpersons and other influential women.

The Women's Union has its own action plan and works with mass media to raise awareness of issues of its plan. This includes addressing women's health issues and raising awareness of early detection of breast cancer and cervical cancer. It has its own TV programme on two national TV channels, and is responsible for its own programme content and topic selection. Recent programmes have discussed cosmetics and home interior design. It also publishes its own magazine.

A priority area is combating stereotypes and to this end, competitions are organized to select the best female scientist in order to encourage girls to choose non-traditional subjects and professions. The 'Woman of the Year' competition selects outstanding women from various fields - women in business, women in education, women in culture, women in handicrafts and so on. Women selected locally go forward to province-level and finally national-level competitions.

Through support from UNDP, Business Women's Centres have been established by the Women's Union nationwide. In collaboration with the Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists, women are supported in establishing enterprises for income-generating activities through accessing preferential loans. The Women's Union issues low-interest loans (at one percent interest rate) collateral-free, for women wanting to start-up new businesses such as greenhouse vegetable and flower production, and guaranteed by the Union of Entrepreneurs. Other enterprises included jewelry production, silk production, wool processing, food processing, and bakeries.

However, at the same time the Women's Union defends social traditions and cultural norms. Domestic violence is considered an aberration, and divorce a source of social shame.

Youth Union

The Youth Union has more than 900,000 members, 54 percent of whom are girls and 45 percent boys. The aim of the Union is to protect the rights and interests of young people, and educate them in a healthy lifestyle. Sports events and cultural activities are promoted. The Youth Union collaborates with UNICEF, UNFPA and EU-funded CADAP for awareness-raising activities. The leadership has also been sponsored by OSCE in Turkmenistan to attend events overseas in their capacity as significant State-sponsored youth organization. The Law on Youth was adopted in 2014, and in 2015 the Youth Policy for period of 2016-2020 was approved. The Youth Union is an intermediary between the State and youth and assists young people in finding jobs, receiving housing and other benefits. The Central Council is based in Ashgabat and there is a youth council in each province and a Youth Union centre in every district.

The national youth centre – 'YPEER' was opened in 2011 and works on promoting issues relevant to young people aged 14-25 years. In collaboration with UNFPA awareness-raising training in schools and camps has been delivered in topics such as gender equality, HIV/AIDs, sexually-transmitted infections, psychotropic substances, drugs, and tobacco smoking. More than 26,000 young people have received training to date. Currently, the centre is drafting a questionnaire which will be used to survey awareness of gender equality.

The Children's Fund of Turkmenistan is a charity established in 1988 under the Central Council of Youth Union of Turkmenistan, and works with orphans, disabled children and families with many children. The focus of its activities is on promoting a healthy lifestyle, reproductive health, the protection of women and children, mental health, the provision of material support to disabled children and children left without guardians.

State Statistics Committee

The Committee compiles key data concerning all sectors of the economy annually, although not in open access, and only available upon formal request. The most recent population census was conducted in 2012 and findings have not been made available to the general public. The most recent available population data refers to 1995. The next census will be conducted in 2022. In 2018, the Committee plans to publish a statistical compilation - 'Men and Women of Turkmenistan' containing gender disaggregated data for a number of years. The last time such gender disaggregated data was published was in 2007.

Labour Force Surveys are carried out every three years and data is collected from all sectors of the economy. Approximately 47 percent of the labour force is made up of women. Data on wages and salaries is collected annually. The wage gap between men and women is approximately 12-13 percent and is widest in the oil and gas sector. Unemployment data is collected using ILO methodology and the current rate of unemployment is reportedly 3.5 percent. The majority of women are employed in the education and health sectors and the number of women employed in the oil and gas sectors is very low. Every quarter data on newly established enterprises is collected. Data related to labour migration data is partial and based on Labour Force Surveys, and more complete data is collected and held by the State Migration Service

The Committee collaborates with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to monitor national action plans on the implementation of Human Rights treaties, including the National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

The Committee will share responsibility for implementing the nationwide survey on domestic violence in 2018, and has been involved in reviewing the questionnaire which is based on WHO methodology.

The State Statistics Committee recognizes the need to conduct more thematic studies on priority issues, and not only on the collection of administrative data. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Committee participates in the WHO Adult Risk Factor Surveillance project – the STEPS non-communicable disease risk factor survey, to monitor the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Current Government policy is to reduce the number of smokers to 3.5 percent of the population by 2025, down from approximately 15 percent at the current time.

The major needs of the State Statistics Committee are capacity building in methodology of data collection on gender statistics particularly in relation to the SDGs.

4.9 Relevant actions taken by key actors

4.9.1 Key statistics on the situation of women and girls, men and boys in Turkmenistan.

The real situation regarding women and girls, men and boys in Turkmenistan is difficult to uncover and assess.⁴² As already mentioned, gender statistics are largely unavailable, and official statistics are unreliable.

The last time that gender disaggregated data was published in Turkmenistan was in 2007. The most recent available population data refers to 1995. The last population census was conducted in 2012 although the findings were not made available to the public.

Under Turkmenistan's gender equality legislation, gender-disaggregated statistics are collected and compiled, and a 'Genstat' database has been created. The State Statistics Committee reportedly plans to publish a statistical compilation - 'Men and Women of Turkmenistan' in 2018 containing gender disaggregated data for a number of years.

ADB's new Country Partnership Strategy⁴³ contains some key social and poverty indicators for the country:

Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) was reported as 42.0 in 2015 (the latest year for which data is available), down from 48.2 in 2001.

Infant mortality rate (below 1 year/per 1,000 live births) was reported as 23.0 in 2015, up from 21.3 in 2001.⁴⁴

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

The 2015-2016 MICS survey covered more than 6,000 households. The data from the survey will be used to form a baseline for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and other global commitments. Data was collected to assess the status of children and women at the national level, for urban and rural areas and for six regions: Akhal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap, Mary velayat and Ashgabat city. 7,618 individual women were interviewed and questionnaires were completed for 3,765 children, providing critical information on child-related indicators such as age, birth registration, early childhood development, breastfeeding and dietary intake, immunization, and care of illness.

Key findings from the final report were as follows:

- In Turkmenistan, 3 percent of children under the age of five are underweight and 1 percent are classified as severely underweight. 12 percent of children are stunted or too short for their age, and 4 percent are wasted or too thin for their height. 6 percent of children are overweight or too heavy for their height.
- 73 percent of babies are breastfed for the first time within one hour of birth, while 94 percent of newborns start breastfeeding within one day of birth. Approximately 59 percent of children aged less than six months are exclusively breastfed and 81 percent predominantly breastfed.

⁴² Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013), Women: Turkmenistan's Second-Class Citizens Equal only to Injustice and Vulnerable to Arbitrariness, Report 2, 2013.

⁴³ ADB (2017) 'Turkmenistan, 2017–2021 —Catalyzing Regional Cooperation and Integration, and Economic Diversification.' Country Partnership Strategy. September 2017

⁴⁴ ADB (2017) 'Turkmenistan, 2017–2021 —Catalyzing Regional Cooperation and Integration, and Economic Diversification.' Country Partnership Strategy. September 2017 p 7. 'Country at a Glance'

- The percentage of children age 24-35 months who had all the recommended vaccinations by their first birthday (MMR by their second birthday) is 95 percent.
- 43 percent of children age 36-59 months are attending an organised early childhood education programme. This figure is 70 percent in urban areas, compared to 29 percent in rural areas.
- With the majority (94 percent) of children age 36-59 months, an adult household member engaged in four or more activities that promote learning and school readiness during the 3 days preceding the survey.
- In Turkmenistan, the percentage of women age 15-49 years who were married / in union before the age of 15 is less than 1 percent. 6 percent of women age 20-49 years were married / in union before 18 years of age.
- 81 percent of women aged 15-49 years have heard of AIDS. However, the percentage of women who know of both main ways of preventing HIV transmission – having only one faithful uninfected partner and using a condom every time – is only 56 percent.

As mentioned earlier, according to UNICEF the quality of the 2015-2016 survey was not up to expected standards, and mortality data was considered to have been under-estimated.

A second concern relates to the disciplining of children which appeared to be under-reported. This may have been caused by inaccurate data recording or respondent misunderstanding, by not including psychological aggression as a disciplinary method used for children as well as physical disciplining.

UNICEF together with the State Statistics Committee and Ministry of Health is currently preparing for the next MICS in 2019.

4.10 Important country-relevant gender issues

As part of the Gender Study for Turkmenistan, certain country-relevant gender issues were also investigated as follows:

4.10.1 Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting

Gender mainstreaming has not been institutionalised across sectors and areas of the economy. Awareness in line ministries is absent, and capacity to adopt gender mainstreaming in national development is inadequate.

While the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2015-2020 indicates that a holistic approach to mainstreaming gender in all spheres of life will be adopted, there is no evidence of this in the operations of line ministries.

Mid-level and senior-level officials may be aware of gender equality requirements and a general idea about mainstreaming through their exposure and participation in international seminars and events, but there is currently no incentive to promote gender mainstreaming as a gender equality approach.

Gender focal points have been formalized in ministries, but their main function is to collect administrative data on male and female participation rates.

Following the 1995 UN Beijing Conference, gender mainstreaming was identified as the most important mechanism to reach the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The UN defines gender mainstreaming as ‘a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

Mainstreaming of GEWE is EU policy and is a mandatory requirement laid down by law in the Development Cooperation Instrument Regulation, which defines GEWE as a cross-cutting issue to be integrated into all development activities, beginning with an analysis of the gender concerns of each sector; policy documents for the sector, and the specific legislation governing each sector. Actions are to be designed to address specific concerns, needs and constraints of female and male beneficiaries.

Gender budgeting

The principle of gender budgeting has only recently been introduced in Turkmenistan. In 2017, UN Women

implemented capacity building in gender-responsive planning and budgeting to representatives of government institutions to increase their understanding of this tool for developing gender-sensitive policies and budgeting.

Certain recommendations were made by participants based on a gender-responsive results-oriented budgeting approach, such as improving services for identifying potential employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and improving access to vocational education institutions to enable women with disabilities to be trained and enter the labour market.

However, the concept of gender budgeting is new for Turkmenistan, and there is currently little scope for introducing the approach since state budgeting is essentially top-down and non-participatory.

4.10.2 Discrimination

Gender inequalities persist both formally and informally in Turkmenistan. Both direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls is evident, which impinges on their access to human rights, education, employment and opportunities.

Direct discrimination

Discrimination in employment

Discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, language, and disability is widespread across all sectors of the economy and Government.

The Labour Code and Presidential Decree No.10732 of 25 December 2009 remains overly protective of women as mothers and stipulates restrictions on their working time.

While there has been a recent loosening of restrictions on night work, shift work and business trips for women (See Section on Institute for Democracy and Human Rights), pregnant women, women that have children up to three years of age, women with disabled children under 16 years of age, and single parents with two or more children are prohibited from working overtime.⁴⁵

While women are formally protected from discrimination on the basis of gender under the Employment Act and the Labour Code, evidence suggests that employers are unwilling to formally conclude labour contracts with female employees or hire women because of the extensive maternity protection measures which are stipulated by law. Pregnant women are entitled to 112 days paid maternity leave under Article 96 of the Labour Code.

The Government continues to restrict women from working in jobs considered dangerous and environmentally unsafe.

Sexual harassment

There is no law which specifically prohibits sexual harassment, although anecdotal evidence suggests that sexual harassment takes place in the workplace.

Lack of adequate anti-discrimination laws

Anti-discrimination laws do not apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, and the Government does not provide legal protection or recognition of their gender identity.

Homosexual conduct is punishable by up to two years in prison and the possible imposition of an additional two- to five-year term in a labour camp under Turkmen law. The law does not mention same-sex sexual contact between women.

Indirect discrimination

Domestic Violence

Specific legislation to deal with violence against women, in particular domestic violence is still absent, as well as a lack of information and statistical data on its nature, extent and causes.

The law prohibits spousal abuse through provisions in the criminal code that address intentional infliction of injury. Penalties range from fines to 15 years in prison, based on the extent of the injury, although enforcement of the law is inconsistent.

⁴⁵ United States Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkmenistan

Anecdotal evidence suggests that domestic violence against women is common although unreported, and that victims are unaware of their rights or are afraid of increased violence from husbands and relatives following formal complaint.⁴⁶

Early / child marriage

Approximately 6 percent of girls in Turkmenistan are married before their 18th birthday⁴⁷ although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18 years. Although there is a lack of data on the subject, it is believed that early marriages are usually arranged marriages and occur in the North, and among Uzbek communities.

Polygamy

Although, polygamy is prohibited by law, it is practised without any legal repercussions. Women have no legal course of action against husbands who take another wife. Legal provisions governing such de facto unions, also deny second wives any protection and redress in cases of separation.⁴⁸

Bride price

The custom of paying for a bride, known as '*kalym*', has seen a revival in Turkmenistan in the years since the Soviet period, when it was officially banned. In 2011, it was estimated that nine out of ten Turkmen marriages involved a transaction of this kind.⁴⁹ A *kalym* payment can reach up to 10,000 US dollars. The highest prices were paid for marriage to a woman with a university education, in a public-sector job, or skilled in a traditional craft. At the same time the bride's family contributes the traditional dowry of furniture, household appliances, clothes and gold jewelry.

The payment of a bride price supposedly makes the wife more submissive and obedient. It is also believed that the bride price custom may pressure a woman to remain in an unhappy marriage. Conversely, men are aware that if they seek a divorce, their parents will lose the money they paid as bride price, and that remarrying implies further financial costs.

Unofficial statistics suggest that Turkmenistan has very low divorce rates, with formalized separation affecting only one in 1,000 families. A costly bride price has been suggested as being one of the deterrents to divorcing, although there is a lack of data on the subject.

Dress code for female students

A strict dress code is imposed on female students in higher education institutions obliging them to wear Turkmen national dress comprising ankle-length embroidered dress and skull-cap, regardless of their ethnicity. Males students on the other hand are not obliged to wear national dress. While there is a lack of hard data concerning the consequences of failure to conform, anecdotal evidence indicates that girls have been refused entrance to University for not wearing national dress.

The CEDAW Committee noted in 2012⁵⁰ that this dress code policy reinforces discriminatory traditional norms and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women in Turkmen society.

Child labour

The minimum age for employment of children is 16 years and the law prohibits children between the ages of 16 and 18 from working more than six hours per day. A Presidential decree bans child labour in all sectors and states specifically that children may not participate in the cotton harvest.⁵¹

Despite the ban on the involvement of minors in cotton harvesting, children were observed working in cotton fields during the 2017 cotton picking season.⁵² Moreover, for the first time in several years, local authorities were involved in promoting child labour in cotton harvesting. In some districts of Akhal and Lebap velayats, teachers and school directors held parent meetings, encouraging the participation of children of school grades 5-11 in harvesting cotton. The instruction to call parent meetings was allegedly issued by the local Department

⁴⁶ United States Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkmenistan

⁴⁷ UNICEF State of the World's Children 2016

⁴⁸ Social Institutions and Gender Index. Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Turkmenistan (available at <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>) [accessed July 2009]. OECD Development Centre. Paris.

⁴⁹ IWPR (2012) News Briefing Central Asia. International War and Peace Reporting

⁵⁰ CEDAW Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Fifty-third session 1 – 19 October 2012

'Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – Turkmenistan.

⁵¹ United States Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights 'Turkmenistan Human Rights Report 2016'

⁵² www.Alternative News of Turkmenistan 05.11.2017

of Education. Cotton picking by children also allegedly took place in 2017 in Dashgouz and Mary regions.⁵³

There have also been anecdotal reports that parents in some rural areas have removed girls from school as young as nine years of age to work at home.⁵⁴

Discrimination against persons with disabilities

Despite the law which prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, persons with disabilities encounter discrimination and denial of work, education, and access to health care and other state services because of social and cultural biases.⁵⁵

The 2013 Code on the Social Protection of the Population defined social protection policies for persons with disabilities and established quotas and work places for persons with disabilities. However, these are not broadly enforced. Members of the disability rights community report that persons with disabilities are generally unable to find satisfactory employment due to unofficial discrimination.

Students with disabilities have been unable to access education because of the lack of qualified teachers, and facilities which were inaccessible for the disabled.⁵⁶

Although the law requires universities to provide special entrance examinations to applicants with disabilities, students with disabilities have experienced difficulties in gaining admission to higher education.

There is a lack of compliance by building construction companies with the law requiring new buildings to ensure access by persons with disabilities resulting in inaccessibility.

In rural areas, where children with disabilities are kept concealed because of social stigma, access to much needed support is very limited and a child with disabilities is less likely to develop social skills.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities

There is a lack of data on the enjoyment of rights by ethnic groups in country and the representation of minorities in public and political life.

The most recent available data indicates that in 2003 the population of Turkmenistan was 85 percent Turkmen, 5 percent Uzbek, and 4 percent Russian. Smaller ethnic groups, in order of size, are Tatar, Kazakh, Ukrainian, Azeri, and Armenian.⁵⁷ This differs somewhat from data presented in the 'Report of Turkmenistan regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' (2004) by State parties, indicating that 94.7 percent of the total population was Turkmen; 2 percent was Uzbek; 1.8 percent was Russian and 1.5 percent was from other ethnic groups (Kazakhs, Azerbaijani, Armenians, Ukrainians, Tartars, and Beluji).⁵⁸

While legal guarantees provide for equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, ethnic minorities face language barriers in obtaining State employment and in communicating with State and public institutions.⁵⁹ Applicants for Government jobs have to provide information about their ethnicity going back three generations.

Russian remains prevalent in commerce and everyday life in Ashgabat, even though the Government promotes the use of Turkmen for conducting official business. The law designates Turkmen as the official language. Turkmen language instruction for non-Turkmen speakers however, is only available in primary and secondary schools. Ministry employees are required to pass tests demonstrating knowledge of professional subjects in Turkmen, and employees who fail the examination are dismissed. The Government has also targeted non-Turkmen first for dismissal when layoffs have occurred, and disproportionately few non-Turkmen hold Government positions.

⁵³ www.Alternative News of Turkmenistan 05.11.2017

⁵⁴ United States Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights 'Turkmenistan Human Rights Report 2016'

⁵⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights 'Turkmenistan Human Rights Report 2016'

⁵⁶ United States Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights 'Turkmenistan Human Rights Report 2016'

⁵⁷ CIA (2017) World Factbook. Central Asia: Turkmenistan

⁵⁸ CEDAW. 2004. CEDAW/ C/ TKM/1-2. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Combined initial and second periodic reports of States parties: Turkmenistan (available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm>). New York, USA.

⁵⁹ UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2017) 'Concluding observations on the eighth to eleventh periodic reports of Turkmenistan' 7 February 2017

4.10.3 Gender issues related to education sector in Turkmenistan

There is a lack of reliable data on enrolment of boys and girls in preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, as well as on dropout rates and their causes.⁶⁰ On the surface, there is gender parity in education with regard to school enrolment, however the quality of education at every level is poor and education standards are low.

The education sector is also characterized by corruption linked to university enrolment and examination scores.

There are marked gender differences amongst students in high school⁶¹ and through to higher education.⁶² In the 2010/2011 academic year, women accounted for 58.2 percent of the total number of students attending secondary vocational schools.⁶³ While vocational schools have more female than male students, their choice of subjects to study follow traditional gender patterns. Female students dominate in courses on health care (86.4 percent of students), education (85.7 percent of students) and economics (67.2 percent of students), while men dominate in courses on transport (100 percent of students), law (100 of students), industry (70.9 percent of students), construction (65.1 percent of students) and agriculture (56 percent of students).⁶⁴

Male job seekers have better chances of finding a job because their skills better fit the available vacancies offered by the labour exchange.

In higher education establishments, women account for only 34 percent of all students of whom over 40 percent specialize in health (46.3 percent), the arts and cinema (44.2 percent) and economics (46 percent).⁶⁵ Despite a slight increase in enrolment of girls in non-traditional areas in recent years, where women currently represent 24.4 percent of students in the Oil and Gas Institute; 23.6 percent in the Institute of Energy Studies, and 41.6 percent in the Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, traditional beliefs of both students and teachers prevail regarding appropriate study subjects for females.

4.10.4 Status and needs of women in rural areas

There is a lack of information concerning the real situation of rural women in Turkmenistan, particularly related to access to education, health services, employment, arable land and drinking water.

Evidence suggests that women in rural areas are more exposed to the negative impact of stereotypes, patriarchal customs and traditions. Men are considered heads of household even if the wife is the primary breadwinner.

Rural women are less likely to be aware of their legal rights or of their position regarding inheritance. By law, women as wives and mothers have equal inheritance rights, although in practice, patriarchal tradition is discriminatory and property and land rights are usually left to sons or other male relatives.⁶⁶

Forced marriages are common in rural areas and the practice of paying bride prices and dowries as mentioned earlier, is commonplace.⁶⁷

Polygamy although prohibited by law, is also common in rural areas without any legal repercussions.

Women in rural areas rarely initiate divorce and there is high social stigma and discrimination against divorced women and their children.

⁶⁰ According to official statistics, primary school enrolment was 99.8 percent in 2013. Taken from World Bank Joint Country Engagement Note FY16-FY17 (2015)

⁶¹ Where there were two times more males than females in the 2010/2011 academic year.

⁶² CEDAW (2012) observes that traditional attitudes still direct female students into areas of study “appropriate” to their social roles

⁶³ UNDP Overview of MDG progress in Turkmenistan at: http://www.undptkm.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1283&Itemid=90.

⁶⁴ UNDP Overview of MDG progress in Turkmenistan at: http://www.undptkm.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1283&Itemid=90.

⁶⁵ UNDP Overview of MDG progress in Turkmenistan at: http://www.undptkm.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1283&Itemid=90.

⁶⁶ Freeman, Marsha A. (2006) ‘Country Report: Turkmenistan’, (prepared for submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 35th session, May 2006), International Women’s Rights Action Watch, University of Minnesota

⁶⁷ Social Institutions and Gender Index. Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Turkmenistan (available at <http://genderindex.org/country/turkmenistan>). OECD Development Centre. Paris.

Higher birth rates in rural areas place a heavy burden on women and put pressure on household incomes. Women face the challenge of combining family housekeeping and economic functions.

There are insufficient preschool places in rural areas and there is a significant difference between rural and urban areas in preschool attendance rates. In the country as a whole, only approximately 46 percent of children aged five years attend preschool which is considered very low for a middle-income country. The recent ten-fold increase in preschool fees introduced in 2017 has had a negative impact on child enrolment rates and has made preschools unaffordable for the rural poor.

Access to clean drinking water remains a priority need particularly in remote areas. It has been estimated that less than 30 percent of rural households have connections to piped water supply systems.⁶⁸ Many areas rely on water which is brought into communities by tanker.

There is a significant wealth gap between urban and rural areas. Rural areas are characterized by high unemployment and a lack of household food security. While the official national unemployment rate is 3.5 percent, the real unemployment rate in rural areas is much higher and estimated to be 30-50 percent. Added to this is the lack of freedom of movement to migrate to urban areas to seek work. For this reason, the rural population is considered to be highly vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour by local recruiters.

Access to health services in rural areas is poor and the payment of fees for medical services causes hardship for low income families. Hospital patients need to bring their own bedding, supplies and medications, as well as make informal payments to hospital staff. Because of financial constraints, many women in rural areas choose to give birth at home.

The agriculture sector employed 735,000 people in 2014, of which the majority - 393,000 were women.⁶⁹ Rural women were employed both as farm laborers on larger farms and on household farm plots used for subsistence farming. Widespread home farming results in the significant use of women and children as unpaid labour for planting, weeding and harvesting.⁷⁰

The participation of rural women in local government is low. In villages and settlements, the '*Gengesh*' is the representative decision-making body, whose members are elected by the local population. Although more recent data is unavailable, in 2003, only 14 percent of those elected to local representative bodies were women.⁷¹

4.10.5 Role and responsibilities of women in society

Patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes persist in Turkmenistan. A woman's role is to get married and become a mother. Such stereotyping is a root cause of the disadvantaged position of women in public and political life and in the labour market.

Employment legislation continues to limit women's economic opportunities by being overly protective, and vertical and horizontal occupational segregation persists.

At all levels of political and public life, women remain under-represented. Only one woman serves in the 10-member Cabinet of Ministers.⁷² Only 27.42 percent of members of Parliament were female in 2016. In Regional People's Councils, less than 20 percent of council members are women. In the judiciary, only 15 percent of judges are women. It is believed those women who have attained high-ranking senior positions in public office, have done so principally because of their influential connections, rather than individual merit.

In the private sphere, violence against women continues to be socially legitimized. Inside the family, husbands and mothers-in-law traditionally make decisions regarding the spacing and number of children the wife should have.

⁶⁸ World Bank (2015) Joint Country Engagement Note FY16-FY17

⁶⁹ UNDP. Human Development Indices: a statistical update 2008 (available at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDI_2008_EN_Tables.pdf). New York, USA.

⁷⁰ UNESCAP. 1999. Strengthening Income-Generating Opportunities for Rural Women in Turkmenistan (available at <http://www.unescap.org/rural/doc/women/IV.Turkmenistan.PDF>). Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Generating Employment for Rural Women: Studies from selected Central Asian Republics, 3-5 May 1999. Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁷¹ CEDAW. 2004. CEDAW/ C/ TKM/1-2. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Combined initial and second periodic reports of States parties: Turkmenistan (available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm>). New York, USA.

⁷² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016' United States Department of State

4.11 Shortcomings and main challenges to be addressed

4.11.1 Institutional and legal framework on GEWE in Turkmenistan

There are some shortcomings in the institutional and legal framework on GEWE in the country. It is not clear whether the 2015 Law “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men” fully guarantees gender equality regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms in economic, social and cultural fields, or any other field as stipulated by CEDAW.⁷³ The Law guarantees mainly civil and political rights. There also appears to be no clear definition of discrimination against women prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination in both private and public spheres.⁷⁴ Gender-neutral laws may perpetuate indirect discrimination against women.

While the country’s National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2015-2020 includes most of the gender equality targets identified for Sustainable Development Goal 5 which relates to gender equality, the Plan lacks an effective M&E plan and specific details related to its implementation.

The national machinery for the advancement of women is fragmented across different agencies (Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Interagency Commission on Human Rights, and the Human Rights Ombudsman). This weakens its effectiveness in ensuring that gender equality policies are properly developed and fully implemented throughout the work of all ministries and Government institutions.

While the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is currently taking an active role in coordinating gender equality actions, it is constrained by its limited available human resources.

National gender statistics disaggregated by gender, age, race, ethnicity, location and socio-economic background are not available to the public, making it impossible to accurately assess the situation of women and determine the degree of existing discrimination.

Domestic violence is still not criminalised and is only now entering public discourse in Turkmenistan. In 2018, a study on the prevalence of violence against women including the types of violence and reasons behind it is expected to be implemented by national institutions in collaboration with UNFPA. Based on the findings, consultations are envisaged about the criminalisation of violence against women and other response strategies.

4.12 Key barriers to achieving gender equality in Turkmenistan

There is a lack of political will to eliminate stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes that discriminate against women in society. No significant effort is being made by government bodies to modify these. State-controlled media constantly reinforce a stereotypical portrayal of women. A recent official driving licence ban even seeks to prohibit women from driving cars. State policies impose strict dress codes on girls and women which reinforce entrenched traditional norms.

There is a general lack of awareness among government bodies of fundamental and substantive gender equality which concerns the rights of the individual. Women themselves, especially those in rural areas, are not aware of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and lack the necessary information to claim their rights. There is also limited awareness of the country’s strategic gender equality documents. A legal culture which is supportive of women’s equality and non-discrimination is absent.

A conducive environment to allow for the establishment of independent women’s organizations to take forward gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country is lacking.

Gender-bias in the family favours investing in boys’ education over that of girls. The prevailing attitudes and excessive domestic duties of girls and women in the family are barriers to both girls’ education and employment. Stereotypes regarding suitable and appropriate educational subjects for girls, deter them from enrolling in science subjects at secondary and tertiary levels, and lead to subsequent segregation in employment.

⁷³ CEDAW Article 1 reads: ‘The term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.’

⁷⁴ CEDAW Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Seventieth Session (2017) ‘List of issues and questions in relation to the fifth periodic report of Turkmenistan’ Item 4 of the provisional agenda 2–20 July 2018.

In the political sphere, insufficient capacity building for potential female candidates together with negative attitudes towards them, hamper the equitable participation of women in politics.

5 Specific issues and response strategies

5.1 Non-financial instruments: political and policy dialogue

The EU's engagement in the region is governed by its Strategy for Central Asia and the development of peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and stable development, as well as the promotion of good governance, human rights and the rule of law.⁷⁵

The EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy⁷⁶ also stipulates that in all areas of its external action, the EU without exception is to promote a human rights-based approach to assist the country in implementing its international human rights obligations. In July 2015, a new action plan was introduced for the period 2015 to 2019 with increased focus on economic, social and cultural rights as key external human rights priorities for the EU.

Another major development is the upgraded focus on combating discrimination. The Framework contains a commitment for the EU to 'fight discrimination in all its forms through combating discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, age, gender or sexual orientation'.

The gender analysis, expertise and knowledge provided by other actors in Turkmenistan such as UN agencies is another useful basis for informing the EU's political dialogue with the Government. The EU has a specific cooperation agreement with UN Women which affirms the partnership between the two organizations to support gender equality and women's empowerment around the globe and ensures close collaboration.⁷⁷

The EU as important donor⁷⁸, has political leverage and is influential with the Government. At no financial cost, there is space to conduct effective policy dialogue on gender issues in relation to Turkmenistan's National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2015-2020) which includes activities related to discrimination and gender-based violence.

As mentioned earlier, the Plan assumes resource allocations from State and local budgets; the development of special programmes and technical specialists, and gender analysis. Its 15 targets and 60 activities, include among others:

- Improving legislation in line with CEDAW recommendations and gender equality principles;
- National mechanisms to promote gender equality
- Combating stereotypes
- Identifying priority areas to address gender-based violence
- Greater participation of women in social, political and professional life
- Access to health service and sex education
- Women in detention
- Data collection to monitor and evaluate the Plan.

The EU is well placed to lend its support to promoting gender equality in Turkmenistan, and to efforts being made by the country's National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights which represents part of the country's national gender machinery.

The results of political dialogue should also be continued into the policy dialogue with Member States particularly Germany which has an active Central Asia programme which includes actions in Turkmenistan, to ensure that respective external policies and programmes are implemented in accordance with Member States' agreed gender equality commitments, whether through gender mainstreaming or gender-specific actions.

⁷⁵ The European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) has postponed final ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that governs bilateral relations and cooperation between EU and Turkmenistan, citing human right concerns.

⁷⁶ Council of the European Union (2012). EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. Luxembourg

⁷⁷ UN Women, European Union (2016) 'Working Together for Gender Equality: The EU – UN Women Partnership.' The EU-UN Women partnership focuses on five priorities: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

⁷⁸ Responsibility for EU DCI operations in Turkmenistan is with EUD Kazakhstan

When combined, these three methods - political and policy dialogue, gender mainstreaming and specific actions are an effective three-pronged approach to increasing gender equality. The components are complementary and are essential for ensuring GEWE impact on the ground.

Opportunity for joint action with National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights and other actors

A major role of the EU in Turkmenistan is one of advocacy. The EU representative⁷⁹ could convene a meeting with EU Member States, UN Women, UNFPA and other UN agencies, together with the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, for a joint brainstorming meeting to discuss GEWE priorities in Turkmenistan in the context of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2015-2020. The Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is committed to taking forward gender equality in the country, and has the mandate and space to collaborate with donors.

The EU could become actively involved in contributing to specific goals contained in the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and become invested in concrete actions (see Section 5.6: New actions for Turkmenistan). In collaboration with UNFPA there is scope for taking forward actions related to the up-coming nationwide study on domestic violence, and thereby contributing to EU Gender Objective 7: 'Girls and women free from all forms of violence against them both in the public and private sphere' (see Section 4.4).

There is also a need to lobby the Government to strengthen the effectiveness of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, by increasing its human resources to improve the effectiveness of its work on gender equality; ensuring it has an adequate operational budget, and the powers to execute, implement and monitor gender equality action programmes.

Each (even small) initiative towards GEWE should contribute to general coherent programmes such as Turkmenistan's National Action Plan on Gender Equality. Agreement could be reached between parties on different joint action paths over a range of time-frames such as over the coming one, two or three years. This will ensure that the EU is present at key junctures of Turkmenistan's gender equality action plan, and extend its political influence.

As an important donor in the country, the EU is well-placed, and could take the lead in a coordinated donor response in policy dialogue regarding combating gender stereotypes; human and women's rights dialogue, and stressing also the crucial role of public organizations and the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights in monitoring the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for the achievement of the SDGs.

5.2 Coordination between EU institutions and EU Member States

Agreement on the choice of measures from the GAP II that will be selected and implemented by the EU and Member States is made difficult by the absence of an EU Delegation in Turkmenistan, although it is understood the country programme is managed through the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan.

Effective implementation of the EU GAP II objectives in Turkmenistan requires much stronger communication between all the different EU actors⁸⁰ at partner country level, in order to share analysis, strategic thinking and lessons from practice. Placing discussion of on-going GAP II measures as a rolling agenda item at regular EU and Member State coordination meetings would maintain the focus and attention on progress being made on the three thematic priorities. The aim is for all actors of the EU's external relations to foster and support gender equality actions in the country.

There are other opportunities for improving coordination between EU institutions and Member States: GAP II could also be a rolling agenda item at regular meetings of EU Heads of Mission to exchange information in EU Member State Councillor meetings at least on a yearly basis.

It is understood that the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan will be able to report to HQ Brussels on the progress on gender issues in both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the framework of the Gender Action Plan implementation report. The findings could be presented to local level development partners in Turkmenistan.

5.3 Assessment and recommendations of where EUD can add value for

⁷⁹ In this case, Head of Cooperation, EUD Kazakhstan

⁸⁰ 'EU Actors' refers to Commission services, the EEAS and EU Member States

achieving country objectives on gender equality (as part of national development)

The political leverage and advocacy opportunities for taking forward gender equality in Turkmenistan is provided by the Sustainable Development Goals. Twelve of the 17 SDGs have gender targets to be achieved by 2030.

Removing obstacles for female employment and career growth is one of the goals. Despite full guaranteed gender equality there are hundreds of jobs which remain prohibited for women in Turkmenistan, because they are considered unsafe or dangerous for women, especially in highly-paid sectors and heavy industries.

Under Goal 5, there is a target on eliminating violence against women, while Goal 16 has a target to promote the rule of law and equal access to justice.

Through advocacy and the established formal dialogue with Turkmenistan, the EU could lead the way in recommending that Turkmenistan analyse and use data for policy formulation especially regional data, disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and other social differences. This would also align well with the emphasis on data within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals in detail are presented in Annex 4.

5.4 Selected objectives from GAP II for Turkmenistan

Based on an analysis of the gender situation in Turkmenistan, priority gender objectives have been identified to which the EU can add value:

B. Thematic Priority: Physical and Psychological Integrity

Ensuring the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women is an EU priority. Preventing and combating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a precondition for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as an important value and objective in itself.

Objective 7 is a priority for Turkmenistan and is recommended:

Objective 7. Girls and women free from all forms of violence against them (VAWG) both in the public and private sphere

C. Thematic Priority: Economic and Social Empowerment

Ensuring that girls and women are empowered, that their economic and social rights are fulfilled and that an enabling environment for their fair and active participation in the economy exists are key EU priorities. Such an objective will contribute to faster growing economies, whilst preventing human exploitation.

Objectives 13 and 15 are priorities for Turkmenistan and are recommended:

Objective 13. Equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational education and training (VET) free from discrimination

Objective 15. Equal access by women to financial services, productive resources including land, trade and entrepreneurship.

D. Thematic Priority: Political and Civil Rights – Voice and Participation

Ensuring that girls and women, boys and men, have a voice at all levels of society, are able to effectively participate and have a say over decisions that affect their lives is central to the EU's approach. Not only is it right that girls and women participate equally, their participation contributes to more inclusive, balanced and representative societies.

Objectives 17, 19 and 20 are priorities for Turkmenistan and are recommended:

Objective 17. Equal rights and ability for women to participate in policy and governance processes at all levels

Objective 19. Challenged and changed discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes

Objective 20. Equal rights enjoyed by women to participate in and influence decision-making processes on climate and environmental issues.

The thematic objectives outlined in Annex 1 of the framework, 'Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020' are all specific initiatives for women and girls (and some also for men and boys). EU actors should continue to use the EU's range of means to implement and promote gender equality. To be effective and sustainable however, they also require changes in the broader social, economic, political and environmental country context in Turkmenistan.

5.5 Proposed adaptation of programmes in Turkmenistan

An overview was made of on-going EU-funded technical assistance projects to assess to what extent gender mainstreaming was effective, and whether there was adequate awareness of the gender dimensions of the sectors in which interventions were being made. Based on findings from the analysis the following actions are recommended:

- The EU should reiterate with implementing partners that it is mandatory that gender equality and women's empowerment issues be addressed in all EU-funded projects and programmes
- Project log frames should be updated to ensure that indicators and targets are gender-sensitive, and project reporting and data should be gender-disaggregated
- Project implementing partners must take up relevant gender objectives through gender mainstreaming actions to ensure women have equal access to project benefits, and adequately measure progress towards achieving GAP II.
- A requirement to address gender dimensions in all situation analyses, inception reports and feasibility studies etc. should be imposed and reiterated regularly.

5.5.1 Support to the Education System in Turkmenistan. EuropeAid/136701/DH/SER/TM. 2016-2020

The overall objective of the Project is to further support the Government of Turkmenistan in the creation of a modern education system in line with international educational standards. The purpose is to contribute to the on-going education reform process by facilitating the introduction of educational standards and adapting professional education programmes to labour market needs.

The project covers strategic planning, institutional capacity development, and school management. The activities under implementation include developing educational programmes, to further qualification of teachers, and to school management.

Background

Education is the focal sector of EU intervention in the country through DCI. The education sector is currently impeded by an insular and weak Ministerial bureaucracy, and slow decision-making processes. The country's skills base has eroded significantly since independence. The key challenges include: a lack of institutional capacity for education planning; the need to improve policy coordination; lack of data disaggregated by gender, region, wealth quintile, and capacity constraints on analysing and producing adequate quality education statistics; and the need to develop effective use of ICTs (information and communication technologies) in education.

There are also concerns related to the quality of teaching and learning methodologies; curriculum content and the availability of textbooks; school infrastructure, and teacher training and professional development.

The project has suffered significant delays in obtaining official approval for its work plan. No detailed gender analysis of the situation or sector has as yet been undertaken by the implementing partner.

EU GAP II Thematic Objective

The specific thematic objective from GAP II relevant to this project is:

Objective 13. Equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational education and training (VET) free from discrimination. (Thematic Priority: Economic and Social Empowerment).

This will be addressed through mainstreaming gender equality at project outcome and output level. Indicators to measure contextual progress and EU contribution to change include: secondary school completion rate for girls and boys (SDG 4.35), and tertiary education enrolment rates for women and men (SDG 4.37); number of teachers trained with EU support (EU RF), and ratio of female to male who have benefitted from vocational education and training / skills development and other active labour market programmes with EU support (EU RF).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Education System Support project collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to raise awareness amongst project staff and provide capacity building on how to identify and address the important gender issues related to the education sector and link them to relevant SDGs. An effective gender analysis of the education sector can be produced, and gender mainstreaming actions can be designed. Log frame indicators can also become more gender-sensitive. The Institute has the mandate and capacity to work on GEWE in the country, and can contribute to ensuring that the project's gender mainstreaming is effective.

Within the education (focal) sector, the EU-funded project is well placed to address gender stereotyping and eliminate inequality between men and women through education. It should

- Promote the development of professional courses for girls in non-traditional skills
- Assist the Ministry of Education in revising the curricula for teacher-training and educational curricula at all levels of education in order to remove existing gender stereotypes.
- As part of teacher training, include addressing the removal of gender bias and stereotypes
- The training of girls in VET in non-traditional skills, should be linked to the labour market (tourism, innovations, IT)
- Gender stereotypes in education curricula should be removed and courses should be more gender-sensitive
- Gender-sensitive indicators should be used in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the sector
- Further studies should be carried out to fully understand the gender dimensions of the education sector.

5.5.2 Support for Further Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Turkmenistan SARD III

The overall objective of the project is to support the Government of Turkmenistan in the achievement of national sector objectives for sustainable agriculture, rural development and institutional support to the rural agri-sector. The purpose is to increase productivity and competitiveness of the agri-food sector through activities that improve production, processing and marketing and to strengthen the capacity of supporting Turkmen agriculture institutions.

The project covers primary production, processing / adding value, market development and export trade development. The focus is on import substitution and the introduction of food safety principles and testing.

The sector is dominated by female professionals working particularly in laboratories, and the project's trainers have been predominantly female experts.

Project implementation is in its first year, and as part of its assessment of individual agriculture and livestock enterprises, an assessment form will be used to assess a number of cross-cutting issues including gender and whether the development of the enterprise will address specific gender issues. This will allow it to assess future project impact. No detailed gender analysis of the rural agri-sector has as yet been undertaken.

EU GAP II Thematic Objective

The specific thematic objective from GAP II relevant to this project is:

Objective 15. Equal access by women to financial services, productive resources including land, trade and

entrepreneurship (Thematic Priority: Economic and Social Empowerment).

This will be addressed through mainstreaming gender equality at project outcome and output level. Indicators to measure contextual progress and EU contribution to change include: number of women receiving rural advisory services with EU support (EU RF); gender gap in wages in agri-food sector (SDG 5.1); number of women and men who have secure tenure of land (EU RF) and GNI per capita (SDG 8.54).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the SARD III project collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to raise awareness amongst project staff and provide capacity building on how to identify and address the important gender issues related to the agriculture and rural development sector and link them to SDGs. An effective gender analysis of the sector can be produced, and gender mainstreaming actions can be designed. Log frame indicators can also become more gender-sensitive. The Institute has the mandate and capacity to work on GEWE in the country, and can assist the project in ensuring that its gender mainstreaming is effective.

5.5.3 Support to the Public Administration Capacity Building in Turkmenistan DCI-ASIE/2016/376-794

The overall objective of the project is to modernise, in line with international and European standards, the know-how and skills of the Turkmen Public Administration by building up the capacity of the institutions responsible for the training and professional development of civil servants. The purpose is to enhance the institutional and training capacities of the Academy of Civil Servants and of relevant state bodies through the development of modern training programmes.

The main partner of the project is the Academy of Civil Servants. Other key stakeholders and partners include higher education and research institutions such as the Institute for State and Law, the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, and the Turkmen State University.

The project is in its first year and has undertaken a functional analysis and training needs analysis to inform the development of methodology. The Academy has expressed an interest in the development of Masters Programme in Public Administration.

Key management positions in the Academy of Civil Servants are held by women.

EU GAP II Thematic Objective

The specific thematic objective from GAP II relevant to this project is:

Objective 13. Equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality training (VET) free from discrimination. (Thematic Priority: Economic and Social Empowerment).

This will be addressed through mainstreaming gender equality at project outcome and output level. Indicators to measure contextual progress and EU contribution to change include: tertiary education enrolment rates for women and men (SDG 4.37); number of teachers trained with EU support (EU RF), and ratio of female to male who have benefited from skills development and other capacity building programmes with EU support (EU RF).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Public Administration Capacity Building project collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to raise awareness amongst project staff and provide capacity building on how to identify and address the important gender issues related to the civil service sector and link them to SDGs. An effective gender analysis of the sector can be produced, and gender mainstreaming actions can be designed. Log frame indicators can also become more gender-sensitive. The Institute has the mandate and capacity to work on GEWE in the country, and can support the project to ensure that its gender mainstreaming is effective.

5.5.4 Further Enhancement of the Public Finance Management Reform III EuropeAid/134465/C/SER/TM

The overall objective of the project is to support the Government of Turkmenistan to contribute to the socio-economic development of Turkmenistan through an improved collection, allocation, usage and control of public resources. The purpose is to assist The Ministry of Finance with improving its readiness for the automation of core PFM operations.

To achieve this, the project aims to: (a) assist the Ministry of Finance of Turkmenistan (MoF) to develop the regulatory framework to implement a modern, comprehensive Budget Code; (b) advise on the implementation of international standards of financial accounting and reporting; c) promote a Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) and support the implementation of Results Oriented Budgeting (ROB) in pilot ministries; (d) develop further the macro-economic forecasting capacity of the relevant executive authority; (e) support the implementation of a best-practice Core Treasury System; (f) specify a viable GFMIS (Government Financial Management Information System) to enable a revised budgetary processes to function efficiently and; (g) suggest ways of improving the capacity of the MoF to budget for, prioritise, and implement capital expenditure.

The project has suffered delays in obtaining official approval for its work plan and short-term experts, and the project steering committee has not been established. It is understood that modifications to project activities and delivery are currently being proposed, and revised.⁸¹ Certain capacity building and training activities may be reorganized or rescheduled. No gender analysis of the public finance sector has as yet been undertaken.

EU GAP II Thematic Objective

The specific thematic objective from GAP II relevant to this project is:

Objective 13. Equal access for women to all levels of quality training free from discrimination. (Thematic Priority: Economic and Social Empowerment).

This will be addressed through mainstreaming gender equality at project outcome and output level. Indicators to measure contextual progress and EU contribution to change include: ratio of female to male who have benefited from skills development and other capacity building programmes with EU support (EU RF).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Public Finance Management Reform III project collaborate with the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to raise awareness amongst project staff and provide capacity building on how to identify and address the important gender issues related to the public finance management sector including promoting and introducing gender responsive budgeting and link them to SDGs. An effective gender analysis of the sector can be produced, and gender mainstreaming actions can be designed. Log frame indicators can also become more gender-sensitive. The Institute has the mandate and capacity to work on GEWE in the country, and can assist the project in ensuring that gender mainstreaming is effective.

5.6 New actions identified for Turkmenistan

Following an analysis of the gender situation, new gender equality projects and actions have been identified which are considered of high priority in Turkmenistan.

The recommended actions for Turkmenistan are:

- Support for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2015-2020
- Support for the implementation of CEDAW recommendations to Turkmenistan
- Strengthening and support to the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights
- Interventions which address gender-based violence.

These actions were introduced and discussed in Section 4.1 above. Support by the EU for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality could be implemented in partnership with UN agencies in

⁸¹ PFM 5th Interim Report (September 2017)

Turkmenistan.

5.7 Identified priorities for in-country calls under EIDHR / NSA-LA instrument in Turkmenistan

The current situation in Turkmenistan is restrictive, and space for independent NGOs to operate freely remains limited.

Findings from this Gender Study indicate that there are many areas where improvements are needed and where initiatives could contribute to improving gender equality / women's empowerment in the country through the EU's EIDHR / NSA-LA instruments, if applicable and possible.

The EIDHR is designed to help civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. The 2014-2020 EIDHR has become more strategic in its focus, and its specific objectives are defined with respect to the protection of human rights and support of democratic processes, including in particular:

- stronger emphasis on economic, gender and social rights
- stronger wording on the role of civil society, including a specific reference to the cooperation between civil society and local authorities and relevant State institutions;
- stronger emphasis on vulnerable groups (national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex persons (LGBTI), indigenous peoples).

Recommendations on integrating gender-specific interventions into possible future EIDHR country-based support schemes and CSO-LA thematic instrument.

This section contains recommendations regarding calls for proposals in Turkmenistan. They can be used for elaborating corresponding guidelines for grant applicants to the above-mentioned thematic instruments.

1. As mentioned above, the relevant gender objectives for Turkmenistan under Thematic Priority B: Physical and Psychological Integrity is Objective 7.

For Objective 7: Girls and women free from all forms of violence against them (VAWG) both in the public and in the private sphere. The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 7 could include:

- Delivering education and raising awareness for behavioural change regarding gender-based violence, engaging men and boys and communities.
- Improving the capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement to provide redress to VAWG victims, in line with international standards.
- Providing services that support survivors of VAWG
- Supporting legislative action to penalise all VAWG and gender-based violence and to protect victims.

2. As mentioned above, the relevant gender objectives for Turkmenistan under Thematic Priority C: Economic and Social Empowerment are Objectives 13 and 15.

For Objective 13: Equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational education and training (VET) free from discrimination. The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 13 could include:

- Providing vocational and professional training for girls and boys that enable them to be change agents
- Providing education (both formal and non-formal), that addresses gender stereotypes
- Ensuring safe, free of sexual and gender based violence environment that responds to child protection principles
- Promoting gender-equal role models in the transition from education to the labour market
- Supporting legislation reforms to provide non-discriminatory education for girls and boys

For Objective 15: Equal access by women to financial services, productive resources including land, trade and entrepreneurship. The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 15 could include:

- Supporting transformative legislation on ownership, inheritance and control of land and other productive resources by women

- Eliminating barriers to women's equal access to markets, private sector development services, financial services, entrepreneurship, and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Supporting female entrepreneurship as well as care facilities that assist families
- Increasing the affordability and use of technology, expanding rural access, and boosting digital literacy for women.

3. As mentioned above, the relevant gender objectives for Turkmenistan under Thematic Priority D: Voice and Participation are Objectives 17, 19 and 20.

For Objective 17: Equal rights and ability for women to participate in policy and governance processes at all levels. The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 17 could include:

- Promote behavioural change in decision making, combating discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes at family and community level, through public education and media campaigns, engaging with women and men of all ages.
- Increasing the percentage of women in key institutions at national and municipal levels: Government and local councils.

For Objective 19: Challenged and changed discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes.

The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 19 could include:

- Promoting public debate on non-discriminatory gender relationships that respect the physical, mental, social, integrity of boys and girls, and the child protection principle
- Supporting community, peer-to-peer, outreach and mobilisation action, involve men and boys, engaging with leaders and figures of authority to promote the rights of girls and women of all ages and to increase the value placed on them by their own communities
- Investing in broad-based education on social constructions of masculinity / femininity and positive change in decision making for family responsibilities, parenthood, opposition to sexual and gender based violence, etc.
- Supporting civil society action of girls and women, men and boys and their associations as agents for change towards gender equality.

For Objective 20: Equal rights enjoyed by women to participate in and influence decision-making processes on climate and environmental issues. The possible relevant activities in Turkmenistan under Objective 20 could include:

- Increasing the resilience of girls and women in facing climate and environmental change and supporting them as agents of environmental protection.
- Researching the differentiated impact of climate change on male and female population of all ages, to be able to design public policy that responds to the real needs of men and women.

Recommendation for Central Asia Regional Programme

There is scope for the EU to promote / formulate a regional Central Asia programme on GEWE with a focus on:

- building knowledge of Central Asia partners
- sharing best practice on legal and institutional framework for GEWE and its effective implementation
- gender research
- use of gender statistics in policy formulation;
- gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in national development

This could be between Central Asia countries and selected EU Member States. Eastern European Member States which have a similar historical Socialist past and context, would be well-placed as partners, thereby improving relevance and effectiveness for Turkmenistan.

6 Annexes

Annex 1: People / Entities Met

Name	Designation
Svetlana Bairamova	EU Liaison Office in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Ilya Ikonnikov	Key Expert, Support and Facilitation of the Implementation of EU programmes in Turkmenistan
Irina Dedova	UN Women Program Specialist
Jean-Jacques Kudela	Team Leader, Senior Evaluator, Aets Consultants
Georges Molak	Senior Evaluator, Aets Consultants
Mehri Karakulova	CADAP 6 National Coordinator / Turkmenistan
Rustam Berdiyev	BOMCA 9 National Coordinator
Jerome Bouyjou	Human Rights and Political Affairs Officer, UNRCCA
Ayjerem Myratdurdyeva	WHO NPO for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Project
Guljermal Overmaradova	WHO Tobacco Control Project in Turkmenistan
Laura Vremis	WHO Tobacco Control Project in Turkmenistan
Siraj Mahmudlu	Deputy Representative, UNICEF
Shohrat Orazov	Child Protection Officer, UNICEF
Jebpar Bashimov	Education Officer, UNICEF
Bayramgul Garabayeva	UNFPA Assistant Representative
Mahym Orazmuhamedova	IOM Head of Office
Azat Atajanov	IOM (Future) Head of Office
Natasa Rasic	OSCE Human Dimension Officer
Nurjermal Jalilova	UNDP Programme Analyst Governance, Economic, Diversification and Inclusive Growth
Ogulshivin Yazlyeva	UNDP Head of PSU
Nazik Avlyakulova	UNDP Communications Associate
Alla Ablezova	Specialist, International Department, Ministry of Finance and Economy
Seitnur Japarov	Head of the Department of Social Policy and Management of the Institute of Strategic and Sustainable Development under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Aigul Berdieva	Specialist of the Department of Social Policy and Management of the Institute of Strategic and Sustainable Development under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Johannes Stenbaek-Madsen	(by phone) Head of Cooperation EUD Kazakhstan
Snejana Popova	(by phone) Task Manager
Ms Thorda Abbott-Watt	HM Ambassador British Embassy Ashgabat
David Pert	Deputy Head of Mission & HM Consul, British Embassy Ashgabat
Ms Gayane Israyelyn	Political Section Assistant, British Embassy Ashgabat
Suleiman Durdiev	Deputy Head, Central Council of Youth Organization of Turkmenistan Named After Magtymguly
Taimaz Batyr,	Head of the Department of International Cooperation, Central Council of Youth Organization of Turkmenistan Named After Magtymguly
Kurbanguly Khydyrov,	Specialist of the department of International Cooperation Central Council of Youth Organization of Turkmenistan Named After Magtymguly
Aivoza Mukhamedova,	Coordinator of the Youth Centre (YPEER) of Ashgabat

Aimal Urazsakhatova,	Chairperson of the Children's Fund
Biagul Kanymukhamedova	Deputy Head of Department of Population, State Statistics Committee
Jamila Ataeva	Head of the Department of Social Statistics, State Statistics Committee
Munisa Muraeva	Deputy Head of the Department of Social Statistics, State Statistics Committee
Guzelya Muradova	Head of the Department of Labour and Wages, State Statistics Committee
Maisa Khojanazarova	Leading Specialist of the Department of Labour and Wages, State Statistics Committee
Guncha Khushkulieva	International Department, State Statistics Committee
Khimrai Khairov,	International Department, Ministry of Education
Davlet Yazkuliev	International Department, Ministry of Education
Gulkurgan Kurdukdieva	Head of the Department of primary and secondary education, Ministry of Education
Arthur Russell	Team Leader 'Support for Further Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Turkmenistan – Phase III' Project
David Pepper	Agri-business and Rural Development Specialist 'Support for Further Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Turkmenistan – Phase III' Project
Natalya Akmuradova	EBRD Principal Manager
Stefan Siewert	Team Leader, Support to Education Sector in Turkmenistan
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Merdan Khanov	Acting Head of the Department of International Relations, Ministry of Justice
Svetlana Maltseva	Chief Consultant of the Department of International Relations, Ministry of Justice
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Gulya Choreklieva	Head of NGO 'Yenme'
Meret Akmuradov	Head of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy
Bahargul Tagangendieva	Head of General Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy
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Yusuf Alieva	Director, NGO 'Centre for Support of the Disabled'
Ata Salyhov	GIZ Head of Finance and Administration
Sabir Agabalaev	Director, NGO 'Keik Okara'
Bahargul Agaeva	Head of Statistics Department, Ministry of Health and Health Industry
Guzaliya Gazizova	Head of Sanitary Supervision Department, Ministry of Health and Health Industry

Annex 2: Interview / focus group guides

Question guide for public organizations interviews and meetings

Areas covered:

- Mandate and goals of organization
- Current activities
- Current gender situation
- Discussion and analysis of most important gender / empowerment issues
- Problems specific to Turkmenistan – GBV, domestic violence, discrimination, social norms
- Status and needs of women in rural areas
- Role of EU and donors
- Main conclusions and recommendations

Question guide for line ministries / government bodies / government-organized NGOs

For Ministry of Economy and Finance

Economic policy of Turkmenistan; national development strategy; economic growth and forecast of economic development in the country; gender mainstreaming in relation to national development; role of EU in the country's development.

For State Statistics Committee:

Available statistics on the situation of women and girls and men and boys in Turkmenistan; information gaps; approach towards data collection for 2015-20 National Action Plan on Gender Equality and SDGs; data collection in rural areas; digital data collection; capacity building and training needs; contribution of EU and donors.

For Ministry of Education:

Education policy in Turkmenistan; school pupil attendance rates and drop-out rates of girls and boys; differences between rural and urban areas for IVET and secondary vocational education; access of girls and boys to primary education and vocational education; gender mainstreaming in education; access to higher education; contribution of education sector to the National Programme of Social and Economic Development of TKM 2011-2030; role of EU and donors in education sector.

For Institute for Democracy and Human Rights:

Mandate of Institute; gender policy of Turkmenistan; mechanism for monitoring gender policy; constraints and information gaps; coordination mechanism for gender equality; available resources; capacity building; gender focal points; domestic violence; areas for further study; role of EU and donors.

For Ministry of Justice:

State guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities; complaints procedure; special training for gender-based violence; penalties for gender-based violence; special provisions in court-room for people with disabilities; domestic violence law; provision of free legal aid; contribution of EU and donors.

For Ministry of Agriculture and Water Economy:

Agriculture and Water Policy in Turkmenistan; gender mainstreaming in relation to access to water and land; rural development policy; land ownership by women; participation of women in WUAs; status and needs of women in rural areas; role of EU and donors in the sector.

For Women's Union:

Mandate and goals of Women's Union; current activities; most important gender issues in Turkmenistan; status and needs of women in rural areas; roles and responsibilities of women in society in Turkmenistan; gender education to transform stereotypes; legal awareness of women; domestic violence; role of EU and donors.

For Youth Union:

National Youth Policy of Turkmenistan; Strategy and Action Plan of Youth Policy; main activities of Youth Union; main aim of Youth Union in forming young women and young men; priorities and problems of young women and young men.

Question guide for international organizations / international finance organizations / other donors

Areas covered:

- Main activities in Turkmenistan
- Main problems and priorities of target groups
- Available statistics on the situation of women and girls, men and boys
- Barriers to achieving equality
- Main stakeholders in the sector
- Gender mainstreaming
- Status and needs of women in rural areas / role and responsibilities of women in society
- Discrimination
- Gender-based violence
- Role of EU and donors
- Main conclusions and recommendations

Annex 3: Documentation

Turkmenistan

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Annex 4: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), known as: 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', is a set of 17 Global Goals covering a broad range of sustainable development issues.

The SDGs in detail are:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
- Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change forum)
- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss
- Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.