

WOMEN IN TRANSITION PERIOD AND MEDIA IN KYRGYZSTAN

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Women in the Central Asia play a significant role in the social sphere. In particular women in Kyrgyzstan are engaged in the spheres of service, education and health care. In the high schools up to 80% of the women employed are teachers, in universities its 70% and almost 70% of all medical workers are women.

However, in non-urbanized areas of country women are the basic building block of society because they work with small businesses and generate commerce.

Out of a population of roughly 5 million people 65% of them live in the countryside and the majority of Kyrgyz women live in remote areas. For that reason the majority of women cannot influence the political and social decisions made and cannot help with the development of society.

Some of the women who lived in rural areas emigrated to the urbanized regions of the country as a result of poverty and some of them have even moved to other countries to earn money for their families. Most of the labor immigrants to the other countries around central Asia are women and they work many different professions around the area. They work on trading platforms of Russia, tobacco fields of Kazakhstan, clean houses and baby-sit in Moscow and other different cities and countries. The amount of money that they earn is usually not enough to live in luxurious conditions but it is better than having nothing.

As a result of worsening conditions in their own countries women from Kyrgyzstan are finding reasons and looking for opportunities to stay in other ones. At the same time the role of women in public life has noticeably increased in Kyrgyzstan. The most active and energetic of them have managed to establish their own businesses. One of the examples of this is the fact that in almost all of the large marketplaces in Kyrgyzstan the merchants are mainly women and help import goods from China, Turkey, India, and other countries. There have been new factions of women appearing in Kyrgyzstan to take part in the politics of the country before and after the Revolution of 2005. Most of their activities include organizing protests, rallies, marches and other such collaborations. There have been numerous political groups who have helped the women gain a political standing and have taught them the subtleties and machinations of politics in Kyrgyzstan. These groups of women have had a tremendous influence on Kyrgyz society and have become to be known as a force to be reckoned with in the political arena. An example of the influence that they hold was shown in the Djalalabad province in January. A group of women there held a protest against a deputy of the Parliament.

The group of women of provokers has been superseded from a place of event by participants of a meeting with the deputy.

In Kyrgyzstan now the significant part of the non-governmental organizations and a number of political parties are headed by women, who actively participates in a political life of the country. Leaders or co-chairs of active political parties as " My country " (M.Kulikova), "Асаба" (R.Otunbaeva), Democratic party of women of Kyrgyzstan (T.Shajlieva), "National unity " (R.Aknazarova), assembly of Kyrgyzstan's women (Zamira Akbaghsheva) are women.

The women also heads the influential non-governmental organizations in the country, such as " the Civil society against corruption " (T.Ismailova), the Association of NPO (T.Umetalieva), a several Human rights organizations (A.Abdrasulova, N.Ablova) and many others.

But despite of obvious activity of representatives of women organizations, the women are presented very poorly in the higher authority of Kyrgyzstan. At present time some representatives of women, who has involved in state management are a Chairperson of Constitutional court Cholpon Baekova, Minister of labour and social development Ukhtomkan Abdullaeva, Chairperson of Migratory service KR Aygul Ryskulova, Chairperson of Social Fund Olga Lavrova, Chairperson of City Council of Bishkek Nurjamal Baybolova, the head of Financial investigation of under Government N.Tazhimamatova.

The president has tried to include in structure of the Government some of women after presidential elections in 2005, but any of three presented nominees has not been supported by present Parliament. Meanwhile the nominees had been presented are known - Rose Otunbaeva had been proposed to the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ishengul Boljurova to be a Minister of Education and Alevtina Pronenko to be a Minister of Labour and Social Protection.

On the other hand recently the United Nation announced Kyrgyzstan among the countries in the World where is not a single women in the Parliament. Although three women have been selected after parliamentary election in 2005 as the deputies. But their right to remain the seats in the parliament have been challenged by their main opponents at election in the court and the challengers were recognized as the winners. So far Kyrgyzstan is one of the ten countries in the World where is no woman in Parliament. Besides Kyrgyzstan remains to be the state where women in the Government are presented by only two women. Both of them, Minister of Labour and social development Ukhtomkan Abdullaeva and Chairwoman of the Migratory service Aygul Ryskulova, were appointed by the degree of the head of state in conditions when approval of parliament is not required anymore by the new Constitution adopted at the last days of December, 2006.

However the imbalance in the gender issue is slightly compensated by representation of women of Kyrgyzstan in diplomatic corps of foreign countries. Now four women are occupying the positions of the Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary Ambassadors of Kyrgyzstan. Three of them were appointed to the posts after event on March 24th, 2005.

Zamira Sydykova was appointed as the Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to the USA and Canada and she is participating in this Conference, and Rina Prizhivoit was appointed as the Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Austria, Czech Republic and Hungary, and she also is representative of Kyrgyzstan in the organizations of the United Nations and OSCE in the Vienna. Third is Lidiya Imanalieva who is professional diplomat and has been appointed as the Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Belarus and Poland last year. She was working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for long time and used to work as the first deputy of Foreign Minister. She is known as experienced professional. Fourth woman is Lidiya Orolbaeva, who is Kyrgyz Ambassador to India.

First two women are not career diplomats and are appointed as the Ambassadors for active support of leaders of present authority when they were in opposition. Both of them were active journalists and with the critical publications addressed to the former authority they have strongly influenced public opinion. Z.Sydykova was then the Editor-in-Chief of the oppositional newspaper "Respublica" which has suspended the release after departure of the head. And R.Prizhivoit was the leading author of the one of the strongest in previous oppositional newspaper "MSN" in Kyrgyzstan, published sharp materials with criticizing the head of the state. Thus, after events on March 24th 2005 two women from mass-media became politicians but not acting journalists for a while. They are now the reference points for other women in press.

Considering, that the potential of women is used by the state and society in common not on satisfactory level, there is hope that attitude to the gender issue will change and improve and more comprehensible public attitude would be paid to a role of women in Kyrgyz society. For this purpose it is necessary not only to pay constant attention of a society to a present role of women in a public life, but also to provide detailed explanatory work, to propagandize experience of foreign countries in which the Government as well as the Parliament of the country consists of women on half, and in some countries even the head of state is a woman.

In this business the special role is allocated to the mass-media and especially to its electronic media, as to the most effective of influence to an active part of society. At present in Kyrgyzstan, besides TV, on-line journalism is developing fast. By the quantity of informational the web-sites of Kyrgyzstan are on leading position in the Central Asia. Every year their quantity increases, as well as influence and quality. According to the survey, provided by the independent organizations in Kyrgyzstan, there are about 500000 Internet users in country at moment.

That is about 9% of all population. Development of on-line journalism in Kyrgyzstan is connected with the World tendency of growth of influence of the Internet on development of a society. Now most popular and active the Internet sources of the information in the country are such web-sites of operative updating as *www.24.kg*, *www.AKIpress.org*, *www.tazar.kg*, *www.parohod.kg*, *www.azattyk.kg*, *www.kabar.kg* and others. That is not included printed media, the part from which also has the Internet-sites.

The editorial staff of these information resources consists basically of women, and three from this operative on-line sources headed by women - Elena Avdeeva is the Editor-in-Chief of web-site *www.parohod.kg*, Asel Otorbaeva is the Chief of the web-site *www.24.kg* and Elmira Toktoghulova is the Chief of the web-site *www.tazar.kg*. Beside of them, women occupied the leading positions in Radio and TV media resources in the country. Until recently the leading oppositional TV was headed by Oksana Malevanaya who has headed now one more influential TV station – the Fifth channel since February, 2007.

Before transformation and renaming the channel was headed by another woman Aynura Temirbekova. Now one of the leading state owned newspapers in Russian "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" is also headed by known journalist Tamara Slashcheva, and since recent the Kyrgyz Radio also headed by the woman - Anash Kadyrova.

Among the known journalists actively working in the Kyrgyz mass-media, it is possible to name such women as Bermet Malikova and Zynaida Sorokina in the daily newspaper "The Evening Bishkek", Djyldyz and Cholpon Musabekova's in the main opposition newspaper in Kyrgyz "Agym", Larissa Li and Alexandra Chernyh in the newspaper "MSN", Nurgul Isaeva in magazine "DA ", Nargiza Ahmetova and Asel Mambetova, Vera Tchernikova and Tamara Valieva in the Kyrgyz State TV and Radio company, Larissa Kalinina and Irina Litvinova on private TV company "Pyramid".

The press-services of many organizations also heads women – Aynura Almaz heads the Press-service of Kyrgyz Parliament, Nuriya Iskenderova heads the press-service of the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan, Aynura Kanimetova heads the press-service of the State Committee on migration, etc. At the same time among 60 newspapers with limited copies on the regional scales the woman are editors-in-chief in many of them. For example, Toktosh Sarieva heads the newspaper "Sel'skaya nov" in Zhajylsky rajon, Turdukan Kojoeva heads the newspaper in Tonsky rajon for two decades, and the newspaper of the remoted Alay rajon in the South of country heads by Ajar Ibraeva for more than decade.

Besides it, one of leading researcher in the field of Legacy Gulnara Ibraeva works in the sphere of mass-media. She wrote several books related to the problems of freedom of press and problems of journalist's right in Kyrgyzstan. Currently she is the head of Department of sociology of the American University - Central Asia in Bishkek.

Women in Kyrgyzstan are gaining more and more influence in the media today and even though in certain areas of the country they are still holding their traditional roles, in the urban areas they are actively engaged in politics and society.

If the already existing political groups in Kyrgyzstan would help the women more their social and political status would jump across the entire country. Public support is required for women to fight to enlarge their representation in the official bodies of the government. There are still artificially created barriers for women candidates for the high level and middle level of the state posts. The potential of women in the media also might be more.

The active work of women NGOs and the establishment of several women's media sources dedicated to promotion of women to members of the Government will give additional aid. Also at the moment the experience of international journalism in solving women's issues would be appropriate.

The examples of the women's movement in the USA and Europe, would be significant too by showing what women have done around the world to acquire their rights.

In this matter more support from the International media is needed. That will bring into Kyrgyz society not only a new vision of modern world through the eyes of women, it also will bring a new knowledge and new skills in this field.