



Methodological Guide «Standards for Gender-Sensitive Journalism»

Project «DatkAyim - Promoting gender equality in a new way»

HERo – New narratives towards a gender equal society

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The authors	PA «Agency for Social Technologies» (AST) and Center for Creative Development «Danilo Dolci»

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FOREWORD

Despite all the efforts made to achieve gender equality in Kyrgyzstan (ratification of the main international documents on human rights, declaration of equality of rights at the level of national legislation, increasing the gender potential of decision-makers, and other measures), it must be stated that women and men in countries do not have equal opportunities, as evidenced by gender-disaggregated statistics. As a result, we are faced with multiple examples of gender-based violence, reaching its most extreme manifestations and sophisticated forms, cases of discrimination, harassment, sexism and other negative phenomena, which together hinder the achievement of equality between women and men in the country.

In many ways, this unequal situation is supported by education and the media, which reinforce the existing gender stereotypes in society, which contribute to the manifestation of discriminatory manifestations against women.

The world community, being deeply concerned with the problem of gender-based violence, recognizes the important role of the mass media (media) in its prevention and overcoming. In particular, back in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted – documents to empower women around the world. In a separate section “Women and the Media” of the Beijing Platform for Action, two strategic goals are proclaimed:

- Empowering and accessing women to express their opinions and make decisions in and through the media and technologically new media;
- Contribute to the creation of a balanced and non-stereotypical image of women in the media.

In 2008, Kyrgyzstan adopted the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women”, which establishes state guarantees to provide equal rights and opportunities to people of different sexes in the political, social, economic, cultural and other areas of human life; designed to protect men and women from discrimination based on sex. The law aims to establish progressive democratic relations between men and women. The law establishes a ban on gender discrimination, one of the forms of which is *“reproduction of gender stereotypes through the media, education, and culture”*. Thus, the discourse on the role of the media in achieving gender equality unfolds not only from the point of view of a democratic secular state, but also has a legal character.

A gender approach in all areas is one of the most important prerequisites for the formation of a mature civil society based on intolerance of violence and discrimination, which, among other things, is supported by gender-sensitive journalism.

Journalists can and should contribute to building the rule of law, respect, observe and protect human rights. That is why it is important to continue understanding and practical implementation of a gender approach in the media.

In an age of digital, democratic, social and political change, communication has become an essential means of communicating progressive ideas and initiatives that can create stronger, more informed and more active communities than ever before. The development of journalistic ethics is the most important phenomenon for the entire professional community and the cornerstone of news journalism as a means of transformation in society. In the light of ongoing changes, gender issues are becoming a mandatory component of progress and ethical journalism. The fight against gender inequality is the struggle of all mankind. Asking about preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudice and violence against women and girls means striving to ensure that violence and inequality are finally properly reported in the media.

The media (newspapers, radio, television) and new technologies, the Internet are part of culture and society. It is widely recognized that the media are the transmitters of culture and the driving forces behind globalizing cultures. There is no aspect of society today that is not influenced by the media, albeit to varying degrees. The media can also be created as social entities in their own right, with the power to give impetus to social development.

There is a clear relationship between women's empowerment and media development. The media is involved in the empowerment of women. The proliferation of media, the explosion of new technologies and the emergence of social media in many parts of the world have provided multiple sources of access to gender-related information and knowledge. The media, regardless of the technology used, remains one of the main sources of information, ideas and opinions for most people around the world. While inequalities and gender stereotypes exist in social structures and people's minds, they can be propagated and perpetuated by the media or toned down, questioned and ultimately eradicated.

SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) calls on all countries to achieve gender equality as the foundation of peace in the world. In terms of SDG 5 – achieve gender equality – some progress has already been made. However, women and girls continue to suffer from discrimination and violence, and media coverage of the problem does not reflect the reality and scale of the scourge. With their citizenship and information materials, the media can help create the necessary conditions for combating gender inequality.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan is systematically working in this direction. In particular, the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for 2018-2020 included separate measures to develop standards for gender-sensitive journalism, and this guide was developed in order to implement these measures at the request of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic, which, being authorized state body in the field of gender policy, continues to coordinate the efforts and initiatives of various organizations, partners for their further implementation in the media sphere.

This guide is aimed at developing and maintaining an understanding of the values of human rights and gender equality in the activities of the media, skills in gender-sensitive coverage of events, the use of gender-correct language, the dissemination of gender-sensitive content and visualization, avoiding the reproduction of gender stereotypes as a form of gender discrimination.

Management is intended for journalists, editors, employees of the press services of state and municipal bodies, as well as active figures in social media.

1. INTRODUCTION TO GENDER

1.1. Sex and gender: biological and social

➤ *Who will be born? Biology questions*

"Who will be born to you?", "And who did you want?", "Boy or girl?" - A pregnant woman hears these questions very often, and certain expectations are associated with the answer to them both for herself and for her relatives.

"Who was born?" - This is the first question that interests us when we hear that our relative, colleague or acquaintance has become a mother. Why is it so important?

This is how nature works, that a child is born a girl or a boy, and this phenomenon of the biological difference of human beings prompts us to explain a lot in the behavior of people. It is in biological differences, in particular, in hormonal, morphological, neurological, that psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, criminologists, and teachers seek answers to their questions and justify the answers to them.

The medical criterion for determining the sex of a person is the presence of the sex glands (testicles or ovaries), which, in turn, determines the ability of the gland to produce spermatozoa or eggs, that is, to perform the reproductive function inherent in the male or female sex, and also to produce more male or female sex hormones. And already these hormones predetermine the structure and development of internal and external genital organs.

Thus, sex is a biological attribute of a person. It would seem that this is an indisputable fact, an obvious given. However, everything is not so simple. In addition to the well-known division into boys and girls, medical science has to deal with many surprises and mysteries, including those related to sex and gender differences.¹ So, there are "and intersex people"² – these are people whose biological sex from birth cannot be unequivocally determined as male or female. Intersex implies the presence of characteristics of both sexes to one degree or another: the number of sex chromosomes, hormonal levels and the development of reproductive organs.

¹ Biologist Ann Fausto-Sterling has calculated that the number of people born with mixed sex characteristics is 1.7%. This is a small share, but behind it are, however, millions of people.

² Previously, for persons with signs of both male and female, the concept of "hermaphroditism" was used.

Initially, the biological affiliation of the child to women or men (her/him) is determined visually by the doctor taking delivery. If such a determination is not difficult, the doctor reflects the sex of the child in medical documents, which subsequently become the basis for fixing the sex by state authorities. Gender is recorded in the birth certificate and in the passport, it affects the legal status of a person, the existence and scope of rights, duties, and features of responsibility. So, for example, in the Kyrgyz Republic, only male citizens are subject to compulsory conscription for active military service, only females can be granted maternity leave, life imprisonment is not assigned to women, only persons of different sexes (a woman and a man) can enter into marriage, etc. In other countries, for example, Italy, women can be sentenced to life imprisonment, and in Israel they are drafted into the army.

It can be stated that from the point of view of biology, there are not so many insurmountable differences between women and men. These, of course, include the ability of exclusively women to bear and give birth to children, breastfeed them, and the ability of exclusively men to fertilize. All other differences (in behavior, family life, and professional activities) are not so fundamental and are largely formed under the influence of upbringing and traditions, that is, in fact, they are behavioral stereotypes imposed by the environment, that is, family and society.

Binarism implies the division of people into two groups - female and male. It is first manifested genetically, at the moment of fertilization of the egg. The human genotype consists of chromosomes arranged in pairs: the 22nd pair consists of X chromosomes, while the 1st (23rd) pair consists of two X chromosomes, or one X and one Y chromosome. Thus, it is the last pair (23rd) that determines the human genetic sex: XX is the female sex and XY is the male sex.

On the basis of binarism the binary gender system is built (gender binary, gender binarism) - a way of social structure in which sex and gender are divided into two separate and opposite categories: men and women. The binary model assumes that "sex", "gender" and "sexuality" always correspond by default. For example, if a person is assigned a male sex at birth, he is expected to have a masculine appearance, character traits and behavior, and a heterosexual attraction to the "opposite" sex.

The binary gender system is dominant in the modern world, although other gender systems have existed throughout history, and in many cultures still exist today.



Source:

➤ What is gender?

As already noted, from a biological point of view, there are not so many differences between women and men: the ability to carry a pregnancy, give birth and breastfeed, the ability to fertilize. All other differences are the fruit of the influence of education, training, culture, traditions, religion. All these are behavioral stereotypes formed by society.

And here we are already faced with another concept – the concept of *gender*. If sex is “a set of biological and physiological characteristics of an organism, set from birth”, then gender is a social gender, a sex construct built on by society over physiological reality.”³

Most of the seemingly “typical” characteristics of men and women (aggressiveness and submissiveness, perseverance and compliance, activity and passivity, restraint and expressiveness, etc.) are not innate, but acquired, that is, imposed and developed by society. A different approach to raising girls and boys (encouragement and suppression of their different behavior, different toys and games), teaching different skills (communication with technology and housekeeping), reflecting the stereotypical roles of women and men in

The term “gender” is a transliteration of the English word for grammatical gender, male or female. It was first used in an extragrammatical context by psychologist R. Stoller in “Sex and Gender”. The point of separating the terms mentioned in the title was to separate the socio-cultural meanings of “masculinity” and “femininity” from biological sex differences. Thus, the very meaning of the term “gender” is to deny the absolute biological predetermination of relations between the sexes: there is biological sex and there is gender, that is, “social sex”.

Source: Gender for Dummies / T. Barchunova, E. Zhidkova, E. Zdravomyslova, O. Zdravomyslova, L. Popkova, E. Omelchenko, L. Samorukova, L. Semenova, I. Tartakovskaya, A. Temkina; ed. I. Tartakovskaya, L. Popkova. M.: Heinrich Böll Foundation: Educational and Publishing Center “Zvenya”, 2006.

textbooks both at the level of content and illustrations (the image of female teachers, cooks, male policemen, workers) leaves an imprint both on the choice of professions, occupation, and behavior patterns in general. At the same time, the child’s interest in what is associated with the other sex, as a rule, is not supported. All this puts boys and girls, men and women in an inherently unequal position. Everything that is marked by society as the area of responsibility of men (politics and decision-making, earning money, professional realization) is valued by society higher than the activities that are prescribed for women (domestic work, caring for children and elderly family members, raising children). And the professions themselves, in which predominantly women are employed (nurses, hospital aides, educators, cleaners, seamstresses, etc.), are perceived as “less serious” compared to those in which only men predominate or are involved (politicians, firefighters, military, policemen, etc.). “Contrary to the once very popular opinion that a cook can rule the country by raising a woman as a cook, society does not at all intend to give her the opportunity to determine the foreign and domestic policy of the state. And in the

³ Cit. Ilyin E.P. Sex and gender. - St. Petersburg: Piter, 2010. - p. 14

same way, society stubbornly ignores the fact that all the traits called “male” and “female” are in fact simply human, that is, they can be inherent in one or another proportion to each of us⁴.

In the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic⁵ gender is defined as the acquired, socially fixed behavior of persons of different sexes; the social aspect of relations between men and women, which manifests itself in all spheres of life, including politics, economics, law, ideology and culture, education and science.

All gender differences are the result of the influence of various sociocultural norms, roles assigned by society to people of different sexes. Moreover, these sociocultural norms also affect the "biological" characteristics - life expectancy, morbidity, mortality.

Initially, more boys are born than girls (in Kyrgyzstan, 105-106 boys are born for every 100 girls)⁶. However, the level of life expectancy for men is lower than for women - 67.8 years against 76 years⁷. This means that the average woman will outlive the average man by 8.2 years.

This situation, among other things, is closely related to a lifestyle that directly depends on stereotypical ideas about femininity and masculinity - smoking, alcoholism, risky behavior (aggressive driving, dangerous sports, fighting, etc.), malnutrition, untimely seeking medical help, staying in places of deprivation of liberty, etc. Thus, traditionally, male mortality exceeds female mortality by 1.5-1.6 times⁸. The higher mortality rate of men compared to women from suicide (4.1 times), attacks (4.7 times), tuberculosis (3.1 times), alcoholism (7 times), respiratory diseases (1,4 times), diseases of the digestive system (2 times)⁹.

➤ What is gender identity?

Gender identity is the awareness of one's gender by the person himself, identifying himself as a man or a woman.

Gender identity, awareness of being a boy or a girl, is formed in two stages. Development begins at age of two and ends at age of four. At the age of four, children are not only well aware of their gender, but also begin to unequivocally associate it with physical characteristics - the structure of their own genitals. At this age, they finally understand that their gender is a fixed characteristic and cannot be changed by dressing up as members of the opposite sex, changing the name or changing the details of behavior. The second critical period occurs at the time of reaching puberty.¹⁰

⁴ Barchunova T., Zhidkova E., Zdravomyslova E. et al. Gender for Dummies. M.: Zvenya, 2006. - p. 47.

⁵ Art. 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” dated August 4, 2008 No. 184

⁶ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 54

⁷ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 50

⁸ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 51

⁹ Social trends in the Kyrgyz Republic <http://stat.kg/ru/publications/publikaciya-socialnye-tendencii-kyrgyzskoj-respubliki/> - p. 27, Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2014-2018 <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/20232a59-bc04-4b2f-b8da-5220d4afbecc.pdf>

¹⁰ Butovskaya M.L. Anthropology of sex <https://culture.wikireading.ru/77104>

Gender identity is largely determined by *the gender of upbringing* - the gender in accordance with which the development, education, and upbringing of the child took place. In the process of upbringing, ideas about male and female, masculinity and femininity, male and female traits of character and behavior are laid in a girl and a boy, and at the everyday level they are often opposed. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, in accordance with traditional ideas for its cultural environment, they try to raise boys strong and determined, thereby supporting ideas of masculinity. Girls, on the contrary, are weak and pliable, based on the idea of femininity. However, guided by good intentions, parents and society thereby only reinforce stereotypical and discriminatory perceptions and form the so-called gender – that is, social sex.

In reality, the so-called both feminine (female) and masculine (male) qualities can coexist in the same person. Both women and men can be bold and cowardly, tender and tough, ambitious and modest, etc. Moreover, they can appear or be veiled in certain circumstances. So, for example, a gentle and caring father can turn out to be a cruel rapist or murderer, and a respectable and modest woman can show aggression and determination.

For most people, their gender identity does not conflict with their sex registered at birth (men feel like men and women feel like women). Such people are called *cisgender*.

People whose gender identity does not match their registered sex are referred to as *gender uncomfortable*¹¹. These include *bigenders*, *agenders*, *genderqueers*.

Bigender is a person whose gender identity can change under the influence of various factors. A bigender individual can feel either a man or a woman, regardless of his own biological sex¹².

Agender is a person who denies their own belonging to any gender. It is typical for an agender to level the significance of gender differences as such¹³.

People who believe that their gender identity or gender expression does not fit into the traditional “male” and “female” categories, goes beyond the traditional binary gender system, are referred to as *genderqueer* or *non-binary*. In non-binary people, the identity may simply be a combination of male and female gender.

*Transgender people*¹⁴ is used to define a heterogeneous group of people, different from or outside of culturally defined categories of gender, individuals whose gender identity differs to varying degrees from the registered sex.

Another concept in the context of research on gender identity is the concept of “transsexuality”, which is used medically to describe people who seek to change or have changed

¹¹ In Kyrgyzstan, the concept of “transgender people” is used to define a heterogeneous group of people who differ from or go beyond culturally defined categories of gender, people whose gender identity differs to varying degrees from the registered sex.

¹² Shevchenko, Z. V. (Comp.). (2016). Glossary of gender terms. Cherkasy: publisher Chabanenko Yu. <http://a-z-gender.net/agendery.html>

¹³ Shevchenko, Z. V. (Comp.). (2016). Glossary of gender terms. Cherkasy: publisher Chabanenko Yu. <http://a-z-gender.net/bigendery.html>

¹⁴ Guidelines for the provision of medical and social assistance to transgender, transgender and gender non-conforming people for medical specialists at all levels of health care and other departments of the Kyrgyz Republic, approved by order of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 42 dated January 18, 2017.

their primary and/or secondary sexual characteristics through feminizing or masculinizing interventions (hormonal therapy and/or surgical operations), usually accompanied by a change in gender role on an ongoing basis¹⁵.

The legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic¹⁶, like many other countries, provides an opportunity to change sex (anatomically and legally) for gender non-conforming people. The right to change and correct gender identity can be exercised after a psychological and psychiatric examination of a person who wants to change gender, determining his/her distress caused by a discrepancy between gender identity and the sex defined and registered at birth, as well as related gender role and/or primary and secondary sexual characteristics). Based on such an examination, a medical report is issued with recommendations on changing the gender in the passport¹⁷.

Transsexuality should be distinguished from the dressing of women or men in clothes characteristic of persons of the opposite sex.

1.2. Reproduction of gender roles

➤ What are gender roles and what do stereotypes have to do with it?

Gender roles are the roles that society prescribes for men and women to play in accordance with the social and cultural norms that exist in a given society and a given historical period. Gender roles determine how people of a certain gender should think and feel, how they should act. Gender roles may vary across different age and social groups and may change over time. In contrast, biological roles (the ability to fertilize, bear and give birth to offspring, breastfeed) are absolute and cannot be changed ¹⁸ (at least at the current level of development of medicine).

Over the centuries, people have developed certain ideas about the role that women and men should play in society. They are based on concepts such as *femininity (being feminine)* and *masculinity (being masculine)*, that is, characteristics that are socially and culturally associated with gender.

Gender roles are supported by stereotypes – typical ideas about the image of people of different sexes.

Initially, gender stereotypes are imposed in the family, that is, the first environment in which the child enters. Even in infancy, by using gender-colored strollers, bonnets, vests, socks, etc., parents transmit to others, and later form in the child himself, ideas about his/her proper sex appearance. As the girl and boy grow older, the gender difference is reinforced by toys, games, hairstyles, clothes, and the child joins “typically female” (swaddling a doll, putting her to

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Art. 38 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the protection of the health of citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic” dated January 9, 2005 No. 6

¹⁷ Guidelines for the provision of medical and social assistance to transgender, transgender and gender non-conforming people for medical specialists at all levels of health care and other departments of the Kyrgyz Republic, approved by order of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 42 dated January 18, 2017.

¹⁸ It is possible to carry out a correction of gender, to surgically form the genitals, however, the ability to bear and give birth to children, breastfeeding remains the prerogative of exclusively women, and the ability to fertilize – men.

bed, cooking, etc.) or “typically male activities” (shooting games, games with cars, airplanes, transformers, etc.). In addition, stimulating “correct” (“clean up after yourself, you’re a girl”) or suppressing “wrong” (“don’t cry, you’re a boy”) behavior through personal example or educational methods more and more helps to strengthen the child’s ideas about typically female and male patterns of behavior.

The sphere of education (kindergarten, school), where the child enters at the next stage, reinforces the stereotypical ideas about male and female destiny. This is facilitated by both the messages that teachers broadcast and the materials used in the educational process (textbooks, visual and methodological aids). Moreover, not only their content itself works to strengthen stereotypes, but also their visual design.

Thus, the gender examination of textbooks conducted in Kyrgyzstan showed that the following factors embedded in educational materials contribute to the formation and strengthening of gender stereotypes:

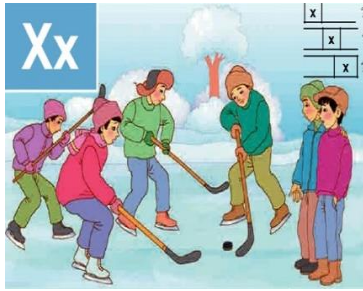
- The variability of *gender roles in boys/men is much wider than in girls and women*;
- The family sphere (traditional roles of mother, wife, “kelinka”, grandmother), as well as housework against the background of the minimum number of female images in the professional sphere, is “fixed” to a woman to a greater extent;



- *Management, authority - a priori “male” sphere*;



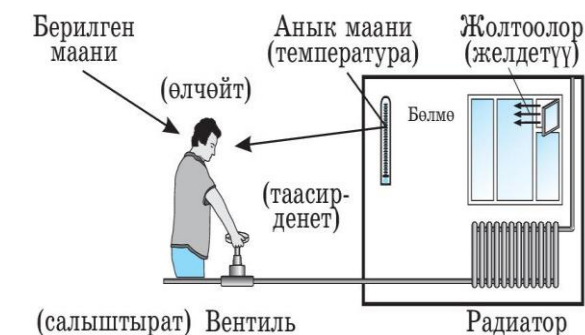
- *The sphere of leisure, sports, intellectual activity is predominantly represented by men*



- *Textbooks on humanities and history are dominated by the approach of describing social development as a history of wars and conquests; stereotypes about the dominant position of men in political and power structures are reproduced, downplaying the role of women in the historical process;*



- *Practically no historical assessment of the centuries-old practice of gender discrimination is given, and in some cases, it is justified;*
- *In assignments, exercises, especially in the exact sciences, the vast majority of characters are male, which reinforces the idea that science is a male sphere. Sometimes this message is made right on the cover of the textbook;*



47-сүрөт. Бөлмөдө абанын температура-
сын жөнгө салуунун принциби.

- *In a social studies textbook, there is a gender asymmetry in legal examples, with men being more often perpetrators and women more often victims of crime.*

Thus, the concept of a “traditional” distribution of social roles is formed in the child, which only contributes to gender stereotyping.

➤ *In what areas are gender stereotypes strongest?*

Supported by centuries, ideas about the image of people of different sexes apply to almost all spheres of life, but gender stereotypes are most pronounced in the following areas:

1. in the distribution of family roles,
2. in the professional field,
3. in the field of politics/management.

Gender stereotypes in family roles almost openly convey the thesis that for a woman the most important area of life is a private space – home and family and, accordingly, the role of a housewife, wife and mother. A woman’s “success” in life is often measured in terms of whether she got married, how many children she had, and whether she was a good housewife. Even the responsibility for preserving the family is mostly stereotypically imposed on women (“I could not save my family”, “I didn’t have enough female wisdom”, etc.).

In traditional views, men are required to focus on the material support of the family, inclusion in the professional and public spheres, that is, in the public space. As opposed to assessing a woman as a housewife, wife and mother, the “success” of a man is assessed in terms of his professional and material viability, career (the so-called successful masculinity).

The stereotypical idea of a man as an exclusively earner and breadwinner under certain circumstances (for example, loss of a job, problems in business) plays, first of all, a cruel joke with the man himself, makes him a “loser” both in the eyes of the family and society, and in own eyes. A man often falls into a state of confusion or even depression, which can cause suicide. One of the ways out of the loss of professional “success” of a man

According to statistics in the Kyrgyz Republic, the suicide rate among men is 4.1 times higher than the suicide rate among women. Source:



can be a retreat from the traditional distribution of gender roles in the family, involving a man in housework and childcare, and women focusing on professional growth and career. It should be noted that the labor legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic allows a man (child's father, grandfather, and other relatives) to take parental leave both in full and in parts, can be used in full or in parts¹⁹.

However, as practice shows, not only women, but often men themselves are not ready for the "non-traditional" distribution of roles both in the family and professional activities. The situation is aggravated by the stereotypes prevailing in society. So, if a modern woman is already quite free to try on the "traditional" male profession of a businessman or politician (although it will be more difficult for her to succeed, but the fact itself will not cause categorical universal condemnation), then a man who has expressed a desire to engage in a "traditionally" female profession a manicurist, a kindergarten teacher, an elementary school teacher, a babysitter, or housekeeping, child care, or elderly family members, will meet harsh condemnation from the community.

However, it must be admitted that men rarely protest against the traditional distribution of gender roles, since it suits them quite well. Quite rightly, the researchers note, "Whatever one may say, they have the lion's share of the world's wealth at their disposal. They control almost all key decisions in the field of politics and economics."²⁰

Gender stereotypes in professional activities prescribe to men mostly instrumental activities, technique, physical work, exact sciences. Service and executive activities (education, social sphere, healthcare, etc.) are traditionally imposed on women. This is supported by the so-called segregation (division) in the labor market, the presence of typically female and male areas of professional activity. This segregation is called "glass walls" and "glass ceiling".

The "glass ceiling" or the so-called vertical segregation of labor is an invisible and formally undefined barrier that limits the advancement of a woman through the ranks²¹.

Possessing the same or superior level of professionalism compared to their male counterparts, women, nevertheless, "stop" in career growth most often at the level of performers, or, at best, become deputy managers. These barriers are due to both deep gender stereotypes about the secondary role of women in general, and about the limitations of their abilities²².

Horizontal labor segregation or *"glass walls"* is a situation where women have less access to professions and activities that subsequently provide significant vertical, career growth. "Glass walls" tend to concentrate women in industries that are less profitable, provide less access to financial and economic resources, and therefore provide less access to power structures. Thus, in the field of culture, health care or social welfare, there are fewer career prospects than in the management and

Women make up less than one third (27.9%) of the total number of heads of economic entities.

Source: Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2016-2020. - NSC KR. – p. 116



¹⁹ Art. 137 of the Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic dated August 4, 2004 No. 106

²⁰ Gender for Dummies p. 125

²¹ <http://a-z-gender.net/steklyannyj-potolok.html>

²² <http://www.owl.ru/gender/202.html>

financial sectors. Therefore, in the presence of “glass walls”, the limited vertical advancement is already predetermined by the choice of a professional field of activity²³ (for more details, see the section “Politics, economics, education: gender profile”).

Due to the fact that men are employed in higher paid jobs and sectors of the economy, or occupy higher positions in typically “female” sectors, the average monthly wages of women and men also differ in the end. *So, this indicator for women in 2020 amounted to 15,078 soms, and for men - 19,992 soms. Thus, the ratio of women's wages to men's wages was 75.4%*²⁴.

In addition, in Kyrgyzstan, since the Soviet times, there has been a list of industries, jobs, professions and positions with harmful and (or) dangerous working conditions, where the use of women's labor is prohibited²⁵, which only reinforces the gender stereotype that women and men are not equal in choice and creates a situation of gender segregation of labor.

Gender stereotypes regarding women's and men's participation in politics/decision-making are based on the notion that politics is not a woman's business.

“The world experience of parliamentarism shows that if 10% of the seats in the legislature are occupied by women, then this facilitates the adoption of laws to protect children. If 20-30% of the seats are occupied by women, then all programs that reflect the interests of the female population are implemented much faster and more efficiently. It is no coincidence that the UN in all documents adheres to the strict principle that without the participation and empowerment of women, reliable solutions cannot be found

In addition, those countries in which the representation of women in parliaments is quite high - Norway (41.4%), Switzerland (41.5%), Sweden (47%) occupy the top lines of the ranking of countries in the human development index (first, second, eighth place respectively).

The Human Development Index is a composite index that measures the average achievement in the three main dimensions of human development: health and longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. For comparison, Kyrgyzstan in this rating is in 122nd place out of 185 countries.

Sources:

Database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union “Women in Parliaments”



²³ Shevchenko Z. V. (Comp.). (2016). Glossary of gender terms. Cherkasy: publisher Chabanenko Yu. <http://a-z-gender.net/steklyannye-steny.html>

²⁴ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 115

²⁵ Decree of the Government of the KR dated March 24, 2000 No. 158

in a society that is threatened by social, economic and other problems.²⁶

Despite this, in Kyrgyzstan the level of participation of women in politics/decision-making has traditionally been and remains low. An imbalance in gender representation is noted in all branches of state power (legislative, executive, judicial) and in all areas of decision-making. It manifests itself to the greatest extent at the level of political positions, where the share of women as of January 1, 2021 was only 24.3%²⁷ (for more details, see the section “Politics, Economics, Education: Gender Profile”).

Of course, the fact that a woman occupies a certain leadership position cannot, in itself, serve as a guarantee that the interests of women will be observed. However, the interests of the male and female population are always present in society, and they are different. A gender approach in making political decisions means, first of all, the realization that certain phenomena can affect the male and female population in different ways, cause their unequal reactions, and maintain social tension in society. And women in power structures are objectively able to bring into the political culture those elements that will help defend and protect the interests of both the female and male populations. The partnership of women and men in politics is the source of a more complete and representative democracy, creating real opportunities to take into account multipolar interests in society.²⁸

1.3. The triple role of a woman

➤ In what areas are gender stereotypes strongest?

Women in modern society perform many functions - give birth and raise children, run a household, care for sick and elderly relatives, work on household plots, work outside the home, provide for their families, participate in the life of their communities, etc.

Researchers suggest calling this phenomenon such terms as: **third shift, triple burden, triple role** (English - *third shift, triple burden, triple role*)

All the roles played by women can be conditionally divided into three groups depending on what activities they perform:

- **Productive activities** involve the production of goods and services for consumption and trade (agriculture, fishing, employment and self-employment). Both women and men can engage in productive activities, but for most, their roles and responsibilities will differ according to the gender division of labor. The productive activities of women are often less visible and valued less than those of men.

An analysis of employment and the labor market in Kyrgyzstan shows differences in the

It is noteworthy that the average monthly salary of women is 15,078 soms, while that of men is 19,992 soms, that is, the “female” salary is 75.4% of the “male” one.

Industries with a high concentration of female labor resources are predominantly financed from the state budget.

²⁶ <https://studfile.net/preview/3299908/page:5/>

²⁷ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - p. 69

²⁸ <https://studfile.net/preview/3299908/page:5/>

distribution of female and male employment by type of economic activity, which is primarily due to established traditions. Women's employment is highest in the service sector (health care, social services, education), while men's employment is highest in the manufacturing sectors (construction, mining, transport activities, etc.). Average monthly nominal wages in traditional "women's" areas are lower than average monthly nominal wages in "male" areas of employment (for more details, see the section "Politics, economics, education: gender profile").

- **Reproductive activities** mean the maintenance and care of family members, including bearing, giving birth and raising children, cooking, providing water and fuel for the home, shopping, housekeeping, and caring for the health of family members.

Statistics show that women spend an average of 4 hours and 20 minutes a day on housework, spending 18.1% of their time on it. For men, these costs are 4.7 times lower and account for 3.9% of the daily time fund. As a result, compared to men, women spend almost 5 times more time on housework and 2.3 times more time on raising children.²⁹ Rural women spend 1.5 times more time on housekeeping than urban women. The situation is aggravated if there is no source of drinking water and central sewerage in the household, which automatically increases the burden of domestic work on women³⁰.

For human survival, reproductive activity is extremely important, but is rarely considered as "real work". This is almost always the responsibility of women and girls. At the same time, unpaid domestic work is not appreciated and is perceived as an easy, self-evident duty.

In general, Kyrgyzstan is characterized by the shifting to women of almost all aspects of raising children and caring for elderly relatives. Therefore, many families do not encourage the employment of women in paid work, due to lack of time and the unwillingness (or sometimes impossibility) of other family members to take on some of the responsibilities. The lack of time and the heavy workload of household work also leads to a decrease in the time for satisfying physiological needs, such as sleep.

- **The work of running the affairs of a local community** is the collective organization of social events: holidays, work to improve conditions in a neighborhood/village, participation in groups and organizations, local political events, etc. This type of work is rarely taken into account in the economic analysis of a social unit. However, it involves a significant amount of voluntarily given time and is very important for the spiritual and cultural development of communities, being the driving force behind the organization and self-determination of a social unit.

²⁹ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 246

³⁰ The right to clean drinking water in the context of human rights in the Kyrgyz Republic. - p. 38.

2. GENDER FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF LAW AND LEGISLATION

2.1. International Legal Framework for Gender Equality

➤ *What are human rights and international human rights standards?*

Human rights are the rights that every person has from birth only because he/she is human. Human rights are not granted, not granted by the state, they belong by birth to all people, regardless of gender, citizenship, ethnicity, disability, social origin, skin color, attitude to religion, language or any other characteristics.

Mankind has come a long way from understanding the category of human rights in the works of thinkers and philosophers to recognizing the need for their proclamation and protection in international legal documents, which together have become *international standards in the field of human rights*. These standards represent the legal obligations of states to ensure individuals fundamental rights and freedoms, not to take actions that infringe on these rights and freedoms, not to allow any kind of discrimination, and to stop actions that violate them. In addition, the responsibility of states for failure to fulfill their obligations is established, international mechanisms for the protection of human rights are determined.

International human rights standards are, as it were, a basic "minimum" applicable to all people, below which states cannot fall. However, higher or more specific standards may be set and applied in any given country.

International standards can be adopted in different legal forms: in the form of international treaties (covenants and conventions and additional protocols thereto), declarations, charters, resolutions of international organizations, guidelines, etc.

The system of international human rights standards includes:

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948;*
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966* ³¹;
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966* ³²;
- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965* ³³;
- *The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979* ³⁴;
- *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984* ³⁵;

³¹ The Kyrgyz Republic joined by resolution of the Jogorku Kenesh dated January 12, 1994 No. 1406- XII

³² The Kyrgyz Republic joined by resolution of the Jogorku Kenesh dated January 12, 1994 No. 1406- XII

³³ The Kyrgyz Republic joined by the Law dated July 26, 1996 No. 48

³⁴ The Kyrgyz Republic joined by resolutions of the Legislative Assembly of the Jogorku Kenesh dated January 25, 1996 Z N 320-1 and Assembly of People's Representatives Jogorku Kenesh dated March 6, 1996 P No. 257-1

³⁵ KR joined by the Law dated July 26, 1996 No. 46

- *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990*³⁶;
- *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006*³⁷;
- *Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989*³⁸, etc.

The most significant human rights document is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It recognizes the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings, concepts that underlie human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, constitute what is known as the International Bill of Human Rights. On their basis, further developed and adopted special conventions aimed at protecting special categories of persons.

Kyrgyzstan has acceded to international human rights treaties, thereby committing itself to implement these international standards in its national legislation. Thus, observance of human rights is a duty of the state enshrined in law.

➤ **How was the reflection of women's rights in international law formed?**

Simultaneously with the emergence of mechanisms for the international protection of human rights after the Second World War, the international protection of women's rights was also developed, which is based on the principle of equality of men and women in all spheres of life.

Provisions for the equality of men and women are enshrined in the UN Charter, which indicates the importance of this equality at the global level. The UN Charter became one of the first and most important international documents that declared the need for universal provision of individual rights, enshrined the principle of universal respect for rights and freedoms, excluding any discrimination, obliging states to promote “universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without differences of race, sex, language and religion”.

Specific issues of gender equality are also reflected in other conventions, such as, for example: *the Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1952*; *Convention on Consent to Marriage, Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriage, 1962*; *Convention on the Nationality of the Married Woman, 1957*; *ILO Maternity Protection Convention 1952*, etc.

The adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) became the starting point for the development of standards for the protection of human rights in general and women's rights in particular. The UDHR says:

- Everyone shall have all the rights and all freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, whether as regards race, colour, **sex**, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, class or other status (Article 2).

The UDHR, although not subject to ratification, however, contains conceptual basic human rights, enshrines the list of civil, political, socio-economic and cultural rights.

³⁶ The Kyrgyz Republic joined by the Law on April 15, 2003 No. 80

³⁷ Ratified by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic dated March 13, 2019 No. 34

³⁸ The Kyrgyz Republic joined by resolution of the Jogorku Kenesh dated January 12, 1994 No. 1402- XII

Legally binding documents are based on the provisions of the UDHR - *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*, which lay the foundations for gender equality:

- Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and ensure to all persons within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in this Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political and other beliefs, national or social origin, property status, birth or other circumstances. (Part 1, Article 2 of the ICCPR);
- All people are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this regard, discrimination of any kind must be prohibited by law, and the law must guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground whatsoever, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property status, birth or other circumstances. (Art. 26 of the ICCPR);
- The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure that the rights set forth in this Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind, whether as regards race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property status, birth or other circumstances (part 2 of article 2 of the ICESCR).

Kyrgyzstan acceded to both pacts, thereby undertaking obligations to bring national legislation in line with their norms. So, according to part 3 of Art. 6 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, generally recognized principles and norms of international law, as well as international treaties that have entered into force in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, are an integral part of the legal system of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The provisions of the pacts have been implemented into the norms of the national legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. On their implementation, the country periodically reports to the international bodies of the UN. It is noteworthy that in addition to the official report of the country, civil society can submit alternative (or so-called "shadow" reports) to the relevant UN committees.

➤ ***On the basis of what international documents is gender policy built in Kyrgyzstan?***

The beginning of the implementation of priority activities, directions for solving the most important problems of women in Kyrgyzstan was 1996, when the country expressed its commitment to five conventions for the protection of women's rights:

- On the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 1979;
- On the Political Rights of Women, 1952;
- On Consent to Marriage, Marriage Age and Registration of Marriage, 1962;
- On the Citizenship of a Married Woman, 1957;
- On the protection of motherhood 1957;

The ratification of these documents became the starting point for the formation of gender policy in the country.

In addition, the gender policy of Kyrgyzstan is based on international criteria and norms prescribed in the following documents:

- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995;
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993;

- Resolution of the UN General Assembly "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

➤ **What are the key principles and norms laid down in international standards for the protection of women's rights?**

The key document requiring the state parties to fulfill their obligations to achieve de facto gender equality is *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*.

The main requirements of the Convention are:

- incorporate the principle of equality between men and women in their national constitutions or other relevant legislation, if this has not already been done, and to ensure, by law and other appropriate means, the practical implementation of this principle;
- take appropriate measures, including sanctions, where necessary, prohibiting all discrimination against women;
- establish legal protection of women's rights on an equal footing with men and ensure, through competent national courts and other public institutions, effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;
- refrain from committing any discriminatory act or action against women and ensure that public authorities and institutions act in accordance with this obligation;
- take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise, to amend or repeal existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against women;
- repeal all provisions of its criminal law that constitute discrimination against women;
- change the social and cultural patterns of behavior of men and women in order to achieve the eradication of prejudices and the abolition of customs and all other practices that are based on the idea of inferiority or superiority of one of the sexes or the stereotype of the role of men and women;
- ensure that family education includes a correct understanding of motherhood as a social function and recognition of the common responsibility of men and women for the upbringing and development of their children, provided that in all cases the best interests of the children are paramount.
- take all appropriate measures, including legislative ones, to suppress all forms of trafficking in women and exploitation of the prostitution of women.

CEDAW is characterized by the rejection of the idea of equality as the identity of men and women. Difference as such is not interpreted as an obstacle to equality of rights. Under CEDAW, difference becomes politically important when it is the basis for a violation of rights – and this qualifies as discrimination.

Art. 1 CEDAW defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or limitation on the basis of sex which seeks to weaken and nullify the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of women, regardless of their marital status, on the basis of equality between men and women, human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil and any other field."

CEDAW pays special attention to the situation of women in rural areas. This is extremely important for Kyrgyzstan, since two thirds of the country's permanent population are rural residents.

At the same time, in rural areas the share of women is 49.3%, in the city - 52.4%. Rural women account for 64.6%³⁹ of all women in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁰

Gender equality in terms of international standards is not only equality of political rights and opportunities. It is much broader and includes the following areas:

- political and public life;
- acquisition, change or retention of citizenship;
- education, labor and employment, healthcare, other areas of economic and social life;
- equality before the law, equality of legal capacity;
- in freedom of movement and freedom to choose the place of residence and place of residence;
- in marriage and family, etc.

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1953 is an international act aimed at protecting the rights that provide a woman with participation in the government of her own country. These rights include:

- the right to elect and be elected to all institutions requiring public elections;
- the right to hold public office in their country.

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages was adopted in order to ensure the free choice of a spouse, the abolition of child marriage and the betrothal of girls before reaching puberty.

The Convention provides:

- prohibition of marriage without the full and free consent of both parties, which must be expressed by them personally;
- establishing a minimum marriageable age;
- obligatory registration of marriage by the competent authority.

Convention on the Nationality of the Married Woman provides that:

- neither the marriage, nor the dissolution of a marriage between any of its citizens and a foreigner, nor the change of citizenship by the husband during the existence of the marriage union, will automatically affect the citizenship of the wife.
- neither the voluntary acquisition by any of its citizens of the citizenship of any other state, nor the renunciation of its citizenship by any of its citizens, shall prevent the wife of that citizen from retaining her citizenship.

Maternity Protection Convention regulates:

- the rights of women employed in industry, agriculture, public services, education, culture, health care, including work at home;
- measures to protect the health of pregnant and lactating women;

³⁹ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2015-2019 - p. 16.

⁴⁰ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2015-2019 - p. 14.

- minimum periods of maternity leave, leave in case of illness or complications, payment of benefits;
- the need to maintain employment and avoid discrimination during pregnancy and maternity leave;
- measures to support breastfeeding mothers in terms of providing breaks for breastfeeding.

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993 became the first official set of international norms for the protection of women from violence. The document calls on states to condemn this harmful phenomenon, not to invoke any customs, traditions or religious motives to evade their obligations to eradicate it. The Declaration defines violence and defines its levels:

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause harm to a woman's physical, sexual or psychological health or suffering, as well as threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life.

Violence against women includes, but is not limited to:

- a) physical, sexual and psychological violence that takes place in *the family*, including battery, sexual abuse of girls in the family, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, extramarital exploitative and exploitative violence;
- b) physical, sexual and psychological abuse that occurs in society at large, including rape, sexual coercion, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in schools and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- c) physical, sexual and psychological violence from or with the connivance of the state, wherever it occurs⁴¹.

Thus, the Declaration identifies three levels of violence (in the family, society, in the state as a whole or with its connivance), and it can manifest itself in different forms.

The Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women (BPfA) defines 12 main areas in which action should be taken both by the states themselves and by non-governmental organizations and international institutions:

1. Women and poverty
2. Education and training
3. Women and health
4. Violence against women
5. Women and armed conflict
6. Women and the economy
7. Women's Participation in Policymaking and Decision-Making
8. Institutional arrangements for the advancement of women
9. Women's human rights
10. Women and the Media
11. Women and the Environment
12. Girls

Emphasizing equality, however, the BPfA does not interpret it as the similarity or identity of women with men. Differences are recognized as existing, but are understood not as biological predetermination, but as a consequence of the socially determined roles of each of the sexes.

⁴¹ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 48/104 of December 20, 1993

➤ ***What aspects does the BPfA include within the framework of the “Women and the Media” direction?***

Within the framework of the “Women and the Media” direction, it is clearly articulated that this topic should be considered in several aspects:

- Representation of women in the media, including the representation of women in leadership positions and among media owners who set media agendas;
- Images of women in journalistic and advertising materials (how exactly women's images are broadcast in the media);
- Representation of women's interests in the media as a social group and access of different groups of women to media channels.⁴²

The print and electronic media in most countries do not create a balanced image of women leading active and diverse lives and their social contribution to a changing world.

In terms of interaction between women and the media, the BPfA identifies the following strategic goals:

1. Empowering and accessing women to express their opinions and make decisions in and through the media and technologically new media;
2. Promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

To achieve these goals, the BPfA proposes measures that can be taken:

- governments and international organizations :
 - a)research and strategies in information, education and communication,promoting a balanced image of women and girls and highlighting their multiple roles;...
 - (c) Promoting gender-responsive training for media professionals... to promote the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse portrayals of women in the media;
 - d) Encouraging the media to refrain from depicting women as inferior and not using them as sexual objects and commodities, but to present them as creative human beings, key contributors to the development process and enjoy its benefits;
 - (e) Promoting the idea that negative stereotyped images of women presented in the media are.....discriminatory and degrading, as well as offensive;
 - f) Adoption or implementation of effective measures, including legislation that would address pornography and the depiction of violence against women and children in the media.
- Media and advertising agencies:
 - (a) Development of guidelines and codes of professional conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of a non-stereotypical image of women;
 - b) Establishingguidelines and codes of professional conduct regarding violence, degrading or pornographic material against women in the media, including advertising;
 - (c) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the context of addressing all issues of concern to civil society;
 - d) Increasing the participation of women in decision-making at all levels of the media.
- Media, NGOs and the private sector in cooperation with government agencies:

⁴² Ibraeva G., Toralieva G. Guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting and countering extremist propaganda through media literacy. - p. 11.

(a) Promoting the fair sharing of family responsibilities through media campaigns that emphasize gender equality and non-stereotypical roles for women and men in the family, and disseminate information aimed at eliminating maltreatment of one of the spouses and children and all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence;

b) Preparing and/or disseminatingmaterials about women leaderswho bring to their work in this position ... a variety of life experiences, including, but not limited to, experience in balancing work and family responsibilities wisely like about professional workers, about women managers and entrepreneurs, to create role models, especially for young women;

(c) Promoting large-scale campaigns using public and private educational programs to disseminate information and raise awareness about women's rights;

(e) Development of approaches and training on the application of gender analysis to media programming.

➤ *What are the Sustainable Development Goals and how do they relate to gender equality?*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals that are expected to improve the quality of life for people around the world by 2030. They were adopted on September 25, 2015 at the UN General Assembly. Kyrgyzstan, along with other countries of the world, expressed its commitment to achieving them.

SDG 1: No Poverty

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

SDG 3: Health and well-being

SDG 4: Quality education

SDG 5: Gender equality

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

SDG 9: Industrialization, innovation and infrastructure

SDG 10: Reducing inequalities

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

SDG 13: Combat climate change

SDG 14: Marine Ecosystems

SDG 15: Save terrestrial ecosystems

SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

SDG 17: Partnerships for sustainable development

The topic of gender equality is a cross-cutting one for all SDGs, and is also singled out as an independent SDG 5 “Gender Equality”. To achieve it, the following tasks are envisaged:

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including human trafficking and sexual and other forms of exploitation
- Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

- Recognize and value unpaid care and household work by providing utilities, infrastructure and social safety nets and promoting the principle of shared responsibility in housekeeping and the family, taking into account national circumstances
- Ensure women's full and meaningful participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in line with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the review conferences
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, and access to ownership and control of land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritances and natural resources in accordance with national laws
- Strengthen the use of high-impact technologies, in particular information and communication technologies, to promote the empowerment of women
- Adopt and improve sound policies and binding laws to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

2.2. National legislation

➤ *What normative legal acts of the Kyrgyz Republic establish the foundations of gender equality?*

The foundations of gender equality are laid down by the *Constitution* of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2021, which establishes:

- equality of rights, freedoms and opportunities for their implementation for men and women (part 3 of article 24);
- inadmissibility of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, language, disability, ethnicity, religion, age, political or other opinions, education, origin, property or other status, as well as other circumstances (part 1 of article 24);
- special measures established by law and aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for various social groups in accordance with international obligations (part 1 of article 24) do not constitute discrimination;
- prohibition of propaganda of national, racial, religious hatred, gender and other social superiority, calling for discrimination, hostility or violence. (part 4 of article 32);
- equality of rights and opportunities when entering the state civil and municipal service, promotion in a position in the manner prescribed by law (part 3 of article 37).

Following the Constitution, *the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women"*⁴³ establishes state guarantees for the provision of equal rights and opportunities to people of different sexes in all spheres of life, including political and economic, is the basis for the implementation by the state of its obligations to establish and maintain gender equality.

The law provides:

- guarantees of gender equality in state administration, equal rights and equal opportunities in entering the state and municipal service, in promotion, a quota system, according to which employees of the same sex should not prevail in the personnel of state bodies and local self-government bodies;

⁴³ dated August 4, 2008 No. 184

- prohibition of gender discrimination, both direct and indirect;
- the need for gender statistics;
- of gender equality in economic, social and labor relations;
- mechanisms for ensuring compliance with gender equality.

➤ **What other laws contain requirements for ensuring gender equality?**

Gender equality requirements are included in laws and codes governing various areas of public life.

*Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic"*⁴⁴ governs that:

- when determining the list of candidates, a political party must take into account the representation of no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex, while the difference in the order in the lists of candidates of women and men nominated by political parties should not exceed three positions.
- when distributing mandates received by a political party, at least 30% of the total number of mandates received by a political party shall be initially distributed among the female candidates who received the largest number of votes. In the event that female candidates from the list of candidates of a political party did not receive votes, the remaining mandates for the women's quota are distributed in the order corresponding to the order in which female candidates are placed on the list of political parties established when registering the list with the CEC.⁴⁵
- in case of early termination of the powers of a deputy, his mandate is transferred to the next registered candidate from among female candidates, in case of termination of powers of a female deputy, from among male candidates, in case of termination of powers of a male deputy.⁴⁶ At the level of elections to local keneshes, this was achieved even later, in 2019.⁴⁷

The Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic establishes:

- equality of opportunities for the realization of labor rights and freedoms;

⁴⁴ dated July 2, 2011 No. 68

⁴⁵ CEC - Central Commission for Elections and Referendums

⁴⁶ Point 31 of Art. 1 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Amendments to the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic"" dated June 5, 2017 No. 96

⁴⁷ Point 36 of Art. 1 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Elections of Deputies of Local Keneshes"" dated August 8, 2019 No. 117

- prohibition on restrictions on labor rights and freedoms or obtaining any advantages in their implementation depending on gender, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, age, place of residence, attitude to religion, political opinions, affiliation or non-affiliation to public associations, a criminal record (with the exception of restrictions provided for by legislation in the field of labor relations), as well as from other circumstances not related to the business qualities of the employee and the results of his work;

- inadmissibility of unequal pay for equal work;

- possibility of using parental leave not only by the mother, but also by the father of the child.

Despite the proclamation of the principle of equality in labor, since the Soviet times in the Kyrgyz Republic there have been industries, jobs, professions and positions with harmful and (or) working conditions, where the use of women's labor is prohibited. It prohibits more than 400 professions for women, that is, half of the working-age population of the country, and contains a mention of those positions and professions that have long been gone.

The norms of the **Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic** provide for:

- equality of rights and freedoms of women and men, equality of opportunities for their implementation in family relations, equality of personal and property rights and obligations;
- gender equality in family relations is protected by society and the state;
- relations between family members and persons living together with them are based on the principles of gender equality, as well as respect for the honor and dignity of the individual;
- prohibition of gender discrimination in family relations;
- family, fatherhood, motherhood, childhood - the concern of the whole society and preferential protection by law;
- obligation of both spouses to financially support each other;
- deprivation of parental rights or restriction in them, which can be applied both to the mother and father of the child;
- obligation of both parents to support their minor children, educate them, take care of their education.

In **the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on Offenses** established equal responsibility for men and women for committing crimes and offenses, however, for some of them, only women can be held accountable (for example, for the murder of a newborn child by a mother) or only men (for example, for bigamy or polygamy).

From equality of responsibility, it is necessary to distinguish the peculiarities of sentencing for women and men. So, for example, women are not assigned life imprisonment, public works are not assigned to conscripts (that is, men), pregnant women. However, this does not mean that these categories of persons can escape responsibility. They will be punished in any case, since almost all articles of the Criminal Code provide for so-called alternative sanctions, and the court can choose one of the types of punishment for a specific act, depending on the severity of the crime and the degree of guilt.

3. EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION: CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

3.1. What is discrimination

➤ *What is discrimination? Why does it arise?*

Discrimination is a preconceived or negative attitude towards a person, or the deprivation or diminution of his rights on the basis of any sign (gender, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, language, sexual orientation, disability, age, etc.).

Despite the fact that we are all born equal and have equal rights only because we are human beings, in life we (some more often, some less) are discriminated against for one reason or another - because we are women, we have or do not have a certain social origin, we speak or do not speak a language, etc. And this happens despite the fact that the principle of equality is the foundation on which both international law and national human rights law are built.

Why do we face discrimination? Any discrimination is always based on prejudices and stereotypes.

Prejudice is preconception, slant or prejudice against someone due to his/her belonging to a particular social group. Prejudices are social, not biological. They are often passed down from generation to generation, maintained with the help of customs, rules that "it's supposed to be", "it should be."

Usually, prejudices become part of a person's worldview and are embodied in his behavior irrationally, without being subjected to critical analysis. So, for example, a mother's advice to her son not to marry a "southern" and "northern" girl, in principle, regardless of a specific bride, is based on prejudices that all "southern" or "northern" girls have some character traits that are universal for all (for example, less economic, scandalous and independent).

Prejudices often impose a negative role on their carrier. Thus, the presence of this or that prejudice seriously distorts the perception of people from other ethnic or sociocultural groups – a person sees in them what he wants or expects to see, and not what is actually there. Among people infected with prejudices, an unconscious feeling of anxiety and fear arises: they see a potential threat coming from objects that they themselves have discriminated against, which gives rise to even more distrust towards them.

It must be admitted that the formation and dissemination of prejudices underlying discrimination are significantly influenced by the media, which "paint" a negative image of people of a certain ethnicity. Examples are reflections of the image of a terrorist as a person of "Asian nationality" or belonging to a certain religious group, a thief or a swindler belonging to a certain ethnic group, etc.

Next to prejudices there are always stereotypes - habitual, widespread ideas about a particular group of people or their activities.

Stereotypes are prevalent beliefs or opinions about a group of people. As a rule, stereotypes are absorbed into consciousness "with mother's milk", in the process of upbringing, training, socialization. They permeate the entire life experience of a person, sometimes unchanged, and sometimes developing and changing. For example, there is a widespread gender stereotype that childcare and housekeeping should be done exclusively by women, and that a man's career is more important than a woman's.

Stereotypes often contribute to labeling and stigmatization. They are most often acquired in the process of communicating with those people with whom a person spends a large amount of time. These are parents, friends, peers, teachers, etc. If, for example, children hear from their parents that “you can’t look into the eyes of gypsies - they will deceive you”, they will sincerely believe in this, try to look away from people of this ethnic group. Sometimes stereotypes arise as a result of one’s own negative or positive experiences. So, for example, a mother will convince her daughter not to marry a guy of a certain nationality just because her own life with a representative of this ethnic group did not work out. Or vice versa – the father’s advice to choose a deeply religious girl as his wife can be based on his own positive experience of living with such a wife.

The media play a very significant role in spreading stereotypes. So, for example, the reflection in the media of “ala-kachuu” as a national tradition of the Kyrgyz contributes to the formation of a stereotype that this is normal, romantic, quite justified and permissible.

Placed in June 2020 in the Kyrgyz segment of the Internet, an advertising video of one of the restaurants that you can give a stolen daughter in marriage for a good piece of meat showed once again how negative the influence of the media can be on the formation of stereotypes, the spread of discrimination, etc.

Often *labeling* leads to discrimination - linking some quality (usually negative) with an individual or many people, although this connection is absent or not proven. As a rule, stigmatization becomes discrimination in a situation where one person has some kind of power over another. In many countries, stigmatization is prohibited by law, but in reality, stigma can literally “hover in the air”. An example is the attitude towards migrants, non-indigenous residents of a particular area, who are considered less cultured and educated, and often even referred to as words with a negative connotation (“limita”, “came in large numbers here”, “rural”, etc.).

Stigmatization, stereotypes and prejudices are the foundation of discrimination.

The essential features of discrimination are:

- infringement or derogation of rights;
- unacceptable grounds on which discrimination is carried out;
- lack of objective legal grounds for discrimination.

So, discrimination is always the infringement or derogation of the rights of any group of persons or a particular person in the absence of legal grounds for this. If the infringement of rights pursues a legitimate goal, for example, the protection of health, public order, security, morality, etc., and the restriction of rights is proportionate, then there is no discrimination. An example is the ban on minors being on the street at night without being accompanied by legal representatives, the ban on older people during an epidemic to visit certain places, etc.

It is not discrimination to deprive persons in places of detention of the right to participate in a peaceful rally, to refuse state registration of marriage to a person who has not reached a certain age, or to refuse to register a candidate who has not reached 25 years of age for the position of deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic.

3.2. Types and forms of discrimination

➤ What are the forms and types of discrimination?

Discrimination takes many forms and can occur in many areas of life, with or without intent. Depending on what grounds a person is discriminated against, its types are distinguished.

Racial discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, ancestral, national or ethnic origin, with the aim or effect of destroying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural or any other areas of public life.

According to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, it is prohibited in education, health care, housing, employment, as well as in access to public services, as well as in all other areas of life. The obligation to prevent, punish and fight against discrimination is imposed on the state.

The extreme forms of racial discrimination are racism and chauvinism.

Racism is discrimination against people based on race, which is based on the ideology of the inequality of human races and the decisive influence of racial differences on history and culture. A broader understanding of racism is that there is a connection between inherited physical and character traits, intelligence, morality, culture, as well as the innate superiority of some races over others.

Chauvinism is discrimination against people based on their nationality. It is based on the idea of the superiority of people of one ethnic group over another. This is where *xenophobia* originates – hostility towards someone or something alien; perception of someone else as unpleasant and dangerous.

➤ What is gender discrimination?

Gender discrimination is based on the gender of a person.

Gender discrimination is any distinction, exclusion or preference that restricts the rights and interests of persons on the basis of sex.⁴⁸ It aims to weaken or deprive the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of equality between men and women in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other area of public life.

Forms of gender discrimination:

1. Direct - discrimination, directly indicating gender;
2. Indirect - discrimination without a direct indication of gender.

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic prohibits discrimination based on race and ethnicity, as well as propaganda of national, ethnic, racial, religious hatred that calls for discrimination, hostility or violence. Such acts are punishable by law. Despite this, there are manifestations of discrimination in Kyrgyzstan (for example, a job advertisement contains a requirement for an applicant of exclusively European or Asian nationality).

⁴⁸ Law "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women"

Direct discrimination includes:

- discrimination based on marital status, pregnancy, potential pregnancy and family responsibilities (refusal to hire a pregnant woman or a woman with small children, refusal to use air transport for women during long periods of pregnancy).
- sexual harassment, that is, actions of a sexual nature, expressed verbally or physically, humiliating and insulting a person who is in labor, service, material, family and other dependence (for example, the provision of a certain position or an increase in wages in exchange for sexual relations);
- different remuneration for equal work of equal qualification (payment of bonuses to male employees in a larger amount than to women).

Indirect gender discrimination includes:

- reproduction of gender stereotypes through the media, education, culture (for example, the reality show "Kelin", in which girls are taught on a TV channel how to please their mothers-in-law, romanticization of family violence from the point of view of "beats means loves", the image of women in textbooks is exclusively in traditional family roles - mothers, housewives, etc.);
- establishment of conditions, requirements that have caused or may cause negative consequences in the form of harm to persons of a certain gender (a ban on female students entering school in a headscarf).

The law establishes which actions are not gender discrimination. These include:

- establishment of differences in the regulation of relations related to the functions of childbirth and breastfeeding (granting maternity leave exclusively to women);

Indirect discrimination is cases when a person's belonging to a particular group is not directly called, but it is meant. Seemingly neutral provisions, criteria or practices actually put members of a certain group of people at a disadvantage compared to others in a similar situation. Indirect discrimination is more widespread in society than direct discrimination, but it is more difficult to see and, in the case of litigation, its existence is more difficult to justify. One example is the requirement of an employer-owner of a restaurant to wear short skirts to waitresses, which automatically excludes Muslim women, overweight women, physically handicapped women, and elderly women from this sphere. A recent example is the scandal that erupted in one of the Russian airlines with the dismissal of flight attendants who do not fall under the 90-60-90 criteria.

- conscription for active military service exclusively of men in cases established by the laws of the Kyrgyz Republic;

- adoption of special measures aimed at achieving de facto equality in political, economic, labor and other social relations (establishment of quotas in the lists of political parties);

- features of labor protection for women and men related to the protection of their reproductive health (inadmissibility of involving pregnant women in work with harmful working conditions);

- establishment of requirements for professional qualifications based on the ability to perform duties only by persons of a certain gender;

- positive actions.

As mentioned above, there is a very thin line between the presence and absence of indirect discrimination. So, for example, the requirement for the physical strength of a candidate for work, the state of his/her health may be objectively necessary for the performance of official duties (for example, a collector, security guard, firefighter, orderly of a psychiatric clinic, etc.).

In Kyrgyzstan, in connection with the surge in violence against women during the quarantine, they started talking about femicide - hate crimes based on gender, the deliberate killing of women, violent actions against them - such as torture, mutilation, burning, excessive cruelty and sexual violence. For example, there are monstrous examples of the torture of a woman in the Suzak region, when a man tied car tires to her neck and doused her with water, an unsuccessful attempt by a husband to shoot his wife, and then beating her on the head with a stone and breaking her hands, nose and other herbs in the village of At-Bashi of the Naryn region and many others.

➤ **What is ageism?**

Ageism is discrimination based on age, that is, discrimination against certain age groups of people.

Like other types of discrimination, ageism can manifest itself both as a mere prejudice and as a discriminatory practice.

Ageism is based on the stereotypical notion that all older people are physically and mentally less wealthy, less valuable than younger people. Unfortunately, ageism is widespread.

This is especially evident in the field of labor and employment, as well as job search.

It is difficult for middle-aged people, and even more so for older people, to get a job, as employers often have a negative attitude towards older workers already at this stage of the employment relationship.

Age discrimination persists even when older workers are already in employment, have no health problems, and are not less educated, less skilled, or less productive than younger employees, but these older women are forced to resign of their own free will. The statutory retirement age plays a negative role here (in the Kyrgyz Republic for women and men, 58 and 63 years, respectively).

*WHO proposes the following age classification:
from 25 to 44 years old - young age,
from 44-60 years old - average age,
from 60-75 years old - old age,
from 75-90 years old - senile age,
after 90 - centenarians*

Interestingly, in women, age discrimination is tied to fertility - the ability to become pregnant and give birth. So, for example, it is much more difficult for a woman of 45-50 years to get a job than a 25-year-old young lady.

We can see indirect ageism in advertising, media, education. For example, in school textbooks, older women are depicted exclusively as grandmothers, housewives, preparing dinner, raising grandchildren, helping young parents, etc. At the same time, their contribution to social development remains invisible, which, as a result, forms these stereotypes among students and supports the myth that older people are economically less valuable members of society.

Ageism supports and promotes inequalities, which in turn can become sources of conflict and hostility. Social isolation of the elderly contributes to the decline of their physical and mental abilities. Fear of old age has a negative impact on middle-aged people, and in some cases they try in various ways to prove to themselves and others that old age does not concern them.

➤ **What is discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation?**

Gender identity is a person's inner feeling of belonging to a male, female, or alternative gender.

Sexual orientation is a fixed pattern of romantic or sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both sexes (bisexuality) or none (asexuality).

Like other types of discrimination, discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation is based on stereotypes and prejudices determined by the sociocultural conditions of a person's life, education, upbringing, the media, multiplied by one's own life experience. The role of religion is also significant here.

Homophobia and transphobia are a very common phenomenon that leads to discrimination in the world.

Homophobia is a hostile attitude towards members of sexual minorities, which often leads to violence against them.

Transphobia is a disaffection for transgender and transsexual people.

Discrimination, based on homophobic and transphobic views, violates the principle of equal rights and opportunities, violates human rights. It takes place not only in traditional, patriarchal legal orders, but also in liberal countries. Examples of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, according to the UN Human Rights Committee and the European Court of Human Rights, can be:

- establishing a different age of sexual consent for same-sex and opposite-sex relationships;

Approximately 76 countries have discriminatory laws that criminalize intimate same-sex relationships with arrest, prosecution and imprisonment. And at least 5 countries have introduced the death penalty for this.

Source:

<https://www.ohchr.org/RU/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx>

- administrative responsibility for promoting homosexuality among minors on participants in public events in support of LGBT people;
- prohibition of gay parades and other public actions in support of LGBT people;
- refusal to recognize the transfer of rights to one of the same-sex partners in the event of the death of the other;
- restriction of parental rights a father in relation to his child from a previous heterosexual marriage due to the fact that the father started a new family with another man;
- refusal to grant permission adoption to a woman on the sole basis that she is a lesbian and lives with her partner.⁴⁹

It is recognized at the international level that sexual orientation and gender identity should not serve as a basis for discrimination, since, let us recall, the principles of equality and non-discrimination are guarded by the norms of international law - the UDHR, the ICCPR, the ICESCR, etc.

➤ *What are multiple forms and types of discrimination?*

In real life, people often face discrimination on several grounds - gender, social origin, age, religion, language and ethnicity, disability, etc. For example, a representative of an ethnic minority with a disability may encounter a dismissive or even squeamish attitude in a maternity hospital and a gay man living with HIV is denied a job as a salesman.

The presence of this problem is also recognized by international bodies, including at the level of legally binding documents. Thus, in the preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, concern is expressed “about the difficult conditions in which persons with disabilities live who are subjected to multiple or exacerbated discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national, ethnic, aboriginal or social origin, property, class, age or other status.

The Human Rights Committee has stated that “discrimination against women is often combined with discrimination on other grounds, including race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, estate or other status”⁵⁰. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has issued General Recommendations on the Gender Aspects of Racial Discrimination⁵¹, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has noted the intersectional issues of discrimination in both its General Recommendations and Concluding Observations on National Reports. Examples of this approach can be found in his General Recommendations on Women with Disabilities and in the

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https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%94%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F_%D0%BF%D0%BE_%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%83_%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B9_%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8_%D0%B8_%D0%B3%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B9_%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8

⁵⁰ Human Rights Committee. General Comment No. 28 on the Equal Rights of Men and Women, in Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Bodies Established by Human Rights Treaties, UNDoc . HRI / GEN /1/ Rev.6, 2003, para. 30.

⁵¹ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). General Comment No. 25 on the Gender Dimensions of Racial Discrimination in the Compendium of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaties, UNDoc . HRI / GEN /1/ Rev.6, 2003.

Recommendations on Women and Health, which suggest that particular attention should be paid to the health needs and rights of women belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.⁵²

In Kyrgyzstan, vulnerable groups exposed to risk of discrimination in terms of access to resources or the exercise of rights, are ethnic minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as discrimination against the population based on gender and sexual orientation.⁵³

3.3. Equality of Rights – Equality of Opportunity – Equality of Outcome: Feminist Merits

➤ What is feminism?

For many dozens and even hundreds of years, women have been trying to correct the existing situation of inequality: inequality in politics, in work, in the family and other spheres of public and private life, with more or less success winning their place under the sun. The most concentrated expression of this struggle is feminism - a social movement and ideology that is aimed at expanding political, economic, personal and social rights for women, eliminating discrimination against women and equalizing their rights with men.

Feminism originates from the reform movement of Western society, when the first demands for equality were put forward by women during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Abigail Smith Adams (1744-1818) is considered the first American feminist. She owns the words “We will not obey laws in the adoption of which we did not participate, and authorities that do not represent our interests.”

In France, in 1791, the National Assembly was presented with the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Citizen, prepared by Olympia de Gouges on the model of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789, which demanded the recognition of the full social and political equality of women.

The history of feminism allows us to distinguish several “waves” of it. The achievement of the so-called “*first wave*” of feminism was the acquisition by women of suffrage. This movement got its name from *suffragism* - a movement for the right of women to vote in elections. It was on the “first wave” of feminism that the reform of legislation and policies took place, allowing women to get the right to vote, gain access to education and property.

The legislative achievements of the feminists of the first wave (equality of rights) turned out to be clearly not enough to achieve universal equality of opportunity, since injustice and inequality lie not only and not so much in the letter of the law, but in the very way of life, the social structure, which was formed under the influence of the patriarchal order, both as in public as well as in the private sphere.

⁵² CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24 on Women and Health in the Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaties, UNDoc . HRI / GEN /1/ Rev.6, 2003.

⁵³ National voluntary review of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kyrgyz Republic. Bishkek, 2020.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26372VNR_2020_Kyrgyzstan_Report_Russian.pdf p.30.

The “second wave” of feminism rose from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. It was clear that the various forms of cultural and political inequality of women were inextricably linked, and the activists of the “second wave” focused on addressing a range of issues related to de facto inequality, sexuality, family, workplace and reproductive rights. The “second wave” quickly spread throughout the Western world and took shape in two main branches: liberal and radical feminism.

Liberal feminism seeks equality between men and women through political and legal reforms. For liberal feminists, issues such as the right to abortion, the issue of sexual harassment, the possibility of equal voting, equality in education, “equal pay for equal work”, the availability of child care, the availability of medical care, drawing attention to the problem of sexual and domestic violence are important regarding women.

The radical feminist movement, unlike the liberal one, sees the cause of women’s oppression in patriarchal gender relations based on the idea of male superiority, and not in legal systems. Followers of this branch of feminism sought to overthrow patriarchy in order to “liberate everyone from an unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions.”

The “Third Wave” of feminism, which emerged in the early 1990s in the United States, to a greater extent affected the field of sexuality as a tool for women’s emancipation. In addition, she expanded the range of issues: in addition to the fight for women's rights, feminism took up the fight for the rights of the LGBT community,⁵⁴ racial equality, religious freedom and labor rights, and also touched upon immigration reforms.

Obviously, it is impossible to achieve actual equality by proclaiming formal legal equality. It is necessary to change public consciousness, to eradicate manifestations of sexism in life, in everyday life, and in public opinion. That is why the third wave of feminism is called anti-sexist.

Today, the world community in general and many countries in particular use the achievements of feminists. They formed the basis of both international documents (declarations, conventions, charters, etc.) and national laws of many countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

➤ **Equality of rights and equality of opportunity: why does everything matter?**

Gender equality is a complex concept that includes different components. This is not only and not so much equality of rights, that is, legal opportunities prescribed at the level of legislation – to vote in elections and be elected, get an education, work, get married, enjoy social benefits, etc. As history shows, the mere legal consolidation of women’s equality and men are clearly not enough.

It was already clear to the feminists of the first wave that not always legal equality (that is, equality of rights) will automatically entail the achievement of actual equality. It is equality of opportunity that becomes the “stumbling block” that slows down or even hinders the achievement of gender equality.

Indeed, one can argue as much as one likes that according to the law, women and men have equal rights, but in order to achieve real equality, the state and society need to make additional efforts. The actual equality of persons of both sexes depends on many factors, and, above all, non-legal ones.

⁵⁴ LGBT is an acronym that originated in English to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

For example, despite the fact that the state proclaims the right of every child to receive general secondary education, as well as equality of rights in obtaining vocational education, some girls cannot realize it due to early marriage.

Despite the fact that the abduction of girls for the purpose of marriage or actual marriage, as well as forced marriage is a crime, in Kyrgyzstan this negative phenomenon still takes place. Abducted girls who are under the age of eighteen usually drop out of school and receive no other education. As a result, they fall into physical, psychological, economic dependence, which makes them extremely vulnerable to domestic

violence. They do not lose the right to education in the legal sense, however, they lose the actual opportunities to receive it due to the reluctance of “new” relatives, the onset of pregnancy, the birth of a child, the need for housekeeping, etc.

The importance of not only equal rights, but also equal opportunities for achieving gender equality is also recognized at the level of the world community. Thus, the “main gender document” – the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – says that in order to achieve full equality between men and women, it is necessary to change the traditional role of both men and women in society and in the family. It is the stereotyped vision of the distribution of gender roles formed and maintained in the family and society (a woman at home with children, a man at work and in public and political life) that hinders the achievement of equal opportunities.

A study conducted by the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic shows that 77% of respondents agree that a woman who marries at a minor age is more likely to become heavily dependent on her husband, compared to adult women. At the same time, every fifth respondent (21%) is ready to marry his daughter at a minor age to a rich person, and a little less than half (44%) to a “good” person.

The opinion that it is never too early to marry a rich person is more common in urban areas (28%) than in rural areas (17%).

The vast majority of survey participants (77%) agree that as a result of marriage at a minor age, the girl is likely to be left without a profession.

Source: Study “Gender in the Perception of Society”.
Bishkek, 2016

➤ **How does Kyrgyz legislation “equalize” opportunities?**

In order to create equality of opportunity and, as a result, achieve gender equality in Kyrgyzstan, a number of measures are envisaged, the basis for which is the Constitution. It states that “in the Kyrgyz Republic, men and women have equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities to exercise them.”⁵⁵ Also, the Basic Law establishes that citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic “have equal rights, equal opportunities for admission to the state civil and municipal service, promotion in the manner prescribed by law”⁵⁶.

Following the Constitution, the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” establishes that persons of different sexes

⁵⁵ Part 3 Art. 24 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁵⁶ Part 3 Art. 37 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic

have equal rights and equal opportunities when entering the state and municipal service, in promotion and further activities in its bodies, and employees of the same sex should not predominate in the personnel of employees of state bodies and local self-government bodies.⁵⁷

Equality of opportunity is also supported at the level of the electoral legislation. So, for example, part 3 of Art. 60 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic”⁵⁸ regulates that when determining the list of candidates, a political party must take into account the representation of no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex, while the difference in order in the lists of candidates of women and men nominated by political parties, should not exceed three positions.

It should be noted that the establishment of equal opportunities in the electoral process is a gradual and difficult process for women in Kyrgyzstan. Despite the fact that the said norm has been in force since the adoption of this Law (since 2011), however, it retained a “loophole”, with the help of which women were forced out of the political process - women deputies who, for various reasons, surrendered or were forced to surrender their mandate, were replaced male deputies. And only in 2017, the country managed to equalize the opportunities for women to participate in politics by introducing into the named constitutional Law a provision that in the event of early termination of the powers of a deputy, his mandate is transferred to the next registered candidate from among the female candidates, in the event of termination of the powers of a female deputy, from among the male candidates, in the event of termination of the powers of a male deputy.⁵⁹ At the level of elections to local keneshes, this was achieved even later, in 2019.⁶⁰

In addition, when distributing mandates received by a political party, at least 30% of the total number of mandates received by a political party shall be initially distributed among the female candidates who received the largest number of votes. In the event that female candidates from the list of candidates of a political party did not receive votes, the remaining mandates for the women's quota are distributed in the order corresponding to the order in which female candidates are placed on the list of political parties established when registering the list with the CEC⁶¹.

An attempt to equalize the opportunities for women and men is also taking place in the sphere of labor, where the Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic establishes special working conditions for pregnant and lactating women, the possibility of using maternity leave not only for the mother, but also for the father of the child.

Despite the achievements of labor legislation, it should be noted that not all problems of equality of opportunity are resolved in it. Thus, since the Soviet times in the Kyrgyz Republic there have been industries, jobs, professions and positions with harmful and (or) working conditions,

⁵⁷ Art. 10 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women”

⁵⁸ dated July 2, 2011 No. 68

⁵⁹ Point 31 of Art. 1 of the constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Amendments to the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic” dated June 5, 2017 No. 96

⁶⁰ Point 36 of Art. 1 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Elections of Deputies of Local Keneshes” dated August 8, 2019 No. 117

⁶¹ CEC - Central Commission for Elections and Referendums

where the use of women's labor is prohibited.⁶² It prohibits more than 400 professions for half of the working population of the country, and contains a mention of those positions and professions that have long been gone.

This list was approved already at the time of the country's independence, but it still uses a paternalistic approach, according to which the state, as it were, protects women from harmful and dangerous working conditions, “caring” about women’s health more than about men’s, estimating it higher, probably hoping for a reproductive role for women to reproduce the population.

However, it must be admitted that “rowing everyone one size fits all” - both young women of childbearing age, and pregnant women, and older women, and women who do not want to have children at all or already have them and do not plan pregnancy anymore, the state itself narrows opportunities to achieve gender equality. In the conditions of the market and competition for jobs, women are forced to perform dangerous work in the informal sphere, without any formalization of labor relations, guarantees from the state and the employer. Thus, we have to state that, having a good goal of protecting women, the state thereby renders them a “disservice”, deprives them of the opportunity to choose, pushes them out of the more or less protected formal sector (official employment with all its rights and guarantees) into the informal one (without official registration of labor relations), leaving one on one with all the negative consequences of such work.

Contrary to this, the development of international labor law is moving towards abandoning paternalistic and prohibitive measures against women’s labor, since such a policy introduces a double standard for workers - men and women, when only men are given the right to make their own decisions about choosing a job; considers women as incompetent citizens who are not able to independently make a decision on the choice of work, and therefore this issue is decided for them by the state; is discriminatory against men (after all, difficult and harmful working conditions are also detrimental to their health); does not encourage employers to improve working conditions⁶³.

Despite the fact that Kyrgyzstan has become a party to the conventions of the International Labor Organization on gender equality, it has not refused prohibitive measures restricting the choice of areas of work for women in the Labor Code.

➤ **What is equal duty and equal responsibility?**

Another element of gender equality is *equality of duty*. It is reflected in all spheres of life and is enshrined in law. So, according to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, they have equal rights and obligations in marriage and family⁶⁴. The norms of the Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic establish the obligations of both spouses to financially support each other,⁶⁵ the obligation of both parents to support their minor children,⁶⁶ educate them, take care of their

⁶² Approved by the Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated March 24, 2000 No. 158

⁶³ See: Khotkina Z.A. Stereotypes and discrimination in the labor market // www.ecsocman.hse.ru/data/726/698/1219/Hotkina.pdf

⁶⁴ Part 3 Art. 26 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶⁵ Art. 94 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶⁶ Art. 85 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

education.⁶⁷ Persons of both sexes are obliged to observe the rules of the road, pay taxes, not violate public order, do not commit offenses. In case of violation of the law, both women and men are obliged to answer before the law.

Equality of responsibility is another component of gender equality. Equal responsibility is the ability of a person, regardless of gender, to perform the relevant duties prescribed by the state, and to bear equal responsibility before the law for their failure to perform.

Equality of responsibility is reflected in the national legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. So, for example, the same measures of family legal liability (for non-payment of alimony, deprivation and restriction of parental rights) are provided for both the father and the mother of the child. The responsibility of women and men for offenses in the field of taxation, for violations of labor discipline, traffic rules, etc. is the same. The Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic establishes equal responsibility for men and women for committing crimes, however, for some of them, only women can be held accountable (for example, for the murder of a newborn child by a mother)⁶⁸ or only for men (for example, for bigamy or polygamy).⁶⁹

From equality of responsibility, it is necessary to distinguish the peculiarities of sentencing for women and men. So, for example, women are not assigned life imprisonment,⁷⁰ public works are not assigned to conscripts (that is, men), pregnant women.⁷¹ However, this does not mean that these categories of persons can escape responsibility. They will be punished in any case, since almost all articles of the Criminal Code provide for so-called alternative sanctions, and the court can choose one of the types of punishment for a specific act, depending on the severity of the crime and the degree of guilt.

Equality of rights, equality of opportunity and equality of responsibility allows women and men to build equal partnership relations – joint actions towards each other, joint participation in state and public life on equal terms by males and females.

3.4. Politics, economics, education: gender profile

➤ *Gender issues in politics: is there equality?*

⁶⁷ Art. 68 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶⁸ Art. 125 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶⁹ Art. 176 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁷⁰ Art. 68 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁷¹ Art. 61 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic

Despite all the requirements of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on gender representation, the degree of participation of women in politics remains extremely low, which indicates the inequality of opportunities for men and women to engage in it both at the national and local levels.

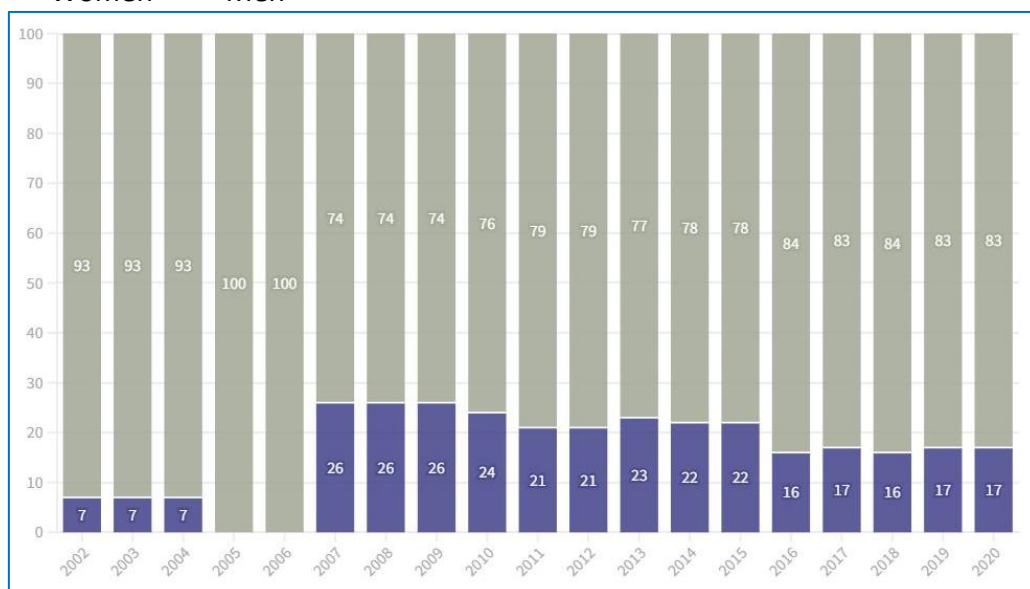
Currently, an imbalance in gender representation is noted in all branches of state power (legislative, executive, judicial) and in all areas of decision-making. It manifests itself to the greatest extent at the level of political positions⁷², where the share of women as of January 1, 2021 was only 24.3%⁷³.

First of all, this is typical for the Jogorku Kenesh, the highest legislative body, which has always been characterized by a clear advantage of male deputies, and in some years (the 2005 elections) there were no female deputies at all.

Political state position - a position in which a person exercises power and makes politically determining decisions focused on the implementation of political programs and projects, is responsible for the implementation of the set political goals and objectives within the powers established by the Constitution and other regulatory legal acts.

Quantity of women in the Kyrgyz Parliament doesn't exceed 30%

Men and Women in %
 ■ Women ■ Men



Source: National Statistics Committee

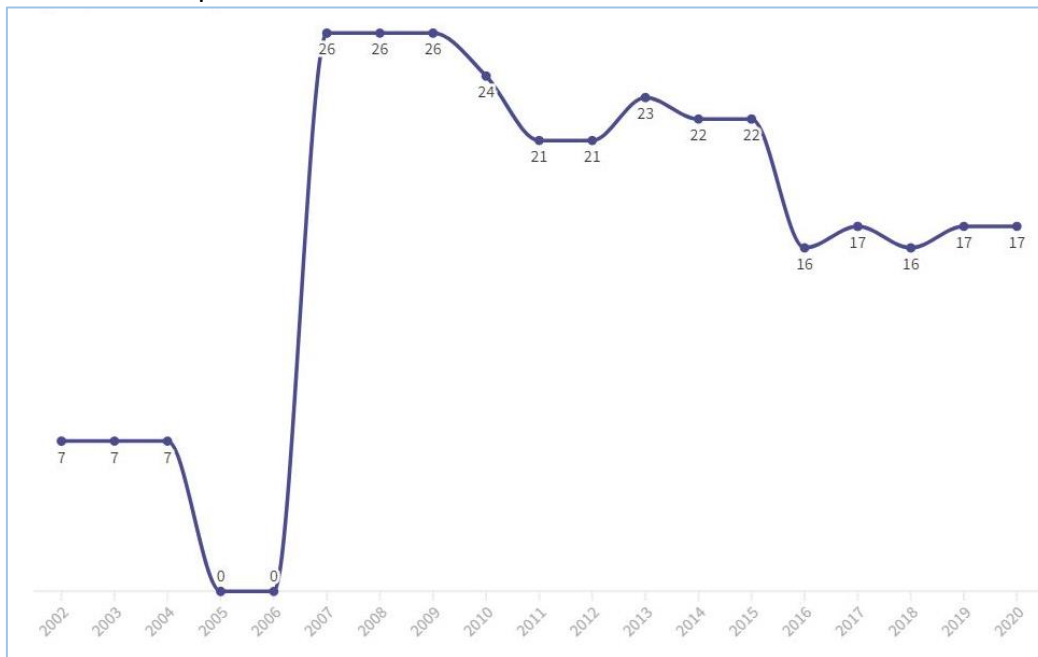
To overcome this situation, legislative requirements (special measures) were established to ensure the representation of women in a number of state bodies, including the Jogorku Kenesh, thanks to which, in the 2007 elections, it was possible to achieve an increase in the proportion of women deputies (up to 25.5%), however, required as the minimum 30% representation was never achieved (Fig. 1).

⁷² The list of political state and special state positions, as well as political municipal positions is defined in the Register of state and municipal positions of the Kyrgyz Republic, approved by the decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic dated January 31, 2017 by the Presidential Order No. 17

⁷³ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - p. 69

30% gender quotes in the Parliament have never been met

% of female deputies



Source: [National Statistics Committee](#)

The last parliamentary elections held on November 28, 2021 under a mixed system (when 54 deputies are elected from party lists, and 36 deputies – from single-mandate constituencies and are nominated either from the party or through self-nomination), have shown how “unfriendly” to women such a system is, and the chances of women candidates to be elected in single-mandate constituencies are practically zero.

Despite the fact that the law attempts to create equal opportunities for women to participate in elections (quotas, priority distribution of mandates among women), in reality women have to defend their rights guaranteed by law, but this is far from always possible. A recent example, when, during the distribution of mandates in the Alliance party, a dispute arose between the CEC and representatives of the party regarding the number of mandates that should be given to women, demonstrated how far the judiciary, society itself, internal party institutions, and the position of the candidates themselves are far from values of gender equality and the rule of law, especially when it comes to the distribution of power.

The Alliance party received 7 deputy mandates in the elections to the Jogorku Kenesh. According to part 4 of Art. 64 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Elections of the President and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic”, when distributing mandates received by a political party, at least 30% of the total number of mandates received by a political party are initially distributed among female candidates who received the largest number of votes. In this regard, if a political party receives 7 mandates of at least 30% of this number of mandates, this means 3 mandates. Guided by mathematical calculations, the CEC, by its Decree of December 15, 2021 No. 835, made appropriate changes to its Regulations “On the organization and procedure for voting and establishing voting results by election commissions in the elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic” (paragraph 82-1). However, the Alliance party, which did not agree with this decision, appealed to the Administrative Court of Bishkek,

which granted its application against the CEC decision on the gender quota. Thus, the court declared illegal and canceled the said CEC resolution of December 15, 2021 in terms of determining the number of 3 deputy mandates for female candidates from the political party “Alliance”, as well as in terms of recognizing the elected deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh from the political party “Alliance” Orgalcha Toktobubu. After that, the CEC filed a complaint with the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Administrative Court of Bishkek. Thus, Zhanar Akaev received a deputy mandate instead of Toktobubu Orgalcha, a female candidate.

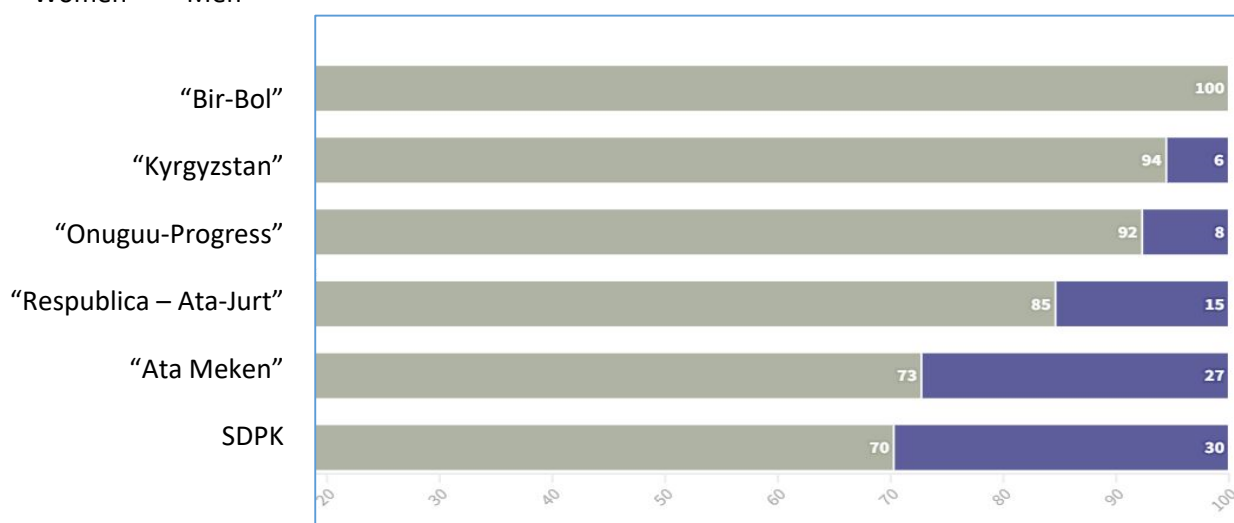
As of January 1, 2022, the number of elected deputies on party lists is 54 people, including 18 women and 36 men. As for the deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies, 34 mandates out of 36 went to men, and new elections are scheduled in two constituencies (Pervomaiskiy and Sverdlovskiy districts of Bishkek).

An analysis of the membership of women and men in parliamentary factions also demonstrates a gender imbalance. So, for example, as of December 1, 2021 of the year in The Jogorku Kenesh of the VI convocation was six fractions, and only one of them, the Ata-Meken faction, for some period was headed by a female leader. This is the only fraction that came close to the target (27.3%) in terms of women's representation. There are no women at all in the Bir-Bol fraction.

Parliament of Parliament of the 6th convocation: Only the fraction of SDPK has kept the quote of 30% of women

The representation of women and men in fractions of the Parliament in %

■ Women ■ Men



Number and share of women in the Cabinet of Ministers, ministries and departments

Data on the number and proportion of women in the Cabinet of Ministers also show a gender imbalance. So, as of December 1, 2021, out of 21 members of the Cabinet of Ministers, there was only 1 woman - the Minister of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision, which amounted to 4.8%.

Gender asymmetry is also characteristic of the composition of deputy ministers. Almost all ministries are men. The only exceptions are the Ministry of Digital Development, in which one of the four ministers is a woman, the Ministry of Education and Science, in which two of the three deputies are women, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration, where also two of the three deputies are women. In all other ministries and the State Committee for National Security, the positions of deputies are occupied by men. Thus, out of 55 deputy members of the Cabinet of Ministers, the proportion of women is only 9.1%⁷⁴.

The Cabinet of Ministers consists of the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, his deputies, ministers and chairmen of state committees.

(Part 1, Article 5 of the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic")

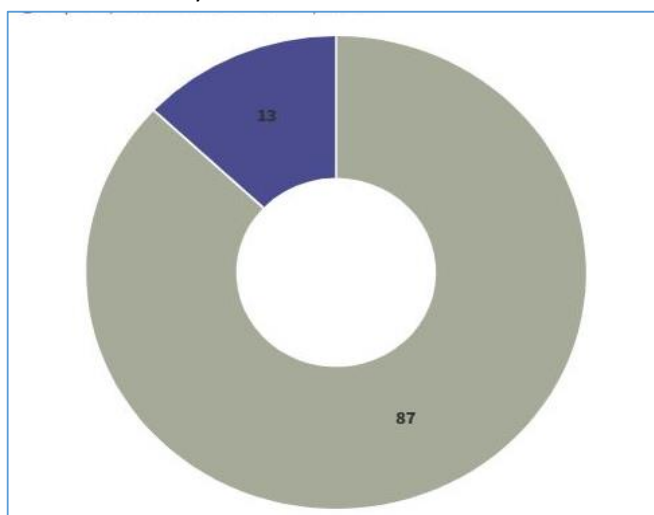
As for the authorized representatives of the President in the regions, all of them - seven people - are men.

There is also a clear predominance of men in other state bodies. So, at the beginning of 2021, it was most significant in the State Customs Service (84.3%), the Prosecutor General's Office (79.8%), the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration (over 76.4%), the Ministry of Transport and Communications (72.9%), the Accounts Chamber (over 72%), and other bodies. Along with this, the number of women prevails in the National Statistical Committee (73%), the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (72%), the State Service for Intellectual Property and Innovation (over 71%), the Ministry of Health (67%), the State Registration Service (69 %), as well as the Ministry of Education and Science (more than 57%)⁷⁵.

In Kyrgyzstan parties are predominantly led by men

Leaders of political parties according to gender in % for the 1st of September 2021

- Parties led by men
- Parties led by women



Source: National Statistics Committee

⁷⁴ <https://www.gov.kg/ru/gov/s/2>

⁷⁵ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 73-74

Number of women leading political parties

As of September 1, 2021, 294 political parties are registered in Kyrgyzstan, and only 39 of them are led by women (13%).

The desire to take part in the 2021 parliamentary elections was expressed by 75 political parties, two of which were refused (Erkin Kyrgyzstan, Ene Zhurogu-Meken).

Only 21 political parties reached the voting day on November 28, 2021, and the lists of only 2 political parties out of this number are headed by women - the political party "Zhashasyn Kyrgyzstan" (Umetaliyeva Toktaiym) and the political party of the people's heritage - Aruuzat (Bekova Almakon).

Representation of women and men in the CEC

An authorized state organ, responsible per organization elections - the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic, consists of 12 people, including 4 women (33.3%). The CEC is headed by a woman, Shaildabekova Nurzhan, and her two deputies are men.⁷⁶

To maintain this indicator, it is of key importance that, according to the legislation, the CEC of the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the state bodies, when nominated to which the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic must adhere to the principle of "no more than 70% of persons of the same sex", which underlies all system of temporary special measures adopted in the country.⁷⁷

Representation of women in the judiciary

The judiciary of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the legislative and executive, is characterized by the predominance of men. The most gender-unbalanced judicial body is the Constitutional Court, where the share of female judges is 1%(!). In the Supreme Court, the proportion of women judges is only 38%, in local courts - 32%, in the Council of Judges - 36%, in the Council for the Selection of Judges - 33%.⁷⁸

Representation of women in local keneshes

Until 2021, the proportion of women in local government remained extremely low, with each regular election resulting in a decrease in the number of women elected. The representation of women in local keneshes decreased from 19% in 2016 to 11% in 2018, with a 30% quota⁷⁹. On April 11, 2021, elections to local keneshes were held for the first time in accordance with the amendments to the legislation made in 2019, and according to their results, the share of elected women in 2021 was 37%⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ December 2021 https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/CIKBSHK/Sostav_CIKBSHKnyn_kuramy/

⁷⁷ Report on the results of gender monitoring of the elections of deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, held on October 4, 2020, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Data provided by the Kyrgyz Association of Women Judges.

⁷⁹ National voluntary review of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Kyrgyz Republic. - p. 59.

⁸⁰ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - p. 68.

In Kyrgyzstan there is almost no women at the political positions

Men and women at the administrative and political positions in %

■ Women ■ Men



With regard to the representation of women in the distribution of political municipal positions at the local level, they are also characterized by a gender imbalance. So, as of January 1, 2021, only 3.3% of them were occupied by women, as for administrative municipal positions, in general - 36.7%. The largest proportion of women holding political municipal positions are in Naryn region (6.2%), the smallest - in Bishkek and Osh (0% each). Most women occupy administrative municipal positions in Chui region (61.0%), the least - in Batken region (20.6%)⁸¹.

➤ Is there gender equality in the economy?

In general, in Kyrgyzstan, the employment rate of men is higher than the employment rate of women, and this trend is quite stable. In 2020, the excess of the employment rate of men in relation to the employment rate of women was noted in all age groups, but the most significant was in the age groups of 25–34 years. At this age, women most often leave work in connection with the birth of a child. But already in the age group of 45–54 years, there is a convergence of the level of employment of men and women. Women of this age, as a rule, have already grown children and return to work.⁸²

There are differences in the employment of urban and rural women in the country. Thus, the employment of the latter is lower in all regions, but in the Osh region, on the contrary, rural women are more employed than urban women (59.3 and 36.1%, respectively), in the Talas region, the employment of rural and urban women is approximately the same (54.8% and 50.5% respectively).⁸³

It is noteworthy that the average monthly salary of women is 15,078 soms, while that of men is 19,992 soms, that is, the “female” salary is 75.4% of the “male”.

Industries with a high concentration of female labor resources are predominantly financed from the state budget.

⁸¹ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016–2020. – p. 75

⁸² Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016–2020. – p. 81.

⁸³ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016–2020. – p. 81–82.

It can be noted that, despite efforts to promote gender equality, women in Kyrgyzstan still have unequal access to economic opportunities. The labor force participation rate of working-age women has decreased by 11.3 percentage points over the past 15 years (from 62.8% in 2005 to 51.5% in 2019). At the same time, the level of economic activity of men of working age over the past 15 years has been consistently above 80% and in 2019 amounted to 81.4%⁸⁴.

The working age in the Kyrgyz Republic for women is from 16 to 58 years, for men - from 16 to 63 years.

Nearly half of working-age women are not active in the labor market, and data on the number of economically inactive population by category shows the growing influence of traditional approaches. In 2019, the number of women leading the household (one of the four categories of the economically inactive population) turned out to be 99.3 thousand more than the total number of all economically inactive men. The largest share of economically inactive men falls on full-time students (40.2%), and women – on householders (51.9%)⁸⁵.

The number of employed women has remained virtually unchanged over the past 15 years, despite a steady increase in the population. The reduction in the overall unemployment rate among women of working age from 9.3% in 2005 to 6.7% in 2019⁸⁶ is due not to their involvement in labor activity, but to an increase in the number of housewives.

The distribution of female and male employment by type of economic activity has significant differences, primarily due to established traditions.

Women's employment is highest in the service sector. The proportion of women in the total number of employed prevailed in such activities as operations with real estate (96%), public health and social services (78%) and education (79%). In these areas, the average monthly nominal wages are respectively 11 408 soms, 10 937 soms and 14 764 soms.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Employment and Unemployment. Results of the integrated sample survey of household budgets and labor force in 2019 <http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/zanyatost-i-bezrabotica-itogi-integrirrovannogo-vyborochnogo-obsledovaniya-byudzhetrov-domashnih-hozyajstv-i-rabochej-sily-v-2013g/> - p. 29

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 156

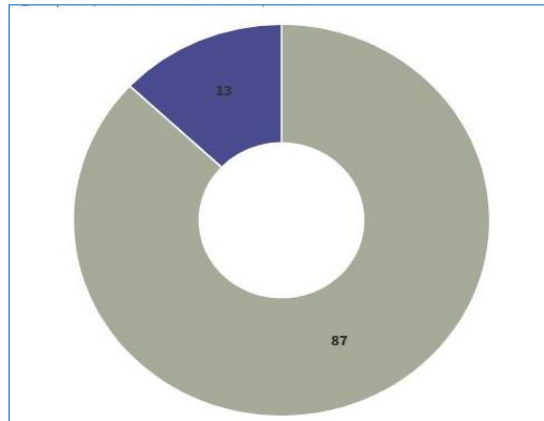
⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 31

⁸⁷ Statistical Yearbook of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. p. 167.

In Kyrgyzstan businesses are predominantly led by men

Heads of business entities according to gender in % for the 1st of January 2021

■ Men
■ Women



Source: National Statistics Committee

A high proportion of men has developed in the manufacturing sectors: construction (99%), mining, as well as transport activities and storage of goods (96% each), provision (supply) with electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning, water supply, cleaning, waste processing and obtaining secondary raw materials (83% each).⁸⁸ In them, the average monthly nominal wage is, respectively, 15 748, 32 688, 21 060, 31 297, 14 781 soms.⁸⁹

An analysis of data on the heads of economic entities indicates the predominance of men.

Thus, their share as of January 1, 2021 was 72.1%, while women - 27.9% (that is, almost 2.6 times lower)⁹⁰ (Fig. 8). Approximately the same distribution was observed 5 years ago (73.5% and 26.5% in 2016), which indicates the inadequacy of the measures taken to ensure gender equality.

The excess is typical for most areas of economic activity. Women-managers prevail to the greatest extent in the field of education (here the share of women-managers exceeds the share of men by 2.1 times) and activities of private households with hired workers; production by private households of various goods and services for their own consumption (1.6 times).

Among managers, there are significantly fewer women in the following areas: transport activities and storage of goods (gap with men by 37.4 times), construction (12.5 times), mining (11.3 times), water supply, cleaning, processing waste and secondary raw materials (8.7 times), public administration and defense, compulsory social security (10 times), activities of extraterritorial organizations (11.2 times).⁹¹

The proportion of women – individual entrepreneurs is also lower in the whole country than men - individual entrepreneurs (35.4% and 64.6%, respectively), with the largest gap in the Batken oblast (28.9% and 71.1%) and the Osh region (28.3% and 71.7%)⁹². In Bishkek, the only

⁸⁸ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2015-2019. - p. 56.

⁸⁹ Statistical Yearbook of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2015-2019. - p. 170.

⁹⁰ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - p. 116.

⁹¹ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - pp. 116-117.

⁹² Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic 2015-2019. - pp. 124-125.

region of Kyrgyzstan, the share of individual female entrepreneurs is larger than that of men (54.5% and 45.5%, respectively).

Among the heads of peasant (farmer) households in the country as a whole, the excess of men is 4 times, compared with women (79.9% and 20.1%, respectively), and it is typical for all regions. The largest gap – 10 times observed in this indicator in the Batken region (90.3% and 9.7%), the smallest - in Bishkek (1.5 times).⁹³ Women on average make up 27% of all entrepreneurs, in the agricultural sector they are even less – the share of agricultural enterprises (including farms) registered under female names is less than 10%⁹⁴. As a result, women's entrepreneurial activities tend to be limited to small businesses with few employees, low start-up capital, and less opportunity to expand the business⁹⁵.

Women's active economic activity is hindered by a number of factors. One of them is the uneven distribution of the burden of domestic work between family members – women and men. As already noted, women devote an average of 4 hours and 20 minutes a day to housework, spending 18.1% of their time on this. For men, these costs are 4.7 times lower and account for 3.9% of the daily time fund. As a result, compared to men, women spend almost 5 times more time on housework and 2.3 times more time on raising children.⁹⁶ Rural women spend 1.5 times more time on housekeeping than urban women.

Another important aspect affecting the economic activity of women is the dependence of employment on family religiosity. The number of believers is growing in the country, and among the population there are stereotypical ideas that a religious woman should do housework and not work. In addition, in such families, girls are more likely to marry at a young age, depriving them of the opportunity to receive vocational education. Thus, they find themselves in a losing situation, it is more difficult for them to find a job in the future, they are highly dependent on their spouse and his family, which in turn increases the risk of violence against these women.

Women who have received vocational education are in a vulnerable position due to the biased attitude of employers. Employers prefer to hire men, avoiding social responsibility for women's reproductive function (payment of benefits for pregnancy and childbirth, provision of paid maternity leave, retention of jobs).

Because of gender stereotyping and discrimination, employers are unreasonably convinced that men will do better in jobs they consider masculine. For example, this is work in the IT field, employment in technical specialties. Women are willingly hired for low-paid jobs in the social sphere and trade. But even in these sectors, men are more often promoted to leadership positions.⁹⁷

In the field of entrepreneurship, women also face restrictions and inequalities. Due to the strong influence of traditional views, assets and property are more often registered in the name

⁹³ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - p. 125.

⁹⁴ Mainstreaming Gender into the Nationally Determined Contribution of the Kyrgyz Republic (NDC) in 2021

⁹⁵ Regional Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Europe and Central Asia (2016-2017) <http://www.fao.org/3/i5501r/i5501r.pdf>

⁹⁶ <http://stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/7d7c4d59-2b8f-44e0-86be-adee6e8c5e28.pdf> - p. 246

⁹⁷ Draft National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality until 2030

of men (for example, only 29% of real estate is registered in the name of women⁹⁸), which means that women have limited access to loans. The main source of lending to women's entrepreneurship is microfinance organizations, where it is easier to apply for and receive a loan, but there is a smaller amount and higher interest rates.

More than 66% of the country's population lives in rural areas, 30% of men and 35% of women are provided with jobs in agriculture and are employed in farming and personal subsidiary plots⁹⁹. Women make up a large proportion of the rural population, making an important contribution to food production and the care of their households. However, in most cases, women have limited access to productive resources, services and decent employment opportunities. Women, especially in rural areas, tend to be among the poorest and most vulnerable groups in the population.

There are more than 428 thousand farms in the country, of which 20.2% are headed by women, which indicates women's limited access to land. The practice of registering women's rights to land can often conflict with customary law, which prevents women from inheriting or retaining land in the event of a divorce¹⁰⁰.

At the local level, there is a low representation of women in community forestry and pasture management. Traditional pasture management practices ensure that men, as heads of the family, have ownership and land use rights. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (2016), out of 454 active pasture committees, about 11 are headed by women (2.4%)¹⁰¹. Irrigation water is an economic asset traditionally managed by men. Access to irrigation water for women is still difficult. In 477 water associations, the representation of women is less than 10%¹⁰².

In addition to financial and property constraints, women entrepreneurs in agriculture face additional risks associated with climate change. Due to different gender roles and inequalities, climate change has a particularly negative impact on women, depriving them of their livelihoods, increasing their workload, as well as leading to increased gender discrimination and the feminization of poverty. Women run the household and care for family members, which limits mobility and increases vulnerability to natural disasters, pollution, and epidemics¹⁰³.

➤ *What is the situation with gender equality in education?*

There are practically no fundamental gender differences in the enrollment of children in pre-school education and primary, as well as basic general education. Only among graduates of the 11th grade, the level of the ratio of girls to boys (gender parity index) changes in favor of girls –

⁹⁸ Gender in the perception of society, NSC KR, 2016. <http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/gender-v-vospriyatii-obshchestva/>

⁹⁹ "Integration of Gender into the Nationally Determined Contribution of the Kyrgyz Republic (NDC) in 2021"

¹⁰⁰ "National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Households: Kyrgyz Republic" (2016). FAO <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/ru/c/0760e903-f985-4af7-b052-7f6c89d63824/>

¹⁰¹ UNDP. A note on including gender issues in projects across sectors. A case of 'Pasture management' project: Kyrgyzstan. <http://undpgendermadeeasy.org>.

¹⁰² BEIJING+25: National Review of the Kyrgyz Republic on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action, progress and challenges. https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/Kyrgyzstan.pdf

¹⁰³ Draft National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality until 2030

1.21 at the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year. The total enrollment in upper secondary education was dominated by girls, with over 54% at the beginning of the 2020/21 school year. There are some differences between girls and boys in enrollment. The ratio of girls to boys in primary and basic education shows that girls are enrolled in lower secondary schools (grades 1-9) more than boys. However, girls are more likely to complete upper secondary education (grades 10-11), while boys drop out of education after grade 9. This is due to an increase in the number of young people who, for material reasons, are forced to acquire a profession at an earlier age. Some young people go to study at vocational lyceums (schools), secondary vocational schools or short-term courses that prepare them for an early entry into the labor market.

The sphere of vocational education is gender segregated, and is, in turn, the basis of gender segregation in the labor market. Thus, in secondary vocational schools, there is a traditional predominance of girls in training in such specialties as education, consumer goods technology, health care, culture and art, and service. At the same time, young men choose professions related to mechanical engineering and metalworking, mining, construction and architecture, electronics, energy and other traditionally “male” specialties.

Among students of higher professional educational institutions, the share of female students is traditionally high in the following areas: education (about 86%), the humanities (more than 73%), and the service sector (more than 63%). At the same time, men mainly choose professions related to architecture and construction (about 82%), agricultural sciences (about 75%), technical sciences (over 69%), law (about 66%).¹⁰⁴

3.5. Gender Violence in Kyrgyzstan

➤ *What is gender violence? What forms of gender-based violence are common in Kyrgyzstan?*

Gender-based or gender-based violence is one of the most powerful barriers to achieving gender equality. It happened so historically that it most often occurs in relation to women and girls.

Gender-based violence is a global problem affecting women and girls around the world. Concerned about this problem, the UN General Assembly in 1993 adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which calls on states to condemn violence against women, not to rely on any customs, traditions or religious motives to avoid fulfilling their obligations in regarding its eradication.

According to the Declaration, violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause harm to the physical, sexual or psychological health of a woman or suffering, as well as threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life.

Violence against women is intended to cover the following but is not limited to:

(a) physical, sexual and psychological violence that takes place in the family, including battery, sexual abuse of girls in the family, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that are detrimental to women, extramarital and exploitative violence;

b) physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs in *society* at large, including rape, sexual coercion, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

¹⁰⁴ Women and Men of the Kyrgyz Republic: 2016-2020. - pp. 144-162.

c) physical, sexual and psychological violence by or with the connivance of the state, wherever it occurs.¹⁰⁵

In another international document, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention)¹⁰⁶ violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and means all acts of gender-based violence that result or may result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering against women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether it occurs in public or private life.

In Kyrgyzstan, the main forms of manifestation of gender-based violence are:

- family violence,
- early and forced marriages,
- sexual abuse,
- harassment.

➤ ***What is family violence?***

Domestic violence is intentional actions of a physical, psychological, economic nature or their threat, as well as a neglectful attitude committed by one family member / person of equal status against another family member / person of equal status.¹⁰⁷

The forms of domestic violence are:

- psychological abuse;
- physical violence;
- economic violence;
- dismissive attitude.

¹⁰⁵ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (adopted by General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993)

¹⁰⁶ Kyrgyzstan is not a party to the Istanbul Convention.

¹⁰⁷ Clause 10) Art. 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Protection and Protection from Domestic Violence” dated April 27, 2017 No. 63

Psychological violence - the threat of committing physical, sexual, economic violence, as well as deliberate humiliation of honor and dignity, coercion to commit offenses or acts that pose a danger to life or lead to a violation of mental, physical health, as well as restriction of adults in the right to communicate.

Physical violence - direct or indirect intentional physical impact of one family member / person equated to him on another family member / person equated to him, deprivation of the ability to perform vital functions, deprivation or restriction of freedom of movement, housing, food, clothing, coercion to severe physical work, as well as evasion of duties of care and concern.

Economic violence is the intentional failure by one family member/family member equated to him to fulfill the obligation to support another family member/person equated to him, as well as the deliberate deprivation or restriction of the right to receive or dispose of property or income destined by law to a person, and/or use funds and property by a trustee to the detriment of the trustee.

Neglect is a deliberate failure to fulfill the duties of caring for family members and persons equated to them.

Sexual violence is not envisaged as an independent form of domestic violence, as it is a criminal offense and is punishable, according to the Criminal Code, by imprisonment, and in some cases, along with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities, *regardless of whether it is committed by a family member or by another person.*

Domestic violence is very common and unfortunately it is on the rise. So, if in 2013 there were 2,580 cases of domestic violence, then in 2019 there were 6,145 cases. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, the number of cases of domestic violence has sharply increased during the quarantine announced in connection with the coronavirus pandemic.

It must be admitted that the official scale of domestic violence is just the tip of the iceberg; in fact, its prevalence is much higher. This phenomenon has a latent character, since its victims (in 2020 in 96% of cases – are women) often consider violent behavior in the family as a variant of the norm, they are afraid of publicity and condemnation from relatives and friends, etc.

A video circulated on the Internet in June 2020, in which a man tied his wife's hands, hung tires around her neck, hit her in the face and poured water on her, received wide public outcry. The man said on the video that it was a "lesson" for her. After that, he was placed in a TDF¹⁰⁸ for committing domestic violence, but after considering the materials of the case, the police reclassified the article to a more serious one: torture.

Non-governmental human rights organizations stood up to protect the woman, the prosecutor's office took control of the case, an extraordinary meeting of the National Council for Women and Gender Development was convened, but a few days after the arrest, the victim withdrew her application.

¹⁰⁸ Temporary detention facility

In this situation, the tolerant attitude of both the victims themselves and her relatives is evidenced by the fact that the son took the side of his father and began to protect him, did not allow his mother to contact human rights organizations. The woman herself said that she had suffered violence from him before, but not so cruel, and that she would continue to live with this man, he was her family and she was against the criminal case. The woman felt ashamed, she was worried about what people would say, because she was preparing for her son's wedding.

The Suzak District Court sentenced the perpetrator to two years' probation, and he was released from custody in the courtroom.

To combat domestic violence, it is necessary not only and not so much to tighten the law, but also to change the existing gender stereotypes in society that domestic violence is permissible.

Another way to prevent domestic violence is to work with the perpetrators themselves to correct violent behavior, which is also provided for in the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, based on the successful application of such practices in foreign countries.

When preparing stories and printed materials, media journalists are encouraged to convey to the audience the message that domestic violence is a common problem in any society, women and children are most often its victims, and violence against women and girls is gender-based. Domestic violence itself is a violation of human rights.

➤ **Who Should Fight Domestic Violence?**

Domestic violence is not a family matter. The entire society and the state should be involved in its prevention and counteraction, as well as providing assistance to the victims. Legislation defines the circle of persons who, by virtue of the law, are subjects of guarding and protection from domestic violence. These include:

- 1) Cabinet of Ministers;
- 2) an authorized state body for coordinating the activities of subjects for the guarding and protection against domestic violence (currently this is the Ministry of Labour, Social Development and Migration);
- 3) court;
- 4) prosecutor's office;
- 5) bodies of internal affairs;
- 6) bodies of social development;
- 7) health authorities;
- 8) educational authorities;
- 9) bodies of justice;
- 10) the authorized state body for the protection of children;
- 11) *Akyikatchy* (Ombudsman);
- 12) advocacy;
- 13) local state administrations;
- 14) local self-government bodies;
- 15) court of aksakals;
- 16) mass media;**
- 17) other organizations within their competence.

Thus, the media are classified as entities that guard and protect against domestic violence.

➤ ***What should the media do in the field of protection and defense against domestic violence?***

To the powers of the media funded from the republican and local budgets in the field guarding and protection from family violence include:

- 1) interaction with the subjects of guarding and protection from domestic violence;
- 2) coverage of issues of guarding and protection from domestic violence in order to form in the public mind the rejection of any form of violence;
- 3) providing information about their activities for the guarding and protection from family violence at the request of the authorized body;
- 4) ensuring in its editorial policy the prevention of propaganda of gender discrimination and violence;
- 5) participation in programs to improve the skills of correspondents and journalists to cover issues of guarding and protection from domestic violence.

Mass media are obliged to publish information on issues of guarding and protection from family violence within the airtime or print space allocated for social advertising.

➤ ***Why are early and forced marriages forms of gender-based violence?***

Early and forced marriages are common forms of gender-based violence, overwhelmingly targeting girls rather than boys.

Since marriages of persons under the age of 18 are generally not allowed in Kyrgyzstan and, therefore, cannot be officially registered, it is impossible to accurately determine their number. At the same time, it should be understood that the dynamics of the number of births in girls of premarital age can testify to their prevalence.

Thus, from 2006 to 2013, there was a steady increase in the birth rate among women aged 15-17 years. In the last 2 years, in general, in the Kyrgyz Republic, a decrease in this coefficient has been observed. It is noteworthy that in the Talas and the Chui regions in 2018 it exceeded the national figure by 1.6-2.4 times, which indicates the prevalence of early marriages in these regions. At the same time, early marriages in rural areas are 2.5 times more common than in urban areas.

In addition, there is an increase in the birth rate among women in the group of 18-19 years. Based on this, it can be assumed that

A family is created on the basis of the voluntary marriage of a man and a woman who have reached the marriageable age established by law. Marriage is not allowed without the consent of the two persons entering into it, and is registered by the state.

(Part 1, Article 26 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic)

The marriageable age is set at 18 years. If there are valid reasons, the executive bodies of local self-government at the place of residence of persons wishing to marry are entitled, at the request of these persons, to reduce the age of marriage for men and women by no more than 1 year on the basis of a commission opinion of the territorial divisions of the authorized state body for the protection of children. Persons guilty of violating the requirements for marriageable age bear criminal liability.

(Article 14 of the Family Code of the Kyrgyz Republic)

such women were also given "in marriage" by way of *nike* even before adulthood.

Such "marriages" of minors, we repeat, are not registered anywhere, but they are performed with the help of the religious rite "*nike*", during which the clergyman cannot always reliably verify the true age of the bride. In order to combat this harmful phenomenon, in 2016 the previous Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic included a provision¹⁰⁹ on the responsibility of persons performing such rituals in relation to minors. In addition, their parents, as well as the other party (groom), if he himself has reached the age of 18, can be held criminally liable for marriages of minors (often brides). The same provision was included in the Criminal Code of 20017, as well as in the new Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2021,¹¹⁰ which imposes imprisonment for a term of 3 to 5 years as a punishment.

Another form of gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan is *forced marriage*. In the language of criminal law, this is called forced marriage or de facto marital relations, as well as kidnapping a person for marriage against his/her will.

The scale of the prevalence of forced marriage practices is reflected in different ways in official statistics¹¹¹ and analytical studies conducted by civil society organizations. According to the facts registered by the state, no more than 30 of them occur per year (and in total in different forms), while according to studies, more than 20% of marriages in the Kyrgyz Republic are made by kidnapping girls, the share of forced marriages is 6%. Such a huge difference only speaks of the high latency of crimes, that the victims, for various reasons, do not report the crime to the internal affairs bodies.

Kidnapping a person for marriage is punishable by imprisonment for a term of 5 to 7 years, and if the victim is a person under 18 years of age - imprisonment for a term of 7 to 10 years.

(Article 172 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic).

The most famous case of the abduction of a girl for marriage was the resonant crime against 19-year-old Burulai Turdaliyeva, committed in 2018. The girl's relatives turned to the police, and the kidnapper was detained. However, in the police station, the offender, who was left alone with the victim through the fault of the police, stabbed her, as a result of which the girl, taken to intensive care, died.

The kidnapper was sentenced to 20 years in prison and his accomplice to 7 years. In addition, the offender was ordered to pay 800,000 soms in compensation to the family of the murdered girl. As for the police officers who committed negligence, three of them were convicted of negligence and sentenced to a fine, and 23 were brought to disciplinary responsibility.

Marriages involving minors and forced marriages, including those concluded through bride kidnapping, grossly violate the constitutional and other rights of girls and women (to education, especially vocational education, to health care, to independently choose a marriage partner, to choose a profession and occupation, freedom from violence, etc.). As a result, they become physically, psychologically and economically dependent, which makes them extremely vulnerable to violence and reinforces gender discrimination. This happens with the tacit consent, connivance or even coercion on the part of parents and other relatives. Legitimation (or

¹⁰⁹ Art. 155-1 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic dated October 1, 1997

¹¹⁰ Art. 175 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic dated October 28, 2021 No. 127

¹¹¹ Offenses and law and order in the Kyrgyz Republic: a statistical compendium. 2014-2018. - p. 16.

justification) in the eyes of society, such marriages are obtained through the religious rite *nike*, which often remains the only procedure, and state registration of marriage is not carried out. As a result, the girl's rights remain unprotected.

Despite the fact that the majority of the population has a negative attitude towards the practice of bride kidnapping and marriage of minors, nevertheless, there are many justifications for this phenomenon both from men and women (folk traditions, customs, the need to help a relative, economic reasons, etc.). Thus, all of this speaks in general about the tolerance of society to the violation of the right to free choice of a spouse.

➤ **What is sexual abuse?**

Another form of gender-based violence in Kyrgyzstan is *sexual violence*. It is a criminally punishable act, and responsibility varies depending on the age of the victim/victim and the severity of the committed action (by prior agreement, by a group of persons, against a minor, the presence of serious consequences, etc.).

The Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic provides for liability for the following types of sexual violence:

- Art. 154. Rape;
- Art. 155. Violent acts of a sexual nature;
- Art. 156. Compulsion to act of a sexual nature;
- Art. 157. Acts of a sexual nature with a person under the age of 16;
- Art. 158. Depraved actions.

The terms of punishment in this case (terms of imprisonment, fines, correctional labor and deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities) depend on the age of the victim, as well as the presence of aggravating circumstances.

It must be clearly understood that the perpetrator of sexual violence is always the rapist himself. He, unlike the victim, always has a choice - to commit violence or not. Sexual violence is a crime and cannot be justified by anything - neither by the behavior of the victim, nor by her appearance, nor by being in a certain place, nor by her moral character.

As for the age of the victim/victim, it should be kept in mind that in the Kyrgyz Republic the age of sexual consent is set by law at 16 years. This means that sexual intercourse or acts of a sexual nature with a person under this age is a crime, regardless of whether this person consented to sexual contact.

*Thus, the presence of a "consent" of a girl/boy to sexual intercourse, the performance of a *nike* ritual in relation to a minor/minor in no way exempts from responsibility and cannot serve as a moral justification for the guilty person.*

➤ **What is harassment?**

Harassment - human behavior that causes inconvenience or even harm to another person, violating his privacy.¹¹²

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<https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE>

At its core, harassment is a violation of a person's personal boundaries, which can manifest itself in different ways: in both direct and indirect actions, for example, vulgar remarks about a person, obscene messages on social networks and instant messengers, unwanted or intrusive letters, SMS or calls, unfriendly remarks and rude jokes, showing offensive, photos or pictures, lustful gestures, physical impact (unnecessary touches, slaps, pinches, hugs and kisses, etc.). The psychological sign of harassment is a feeling of humiliation and constant pressure, harassment and persecution, an oppressive atmosphere.

Contrary to popular belief, the concept of harassment is much broader than actions that have a sexual connotation. It also includes gender identity, ethnicity, belonging to a particular religion, etc.

Harassment is often found in labor relations, in the workplace, and is quite common. The international community, recognizing this problem and expressing commitment to addressing it, adopted the Convention on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work in 2019. It has not been ratified in Kyrgyzstan.

The Convention takes a broad approach to understanding harassment and deals with it in relation to violence.

According to Art. 1 of the Convention, the term "violence and harassment" in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices or the threat of such, whether single or repeated, the purpose, effect or possible consequence of which is to cause physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, including gender violence and harassment.

Gender-based violence and harassment refers to violence and harassment that is directed at individuals because of their sex or gender, or that disproportionately affects individuals of a particular sex or gender, and includes sexual harassment.

The scope of the Convention covers situations of violence and harassment in the world of work, arising during the period of work, related to work or arising in connection with work performed:

- a) at the place of work, including public places and private premises when they are the place of work;
- b) in places where the worker receives wages, takes a break for rest or eats food or uses sanitary facilities and changing rooms;
- c) during business trips, travel, training, events or social activities;
- d) during work-related communications, including those provided by information and communication technologies;
- e) in accommodation provided by the employer;
- f) while commuting to and from work.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the concept of harassment is absent in the legislation, however, only one law, the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “ On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women”, contains the concept of sexual harassment and establishes a ban on them. So, according to Art. 1 of the said Law, sexual harassment is actions of a sexual nature, expressed verbally or physically, humiliating and insulting a person who is in labor, service, material, family and other dependence.

Sexual harassment refers to direct gender discrimination. In terms of scope, the Law only defines it in the workplace, stating that an employer may not pressure or harass employees of different sexes on the grounds that they have refused an employer’s sexual harassment or filed a complaint against an employer for gender discrimination. In cases of pressure or persecution of employees based on gender stereotypes, including sexual harassment, the employer is liable in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic. In addition, the employer is obliged to take measures to prevent cases of sexual harassment (Article 21 of the Law).

It should be noted that these norms of the Law are not widely implemented in the labor market. Only a few organizations, including international ones, have developed and implemented corporate regulations that provide mechanisms to prevent and suppress harassment. And criminal cases are initiated only in rare cases, but only if there are signs of other crimes (compulsion to act of a sexual nature, rape, etc.). There are no norms establishing liability specifically for harassment in the legislation of Kyrgyzstan.

In other countries, harassment scandals go public and go beyond private property.

In the United States, for example, sexual harassment in the workplace is considered a civil offense for which the employer is liable. Therefore, the task of employers is to prevent such cases: improve corporate culture, prohibit discrimination (including harassment) by internal company rules, investigate complaints of harassment from employees and take action if these complaints are confirmed. This could be a warning, a reprimand, working with an in-house psychologist or counselor, a demotion, a suspension, or even a termination. The violator may also be required to pay compensation.

Source:

<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/11/15/vse-govoryat-pro-harassment-a-ya-ne-ponimayu-cto-eto-pomogite>

So, the well-known 67-year-old Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was accused by several dozen women of sexual harassment and violence. As a result of the trial, he was sentenced to 23 years in prison. Another example was the accusation of former US President Bill Clinton by several women, and in 1998 he almost lost the presidency due to harassment towards Monica Lewinsky.

4. GENDER SENSITIVE JOURNALISM STANDARDS

4.1. The concept of gender-sensitive journalism

➤ What is Gender-Sensitive Journalism?

To understand what the standards of such journalism are, you need to understand what gender-sensitive journalism is.

Gender-sensitive journalism is the practice of creating media content in a way that is gender-responsive and portrays women and men fairly without reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

Why is it that, despite the fact that the definition includes both women and men, discussions about gender-sensitive journalism often focus on women? This is due to the fact that media publications continue to focus on men, as well as the fact that journalists very often write about gender-based violence and make mistakes when covering such sensitive topics.

➤ Why write about gender inequality?

Despite the fact that half of humanity is women, they are still restricted in their rights around the world and we are still very far from achieving gender equality – according to some estimates, this may take from 80 to 100 years.

The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown us back a lot – all experts agree that gender inequality has increased in the world, and the pandemic economic crisis is affecting women the most. That is why it is worth paying great attention to articles that fight gender stereotypes and challenge gender inequality.

➤ Why write about gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan?

If we talk specifically about Kyrgyzstan, then here we tirelessly need to write and shoot stories about the fact that women are infringed on their rights, since we are in a country with patriarchal foundations.

It is worth writing about gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan precisely because society still does not recognize this problem. If you still think that the problem is far-fetched, then here are some shocking facts:

- Eight out of ten murders of women in Kyrgyzstan are committed by men.
- For every 100 soms a man earns, a woman earns just over 70 soms.
- 96% of perpetrators of domestic violence are men. Basically, these are husbands beating their wives.
- Working women in Kyrgyzstan spend [three to four](#) times more time on household chores than men.
- In addition to the fact that women are limited in their rights, they are often accused of being guilty of this themselves. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, a woman is deprived of the basic right to safely move around the streets, especially in the evening. If something happens to her during such a walk – she can be attacked, molested, raped or killed – then society immediately wonders what she was doing at night outside the house. At the same time, most often there will be no questions for a male criminal.

So, in order to understand how to cover such issues, it is worth understanding what mistakes journalists make both in the world and in Kyrgyzstan.

4.2. International experience

To understand how the media in the world cover gender aspects, let's turn to international experience and understand if there is a standard in this area? There is no such standard. This is the conclusion that can be drawn from the data of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). This is a worldwide media monitoring and research project, implemented in partnership with women's rights organizations, media associations and researchers from around the world.

Researchers also calculate an index of gender equality in the news media (GEM index). How do they do it? They calculate the average gender equality gap based on the following metrics: number of people in the news (subjects and sources), participation as reporters, appearances as experts and representatives, and presence in economic and political news.

GMMP has now published six reports for 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and [2020](#). Researchers study the media in more than 100 countries around the world.

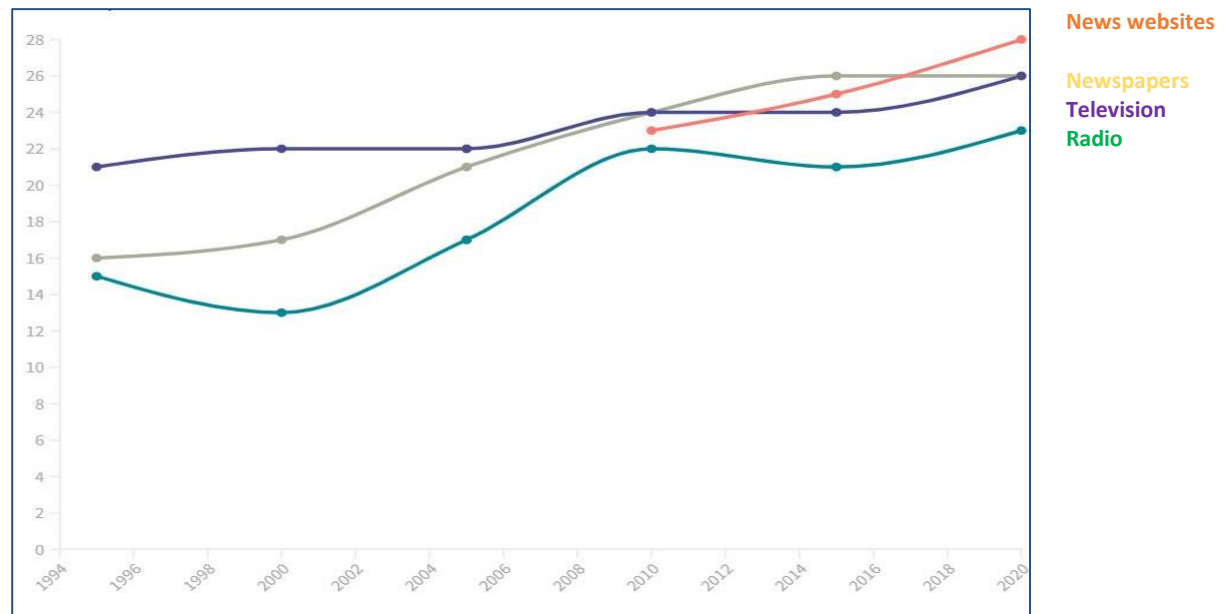
Monitoring shows extremely slow progress in the use of women's voices in public discussions through the media. The news is not only a male-centric view of the world, it also contains gender bias and deep-seated stereotypes that underpin marginalization, discrimination and violence against girls and women.

In 2020, it was revealed that it would take at least 67 years to bridge the gender equality gap in traditional media. In 2015, this figure was 72 years. The results of the study from 2020 indicate that changes in this area are very slow.

The researchers emphasize that in order to achieve full gender equality in the media, it is not enough to overcome the gender gap in quantitative terms – that is, to achieve an equal presence of women and men in the materials of journalists. The authors of the report insist that it is necessary to improve the quality of journalism and consider many stories through gender optics.

The representation of women in news doesn't exceed 30%

Women in %



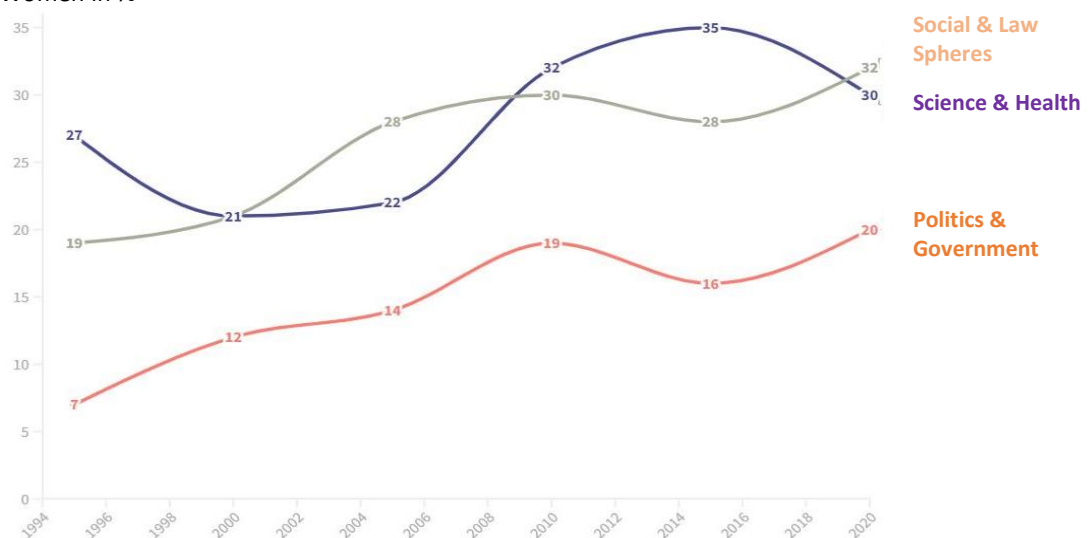
Source: GMMP

The authors of the monitoring note that the biggest gender gap is noted in news about politics – only 20% of women are represented in them.

The smallest gender gap is recorded in social materials and publications about science and health – the representation of women there exceeds 30%.

The representation of women in political news doesn't exceed 20%

Women in %



Source: GMMP

It is one thing to increase the representation of women in the materials of journalists, and quite another – the images in which they appear before readers. So, [according to monitoring](#), from 2015, **only 20% of the total number of women depicted in the media are presented as working people. At the same time, the media show women as unemployed and housewives in more than 60% of cases.**

The problem, the researchers say, is not only that the media reports focus on men, but also that journalists choose men when choosing interviewees – from experts to ordinary witnesses of incidents. At the same time, according to the 2020 report, there has been progress.

“In recent years, numerous female expert search initiatives have spread around the world. The media is clearly making an effort to diversify the pool of experts, responding to external pressure as well as internal industry efforts to improve. Currently, 24% of news experts are women. For many years, this figure was at the level of 19%,” the 2020 report says.

All types of functions are characteristic of men: men who express opinions based on personal experience, male eyewitnesses, and male politicians who provide personal opinions.

At the same time, when journalists portray women in similar functions, some additional role always appears for them. For example, if a woman is talking about personal experiences, she is more likely to be portrayed as a homemaker or mother.

The monitoring also states that women are often portrayed as victims and survivors of violence.

The overall share of stories centered on women has been relatively stable at 10% since 2000, but in 2020 this figure has dropped to 9%. Economic and political news are the least likely to focus on women.

The gender gap is also visible in those who cover the story - journalists more often put the woman in the center of attention of the material. At the same time, the choice of women as the main character of the material in the publications of male journalists does not exceed 10%.

Only 7% of stories touch on issues of gender inequality. Only 3% of stories explicitly challenge gender stereotypes. This suggests that gender stereotypes are firmly rooted in the media. For 10 years, there has been no progress in increasing the proportion of political news that explicitly challenges gender stereotypes.

The relative invisibility of women in traditional media has shifted to online platforms. The researchers note a striking similarity in how online media use traditional media models to broadcast news.

In general, there are only two key differences. First, women tell more stories online than in traditional media – more than 40% of the news published online is created by women.

Secondly, the choice of sources for publications is different. Researchers note that women journalists in online publications choose women as sources of their stories in more than 30% of cases. Men in online media choose women for their reporting in more than 20% of cases.

➤ ***Has the #MeToo movement changed anything?***

#MeToo is a hashtag that [went viral](#) on social media in October 2017. Under this hashtag, women condemned sexual violence and harassment. It gained popularity after the scandal and accusations of rape and sexual harassment against the influential film producer Harvey Weinstein. By the way, he was sentenced to 23 years in prison.

The #MeToo movement was popularized by actress Alyssa Milano, who offered to repost the stories of women who suffered from violence, or share their sad stories under this hashtag. Millions of people around the world still use this phrase to share stories of harassment, attempted rape and rape.

GMMP researchers note that women are under-represented as subjects and sources even in this topic, which specifically concerns women.

Researchers have identified disdainful attitudes towards women as sources in media reports, noting excessive trust on the part of journalists in law enforcement officials.

“The underrepresentation of girls and women in reporting on sexual harassment and rape, especially during Covid-19, when violence against women has reached pandemic proportions, signals to the media that many journalists lack accountability and respect for women. Silencing the voice of women is a trend discovered back in 2005. Then the researchers came to the conclusion that women are not the main ones even in stories that concern them more than men,” the study says.

The study also states that #MeToo-focused media are excluding victims of sexual violence from the agenda based on racial, class and other social identities. In journalistic articles, the focus is on the show business industry, and reporters often quote “famous, predominantly white and wealthy women.”

➤ ***Why is this happening?***

[Researchers](#), of course, say that journalists and the media do not specifically adhere to a policy of discrimination against women, but the problem in general is in already established institutions.

Feminist theorists [believe](#) that the principles of patriarchy are embedded in all modern basic structures of society and the operation of the entire system ensures the domination of men and the subordination of women. The media, being one of these structures, are also influenced by patriarchal attitudes. This is manifested in the fact that journalists do not change their approaches to work, despite the real success of women in reducing the gender gap.

As a result, journalists’ decisions about how to portray women in relation to men, whom to interview, and other such decisions can lead to deep discrepancies between reality and its reflection in the media.

That is why no one talks about an explicit policy aimed at gender discrimination against women, but it continues to exist due to historical inequalities and old approaches.

➤ ***What to do?***

The authors of various studies and manuals on gender-sensitive journalism believe that the [main reason](#) for the lack of coverage of gender issues in the media is that gender is still not on the news agenda.

There is still a perception among many journalists that “gender” is at best a narrow subject that should be left to those who specialize in “soft” stories, and which should not be a concern for journalists covering “big” news. It is not yet widely understood that gender mainstreaming can have a beneficial effect on coverage of events and topics traditionally classified as big news, such as conflicts and disasters, politics and business, crime and punishment.

It turns out that ethical coverage of gender issues will be possible only when every editorial staff takes care of it.

This process should involve not only ordinary journalists, but also editors with media owners. Self-regulatory bodies, schools of journalism, associations and trade unions should also be included in this process.

An important role in this is played by the ethical codes of journalists, which are adopted in many countries. In some countries, these codes are already gender-specific, but since the codes are advisory in nature, not all journalists follow them. However, researchers believe that strong gender-responsive media codes of ethics have the potential to create a specific type of practice that is gender sensitive and responsive.

In 2011, a study was conducted to determine gender status in the ethical codes of the media in the world. The study found that there are more than 400 general media codes of ethics around the world – they are key to holding journalists accountable, as long as they are respected and their application monitored.

Despite the abundance of codes, the analysis points to significant gaps in the implementation of their provisions. These gaps are due, among other factors, to a lack of clear language, a lack of understanding and a lack of practical guidance for their implementation.

However, codes still play an important role as guides for media professionals in ethical thinking, they also promote professional accountability and, last but not least, allow society to hold the media accountable for their work.

Numerous media respondents stated that there were no provisions in the codes of professional ethics for reporting on gender issues. But the results of the study directly contradict the data voiced by the respondents: in fact, in many countries, at the level of industry and associations, there are codes containing provisions on gender ethical practice.

This contradiction is indicative of the problem of poor dissemination of ethical codes, as well as the lack of awareness of journalists about them.

The study of various documents showed that codes of ethics and guidelines for the media most often do not take into account the gender aspects of journalism. In the few cases where emphasis is placed on gender equity, parity and sensitivity, provisions are often generalized and vague.

The prescriptions include gender-correct use of language, diversity in portrayal of roles, gender impartiality, and equality in the distribution of subjects. What is clearly missing there is a reasonable guide, that is, a procedure for journalists.

In addition, recommendations for gender-sensitive reporting often focus on topics such as gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. Also, there are often no mechanisms for the implementation and provision of measures to enforce the codes.

4.3. Experience of Kyrgyzstan

➤ *How are things going with coverage in Kyrgyzstan?*

In Kyrgyzstan, there have been no large-scale studies on how the media cover gender inequality or what images of women journalists use in their stories. However, there are still several reports that can help us draw certain conclusions.

In 2021, the “School of Peacemaking and Media Technologies in Central Asia” released the report ["Gender stereotypes in the media sphere of Kyrgyzstan"](#). The researchers studied the publications of about 10 online publications, as well as the discussion in several large groups on Facebook from October to December 2020.

The experts analyzed the gender balance of the news published on news agencies. It was observed only at the beginning of October, when the election campaign ended and the parliamentary elections started.

For example, in October of 2020, these were reports about candidates for the Jogorku Kenesh and stories about the activities of these persons. Journalists reported on their meetings with voters, described their positions, political/professional activities, or simply published statistics. The candidates also commented on the election process and shared their predictions. The strengthening of the gender balance in the media was also demonstrated by reports focused on women voters.

At the same time, the authors of the study identified the so-called content discrimination, which manifested itself in the underrepresentation of women in the media and public discourse. News agencies represented the opinions of male experts, male politicians 6 times more often than women. The visual series (photos, videos) depicting politicians and activists contained more men than women.

Against the background of the aggravation of the socio-political situation in Kyrgyzstan in October-November of 2020, social media users were more outspoken in their statements, broadcast gender intolerance, used sexist stereotypes that were widely disseminated on the Internet.

The authors of the study concluded that the media sector in Kyrgyzstan does not yet demonstrate genuine efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, it is often the media that propagate, feed and reinforce gender stereotypes and gender intolerance.

Similar conclusions about the underrepresentation of women in the media during the elections are described in the reports of OSCE observers.

- In the 2015 parliamentary elections, media coverage of women was cited as negligible. “During the election campaign, the public television channel KTRK devoted

95% of its time in news programs and 91% of its time in current affairs programs to male politicians. The rest of the media also carried out disproportionate coverage; between 88 and 98% of the time was devoted to male candidates,” [the report says](#) .

- In the 2020 parliamentary elections, a positive trend was [noted](#) – the media devoted separate debates to female candidates for deputies. But in general, during the speeches of women, gender issues were practically not given attention.
- The 2021 parliamentary elections rolled the country back [a little](#) – during the campaign, an overall low visibility of women was recorded, and issues of gender equality were hardly raised.

Also, a journalist Elena Nechaeva analyzed in her program [“Black Box White Noise”](#) which images of women were broadcast by state television channels in Central Asian countries on March 8, 2022.



Her analysis showed that journalists of state television channels, trying to congratulate women, only reinforce gender stereotypes. In this manual, we will consider only what images of women are broadcast on KTRK.

“At the state level in Kyrgyzstan, a woman is valued mainly for her reproductive function. At least, such a conclusion can be drawn from the congratulatory speech of the President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov. First, the mother and wife, and only then the specialist and leader,” the video says.

Sadyr Japarov's speech was broadcast on the main TV channels of the country, while KTRK did not have a single video about the annual marches for women's rights that took place in Bishkek and Osh. The main focus of the TV broadcast was focused on motherhood - on this day, viewers watched the stories of mothers with many children.

“Mothers have a big responsibility — they do a lot of housework, raise children and take care of all family members,” says Aibek Kadyrkulov, a resident of Bishkek, on the air of the KTRK TV channel.

In general, the main TV channel broadcasts the following images of women – a mother, a housewife, and only then a specialist. Women appear before us as television workers, medical staff, trolley bus drivers, as patrol officers, with bows and arrows in their hands.

“And it seems that the stereotype that a woman’s place in the kitchen has been destroyed. But none of the heroines earns a lot and does not take a leading position. And this reinforces another gender stereotype that it is men who should occupy high-ranking and highly paid positions,” concludes Nechaeva.

In general, the image of a woman in the media of Kyrgyzstan is presented in the form of a mother of many children, occupied exclusively with everyday life; a migrant woman who left her children at home and went to work; or even this woman who suffers beatings from her husband and is not going to change her already familiar way of life.

It can be concluded that the current situation in the media in Kyrgyzstan fully reflects the existing trends in the world - while patriarchal features can be traced even more clearly.

However, there are attempts to improve the situation. The following measures were included in the [National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality until 2020 and the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality](#):

- 31.3. Develop a methodological manual on the standards of gender-sensitive journalism
- 31.4. Gender training of media workers on the standards of gender-sensitive journalism

In addition, two guidelines were developed and published:

- In 2020, the [Guidance on Gender-Sensitive Reporting and Countering Extremist Propaganda through Media Literacy](#) was released.

It was [prepared](#) jointly with the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism, UN Women, PIL Research Company and Data Lab.



In general, the manual can be used by journalists, employees of the press services of government agencies, as well as teachers of journalism departments. Part of the manual is devoted to gender-sensitive coverage of events in the work of the media, journalists (also in relation to the work of press service employees of state bodies).

The manual paid attention to how the images of women are broadcast in the media and the representation of the interests of women in the media as a social group. Also there presents an analysis of media approaches to coverage of violence against migrant women.

The author of the analysis came to the conclusion that all the headlines of the Kyrgyz media publications studied show that journalists are not interested in either the victims themselves or their rapists, the appearance of videos on the Internet and the acts of violence themselves in the migratory environment are used as an excuse to reinforce stereotypical ideas about the normative models of femininity and masculinity, to consolidate stigma against men and women.

The manual provided general recommendations for journalists on gender-sensitive reporting.

- Also [a Guide to Gender Sensitive Journalism](#) was published in 2020.

It was funded by the OSCE, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The author was Yulia Gonchar.



The guide also talks about how the media portrays women in their stories, as well as a checklist for journalists to think about when writing stories. It also provides broader advice for journalists on gender-sensitive reporting and examples of stereotypes to avoid.

- A checklist for journalists on writing materials based on the principles of gender equality and gender-sensitive journalism has been [published on the](#) Mediasabak platform.

Developed at the initiative of the Ministry of Health and Social Development with the support of UNDP and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



The checklist contains information about gender stereotypes and gender roles, an explanation of the nature of sexism, and a definition of gender-sensitive journalism.

- The analytical publication “Cabar.asia” has developed “**Gender sensitive journalism. How to Cover Violence in the Media**” within its school, with duration of 6 weeks. Course authors: Gulnura Toralieva and Elizaveta Kuzmenko.



The course contains basic knowledge about what gender is, gender stereotypes and how to avoid gender-biased text. Also, as part of the course, you can learn how to cover violence in the media and blogs – from understanding what types of violence exist to the language of its coverage: terms and words that should and should not be written when describing cases of gender-based violence. Also an important component of the course is a module on how to talk with people who have experienced violence: how to interview, what is the ethics of communication.

- An online course has also been published on the UNDP website: “**Gender-Sensitive Journalism**”. It was developed at the request of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration with the support of UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The training module consists of three lessons and is approximately two to three hours long. There is a quiz at the end of the lessons. Based on the results of the test, you can get a certificate. The course explains what gender-sensitive journalism is, talks about types of violence, explains terms and gives an understanding of gender stereotypes. The course also breaks down examples of inappropriate media coverage and provides rules to keep in mind when writing stories about violence.

The course is in the [Russian language](#):



and also in the [Kyrgyz language](#):



- **Gender-ethical code:**

In Kyrgyzstan, a Gender and Ethical Code was developed - it was adopted on November 12, 2021 at the regional forum “Gender Optics in Media” in Bishkek, which was attended by representatives of regional media who signed the agreement. The Code was developed by participants in a six-month training on gender-sensitive journalism organized by the Media Support Center in collaboration with UN Women as part of the “Ray of Light” initiative.

[Agreement:](#)



[Code:](#)

Media organizations that have adopted this code are required to strive for gender equality in their content and editorial policies, and to combat gender stereotypes. The Code is based on the Constitution and laws of the Kyrgyz Republic, international documents adopted by the Kyrgyz Republic, the Code of Ethics for Journalists of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Control

The media organization deeply understands its role in building a prosperous and just society through the promotion of gender equality and will act accordingly.

The media organization does not allow gender discrimination in personnel policy, distribution of tasks and topics.

The media organization guarantees equal working conditions, equal pay and equal opportunities for women and men to move up the career ladder.

The media organization takes comprehensive measures to prevent sexual harassment, harassment and gender discrimination. If a complaint is received from employees, a fair decision will be made after careful review.

The media organization is developing an equally flexible policy for men and women to combine work with family or other life situations.

The media organization seeks to increase gender awareness and professional skills of its employees.

Content

The media organization does not allow gender stereotypes and discrimination in the content of materials and always strives to maintain gender equality.

The journalist avoids sexist hostility and uses gender-sensitive language.

The journalist, as a source of information, as an expert, provides equal opportunities for women and men and tries to portray each of them in non-traditional roles.

When covering the topic of gender-based violence, the journalist puts the rights and interests of the victim first. He refrains from painting the problem as a normal part of life.

4.4. Gender-Sensitive Journalism Tools

➤ ***Why do journalists in Kyrgyzstan write so often about violence against women, and why are their materials full of frames that justify the aggressors?***

There are several reasons for this. Journalists write a lot about gender-based violence, because the state mechanisms for protecting women from violence do not work in the country. Also, some media such materials catch up with traffic to sites. Therefore, some journalists are reluctant to use the standards of gender-sensitive journalism.

In addition, journalists in Kyrgyzstan do not have enough competencies, so they make mistakes when covering topics related to gender-based violence.

We must not forget about professional deformation – over time, the sensitivity of journalists decreases.

The following question is also very often asked: If there are more women in Kyrgyz journalism, then why is everything so bad with gender sensitivity in editorial offices when writing materials about violence against women?

Journalists do not live in a vacuum - there is a society that creates their picture of the world. Many women working in the media have a strong internal misogyny - hatred, hostility or ingrained prejudice towards women (young ladies, girls).

There is also such a phenomenon as gender socialization - this is the process of assimilation by a person of norms, rules of behavior and social attitudes in accordance with the prescribed gender role. Women in our country have actually been taught that male

violence is the norm. This setting is very difficult to overcome, and even more difficult to accept, that men are so dangerous.

This guide is designed to help journalists learn how to cover such sensitive topics correctly.

➤ **General checklist:**

- ✓ **The most important principle – do no harm!!!**
- ✓ How is the victim described?
- ✓ How are the actions of the aggressor/rapist/killer described?
- ✓ How strongly is the voice of power broadcast?
- ✓ Does the article contain information about the systemic nature of violence or is the case described as a single one?
- ✓ Does the article contain contacts of centers that can help a woman with a similar problem?

If the material contains shocking details that cannot be avoided, it is necessary to put a disclaimer that will warn the reader about this. These descriptions can be traumatic, bringing the person back to their own, possibly similar, painful memories. The person should be left with the choice of whether she or he wants to see such triggered content or not.

Examples of disclaimers: *"The material may contain triggers - descriptions of situations, photographs that can cause repeated experiences of psychological trauma."*

"Warning! The article contains details of the description of the murders of women."

The main frames that journalists most often use when describing gender-based violence are those that lead the reader to think about victim-blaming and justifying the perpetrator.

Victimblaming is a phenomenon when the victim of a crime, accident or any type of violence is given full or partial responsibility for a crime committed against him/her. Victimblaming often causes re-traumatization in the victim or her loved ones.

Feel free to involve professionals who work with survivors of violence on a regular basis. They will help not only to understand the topic, but also give advice on terminology.

➤ **How to write about domestic violence?**

Use neutral language when describing the victim. You shouldn't use the word "victim" unless the woman was killed, because that's a stigma. This word seems to say that the woman was and is helpless. This word in itself excludes the possibility of resistance on the part of a woman. This word evokes negative feelings and traumatic memories in many affected women. It is better to write **"victim of violence"** or **"survivor of violence"**.

When journalists describe a victim of a beating, her portrait is important. It must be neutral, otherwise it leads to victim blaming.

In the materials of journalists there should not be such phrases: “she married the wrong person”, “it’s her own fault”, “she saw it”, “why didn’t she get divorced”. In a situation of violence, there is only one culprit - the person who committed the criminal acts.

You can not call domestic violence **a conflict or a family quarrel**.

Violence can never be a conflict or a family quarrel, and vice versa. Every family has conflicts and quarrels. Domestic violence differs from conflict in that it is systematically repeated incidents of violence with increasing frequency, the purpose of which is to subjugate another person and gain power and control over him. At its core, conflict has a problem that can be resolved. Equal partners argue, disagree, defend their opinion. The conflict has its end.

Domestic violence, on the other hand, does not imply equality of the parties, it is a learned behavior pattern when one person seeks to control another using physical strength, economic opportunities, status, children, etc.

Journalists should not look for the reason for beating a woman. We are talking about such frames as “**didn’t cook dinner**”, “**poorly raised a child**”, “**spent a lot of money on groceries**”, and so on. All this only justifies the abuser.

➤ *Why is it difficult for women to leave an abuser?*

Human rights activists who help women victims of violence agree that breaking out of the circle of violence is very difficult for many reasons.



Firstly, a woman does not always understand that she is in a situation of violence, because the aggressor often uses an “emotional swing”. After a beating, he usually surrounds the injured woman with **care and attention to reassure her that everything will be fine in their relationship**. **Or the woman is so depressed because of the systematic violence that she simply does not have the strength to decide to leave.**

Secondly, the woman is afraid to ask for help, because the abuser often threatens to cause even more injuries or murder if the victim writes a statement to the police.

Thirdly, the injured woman often does not feel support from her inner circle. Many relatives simply do not believe the victim, because her husband behaves like a good person in public. Or relatives say that you can't wash dirty linen in public, and getting a divorce is a shame.

Fourthly, most often, the affected women do not work anywhere, which means they have nothing to rent housing or feed their children. To defend your rights in court and achieve a divorce or compensation, you need a lawyer who also costs money.

Fifthly, women do not trust the police because they do not treat domestic violence as a serious crime.

Sixthly, affected women do not always know where to turn for help.

Seventhly, women are afraid of persecution from their former spouses.

It would take a long time to enumerate why it is difficult for women to get away from an abuser, but the most important thing is that the stereotypical phrase **"she is to blame"** determines the work of law enforcement officers and judges in Kyrgyzstan, as well as society's attitude to violence as a norm. This stereotype actually prevents women from getting the help they need.

➤ **Test yourself. What's wrong with these headers?**

"She didn't pay enough attention." A man beat his wife and tried to bury her alive - he was sentenced to community service.

"In Bishkek, a man beat his wife on the street. She refused to write a statement."

"In Kadamzhay, a man beat up an old woman because she put a bad spell to his mother"

"A man in a supermarket beat a girl for refusing to become acquainted with him"

All of these headlines contain signs of victimblaming. The wording "she refused to write a statement" leads to accusations against the victim that she encourages the impunity of the aggressor. However, journalists should make it clear to readers that the aggressor goes unpunished, not because of the victim, but because of the broken protection system.

Putting wording about why the girl was beaten in the headline leads to the normalization of violence. After all, it turns out that there are some reasons when a woman can be beaten. Many journalists note that by making the so-called "reasons" in the headlines, they want to draw attention to the absurdity of the situation. However, this has the opposite effect.

➤ **How to write about sexual violence?**

It is important to use precise language when describing sexual violence. Rape never means **sex or an inconsistent “relationship”**. This is a violent crime and the perpetrator must be held accountable for it. You should not call the rapist **partner, lover**, and so on. Also, **underage girls cannot “have sex” and they cannot have adult “sex partners”** because that is sexual abuse and these people are rapists.

You cannot shift the responsibility for rape to the victim – journalists should not look for the reason why the rapist did it. As reasons, it is often indicated that the woman was **“openly dressed”, “was drunk”, “provoked the rapist by flirting”, “was late on the street”, “she got into the car”** and so on. Violence cannot be justified on such grounds.

By accusing the rape victim of not being dressed or being in the wrong place, society only encourages the rapist and the aggressor. A crime is always the fault of the perpetrator, not the victim.

➤ *Can clothing be used as an excuse for sexual assault?*

Were all the raped women dressed in a particular way? No. In Kyrgyzstan, they even held [an exhibition](#), which showed the clothes of raped women - among the exhibits were a children's dress, jeans and a T-shirt, a dressing gown and a scarf, and a school uniform.



[Kloop and Mediazona](#) conducted a study and found out that Kyrgyz women are most often raped or tried to rape by their acquaintances. Only in one of the five cases of rape, the perpetrator did not know the victim. This is another argument in favor of the fact that it does not matter to the rapist what the woman is wearing.

The study also found that rapists targeted women they knew who were in a vulnerable position:

- children or teenagers;
- women living alone or at home alone at the time of the violence;
- women with disabilities;
- drunk women.

At the same time, in more than a third of cases, rape or attempted rape was committed at the home of the victim.

To learn more about how to fight rape culture not only in publications, but also in real life, see the [UN brochure in Kyrgyzstan](#).

➤ **Test yourself. What's wrong with these headers?**

In Issyk-Kul, a man entered a house and raped a female pensioner. She forgave him

I wanted to rape a girl because she smokes and drinks - crime stories of Kyrgyzstan

Taxi driver who raped a woman with a child: "She was drunk"

It doesn't seem to matter what kind of violence against women journalists write about in Kyrgyzstan. There is only one pattern - many headlines contain signs of victimblaming. The wording "she forgave him" leads to the fact that accusations begin against the victim that she encourages the impunity of the rapist. However, journalists should make it clear to readers that the rapist goes unpunished, not because of the victim, but because of a broken protection system.

The inclusion of wording in the headline about why the girl was raped leads to the normalization of sexual violence. After all, it turns out that there are some reasons when a woman can be raped. Many journalists note that by making the so-called "reasons" in the headlines, they want to draw attention to the absurdity of the situation. However, this has the opposite effect.

➤ **How to write about the kidnapping of women for forced marriage?**

- ✓ Do not write that the kidnapped girl is a **"bride"** or **"chosen one"**. It is not recommended to use the phrase **"bride stealing"** or **"bride kidnapping"**. No need to call the kidnapper **"groom"** or **"betrothed"**.
- ✓ Don't describe kidnapping a girl for forced marriage as a beautiful Kyrgyz custom. It is worth explaining in the article that kidnapping is a criminal offense.
- ✓ It is not necessary to describe why the rapist committed the kidnapping. **"I didn't dare to get acquainted"**, **"I couldn't pay the dowry"**, **"she shouldn't have married another"**, **"it**

was time for me to get married” – the disclosure of all these “motives” sounds like an attempt to justify the rapist.

- ✓ In materials about abductions for forced marriage, it makes sense to indicate that girls have to stay in the abductor's house out of fear for their lives. The kidnapper can rape the girl **“so that she stays and does not go to another”**. This crime is committed by men out of a desire to dominate, to show their power and control. Since there is a cult of virginity in Kyrgyzstan, the kidnapper uses this to his advantage so that the girl will definitely stay with him.
- ✓ At the moment of such a stressful situation, absolutely everything puts pressure on a woman. Very often a woman does not find support from relatives because her family is afraid of shame. It is worth focusing not on the fact that the girl did not leave, but on the fact that kidnapping women is a crime.
- ✓ In no case should you romanticize the cases of kidnapping girls for forced marriage. It is necessary to explain to readers that the victim can go to the police not only because of the kidnapping, but also because of rape.

➤ *What's wrong with these headers?*

“She betrayed me”: the kidnapper of Aizada Kanatbekova sent an audio message before his death

Suspect in kidnapping Aizada: “Zamir wanted to be romantic”

These headlines show signs of justifying the kidnapper, as well as romanticizing the crime. In many articles broadcasting the last message of Zamirbek Tenizbayev, the killer of Aizada Kanatbekova, the media emphasized that he loved her. In addition, the news publications gave almost no context about the crime committed. If you perceive the news with the broadcast of the message of the kidnapper out of context, then sympathy for the killer may arise.

➤ *What mistakes are made in these videos?*



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gebckJZI_hU



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7r6U7SBOKU>

In the videos presented, there are signs of victim blaming and an attempt to justify the aggressor.

For example, in the commercials, Aizada's kidnapping is referred to as "bride kidnapping", and it is also reported that Aizada was killed after the kidnapper quarreled with her. Such frames justify or level the severity of the crime.

The videos also talk about Tenizbaev's last message, where he accused her of betrayal. "I love her very much and cannot live without her. She does not want to live with me, no matter how much I asked. She said: "Wait for a month." I was waiting. Then another month ... But now that's it, I don't believe anymore. The broadcast of Tenizbaev's message leads to the fact that readers have compassion and sympathy for him. Reports that Tenizbaev killed Aizada Kanatbekova because of unrequited love romanticize a serious crime.

➤ **Materials for additional viewing:**

Mini-documentary film "She yelled: "Mom!""



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db5FOc6ozcw>

Mini-documentary film: “Kidnapping and murder of Aizada Kanatbekova: A year later”

«Those responsible for the death of Aizada should be punished!»



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY4-yjFpR9w>

➤ *Incidents of gender-based violence often end in "no claims". What is really hidden behind this wording?*

Often cases of domestic violence, rape, kidnapping for forced marriage are closed due to the fact that the victim “refused claims”. Refusal of claims is often interpreted as the fact that the woman is satisfied with everything and she herself is to blame for the fact that violence against her will continue.

- It is necessary to explain to readers that when a woman “refuses her claims”, she often does this under pressure from the aggressor herself, the family and the public.

And when you write in the news that a victim of a violent crime has waived her claims, you should clearly understand that this is most often not a voluntary decision. Of course, a woman will do this, because if she does not withdraw her claims, then her husband (intimate partner) will simply take her life.

- It is necessary to focus on the vicious practice that the system provides for such a mechanism as the termination of the case due to the refusal of claims – the crime is committed, but the offender is not punished. The problem is not with women, but with vicious practices.

➤ **How to write about femicide (murder of women)?**

- A beaten woman should be called **a murdered woman, not a dead one** - they die by accident, and men often beat and kill women intentionally.
- Call murder a femicide. In Kyrgyzstan, most murders of women occur as a [result of domestic violence](#) and women are killed by their intimate partners. Murders due to domestic violence are considered femicide. **Femicide is the murder of a woman, usually committed by a man on the basis of hatred of a woman, gender discrimination, and/or as a result of gender violence with the connivance of the state.**
- We must not allow the romanticization of the actions of the aggressor. Very often in the news they write that a man beat a woman because she [“didn't pay attention to him”](#) or beat her [to death “out of jealousy”](#). **Such a description reinforces the stereotype that a woman must do something in order not to be beaten or killed.** The mention of jealousy as the reason for the murder can lead the reader to the idea that the man is not guilty of anything, succumbed to emotions. However, there can be no reason for killing.
- It is better not to write, for example, the phrase **“crime motivated by passion”, “motivated by jealousy”**, because this justifies the aggressor. Journalists should not look for excuses or “motives” (alcohol, drugs, fights, jealousy, breakups, infidelity, and so on) that only divert attention from the central issue: violence. **The reason for gender violence is the control and dominance that some men try to achieve over women.**

Recently, researchers from three countries of the post-Soviet space conducted a [study](#) on how the language of publications affects the attitude of society towards crime.

They **came** to the conclusion that the majority of Russian-language media journalists broadcast the “voice of power”, justify the criminal, thus forming an attitude towards the problem of violence in society as a norm. They studied positive and negative frames based on the [research of](#) their Canadian colleagues.

An analysis of 250 texts showed that in four out of five texts, journalists broadcast the voice of power and do not mark the murder of women as part of a systemic problem. Every fifth text blames the victim and does not tell the story of violence that ended in murder. Similar figures were obtained by Canadian researchers in their own country.

The Russian-language media almost never show the victim in a positive or even neutral way, they do not note the gender nature of the problem. It turned out to be difficult to find

positive frames even in publications that position themselves as sensitive to the problem of domestic violence.

Positive and negative frames in texts about femicide

Each frame reflects one main idea of the text or its fragment. There are more negative frames that can lead the reader to think about the justification of the murder.

POSITIVE FRAMES	NEGATIVE FRAMES
Gender nature of the problem (<10)	Voice of power (>200)
Marking of femicide (<10)	Individualization (>200)
Positive portraying of a victim (<10)	Victim blaming (57)
Humanization of the victim (<10)	No documenting of the history of violence (43)
Information about help with violence (<10)	Social stigma (>20)
	Defective system of criminal punishment (14)

“Many of the interviewed journalists from Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed that the Russian-language media lack the rules for writing news and long texts about domestic violence and the killing of women,” the study says.

The researchers argue that the [media can influence](#) the killing of women.

Sometimes the media broadcast a positive portrait of a criminal, justify his actions, and add social capital to him. The responsibility for the crime falls on the victim – if she drank alcohol, wanted to leave the man, gave rise to jealousy. The media broadcast examples of murders of women to men, while not assessing these crimes negatively.

A crime that has been widely publicized in the media may entail [imitations of it](#). Copycats either repeat some of the components (method, choice of victim, murder weapon, location, etc.) of the previous murder, or repeat everything down to the smallest detail.

After the case of the murder of Anastasia Yeshchenko (a historian from St. Petersburg Oleg Sokolov [killed](#) his graduate student in 2019) and a large number of publications in the media, the map of similar crimes expanded in just a few months. Similar crimes were registered in different cities – from Murmansk to the Stavropol Territory.



[Interactive map](#)

That is why it is better not to describe in detail how the murder was committed.

Example: ***In Moscow, a Kyrgyzstani was detained who had been wanted for 11 years for the brutal murder of a woman in Kyrgyzstan. According to investigators, in 2010, several men lured an employee of the State Registration Service into a deserted place. They, using a stun gun, extorted \$10,000 from her. Not getting what they wanted, the killers broke her skull bones, ribs, beat her to death, and threw her body into the canal. One managed to escape, while the rest were convicted.***

It is enough to simply write that the men brutally killed the woman, without listing the details. When you list such details, you broadcast the method of murder.

Journalists and editors who work on both short and long texts have said in interviews and surveys that making content about femicidal crimes more gentle can be done by taking a few steps.

- ✓ *The editors can draw up an ethical code;*
- ✓ *The editors can help a journalist in the fight against burnout;*
- ✓ *The editorial staff can qualitatively organize the workflow;*
- ✓ *The journalist may try to cover topics related to violence in more detail;*
- ✓ *The journalist may not justify the criminal;*

- ✓ *The journalist may not blame the victim;*
- ✓ *The journalist can carefully place accents in the text;*
- ✓ *The journalist and editor can participate in gender-related discussions and educational programs. Often journalists lack the awareness to look at an individual crime as part of a systemic problem.*

[More](#) information on how to write about femicide can be [found on the website](#) of the Moscow Women's Museum.

➤ **Test yourself. What's wrong with the title?**

In Issyk-Kul, a man entered a house and raped a female pensioner. She forgave him

This headline shifts the focus from the man's crime to the woman's. At the same time, the journalists wrote that the woman forgave the man, although the court order states that she "refused her claims."

In social networks under the article in the comments, users began to draw their conclusions: "Grandma was lucky" Didn't she ask for an investigative experiment?", "He just has to get married, since the lady has no complaints", "Apparently she liked it", "The victim should not have taken the application from the police. Because of such unprincipled people, criminals walk free", "Maybe such "generous" people should also be fined, punished?! As it were, they sow impunity, in a sense...".

This approach on the part of journalists led to victim-blaming against the raped woman.

- ✓ *If you change the approach to coverage, then you can focus on the fact that the system does not protect society from rapists. A woman could refuse claims, because, for example, she was under pressure. But this does not mean that the state, represented by the court, should pass a lenient sentence on the rapist.*

Here is an example of a valid header:

Issyk-Kul: Court sentenced a man to community service for raping a pensioner

Here, the focus has shifted to the actions of the court, and users have a natural question: why did the man receive not a real term for rape, but community service.

➤ **What is wrong with this piece of text?**

"During the operational-search activities, the spouse of the deceased A.U. admitted that there was a quarrel between them. The man also confessed that he punched the woman twice in the face and kicked her in the head," [reads a press release](#) about the murder of a woman in January 2020 in the Naryn region.

At the same time, then the man called the reason for the murder of his wife “financial problems in the family.” During the investigation, it turned out that the woman died after being beaten as early as nine o'clock in the evening, but he called the doctors after midnight.

If journalists publish this text without changes, then this is a broadcast of the “voice of power”. It is not always beneficial for law enforcement officers to call a spade a spade, so they write that “there was a family quarrel between the spouses,” although in fact the husband killed his wife. Also in the text there are signs of justifying the aggressor when it comes to the reasons for his actions. There is a feeling that because of “financial problems in the family” you can kill women.

➤ Image Requirements

Shocking photos and videos only increase the publication’s traffic. Again, this may be contrary to the “Do Not Harm” principle.

Provocative photos and videos, headlines and leads, are used everywhere in journalism. Materials on the topic of domestic and other gender-based violence are no exception. Such a representation will not solve the problem, will not attract more public attention to it and will not help the victims. On the contrary, it will cause a “[reverse effect](#)”.

Example: A woman who lives in violence sees or reads a story of violence that ended in the death or serious physical injury of another woman. Then she sees a random picture or a photo with a bloody knife/huge clenched fist and decides something like this: “My husband is not that dangerous yet ... because he still does not show such cruel physical aggression, but only harasses.”

- ✓ Journalists must fight the myth that real violence is only violence when they are beaten to death, when there are fractures, serious injuries and mutilations. It must be pointed out that violence comes in many forms (sexual, physical, psychological and economic) and that it can be hidden, disguised as love and care, but this makes it even more dangerous. In journalistic material, there should always be an emphasis on the fact that any violence is not the norm.
- ✓ It is necessary to avoid excessive sensationalism and naturalism when showing cruelty and violence.

➤ How you should not?

Photography and video help shape people's opinions and perspectives. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully consider each frame. Pictured here is a woman who was beaten up. How do you think she will feel when she sees her broken face on the news bulletins?

In Kadamjay, a man beat his grandmother because she caused damage to his mother.

22/12/21 09:51

INCIDENT

0

Read and see us at



Bishkek, 22.12.21. /Indira Kamchybekova - Kabar/. In social networks, information spread that tajiks in the city of Aidarken allegedly beat up a grandmother in a car.

According to the press service of the Department of Internal Affairs of Batken region, this information does not correspond to reality.

According to the police, on December 18 at about 2:20 p.m., A.U., a 30-year-old (of Kyrgyz nationality), a resident of the village of Sur, put 61-year-old M.Z. in his car under the pretext that he would take her home from the bazaar. However, on the Aydarken-Soh road, he beat an elderly woman allegedly because she had damaged his mother and disabled her.

This fact was registered in the ERPP under article 280 (Hooliganism) of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, pre-trial proceedings have been initiated.

The suspect was taken to the IVS. The investigation is ongoing.

➤ How can you?

The image should complement the text. You should be careful not to use someone else's face. Therefore, you can create your own illustrations.



Illustration author: Tatyana Zelenskaya for Kloop.kg.

Raped women are often filmed with their heads down. They should not be shown as guilty of violence.

It is better not to use a photo where there is:

- Murder weapons;
- Blood;
- Corpses and parts of corpses;
- A staging with blood, a fist, an overhanging rapist, a female sufferer;
- Intimate photos from social networks, photos of the children of the victim, other relatives as the main illustration;
- Nude women;
- Meat grinder with minced meat, terrible dolls.

Can be used:

- ✓ Killer's face
- ✓ Victim's face (no injury)
- ✓ Joint photo of the victim and the killer
- ✓ Location of the incident, if none of the above is listed there
- ✓ Photos from the apartment of the murdered and/or murderer
- ✓ Witnesses, police officers, neighbors, relatives (with their consent)
- ✓ Special services vehicles (no plates)
- ✓ Photos from protests against violence against women, candles and flowers
- ✓ The outline used by the police to trace the body.

4.5. Gender statistics and gender data journalism

In general, when we talk about gender-sensitive coverage, this does not mean that we are talking only about materials about violence. As mentioned above, the problem of gender-based violence is acute in Kyrgyzstan.

However, journalists should also talk about other issues that women face, or tell about their success stories.

If you don't know where to find a story or story for an article about a woman, gender statistics can help.

For example, using it you can tell that [stereotypes](#) lead to the fact that women are less likely to study for high-paying professions.

It is the data that will help to find completely different focuses and fully reveal the topic of gender inequality.

➤ *What is data journalism?*

[Anastasia Valeeva](#), an international trainer in data journalism, gives the following definition: **Data journalism is, first of all, journalism that uses data to create stories.**

One of the most [common definitions](#) of data journalism is: **Data journalism is the collection, cleaning, organization, analysis, visualization and publication of data to create journalistic stories.** This definition lists the basic steps for creating a history date.

➤ *Where to look for data?*

Stage No 1. Data collection

The first step in **creating** a date history is collecting data. But how do you know what data to collect? There are two options here: either you initially have a question, the answer to which you want to find in the data, or you get data in which you want to find interesting points.

A question or hypothesis may arise from a news agenda. For example, you open a news site and find out that the authorities want to raise the salaries of teachers. This information can be turned into a data-driven story when you find out what the average salary of a teacher is and whether it is possible to live on it normally with current prices. You can also find out from there that most teachers are women and explain that men simply will not agree to work for such a salary. All these data can be pulled from statistics.

And sometimes the data comes to journalists themselves when departments announce some statistics. Looking at their data, you can ask yourself different questions. Is this a new trend or a stable situation from year to year? Perhaps there is some kind of surge somewhere – then you need to find out the reason for such a sharp increase. To find out the answers to these questions, you may need to look for additional data.

Gender statistics on the website of the National Statistical Committee, if you follow this [link](#). There are the tables collected, where there is a breakdown by gender.

However, you can also study the collection of the [National Statistical Committee “Men and Women”](#). It comes out once a year, it contains data on the number of women and men, life expectancy, morbidity, educational level and economic activity. The collection is published annually.

Also, gender statistics can be seen in the collection of the National Statistical Committee on [crime](#). It comes out every five years and contains data on gender-based violence.

Another worth paying attention to is [the Time Budget Survey](#), which is also conducted by the National Stack. From this survey, you will be able to understand what exactly men and women in Kyrgyzstan spend their time on. It is thanks to these data that we know that women in our country [spend](#) four times more time on unpaid housework and parenting than men. And if a woman works, then she does [not have](#) free time at all.

In addition to national data, there are also data generated by international organizations. For example, [UN Women](#) also collects gender statistics. Data School Kyrgyzstan has compiled a table on its [website](#) with various data for all of [Central Asia](#) - there are some statistics on gender as well.

Data journalist [Saviya Khasanova](#) collected all the information about femicide around the world. There you can also get acquainted with the main criteria of femicide and see how it is being studied in other countries.

Stage No. 2. Data preparation and analysis

When you have finally collected all the data that is needed for the story, you need to clean it up. The process of cleaning and organizing data is the most time-consuming, but also the most crucial for data journalism.

As a rule, this work is done in Microsoft Excel, Google spreadsheets or other spreadsheets. You can learn this [online](#) or at data processing trainings. As a result, your data should become “clean”, that is, suitable for analysis using a computer.

How can a computer analyze the data? First of all, these are simple mathematical operations, such as calculating the sum and average, calculating a share or changing an indicator.

But the most important thing here is journalism; that is, how these calculations will help you answer the questions for the story.

The more complex the calculations, the more unexpected story you can create. For example, using statistical analysis methods, you can establish a correlation or even dependence of one indicator on another.

Stage No. 3. Data communication

Now that you've completed your analysis and are ready to tell your audience about it, it's time to find the right words, images, and characters for your story.

You don't have to write boring about data, you can leave all the math behind the scenes by providing a link to your calculations. And in the story itself, describe how what you found in the data manifests itself in life and what consequences it can lead to.

Think about what kind of experts and heroes you need to illustrate the issue you want to raise in your story.

One way to tell your story is through data visualization. At the same time, it is important to know the basic principles of design and be able to choose the right type of chart for what you want to convey to the audience. Classic charts, such as the bar chart to compare data across categories and the line chart to indicate a trend, never go out of style. And if you want to experiment, there are many [directories](#) and [online resources](#) to help you choose the type of chart you want.

Directly for creating visualizations, there are also many online tools, including free ones. Beginners are recommended to start with [Datawrapper](#) (the site has a [blog with instructions](#)), [Infogram](#), and advanced users should get acquainted with [Flourish](#) and [Tablo](#).

Tips from Anastasia Valeeva:

- ✓ **do not be afraid of numbers;**
- ✓ **organize work in stages, from idea to visualization;**
- ✓ **read the news and try to turn the news item into a question that can be answered in the data;**
- ✓ **read analytical reports and studies and try to understand this language learn the functions of Microsoft Excel;**
- ✓ **if you're new to data visualization, try starting with the Datawrapper service.**

If you want to learn even more about how to make data-driven stories, then Kyrgyzstan has already created a special guide for you: [Finding Treasures in Data](#). The manual was published in the Kyrgyz and Russian languages.



➤ **What does data journalism allow journalists in Kyrgyzstan to do with gender data?**

- ***Write about gender-based violence from new angles without victim-blaming or reinforcing stereotypes.***
- The project [“In front of everyone”](#) on the basis of data shows that in Kyrgyzstan it is very difficult to punish the aggressors for domestic violence.
- The project [“Kill You Cannot Die”](#) tells that women in Kyrgyzstan are forced to kill their partners in order to protect themselves from domestic violence.
- Material [Acquaintance, family member, partner. We show on the data who most often rapes women in Kyrgyzstan.](#)

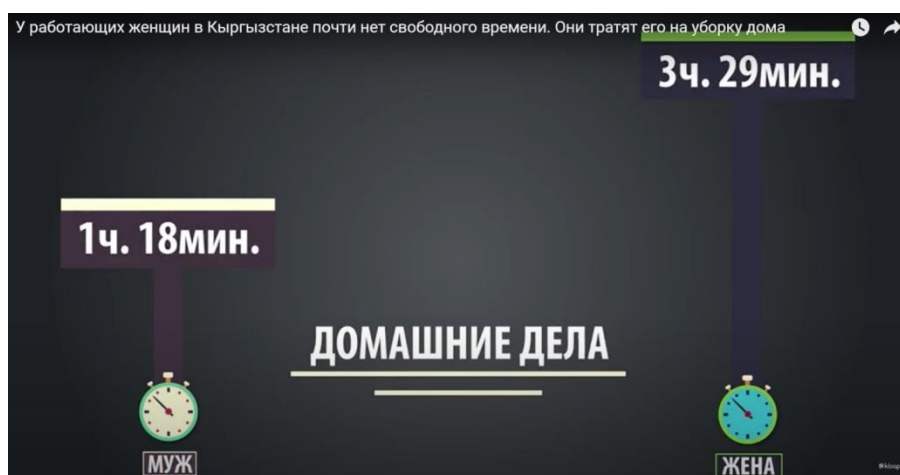
- ["I would have killed her anyway"](#) Kloop's research on femicide in Kyrgyzstan.
- ***Data journalism helps to tell about how stereotypes influence the life of women in Kyrgyzstan.***
- The [Vaccine Against Stereotypes](#) project talks about what prevents girls in Kyrgyzstan from finding their mission.
- The project ["What did this woman lose there?"](#) talks about inequality in the Kyrgyz government.



Illustration: Alexandra Titova for Kloop.kg.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivnRklEhUgY&t=1s>

- ***Data journalism helps to educate the audience.***
- ***Test:*** [How are they protected from pregnancy in Kyrgyzstan?](#)
- ***Have you ever thought about how much time women spend on domestic unpaid work? To find the answer to this question, you need to follow the data.***



<https://youtu.be/FPWjRynf8UI>

The [Data School of Kyrgyzstan](#) collects stories on its website that have been created by alumni of the Internews Data Journalism Scholarship in Kyrgyzstan.

There are collected stories created on the basis of gender statistics:

- Women in childbirth in Kyrgyzstan die more often than in Kazakhstan. What is it with flour here?
- New law against domestic violence - what has changed a year after its adoption?
- Little moms. 12% of girls in Kyrgyzstan get married before the age of 18.
- “Not protected - completely trusted.” Why Kyrgyz women become more likely to become infected with HIV
- “This game is not for you.” Why are there so few women in Kyrgyz politics?
- In Kyrgyzstan , the article against *ala kachuu* practically does not work. Talking about data
- “No one will marry”: How do gender stereotypes prevent girls from developing in sports?

Most of the work of journalists focuses on topics of violence against women, reproductive health, as well as the place of women in power. However, there are still many topics not covered.

5. WORKSHOP

➤ *What to do if your media does not use a gender-sensitive approach when writing articles?*

- ✓ It is necessary to conduct trainings on a permanent basis not only for journalists, but also for editors on gender sensitivity. Journalists should understand that a lot has changed in the world and should follow the trends.
- ✓ Until journalists and editors master gender optics, they will not be able to write about gender inequality and challenge gender stereotypes.
- ✓ It is necessary to improve editorial policy, update editorial instructions with a focus on overcoming content discrimination against women and eradicating gender stereotypes and clichés in media materials. The editorial policy should include a section on gender policy with specific references to media practices and sources.
- ✓ A code of ethics for journalists should include a gender perspective.
- ✓ Journalists should create materials about the role of women in society, their contribution to the development of the country, educate the audience about human rights and gender equality, conduct investigative journalism about the facts of discrimination and violence against women and girls, showing the negative consequences for society.
- ✓ The media should create self-regulatory mechanisms to overcome gender stereotypes and follow the rules in practice. Periodic internal monitoring of media content can be carried out to ensure compliance with gender-sensitive journalism standards.
- ✓ What points should be paid attention to when monitoring?
 - Representation of women in the materials in different roles.
 - Non-stereotypical image of the heroine (it is not necessary to show women in the role of mothers and exemplary housewives all the time).
 - Fighting gender inequality and stereotypes through materials.

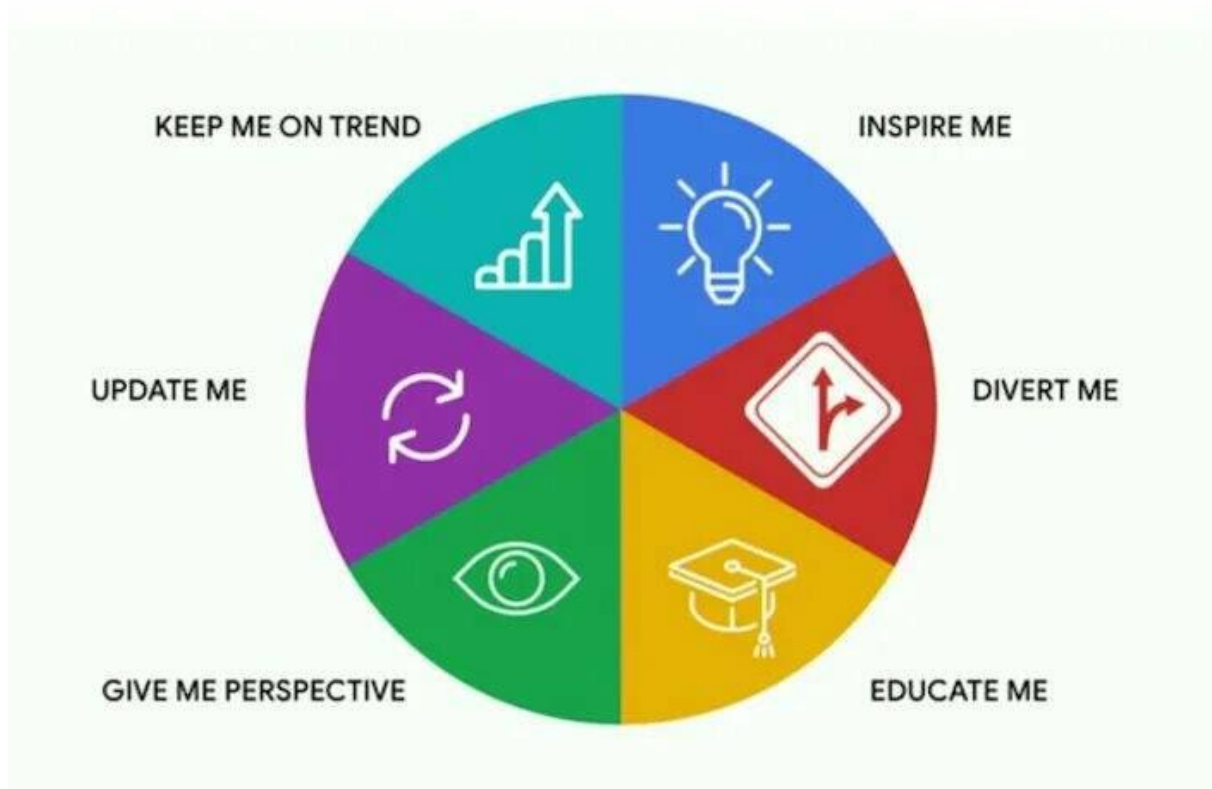
➤ *Is gender-sensitive journalism only about violence?*

No. There are many more topics that journalists can touch on in their materials. We can talk about other aspects of gender inequality. In order to come up with focuses for other articles that will address aspects of women's rights, you can use the "News Audience Needs Model".

[Dmitry Shishkin](#), an independent media digital consultant, promotes [the audience's news needs model](#), which was developed by the BBC.

The media, as news providers, must meet the needs of their audience. The needs of the audience are: inform me, clarify me - give perspective, enlighten me - educate me, keep me trending, entertain me and inspire me.

News needs model - BBC (since 2017)



Below is a description of each type of news needs with a gender context and examples of relevant headlines and publications.

Inform Me This news need speaks for itself - the article will inform you about the latest facts on the topic. Usually these are breaking news or reports from the field:

Parliament fails to meet gender quota again

Three Kyrgyz athletes became winners of the Tokyo Olympics

Keep me trending Here your main allies are social networks. It is important for you to know everything that is happening on your channels and beyond. You can make an excellent selection of tweets, FB posts or other messages from social networks on a particular topic. However, always remember that social networks do not represent society as a whole, so if something is in trend, this does not mean that everyone is talking about it.

Kyrgyz mentality and candid photos of Nazira Aitbekova. What's happening?

Such material may reflect how the discussion in social networks. For example, candid photos of TV presenter and actress Nazira Aitbekova caused a big discussion – she faced condemnation.

Explain to me Informing the audience is the primary responsibility of most media outlets, but you can inform people without necessarily just publishing facts, which other competitors abound. Tell the backstory, give opposing opinions and points of view, and let the reader figure it out for himself. The question in the title, the expression “experts argue” and so on...

How has the coronavirus pandemic increased the burden on women? Experts explain

Women in Kyrgyzstan work mainly in the social sphere – in education or medicine. Moreover, even in these areas, they are less likely to occupy leadership and prestigious positions - they work as teachers or nurses. The coronavirus pandemic has increased the workload on these professionals - teachers had to develop new curricula and master gadgets, while nurses took on the main burden of caring for patients with coronavirus.

Experts explain why the number of teenage pregnancies remains high in Kyrgyzstan

The problem of early marriages and early pregnancy is still relevant for Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, journalists can write about it from completely different focuses, ranging from how society puts pressure on little girls, ending with the inability of the state to solve the problem.

Enlighten me Use Google Trends or AnswerThePublic (and their equivalents), great sources of relevant, timely questions your audience is looking for answers to. If you regularly use technical terms - medical, business or political - always remember that many in your audience are unlikely to know their meaning. Start from the very beginning!

Here you can talk about everything related to sexual practices for women. The topic of sex is taboo in Kyrgyzstan, but journalists can create ethical educational materials. For example, one of the most popular content on Kloop is **What is a female orgasm and how to achieve it?** This means that the audience has a demand for quality explanatory content about it, especially in the Kyrgyz language. This can also include educational materials related to common [myths about sex](#).

Why does Kyrgyzstan still have a list of prohibited professions for women?

Kyrgyzstan still has a list of [professions prohibited for women](#). Despite the fact that there are not many professions in our country at all, the presence of such a list confirms the inequality of men and women in the world of work.

A similar list was created in the USSR, allegedly as part of the state's concern for women's health. But we all understand that the Soviet Union, where this list appeared, was built on

quite definite principles. The Soviet empire needed working hands and healthy people capable of reproducing their own kind.

So, all the infrastructure that we inherited from the USSR - kindergartens and schools in microdistricts - was built not because the government cared exclusively about the comfort of women, but because if a woman has a child attached, then she cannot devote herself to work all day. And the list of prohibited professions [was compiled](#) primarily in order to control the reproductive system of women and increase the birth rate.

Women in the regions of Kyrgyzstan may not be able to afford contraceptives.

Understanding

Women in regions of Kyrgyzstan may not have access to contraceptives. Prices for oral contraceptives in the regions are higher on average by 20 to 220 soms. At the same time, the average salary in many regions is almost two times less than in Bishkek.

Contraception is an important part of every woman's life. Protected, women have the right to choose: when to marry and give birth, and when to study and build a career. At the same time, women in Kyrgyzstan may be completely prohibited from using contraceptives - after all, they have to give birth to children. This is called reproductive abuse.

Menstruation: what did Kyrgyz women do before pads?

Such materials can break the taboo on talking about menstruation in Kyrgyzstan, as well as explain what hygiene products have appeared in the world. This topic can be developed in another way: for example, to talk about the fact that even ordinary sanitary pads during menstruation may not be [available to women in correctional institutions, and there are also no conditions for regular washing in such institutions.](#)

How does body shaping affect women's body image and insecurities?

There are a lot of requirements for women in this world, and one of them is a beautiful body. But the standards of beauty that society imposes on us are often false and it is incredibly difficult to achieve them in ordinary life. These subjective standards lead women to feel insecure and harm their health with numerous diets, for example, trying to lose weight.

It used to be that a woman should be beautiful for a man. Now the beauty industry is telling women that they need to be beautiful for their own sake. And this mantra sounds tempting, if you forget that the beauty industry is not profitable to lose billions of dollars, due to the fact that women have suddenly become self-sufficient and have learned to love themselves and their bodies the way they are.

What is a glass ceiling and why is it difficult for women to succeed in Kyrgyzstan?

The glass ceiling is an invisible limitation both in commercial companies and in government that prevent you from reaching managerial positions.

There are many informal rules of the game that a woman simply cannot follow because she is a woman. It is very easy for men in the men's world to agree among themselves: they can discuss some issues in an informal setting - in a bathhouse, or hold personal negotiations in the office. If a woman tries to use one of these options to achieve her career goals, then she is likely to be slut-shamed. All these restrictions artificially keep women in lower positions.

Inspire me Always remember that any type of societal inequality – present or historical, gender, religious, sexual – can be a great basis for a story that satisfies that news need. Go beyond what exactly happened and tell stories about the emotions of people in a situation. If you are a local or regional media outlet, stories about famous residents who have achieved success get a very strong response.

“People on the plane bring gifts to the family, and I bring stones.” How scientist Sagyn has been studying porcelain for 50 years

You can give different role models of successful women so that girls can see that they can also achieve prosperity in the future, earn no less than men. We need to show different life scenarios for women – society now draws only one scenario for us: after 20 you need to get married, otherwise they will call you an “old maid”, before 30 you need to give birth to at least two children, otherwise they will call you an “old-timer”, by 50 you will be given get married and marry all the children, and then become a grandmother caring for her grandchildren. But there are many women in the world who have realized themselves in completely different roles.

It is not necessary to focus on the fact that with all your successes in business, career, science, and your heroine is also the keeper of the hearth.

When we see a professional man, we don't even think about asking about his family or children, but when it comes to women, these questions immediately appear.

It is necessary not to consolidate, but to get rid of the stereotypes that a woman without a husband is nobody, that without a child she did not take place. Tell the stories of childfree women who are satisfied with their lives, women who, despite the pressure of family and society, chose celibacy and began to lead a happy independent life and not be guided by anyone. Show the audience that there is a choice.

Distract me Videos and photo compilations are great formats for these materials. Many media outlets are already successfully producing Photo of the Day or One Shot style formats. For this need, you will definitely find something wonderful, light, but still connected to the news agenda. Post the photo separately on the site and on your social networks – this kind of thing finds its audience quite easily...

By one shot: Gender Inequality in the Kyrgyz Politics



Sooronbai Zheenbekov at a meeting with former prime ministers and former speakers of parliament on November 20, 2018.

Photo: Press service of the President of Kyrgyzstan