

Gender analysis of Employment of Mongolia

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Abstract

Mongolia, one of the world's youngest democracies, faces ongoing challenges in developing an open, transparent and sustainable economy. The Mongolian economy is still heavily dependent on mining, which remains the country's driving force with a share of almost 24% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Additionally, there remain significant shortcomings in the participation of all population groups, particularly women, in economic and political decision-making processes. This article is based on documentary research and argues for gender equality in employment at the meta (social norms), macro (policies and laws), meso (institutions) and micro (groups) levels. We argue that a holistic gendered analysis of the Mongolian economy is important for the preparation and designing of new opportunities for gender equality.

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Key words

norm, gender dynamics, gender stereotype, gender policy, gender based violence

Introduction

The total population of Mongolia in 2021 was 3.4 million, of which 50.9 % are women. The population is relatively young with 32.1 % aged 0-14 years and 63.4 % aged 15-64 years (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2022a). The majority of the population (69.4 %) lives in urban and mining areas and 30.6 per cent in rural areas (United Nations [UN], 2021). The economy has grown steadily since 1999, due the occurrence of abundant natural resources. Although Mongolia's economic performance has improved significantly with a gross domestic product growth of 1.2 % in 2016 jumping to 5.3, 6.1 and 5.1 % in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively, development progress has been uneven between regions and population groups.

Objective: Regional disparities and poverty are a challenge (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2021). This gender analysis aims to ensure a holistic and gender transformative approach and will look at country, sector, and project levels in Mongolia.

Methodology: A gender analysis was conducted based on gender transformaitive approach (MacArthur et al., 2022). Gender analysis is based on document study and individual interview methods as a qualitative research method. The gender analysis mainly used secondary data such as policy documents, research reports, implementation reports of organizations and statistical data. In addition, in order to confirm the gender analysis, one-on-one interviews were conducted with gender specialists of government organizations of Mongolia.

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Gender transformative approaches is a methodology that, instead of burdening women with the responsibility for equality, engage men and women together as agents of change (Langenkamp, 2023). Where “business-as-usual” accommodative gender approaches try to work around barriers, and are often focused solely on women, gender transformative approaches have broken new ground by transforming structural barriers and constraining gender norms, meaning the unwritten rules about who can do what kind of work, control what types of assets and make what level of decisions.

Structure: Gender analysis consists of three parts and the first part covers the needs and objectives of gender analysis; the second part shows the gender situation in Mongolia at the level of norms, policies and legal framework, organizations, institutions and target groups; the third part tries to show the gender situation in detail in employment.

Information on gender dimensions in Mongolia

Meta level. Gender dynamics in Mongolia have been shaped by socio-cultural norms, socialism that existed for over sixty years (1924 – 1992), and the transition to a market economy in the early 1990s. During six decades of socialism women’s status improved. With support of the Soviet Union, the Government of Mongolia invested in girls’ education and as a result a new generation of well-educated women emerged. Moreover, the Government of Mongolia implemented multiple actions that enabled women to receive childcare subsidies and kept jobs during maternity leave, improved health services and ensured gender equality in labour force participation and remuneration (Gankhuyag G., 2021). The first constitution, adopted in 1924, declared that Mongolian women were given equal rights to vote and to be elected. However, the country still faces challenges in gender equality and Mongolian women continue to be disproportionately represented at political decision-making levels. This is due to the lack of knowledge and awareness

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of gender equality at all levels. Mongolia is ranked 120th with a score of 0.122 in terms of "Political Capacity".

There are multiple reasons for the gender disparities in government, including a male- dominated political structure where connections are critical, lack of financial resources for campaigning, and a public perception among both women and men that all leadership roles, including higher level political representation are more suited to male capacities. Additionally, women tend to be more engaged in family responsibilities whereas men are still predominant in politics and decision-making. According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2020, Mongolia ranked 79th out of 153 countries, and in 2021 ranked 69th out of 156 countries. Following the 2020 parliamentary elections, 13 women (17.1%) were elected as Members of Parliament, which is the same in the 2016 election.

As of 2021, in Mongolia men had on average a life expectancy 9.7 years shorter than women due to unhealthy lifestyle habits such as alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and lack of exercise. According to the statistics for 2020 year, men constitute 59.6%, and women make up 40.4% of those who died. The main causes of death for males aged 15-44 are alcohol poisoning, suicide and traffic accident, while for males aged over 45 the causes include noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

Macro level: An independent Law on Promotion of Gender Equality [LPGE] was passed in 2011 thanks to the joint effort of the National Committee on Gender Equality [NCGE], non-government organizations [NGOs] working for women's empowerment and gender equality and international development agencies. The law became the legal framework for promoting gender equality in Mongolia, which defined the basic principles and strengthened the national mechanism for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The law is important for its clearly spelled out roles and responsibilities of the state organizations/duty bearers with regard to promoting gender equality. The NCGE was restructured in 2011 under a Resolution 323 of the Government, and the new Committee Charter, structure and composition were adopted. This law promotes

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gender equality and sets out obligations for the government and other key actors in the spheres of politics, employment and labour relations, civil service, education, health care and family relations. However, there has been a lack of political commitment and awareness on gender inequality at government level, a lack of financial and human resources, and the absence of a stable, long-term government administration (National Committee on Gender Equality, 2020a). Under the National Plan for Gender Equality 2017-2021 (NPGE), all government sectors are now required to conduct gender-sensitive planning and draw up a gender policy. This process is overseen by the sectoral Gender Councils, chaired by either sectoral ministers or state secretaries, with support from a Gender Focal Point (GFP). According to the LPGE and NPGE, each sector is required to identify human and financial resources to implement their gender policies. The implementation of this public policy-setting law has been supported by two national programs, a strategic plan and twelve sector-specific gender policies as well as gender-responsive local development policies in the nation's capital, twenty-one aimags and nine districts.

The Government of Mongolia approved Mongolia's Long-Term Development Strategy Vision 2050 (State Great Hural, 2020). The Strategy Vision 2050 seeks to mainstream gender into the public policy planning processes in support of sustainable human, social and governance development by addressing the difference in life expectancy between females and males and gender disparities in the labor market. In addition, this strategy aims to promote cooperation and partnership in the field of women's political representation and leadership in decision-making, improvement of the universal gender education system, and the achievement of gender equality. Recognizing the importance of cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration towards the implementation of laws, policies and programs in a gender-sensitive manner as well as monitoring their practical impacts from gender mainstreaming perspectives, the National Committee on Gender Equality chaired by the Prime Minister of Mongolia has approved "The Cross-Sectoral Strategic Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality 2022-2031" (National Committee on Gender Equality, 2022a). This strategic plan is:

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- emphasizes further strengthening of the knowledge base of policy planning processes through gender research and analysis;
- improving efficiency and effectiveness of development financing by introducing gender-responsive budgeting;
- applying special measures to achieve gender balance in the areas of workforce and professional education;
- mainstreaming gender in all sectors including culture and digital development as well as among the private sector entities.

Meso level: In 2018 as an initiative of the Prime Minister of Mongolia, the Government adopted two Resolutions 111 and 285 to provide the NCGE Secretariat an independent status but working under the Prime Minister as part of the Cabinet Secretariat by increasing the number of its staff. Furthermore, the NCGE set up the Media Council (Resolution no.02) and re-organized the National Gender Experts Group (Resolution no.03), and the Researchers and Specialists Group on Gender (Resolution no.04) in 2018. Today, the NCGE has twenty-six members with equal representation from state and civil society organisations. Under the LPGE all nineteen ministries have their own Gender Councils chaired by the Ministers. At the local level Gender Committees are headed by twenty-one aimag and nine districts governors, as well as sub-council, working groups by 118 Soum/Khoroo governors. The NCGE Secretariat is responsible for coordinating inter-sectoral gender-related matters, among other duties.

Micro level: While women in Mongolia are in a relatively good position in terms of economic participation in a regional comparison, and their education and training often even exceeds that of men (particularly in the university sector), their participation in the labor market is particularly weak in ‘male’ sectors (construction sector, mining, financial sector) lower than that of men, and they are also underrepresented in entrepreneurship. The notion that a man should be physiologically strong and mentally not vulnerable remains a stereotype and the reason why many men refuse to ask for help from others. If boys grow up in the countryside, they are either expected

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to stay there as cattle breeders - they traditionally own the majority of the animals - or to earn money in some other way immediately in order to feed the family, based on the traditional understanding of roles mentioned above, without a detour via an education or university training. Girls are sent by their fathers to study in Ulaanbaatar because, according to the traditional role model, they are not suitable as cattle breeders and at the same time are supposed to achieve economic independence through their studies. This leads to a skewed education between men and women and makes the choice of a partner difficult for the women, most of whom want a man who is at least roughly their equal. The rigid role construction of men as caretakers and breadwinners, which contrasts with women's economic independence and generally much higher level of education, inevitably leads to internal contradictions in many cases (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2023). This may be one of the reasons for the high alcohol dependence of men (about 20%) and domestic violence. In 2017, the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] and the National Statistics Office of Mongolia conducted a “Gender-Based Violence Survey”, in which more than half of the women (58%) reported to have been subjected to physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or behavioral violence and to one or more forms of violence in their lives (National Statistics Office, United Nations Population Fund and other, 2018). 74% percent of all persons with disabilities [PWD] surveyed had experienced some form of domestic violence in their family environment. RatesThe rate of psychological and controlling behavioral abuses is the highest among common forms of domestic violence, according to the research. Other common forms are physical, economic and sexual violence, but most of them overlap. A total ofIn total 80% of all PWDs affected by domestic violence are affected by three or more forms of violence (Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, Asian Development Bank [ADB] and Independent Research Institute of Mongolia [IRIM], 2020).

According to the statistics in 2022, 46.3% of all employees, and 40.4% of the unemployed are women. The average monthly salary of male employees is 1,642,800 MNT and that of female employees is 1,360,500 MNT, is resulting in a difference of 282,300 MNT (17.2%). Considering the average salary by occupation, there is a salary difference of 109,200 MNT for managers,

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320,100 MNT for specialists, and 288,800 MNT for technicians and assistants/subspecialists (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2022a).

Housework, caring for elderly family members, caring for the children are traditionally "women's work", resulting in women spending more than 2.7 times as much time on unpaid work as men. In rural areas, this separation often results from the fact that women live in the district towns for their children's education, while the fathers of the children are nomadic animal breeding and live in a distant yurt in the steppe. Another important aspect is the different social perception of the importance of women's and men's health. While women are to be protected from particularly hazardous work, this is not the case for men. There is a clear need for gender-neutral statutory health and safety regulations. The life expectancy for men is currently 64.9 years, while women's is 74.9 years.

In Mongolia most victims of workplace sexual harassment are women, and perpetrators are overwhelmingly men with higher education, the majority of whom are senior managers. According to a comparative study of the Gender Equality Center, sexual harassment occurs at mass events (14.4%), school (1.4%), during lunchtime (0.7%), in the workplace (21.7%), in chairman's office (7.2%). The survey respondents reported that perpetrators were higher-ranking officials (42%), colleagues (21%), boss/supervisors (16%), heads of division/department (7%) (Gender Equality Center, 2018). As the victims of sexual harassment are physically and psychologically damaged, they need should be provided with psychological recovery services, legal advice and information, placed in temporary shelters for a period of time to prevent them from becoming victims again, and enable them to live independently in the future. A victim of sexual harassment has the right to a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission [NHRC], but there are very few who take advantage of this right. The NHRC received 240 complaints related to labour rights between 2008-2017, of which twenty-one were related to sexual harassment in the workplace. Further, it is important to look beyond traditional workplaces and to other sectors such as health, education, and public transport to ensure that all workplaces and public spaces are free from harassment.

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Meta level: Mongolia's Law on Promotion of Gender Equality provides for non-discrimination and equal rights of men and women in the labor market in its Article 11 on the guarantees of equal employment and labour rights. Nonetheless, gender segregation remains a fixed feature of the employment situation. As of 2021, there are 2,152.1 thousand persons aged 15 and over in Mongolia in the labor market, of which 1,225.3 thousand are in the labor force and 926.7 thousand are outside the labor force. Moreover, the number of job seekers is 28000, which is a drop of 8.2 thousand compared with the previous year (Asian Development Bank [ADB], Higher Education Reform Project [HERP], 2016).

Key indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Employed aged 15 and over /thous./	2,185.2	1,253.0	1,146.2	1,162.9	1,125.6	1,180.5
<i>Of which: Female</i>	1,131.2	583.4	539.3	551.1	532.8	552.2
Labour force /thous./	1,357.4	1,358.6	1,273.9	1,250.6	1,225.3	1,265.2
<i>Of which: Female</i>	635.5	628.0	591.8	590.7	577.3	586.5
Persons outside the labour force /thous./	862.9	867.9	832.1	877.5	926.7	894.4

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<i>Of wich: Female</i>	515.0	547.2	516.1	549.4	580.2	551.3
Labor force participation rate /%/	61.1	61	60.5	58.8	56.9	58.6
<i>Of wich: Female</i>	55.2	53.4	53.5	51.8	49.9	51.5
Employment to population ratio /%/	55.8	56.3	54.5	54.6	52.3	54.7
<i>Of wich: Female</i>	50.9	49.6	48.7	48.3	46.0	48.5
Unemployment rate /%/	8.8	7.8	10.0	7.0	8.1	6.7
<i>Of wich: Female</i>	7.8	7.1	8.9	6.7	7.7	5.8
Montly average wage and salaries /thous./	944.5	1,002.9	1,124.3	1,220.6	1,279.4	1,503.8
<i>Male</i>	1,029.4	1,100.3	1,222.6	1,326.2	1,390.0	1,642.8
<i>Female</i>	860.4	903.3	1,021.3	1,109.6	1,163.0	1,360.5

Table 1. Key indicators of labour market of Mongolia, 2022. Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2022

High levels of women's participation in labor force are increasingly found to be in a positive relationship with a country's economic growth and per capita income and as academics infer, the world's total Gross Domestic Product [GDP] could swell its current size by 26% in 2025 if equal gender participation in workforce is supported across economic sectors (Gonzales et al., 2016).

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According to International Labour Organization [ILO] estimates, this growth would amount to USD 5.8 trillion worldwide, with East Asia alone accounting for 1 trillion. Meanwhile Mongolia's statistics show that women's labor force participation has been declining since 2018 to fall from 53.4% to 51.5% in 2022 (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2022b).

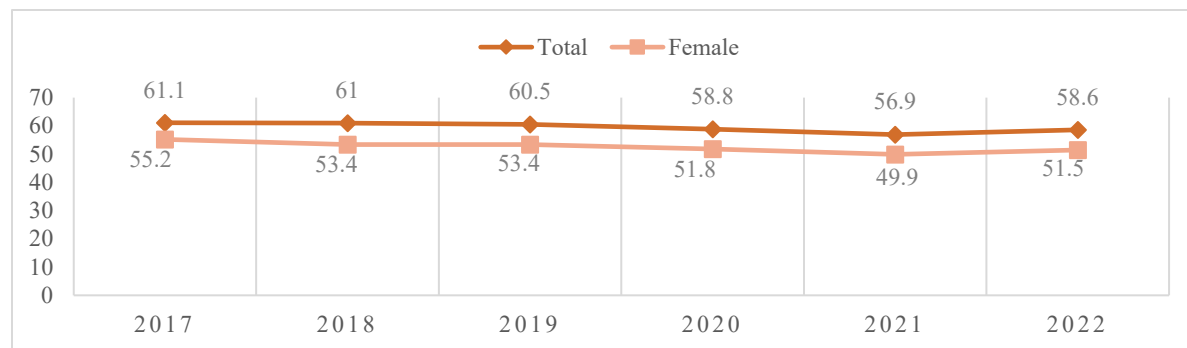


Figure 1. Labour force participation 2017-2022, by gender. Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2022

Female labour force by economic activity in 2022 year:

- 41.8% in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting;
- 57.7% in wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles;
- 76.6% in education sector;
- 49.1% in the manufacturing;
- 17.1% in the construction industry;
- 14.9% in the mining and quarrying.

As we can see, the agriculture sector has the highest number of employees (294.0 thousand) and the sectors with the lowest employment rate include real estate activities (2.5 thousand), activities of households (1.0 thousand), water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation

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activities (6.8 thousand). A look at the workforce in the four sectors that provide the largest inputs in the economy reveal that in the period of 2017-2022, the number of men in salaried employment in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and hunting, mining and other extractive industries as well as wholesale and retail trade has been on the rise while that of women has shown increase mainly in wholesale and retail trade (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2022a). This indicates that the horizontal gender segregation in the labor market could be expected to further continue with a trend towards expansion. The fact that they still make up a minority group among executives in the traditionally female-dominated fields such as education and health, testifies to the persisting vertical gender segregation in the labour market (National Committee on Gender Equality, 2020b).

In Mongolia, informal employment remains a relatively new phenomenon, one that emerged following the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy system. During the transition, informal economic activities expanded rapidly. Informal economy absorbs surplus labour and generates household income. In 2006, a State Policy on Informal Employment in Mongolia was approved and a decision was made to start producing informal employment statistics (State Great Hural, 2006). Thus, of those who have joined the informal economy in the past two years, 43.6 thousand are men and 19.7 thousand are women, with men currently prevailing in this sector at a male-to-female ratio of 1.6:1. Men have moved mostly into construction, wholesale and retail trade, car and motorcycle repair and maintenance services, freight forwarding, and arts, entertainment and recreation industry while women have joined the informal processing industry. However, women still are concentrated in the wholesale and retail trade sector. Occupational gender segregation manifests itself in Ulaanbaatar and across all other regions of the country. Inadequate government policies and inter-sectoral cooperation on informal employment continue to jeopardize citizens' labour rights, labour relations and and social security, and they exert an adverse impact on the country's gross domestic product, social insurance fund and tax revenues (International Labour Organization [ILO], Ministry of Labour and Social Protection [MLSP], 2021).

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Women account for more than 40% of the labor force and unemployed people, which shows that women are more active in the labor market, but it is necessary to take into account the fact that there are more women than men working in activities for education, human health and social work. According to the statistics, female unemployment is mainly caused by retirement, school, disability, illness, taking care of others, and pandemic. The Employment Promotion Law of Mongolia encompasses a wide range of target groups and looks to promote employment amongst these groups. As of 2022, 18077 people were provided with career guidance, counselling and information service, 52.4% % of whom were females (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection [MLSP], 2021).

Macro level: Mongolia, while pursuing implementation of the Sustainable Development Vision (SDV) 2030 like other nations of the world, has also been focusing on promoting gender equality in policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes at all levels. Within this framework, while fulfilling obligations required for the international community, the Mongolian Population, Labor and Social Protection sector will be mandated by Mongolian law to mainstream gender in its development actions, in line with the country's specificities and the needs of the population. Gender equality means women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to realize their potentials to contribute within both their public and private lives and to participate in development processes and benefit from the results. However, women and men, while in many ways similar; the society, work collectives/communities and management are expected to recognize and further their differentiated needs, skills, competences and resources (Tumendelger S., 2019). As it is not yet guaranteed yet that women and men from differing social groups are benefiting equally from numerous actions and arrangements, as their situations and needs vary, the gender-responsive policy is aimed at facilitating provision of equal opportunities to women, men and varying social groups by addressing and resolving the challenges preventing them from enjoying these opportunities and benefiting from the gains (Gender Equality Center, 2018).

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The population, labor and social protection sector plays a critical role towards realizing the Mongolian Government policy on the promotion of gender equality. The development and commencement of the sector- specific gender-responsive policy is not only conducive towards the sector's human resources development, but also towards improvement of the quality of life of Mongolians at large. Article 11, Law on the promotion of Gender Equality, provides for the guarantee of gender equality in the employment and social protection framework. The Ministry of Economy and Development should direct its main activities to ensure the guarantee. To quote the provisions of the Act (National Committee on Gender Equality, Mongolian Marketing Consulting Group [MMCG], 2021):

The Ministry of Labor, Social protection should direct its main activities to ensure the guarantee. By evaluation on the implementation of the law of Mongolian on promotion of gender equality, employers' perceptions towards employment of women and persons with disabilities and implementation of the employment contract shows poor enforcement, which corresponds to assessments made by the employees. Majority of individual and collective labor disputes in enterprises were mainly related to wages and working hours. Employees consider that main causes of the disputes are unjustified dismissals, working conditions, occupational safety and sanitation, and women's employment (National Committee on Gender Equality, Mongolian Marketing Consulting Group [MMCG], 2021). Mongolia's social and economic development situation and gender disparities in the labor market affect men's and women's employment opportunities and career choices. Moreover, it creates gender discrimination in employment and labor relations, and indirect conditions for preference and restrictions on both men and women, excluding in cases permitted by international treaties and laws of Mongolia.

There is little tendency for enterprises to enter into collective agreements. The Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU) has identified issues that need to be addressed in the collective agreement, but does not specifically mention on establishing equal conditions and opportunities for men and women. According to sample collective agreements of enterprises, a tendency of

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absence of specific measures ensuring equal conditions for both women and men is widespread. The 2019-2020 National Tripartite Committee on Labor and Social Consent does not specify the measures to ensure equal conditions for men and women set forth in Article 11.2 of the LPGE. Although the national wage policy (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2019) states that the principle of equal pay for equal work will be followed, no progress has been made in this matter. Over the past decade, the number of workers affected by industrial accidents and acute poisoning has declined, which shows a progress on this indicator. However, the proportion of men in total industrial accidents and acute poisoning remains high compared to women. In recent years, the number of workers who are working overtime has increased. This leads to various negative consequences, such as loss of work-life balance for men and women, less time to spend with family and children.

The labour force participation rate is larger in rural areas than in urban ones (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2021). Women account for 50.3% of registered unemployed citizens. Despite the increase in birth rate, there is a lack of kindergartens. Consequently, one parent has to stay at home taking care of the children. As of the first quarter of 2022, 19.3% of women outside the labor force are not employed due to childcare challenges, while 0.3% men stay at home taking care of the children (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2022b). Another factor adversely impacting employment opportunities for women of reproductive age is the attitude of employers who view maternity as an operational setback and an economic burden for the company. The main reason for such a mind-set is the legal obligation of employers to pay social insurance contributions for maternity and child care. Although the Labour Code of Mongolia sets forth that an employer shall retain for three years the workplace of a woman on maternity leave¹, there are cases when

¹ The new labour law, which has come into effect from January 2022, has many provisions that bring Mongolian labour law closer to international labour standards while giving full consideration to specific national contexts.

this period of time is clipped to only 6 months. It also happens many a time when women are asked about their marital status or reproductive intentions during job interviews (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2023).

The unemployment rate for men older than 50 years of age is high but any further analysis is hampered by the lack of data on the age-specific causes of unemployment. In the period since the start of transition to the market economy, there have been no adequate policies and programmes aimed at facilitating people older than 40 including the retired population to acquire new skills fitting their age and physical capacity, and supporting their re-oriented employment. The benefits of a senior citizens employment programme run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection are being accessed by a small number of retirees with tertiary education (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2022b).

A total of 59.7 billion MNT is budgeted to be spent from the Employment Support Fund for the implementation of employment support programs (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2022a). As of June 2022, of the 21623 people who took part in the program, 60 % were women. In 2022-2023, 1486 women participated in the Women Employment Program, and ninety-six permanent and 535 temporary jobs were created. However, studies evaluating the effectiveness of the program were not available during the given time period.

As of 2021, the national average salary was 1087.7 thousand. In the said period, salary increases took place primarily in the male-dominated mining sector while in recent three years a strong upward tendency is observed with regard to the earnings in the financing and insurance activities.

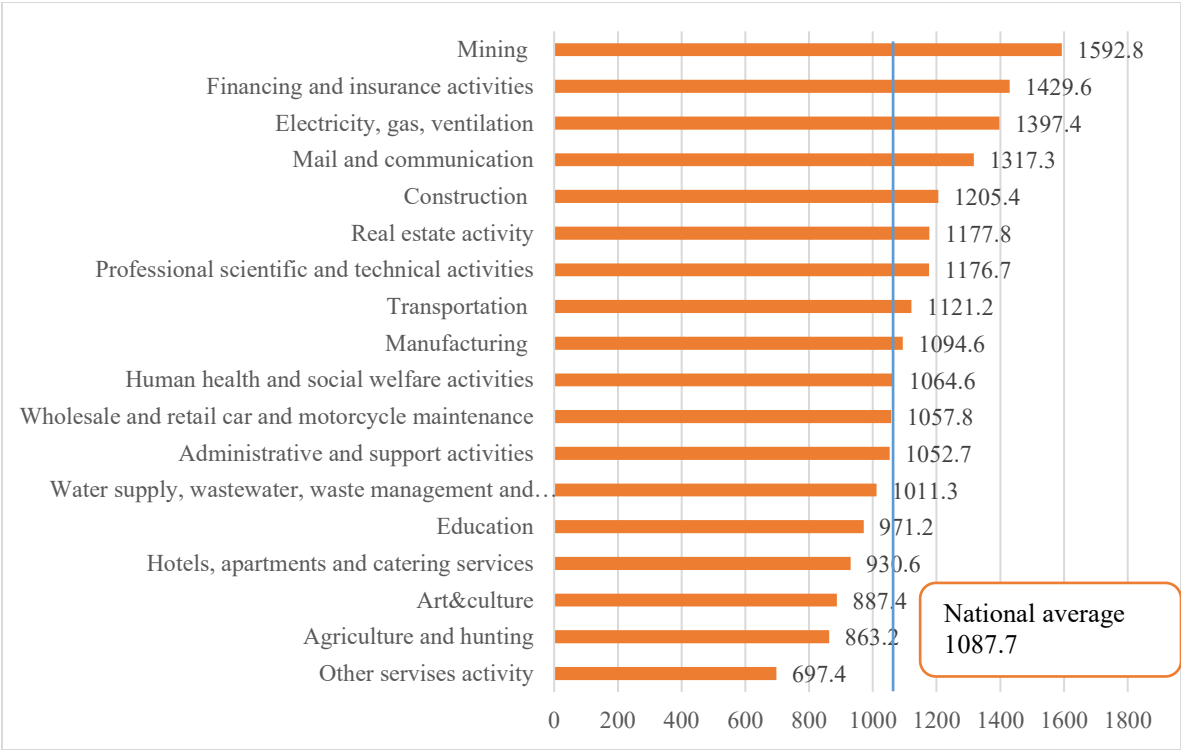


Figure 2. Salary average, by economical sector /thous./ Source: Structure of labor and social security training , evaluation and research institutions, 2021

Women earn on average less than men in all sectors except female administrative and executive staff in the mining sector, or highly skilled professionals in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and hunting fields such as industrial and other machine operators as well as women employed with international organizations (Structure of labor and social security training, evaluation and research institutions, 2021). The biggest pay gaps are observed in the sectors of information technology at 77.6%, as well as at 83% in finance and insurance.

	Male (thousand)	Female (thousand)	Gender pay gap, (for woman)

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Mining	1639.1	1418.6	86.5%
Financing and insurance activities	1574.7	1307.1	83%
Electricity, gas, ventilation	1408	1371.3	97.4%
Information technology	1459.8	1132.4	77.6%
Construction	1209.6	1196.1	98.9%
Real estate activity	1175.7	1180.5	100.4%
Professional scientific and technical activities	1192.6	1164	97.6%
Transportation	1079.6	1259.4	116.7%
Manufacturing	1181.4	999.5	84.6%
Human health and social welfare activities	1118.7	1047.1	93.6%
Wholesale and retail car and motorcycle maintenance	1113.5	990.6	89%
Administrative and support activities	1037.3	1081.3	104.2%
Water supply, wastewater, waste management and cleaning operations	1054.5	957.3	90.8%

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Education	941	981.1	104.3%
Hotels, apartments and catering services	982.7	895.4	91.1%
Art&culture	892.3	881	98.7%
Agriculture and hunting	881	839.3	95.3%
Other services activity	717.5	678.3	94.5%

Table 2. Monthly average salary in Mongolia, by gender. Source: Structure of labor and social security training , evaluation and research institutions, 2021

Working conditions that are tailored to the differing needs of women and men and support the right balance between work and life are not only beneficial in terms of labour productivity but also serve the best interests of the family and society at large. Meanwhile, job insecurity and unavailability of health and social insurance coverages are widespread phenomena in the private sector (International Labour Organization [ILO], Ministry of Labor and Social Protection [MLSP], 2021). The disrupted work-and-life balance is equally detrimental to both women and men but the consequences of such an imbalance affect them differently. Thus, women are burdened with still more work to deal with because of the shortened time for household chores while men lose the opportunity to meaningfully participate in family life. In recent years, the shift work and work away from home for certain periods of time have come to take their toll not only on men's health but also on family relationships. The number of women employed in mining, construction and transport sectors is not showing any noticeable increase, which is readily explained by a stereotype that these are solely male domains and by the employers' preferences for men workers. However, another veritable explanation is that these sectors are yet to put in place restrooms, lockers and

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other basic facilities and conditions tailored to suit women's needs (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2017).

Countries have focused on fostering small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) development through various measures such as taxation and financing policies. For long-term economic stability, Mongolia recognizes that it must support the growth of SMEs – which are the engines of growth in free market economies across the globe, and key to reducing its reliance on the mining sector. The variety and quality of Mongolia's domestically manufactured products are steadily improving and the number of business entities is on the rise. The number of enterprises in the 2021 economic census reached 151.6 thousand, which was an increase of 50.1 thousand or 49.9% from the 2016 census (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2022c). Official data shows that around 60,000 SMEs are currently in operation in Mongolia and they contribute to 17% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The SME sector is one of the most important for the Mongolian economy, accounting for 50% of employment, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (United State Agency for International Development [USAID], Development solution of Mongolia NGO, 2021). Policy support for SME development is the basis for economic growth, reduction of poverty and unemployment, and increase the share of the middle-class population.

Small and medium enterprises (SME) are the ones that attract most attention from the gender point of view. SMEs account for 98% of all economic entities and 5.5% of GDP, employ half of the workforce and are concentrated in services (65.2%), manufacturing (23.8%) and agriculture (11%). SMEs is 2.5 % of the total volume of exported goods (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2020). Micro-businesses comprise 80% of all SMEs and more than half of SMEs are found in the capital city. A small share of them, no more than 15%, are working in agriculture and processing industry. About 50% of SMEs have taken bank loans and only 13% have done so for capital investment purposes (United State Agency for International Development [USAID], Development solution of Mongolia NGO, 2021). High taxes, long hours spent to get banking

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services, expensive rent, lack of skilled workforce, limited financing opportunities and unfavourable loan terms are cited by the IMF as the most typical problems faced by SMEs. According to the current situation of SMEs employment survey results, 800 SMEs, mainly in the field of construction, process manufacturing, and transportation, have created more jobs. The majority of employees in SMEs are aged between 26 to 45 years old, employed at the same company for more than 2 years. Also, they have college degrees, and earn 500.0-1,000.0. thousand mongolian tugriks (1USD~3.48 thousand mongolian tugriks [MNT]) for one month of work. On the other hand, the number of men and women in managerial and leadership positions are similar, and administrative positions are mainly held by women, while men dominate in the factories. SMEs face numerous challenges, including late payment of employees due to insufficient finances, instability in the workplace as a result of working conditions, and difficulty in finding capable workers. Moreover, some employers are reluctant to formalize work contract and cover social insurance (United State Agency for International Development [USAID], Development solution of Mongolia NGO, 2021). According to the results of the research conducted by the Bank of Mongolia, the political environment and corruption are the main problems for the development of SMEs. Also, the SMEs owners felt that it is necessary to implement measures such as making government services less burdensome, creating a favorable tax environment, and reducing corruption at the policy level (United State Agency for International Development [USAID], Development solution of Mongolia NGO, 2021).

Meso level: The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection aims to develop employment, social protection legislation, policies, strategies, program options, drafts, and organize and coordinate the implementation of legislation, policies, strategies and programs on employment (National Committee on Gender Equality, 2022b). A Gender Sub-Council has been established under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, with nineteen members. Within the framework of four main objectives and fifteen directions of activities, the population, labor and social protection sector's gender-responsive policy will be implemented in two phases for the period of 2018-2021 and 2022-2024 in coordination with the implementation of "National Program on Gender Equality"

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and policy documents of Vision-2050. The goal of the gender-responsive policy approved by order No.A/177 of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Mongolia is to provide support to the population, labor and social protection sector's human resources development, policy planning and implementation processes, directed to the general population through mainstreaming gender (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2018).

Policy documents aim to create a system for institutions of population, labor and social protection sector (including eight institutions: the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Labor and Welfare Service General Office, Research Institute of Labor and Social Protection, the Mongolian Labor and Social Protection Service Center in the Republic of Korea, Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development, General Agency for Development of Persons with Disabilities, Center for Occupational Safety and Health, Social Insurance General Office and their subsidiaries) to ensure gender equality in workplaces, promote gender awareness, create a gender-inclusive workplace, and establish and disseminate gender-inclusive collaborations. Moreover, they aim to provide development services, employment, social welfare services, social insurance services and products for families, children, youth, elderly, disabled and people with special needs in the sector in a gender-sensitive manner.

A gender self-assessment questionnaire was conducted online in 2022 among 509 participants of eight organizations to assess the knowledge and understanding of the population, labor and social protection sector employees. 80% of them were women and 20% were men, 76% were administrative and 23% were service workers. 40% of the participants were in provinces, 17.8% in districts, 12.6% in *horoos* (an administrative unit of a district), 12.1% in *soums*, 8.3% in ministries, 5.7% in agencies and departments, 4.7% in capitals, and 1.8% in *baghs* (an administrative unit of a *soum*), which is a sufficient representation (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2022).

A working group was established to introduce "Gender-sensitive budgeting" funded by the World Bank, and the 2023 budget was developed in a gender-responsive manner. In addition, considering

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their specific needs, all forms of enterprises in the public and private sectors have developed a guideline model which will be used to include provisions on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and creating a non-violent environment in their "Internal Labor Regulations". It has been approved jointly with the National Tripartite Committee Labour and Social Consensus and the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia. Executives and human resource specialists of business entities participated in 6 workshops of guideline model (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2023).

Micro level: While young women have greater access to education and perform well, they still experience difficulties gaining a foothold in the labour market (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). 70 % of young women (aged 25-29) have completed tertiary education but for women, having a university diploma does not necessarily translate into a better-paying job. 46% of working-age women are still economically inactive. The gender gap in the labor force participation rate has been persistent and widening for the last couple of years (World Bank, 2018). Among the working-age population (aged 15+), the unemployed and economically inactive people are the poorest. The poor, with low levels of human capital, are unlikely to be able to meet the labor market needs for better-paying jobs and often face difficulties in finding a job, hence poverty headcount rates for the unemployed and inactive population are 40 and 34 % respectively, significantly higher than for those employed. Among the employed population, three in five poor workers were engaged in wage activities, which are mostly low-skilled and low-end service jobs (World Bank, 2018b).

An important tool for gender analysis of social and economic policies and programmes is the time use survey which National Statistical Office of Mongolia started implementing every four years since 2007 and produced reports in 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019, providing critical information on women's and men's use of time for different activities and the changes occurring in the established patterns. These reports confirm that in the past eight years, time spent by Mongolian women and men on paid work has increased while the time they use on unpaid work is showing a tendency to

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decrease (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2019). In this eight year period, time spent on unpaid work such as household chores, care of family members and help to others has decreased by 0.3 hour for urban women and men alike, by 0.5 hour for rural men and by one hour for rural women. This dynamic warrants further detailed research since it may indicate both the positive effects which a wider use of electrical appliances has on family members' workload distribution, and the consequences which the dwindling practice of processing livestock raw materials is having in rural areas.

The primary school enrolment at age of six years was introduced in 2007 that have resulted in a situation spreading far and wide in the rural areas where many herder family mothers are moving to aimag and soum centres for the sake of their children's education with husbands left behind alone to tend to the livestock. Gender-specific changes fraught with negative consequences are also taking shape in the traditional way of life of the herding community. However, this situation is not considered to be a mitigating factor in domestic violence. This is because there was a lack of knowledge of herders about gender-based violence and a tendency to tolerate violence (World Vision Mongolia, Independent Research Institute of Mongolia [IRIM], 2023).

The female discussants who participated in the World Bank's 2018 survey, said employers refused to employ women aged in their 40s as sales women or shop assistants because they "look too old", and job advertisements mostly seek people between the ages of 20 and 32. The discussants noted that employers tend to judge people by their outward looks and appearance and such an attitude affects women harder (World Bank, 2018a). Furthermore, recent years have seen discrimination based on place of residence and dwellers of the outlying Ger districts are increasingly heard complaining about downtown organizations and companies unwilling to employ them. In addition, more than 80% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] people hide their sexual orientation from their co-workers. For transgender women, prostitution is a difficult way to find work. There is a risk of be-coming a victim of violence, intimidation and poverty.

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Discussion

Until today, fixed gender attitudes and discrimination still exist in Mongolia at all levels of society, especially in employment. There is a lot of research on this, but there is not much research on determining the cause and reducing the contributing factors. A gender transformation approach actively explores and seeks to change the root causes of gender differences in employment at the meta, macro, meso, and micro levels. By doing so, it seeks to eradicate the systemic forms of gender-based discrimination by creating or strengthening equitable gender norms, dynamics and systems that support gender equality.

Based on the results of this research, a discussion was organized among the gender specialists of the government and international organizations, and the recommendations based on the results of the research were informed about the possibility of using them in their own policies.

Conclusions

Among the gender-based forms of violence in Mongolia, domestic family violence, violence against women, and sexual harassment of girls are the most severe ones. The study has also confirmed that the root causes of domestic violence in Mongolia are power imbalances and gender stereotypes. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant challenge in Mongolia, with mostly girls, women, the elderly, and LGBT people in particular affected by domestic violence.

The Government of Mongolia and international organizations have made significant efforts to improve the legal environment, establish structures, and improve the coordination of governmental and non-governmental organizations in committing to overcome gender-based violence. It should be noted that this was a joint effort of the government, civil society organizations and international partners. Although the legal environment has improved, there is a lack of understanding of gender equality at all levels, inter-sectoral coordination on gender issues, and the full use of donor research and financial support.

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Mongolia's statistics show that women's labor force participation has been declining since 2017 to 2021 in 5.3%. During the last 5 years, a look at the workforce in the four sectors that provide the largest inputs in the economy reveal that the number of men in salaried employment in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and hunting, mining and other extractive industries as well as wholesale and retail trade has been on the rise while that of women has shown increase mainly in wholesale and retail trade. The fact that women still make up a minority group among executives in the traditionally female-dominated fields such as education and health, testifies to the persisting vertical gender segregation in the labour market. Government policies and inter-sectoral cooperation on informal employment are not inadequate. According to the statistics, female unemployment is mainly caused by retirement, school, disability, illness, taking care of others, poor working condition, odd working hours, low salary, incapability and pandemic (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021). Approximately 50% of employees in small and medium-sized businesses are women. According to the results of gender analysis, discrimination based on age, gender, place of residence, and sexual orientation still persists in the labor market.

Key effective employment practices will require the following measures:

- Eliminate the wage gap between men and women, clarify the reasons of low labour force participation rate in certain sectors, and implement appropriate measures;
- Improve the legal framework for informal employment;
- Ensure the work-life balance to increase the participation of women in labour market, and change gender stereotypes in the workplace;
- Main challenges faced by SME owners include capabilities of human resources, long-term training, and difficulty in finding capable employees, thus draw the attention of relevant authorities to the curriculum and quality of educational institutions such as vocational schools, colleges and universities;
- To increase the initiative of SMEs in conducting on-the-job training for graduate students;
- Support SME owners by providing concessional loans

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