Gender Issues

Yunnan, CHINA

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REFERENCE

1. Introduction
The Gender Specialist has collected extensive data on women and gender issues in China with a special focus on Yunnan Province, which is included in the Project area in the GMS. The documents are retained in the reference library of the project. A list of the References is included as an attachment. The most critical gender and social issues include the transition of the economy with accompanying rapid social change; concerns about reaching the ethnic minority women in development planning; impact of cross-border movements (illegal and legal) such as logging, trafficking, drug trade; spreading HIV/AIDS; prostitution; lack of marketing opportunities in the rural areas; and capacity building through education, technical training and research. This report includes some of the critical data and highlights some of the key issues.

2. Population Features

China’s population at the end of 1996 was estimated 1.22 billion, with 27.7% below 15 years of age. The population growth rate for 1990-95 was 1.11%, and the total fertility rate 1.95%. Women constitute 48.5% of the population (ESCAP, 1997). China’s population is dominated by the ethnic Han.

The sex ratio in China is 106 men per 100 women. The excess of men in the population is attributed to the restrictions of one child per family, and the question of female infanticide due to male preference, and higher female mortality rates. The bias against female infants is marked in special provinces (UNDP, 1998). The predominance of men is more obvious in urban than rural areas, which could be attributed to male migration. On the other hand also young educated women also migrate in search of economic gains. Elderly and women likely to be left behind in the villages to carry on agricultural work and take responsibility of household management contribute to the phenomena of "feminisation and graying of agriculture" (Croll, 1996).

Of the total Yunnan population of 39,896,300, there are approximately 19 Million women, constituting 48.49% of the total population in the province – men constituting 51.51%. There are 25 ethnic minorities in addition to the Han majority, with a population greater than 40,000, and 15 of them are unique ones for China. The maternal mortality rate (1995) was 149.55 per 100,000 births, and the Infant mortality rate (1995) was 53.08 per 1000.

According to the statistics of 1992, the ratio of girls in the schools in Yunnan has been increased to 45.15%, in primary schools, 43.09% in middle schools, 36.87% in universities. Professional technical staff of Yunnan has added up to 211,062, consisting of appr. 40% of the total technical staff of the province. Among these female technical staff, over 20,000 have intermediate technical titles, and over 2,000 have senior technical titles (Yunnan Women’s Union, 1998). Considering women in power and decision-making, 25% of National Seats are filled with women; in Yunnan Province the figure is 26%; at the prefecture level 21% (709) are women. In the political consultations, 16.5% are women. In Yunnan, 210 of the technicians are women.

Son preference has manifested itself through a skewing of the male-female birth ration. This ratio has been distorted in the PRC since early 1980's. The state Statistical Bureau estimated that there were 108.5 male births for every 100 female births in 1981. By 1990, the ratio had increased to 112.26, and by 1995, to 116.57.

Regarding the ethnic minorities, the one-child policy does not apply to many of them. They have the discretion to set their own family planning policies. Although not strictly required to adhere to the one-child policy, a number of minorities have opened up to accept it.

The one-child policy together with improved school enrolment and increased female participation rates in the labour force, has achieved positive results in that the birth-rate has fallen to replacement level. Consequently, there is a possibility that married children from single families may be allowed to have two children in the future.

3. Situation of Women
Box 1: A Brief Introduction to Women in Yunnan

Visitors to Yunnan could not forget the colourful dresses of the highland women. It will be a word wonder if all the women from several hundred branches of the 26 ethnic groups in Yunnan put on their distinctive clothing and walk on the street. It is hard to imagine the mountains are homes for such diversified colours until you see it for yourself.

The highland women "wear" their myths and "write" their history. While the men drowned in uniform Chinese or Western suits, the women are displaying their personalities and charms through their varied ethnic clothing. They believe that traditions began with the history of their ancestral migrations, expeditions, and openings of the virgin soil. Women are the solid foundation of their families as steady and unbending as the soil of this ever-changing world. As such men would leave their seeds grain, money, and anything treasured for the safekeeping of women during wartime or times of exile. During times of peace and tranquillity, women are regarded as symbols of beauty, love, and peace. With needles and threads they have woven their myths legends, and history in the fabrics of their lives. Lacking a written script, these indigenous women have turned daily articles into a vast pictographic history book.

The highland women cherish their high ideals and look forward to a bright future. To maintain the lush green of the Yunnan Plateau, they have worked hard and established a base for women to develop production and science and technology. Thanks to science and technology many housewives have become economically prosperous. Old concepts about women being unsuited to education have given way to minority women to earning doctorates. An prohibitions against women in politics have been washed away by the emergence of several outstanding female civic leaders. The percentage of illiterate women in Yunnan dropped from over 90 percent in 1949 to below 50 percent in 1993. Each ethnic group has trained their own female intellectuals, including writers, artists, scientists, and teachers. The number of women participating in governments and political affairs has increased by a wide margin. There are now more than 280,000 female cadres in the province.

Regarding the overall level of education, it can be noted that in order to have literacy increased in the rural areas, it will be necessary and critical to expand educational opportunities - institutions, programs and resources among the various minorities in the rural areas. The level of education of women is important for their status and for their ability to contribute to national development, partially because of the sizeable impact that female education has on fertility. Regarding educational attainment, the Yunnan province has formulated the following social and economic guidelines: "Education be set as the cornerstone and science and technology must redefined to rejuvenate Yunnan". The government has also established Education Bonus Fund and Vocational Education Development Foundation for the minority areas.

The Centre for Women and Development (CWD) is a new unit in the Institute of Sociology (IOS), Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming, which was established in 1987. The staff capacity of these institutes is: total Staff of 25 professionals, including 3 Professors, 8 Associate Professors, 11 Assistant Professors, and 3 Administrative Staff Members, all with varying ethnic backgrounds. There are three provincial level research societies with members from all prefectures in Yunnan: (1) Centre for Women and Development (membership 170), (2) Yunnan Sociology Society (membership 350), and (3) Yunnan Juvenile Delinquency Research Society (membership 420). The institutions carry out studies in Community Theory and Development, Population and Juvenile Studies, Gender Studies, and Ethno-sociology Theory Studies

Possibilities for joint ventures in carrying out farm household baseline studies and participatory research and planning activities in the next phases of the project were suggested. Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis created a very big interest as its importance was recognised in poverty reduction strategies and household resource allocation and management. The substantive focus of the Centre and the organisational capacity of the Institute:

- "Women’s Reproductive Health and Community Development Appraisal of Luiliang County, Yunnan Province, 1995"

Box 2. Research Program Areas of the Centre for Women’s Studies
Yunnan women’s opportunities in business and trade are remarkable. However, women need business training, managerial skills, marketing knowledge, confidence building and mentoring. In the informal market, women dominate the market places selling and buying. The economic transformation policy has generated and opened up more opportunities for women to earn income in “free markets” and develop skills and talents.

Box 3. Wang Qinping and Her Incredible Sisters – a Success Story

Wang Qinping is a Yi-woman and a graduate of the Economic Management Department of the Yunnan institute for Minorities in 1982. She has immersed herself in financial and monetary work. She was an editor of Kunming Finance and Accounting, participated in the work of certified accountants office, was the Deputy Director of Funding Section of the Kunming Financial Bureau, and was an executive member and Deputy Secretary-General of the Kunming Abacus, Accounting and Financial societies.

In 1994, with her efforts the credit co-operative successfully sponsored the first conference of China’s financial and investment organisations to discuss their reform. This conference aroused great interest from related departments, and the leading members of the development centre under the State Council attended the conference. Like Wang, her sisters are excellent in developing commodity economy. Her eldest sister Wang Zhiping is the manager of a knit wear section of the Quqing department Store. Her elder sister Wang Huiping is in charge of supply and marketing of the replacement company affiliated to the Kunming Machine-Tool Parts factory, and her younger sister Wang Zuoping has contracted the Jinxin store at the Kunming railway Station. They are appreciated as four incredible Yi-sisters by other workers in the trade circles.

There are some feasible and lucrative trade opportunities also for rural women. However, they are dependent on the natural resource base and access to land in order to generate and collect produce (e.g. wild foods such as mushrooms and other non-tree forest products) and to carry out the sales and trading activities. Therefore, the question of women’s access to natural resource use and environmental management remains an even more crucial issue.

Women and their families suffer also from numerous diseases which can be prevented by traditional medicines. Kunming is world famous for its medical plants and herbs and as the modern medical facilities and services are almost non-existent in rural and remote areas, traditional knowledge of medicines is a high-value “commodity”. Medicinal plants and biodiversity knowledge of women is a critical domain to be addressed in integrated rural development interventions.
The All China Women's Federation's provincial office is carrying out its activities with a focus both on rural and urban women. The major foci of the activities of this political government-funded mass organisation is geared towards women in the rural areas. There is an enormous need for basic education, skills training and knowledge transfer as well as for the introduction of new and labour saving technologies. In the urban settings the focus is on professional women's capacity building, promotion, management and leadership development.

**Box 5. Yunnan Women's Federation's Six Major Provincial Projects**

- "Bright Literacy Campaign for Girls" – to provide schooling in the primary school level with funding from various organisations; also "family matching" programs so that an urban family supports one child in rural families have been arranged;
- *Re-employment Schemes for Professional Women* – to assist free of charge in employment scheme organised by the Women's Federation;
- "Capable Women" - to train women in financial management and loans;
- "Green project" – to promote actions in environmental management;
- "Health Project" – to address both physical and mental health issues;

(Source: Personal Communication, Women's Union, 1998)

Federation’s other program interests include various contemporary issues such as HIV/AIDS, child prostitution, and trafficking of women and young girls. are also However, only official demographic data would be made available after translations, and other qualitative information need to be gathered from informal sources. AIDS prevention work is being actively carried out by a Special Committee in schools, radio and TV, and through distribution of information leaflets and pamphlets. Federation staff is also being trained in counselling and discussing AIDS.

**4. Women and Reproductive Health**

The trend of HIV/AIDS prevalence in China is still low except Yunnan where the figures are rapidly rising, particularly among Injecting Drug Users (IDU) and prostitutes. The number of HIV cases in Yunnan is 5033, of which 275 are clinical AIDS patients. Of these 83% have been infected through contaminated needles during drug injections and 6% through sexual intercourse. Of the total cases 4118 or 82 percent are men and 600 are women.

Timely preventive measures are thus urgently needed by the Government authorities, Women's Unions and donors. Although Yunnan is still a relatively low prevalence province, and opportunities to prevent a rapid spread of the disease exist, the spread of HIV/AIDS is a concern for both men and women. The predominant mode of transmission is heterosexual with men frequent commercial sex workers and passing it on to their wives. This is increasingly common among business men whose normal business deals and "hospitality arrangements" include visits to entertainment locales and prostitutes (Personal Communication, 1998).

When rural women and girls are searching employment in urban areas or in neighbouring countries, the risks for becoming HIV infected are high. Particularly vulnerable are the young ethnic girls, who are lured to entertainment and sex industries (mostly to Thailand), and who are in "high demand" abroad and who thus may end up into multi-partner relationships and contacts and become easily infected.

HIV prevention interventions could be targeted to boarder crossing areas, taking advantage of the idle time of travellers for boarder clearance. Those interventions could include focus on behavioural change, provision of sexually transmitted infection services, and access to affordable condoms. Structural intervention, including advocating for policy change to improve the process of boarder crossing and shorten the waiting time, might help opportunities for high-risk behaviour.

**5. Trafficking in Migrants**

Rural poverty is the strongest factor in pushing girls and women to find opportunities for employment and search for better life. Because of pressure from parents, and relatives impacted by extreme poverty, they often they end up in the hands of traffickers with promises of good job and better life, and finally might have to work
as bonded labour in the entertainment and sex industry. The major economic pull-factor is the illegal economy, which is in the hands of powerful and rich men and women.

Regarding the demographics of trafficking, the Yunnan Province boarder Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Vietnam and are used by traffickers to bring Vietnamese into China and Chinese through Myanmar to Thailand and beyond. There are also reports of traffickers bringing people from Myanmar across the boarder into China especially on mining town of Ruli, China. Although the governments involved recognise these routes and often of the coercive and exploitative environment which those trafficked have to face, the trafficking via these routes are the least understood.

The Chinese delegation attending a recent regional Conference on "Illegal Labour Movements; The case of Trafficking in Women and Children" reported that since 1996, 10,503 cases of women and children were rescued with 1,928 trafficking rings broken and 14,709 traffickers arrested. The report further claims that since 1996, 411,700 sex workers have been pursued and many sent to re-education centres. However, there is no clear definition given between those trafficked and sex workers making these statistics ambiguous.

Recent cross-boarder interventions have documented their effectiveness in the service provision on both sides of the boarder - such as a prevention program implemented in the boarder area between Lao PDR and Vietnam (CARE, 1999). Private sector businesses such as transport and shipping companies and corporations have also a vested interest in ensuring safer environments for their labour passing through cross boarder areas and thus interested in support programs on trafficking.

Regarding the national response to trafficking, China has introduced a new Criminal Law to address trafficking and increased the severity of punishment. The All-China Women’s federation and the Ministry of Justice offer legal assistance to districts and counties with high incidence of trafficking. China’s Yunnan province has established "Women and Children in Work Committee" headed by the Deputy of the Yunnan Governor with multi-disciplinary participation from many sectors concerned addressing the issue.

Building a national and local capacity for sustainable action and participation at the sub-regional level is key in the transnational and less developed countries in the Mekong sub-region, so that broader issues linked with trafficking, such as prostitution, spread of HIV/AIDS, drugs, smuggling an other modes of illegal trade can be addressed.

6. Women and Food Security

Rural households depend on agriculture and its related subsectors of livestock raring, fisheries and forest resources for their living. In Yunnan Province women provide 46.6 % of the labourers in the rural areas. Home gardens production is the exclusive responsibility of women almost everywhere in China. (UNDP/FAO, 1998).

In some areas women have taken over traditional roles of men in the farming system, such as ploughing. In addition women are increasingly responsible for marketing the agricultural produce in local markets.

Forests form an economic resource base for rural communities, providing for household food security. Women collect mushrooms, wild berries, fruits, nuts, honey and earthworms, and also medicinal herbs.

In the farming system livestock is an important component. Many households depend on livestock for their main source of cash income. The gender division of labour in livestock management is such that women feed the pigs and poultry and sell small livestock like pigs, chickens, ducks and eggs, in the market

7. Women and the Environment

A number of environmental trends have an impact on rural livelihood in general and on women’s lives in particular. Women are usually disproportionately affected because they are more dependent on natural resources in order to carry out their farm and household activities. Deforestation and soil erosion threatens not only natural resources and biodiversity. While women are being affected by the deterioration of forests, their role in forest conservation is increasing. For example, in Yiao’s county in Yunnan, most of the labourers in the construction of Yangtse shelter-forests are women. (FAO;1997).
8. Policy and Planning Focus in Rural Development

According to the ultimate development goals, to achieve equitable development and social justice through sustainable economic growth, human resource development and sustainable use of the country’s natural resources, policy-makers and planners in China need to (FAO, 1997):

- Develop provincial level production-system specific data bases on gender-specific activities;
- Train provincial leaders and central line-agency officers to develop gender-sensitive planning and programme formulation;
- Create a supportive environment to adopt participatory approaches in order to accommodate people’s voices in policy, planning and planning;
- Develop rural technology and training agenda to assist rural women to improve their productivity and household income;
- Explore land reform policy so that women’s land titles will be ensures;
- Improve women’s access to inputs including credit and labour-saving technologies;
- Co-ordinate participatory meetings in village communities with both men and women to bring about awareness of the land rights issue and its legal implementation;
- Support women in their manufacturing and marketing activities, by providing local marketing information, improving transportation and storage facilities, improving processing and packaging techniques and provision of credit;
- Launch adult education programmes to increase literacy among women in order that they can understand and adopt new technologies;
- Provide opportunities to train paralegal advisors to support women and educate them in legal literacy;
- Pay attention to health issues of the population including HIV/AIDS, and trafficking

9. Closing Note and Appreciation

This Summary Country Report summarises in varying details some of the key points discussed with the informants but is heavily dependent on available secondary data. The information reported is a mix, which can be used as a learning reference by the readers about the wide variety of gender issues. It provides background information for prioritising activity areas and working on the feasibility studies during Phase II, and when developing project ideas and approaches for Phase III.

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