

Women's NGOs in Mongolia and their Role in Democratization

Tsetsegjargal Tseden

National University of Mongolia

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Abstract. This article will reviews the development of the Women's NGOs in Mongolia, and discusses the role of the Women's NGOs in the process of a political transition to democracy. Women's NGOs have a controlling weight in the civil society well beyond their formal percentage among other NGOs in Mongolia and have been at the forefront of democratic changes in Mongolia by pushing the government to increase its openness, transparency and accountability through their public education, policy advocacy and monitoring activities on a broad range of issues from women's economic and political rights to violence against women including the domestic violence.

Keywords: Women's activism, Women's NGOs, gender, Mongolia.

1. Introduction

There are feminist-inspired nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) all over Asia that choose to focus on a myriad of issues. The strength of the Women's movements varies from country to country and there is still the question of whether a public presence or numbers translate to actual women's power. However Each Asian country's women's movement experienced its own struggles with the issue of class, Asian feminists were experts at reading the situation "on the ground" and were not only selective about what aspects of feminist thinking globally they could adopt their directions from, but were also passionate about demonstrating their critiques to international platforms (Edwards and Roces 2004: 15).

Women's movements in Mongolia, like women's movements in other Asian countries, started as a result of interaction with the West, and organizations concerned with women's issues arose. Although the number of Women's NGOs in existence in Mongolia have grown tremendously over the past two decades, from only a few dozen in 1990s, to several today. Several problems continue to plague the Women's NGOs, severely hampering its influence in both political circles and among the public at large.

After a century of women's activism in Asia it is timely for both scholars and activists to look back and reflect on the history of women's movements in the region. Thus, this paper reviews the development of the Women's NGOs in Mongolia, and discusses the role of the Women's NGOs in the process of a political transition to democracy.

* E-mail: tgl@num.edu.mn

2. Women's NGOs in Mongolia and their Activities

A dramatic economic and political transformation began in Mongolia with the collapse of Soviet Union, Mongolia started a transition from a being a communist state into a democratic republic in 1990. The collapse of the Soviet system created a moment for rapid economic restructuring along the lines of a proactive neo-liberal policy agenda, with a minimal role for the state. It also opened the space for a swift political restructuring, which saw the dissolution of the one-party system and the creation of a multiparty parliamentary democracy system, national parliament named the *Ikh Khural*. Beginning of the 1990's income, and employment fell dramatically, with devastating effects on the living standards of Mongolia's population like other post-socialist countries.

After the fall of communism in Mongolia, the country adopted a new democratic constitution, which guaranteed equal rights for men and women in 1992. That year also marked the emergence of citizen-initiated NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), which were coexisting with the "mass" organizations that were beginning to reformulate themselves in the new political environment.

NGOs for women were among the first public support organizations established, and Women's NGOs stood at the frontline of most democratic developments in Mongolia. In 1992, it was women who first began forming NGOs, initially to address the drastic reduction of social protection provided under the new market-led economy. Throughout the country's transition, the activities of Women's NGOs evolved and women leaders continue to develop new strategies for achieving organizational goals.

Mongolian Women's Federation (MWF) founded in 1990 was based upon the former Women's mass organizations during the Socialist period. MWF have become one of the biggest Women's NGOs due to the existing

structure of the old organizations with their existing headquarters in the capital city and branches at the provincial and county levels.

One of the earliest Women's NGOs, the Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS), established on October 20, 1992 and, started its focus on promoting basic women's rights and promoting women in politics. This organization worked in close collaboration with the Mongolian and International NGOs, the Mongolian Government, and a wide range of other individuals and organizations to achieve the organization's goals. LEOS was successful in organizing the Third East Asian Women's Forum held in Ulaanbaatar in 1998. A number of other NGOs in Mongolia began out of the initiative LEOS members, including the National Center Against Violence, which aims to combat violence against women in all forms and CEDAW Watch Network, which coordinates and monitors over implementation of CEDAW Convention. Mongolia's largest Savings and credit cooperative, "Moncord" also began through the initiative of LEOS members.

Women's NGOs' focus ranged from the delivery of services to public affairs, with several of the more prominent women's organizations concerned with public affairs and women's participation in the political process. The Women for Social Progress Movement (WSPM) founded in 1992, strives to educate people on democratic governance and provide support to help provide improvements in the economic situation of women. In 1997, the WSPM established the Voter Education Centre. Its activities included radio and television programs to educate people on democratic governance and the training of rural activists. Centre publishes newsletters that compare the voting records of members of parliament with their campaign platforms and a Citizen's Guide on the Government, which includes the information of members of parliament.

Civil society in Mongolia has also helped to contribute to legal reform by encouraging the view that public participation in lawmaking is critical to the established democratic process. With their advocacy efforts well underway, Women's organizations were exploring legal strategies to advance women's interests within Mongolia's legal framework. The Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association (WLA) was founded in 1992 to protect the rights of women, particularly the rights of women lawyers, and providing all Mongolian women with legal aid. With Asian Foundation support, the Association developed a judicial advocacy program to advance women's rights through the preparation and filed of test cases in key areas of discriminatory practices.

Domestic violence has become a serious problem in Mongolia since the transition period started and has become more publicly visible, possibly due to both the stresses resulting from the transition to a market economy and improved reporting of incidents. One in three Mongolian women were subject to some kind of domestic violence or pressure and an estimated one in ten women, and 60.2 percent of children reportedly experienced physical violence, which is regarded by society as a "normal" event rather than as a crime (UNIFEM, 2001: 52).

In 1994, the Asian Foundation organized first its meeting and women were introduced about topic of domestic violence, all the NGOs joined this movement in a flash and spread this concept. By the mid 90's every Women's NGOs were addressing violence against women, some NGOs had a specific focus on domestic violence. Center Against Violence (CAV) was initially founded in 1995, by three Mongolian women's organizations: the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, Women for Social Progress, and the Women Lawyers' Association. The founding of the Center was an important step to bring domestic violence out of

the shadows so that both its symptoms and causes could be legally and socially addressed. After, CAV became an autonomous organization, it reregistered with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs as the National Center Against Violence (NCAV) in January 1998. This was a specialized women's organization that is leading all the efforts to provide information services and educate people about violence against women, also performing research on the status and dynamics of domestic violence in Mongolia. Then NCAV started to provide legal and psychological counseling and shelter to victims, and to educate the government and the public on domestic violence.

There was little or no gender analysis in the design, collection and analysis stage of most policy-based research in Mongolia. As well gender-sensitive research, by both government and NGOs, suffers from incomplete disaggregation by sex and other pertinent variables, such as age, residence and income. Therefore Women's Information and Research Centre (WIRC) was established in 1995 to address the topic and make sure the proper information is collected. The Centre started to promote the process of mainstreaming gender issues into government policy, planning and programming services in Mongolia and also collaborated with other Women's NGOs and advocacy groups towards achieving women's political and economic empowerment.

Since 1996, a new consciousness started taking hold among women, stimulated by their participation in and the influence of the Women's Conference in Beijing. This Conference exposed Mongolians to many new ideas and linked women to their colleagues around the globe. New Initiatives for Citizen Participation provided the needed attention to the broader processes of citizen participation, like the use of using new approaches to influence decision making and to promote

positive change outside of the election process. These new initiatives fall into two broad categories. The first is the expansion of advocacy efforts, growing from influencing decisions on certain issues to include monitoring or watchdog activities. The second is an expanded role in the legislative drafting process. Women's NGOs have undertaken several important initiatives in these two areas and began to engage in advocacy.

By mid of 90's, the Women's NGOs had expanded their focus to include watchdog groups who main role to promote government accountability. The CEDAW Watch Network Center was established in 1996 as the CEDAW Watch club under the Liberal Women's Brain Pool. In 1997, a seven-member Coalition of Women's Organizations was formed to monitor government implementation of the United Nations Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Mongolia signed the convention in 1981. Citizen monitoring of government performance was new to Mongolia, and the women's organizations which comprised of the National CEDAW Watch Network had to learn new analytic skills in order to determine whether laws and regulations were in place; whether enforcement was weak; and whether there were other barriers to implementation. Realizing the immensity of the task, the group narrowed its focus to women's economic status and employment issues. Then, the monitoring extended to the countryside. As a result of five regional workshops, each of Mongolia's 21 provinces had trained women who know about CEDAW and are able to monitor government performance at the local level (Katherine S.Hunter 1999: 6). Their second example illustrates the expanded role of Women's NGOs in the area of legislative drafting, which helps to insure more effective representation of women's interests in Mongolia's evolving legal framework. Women have experience in commenting on existing laws, for instance, the revised labor law. In their expanded role, they

were extending the precedent for citizen and NGO participation in the legislative process, first seen when NGOs played an active role in drafting of Mongolia's NGO law (adopted in 1997).

There were two important initiatives by the Women's NGOs in the legislative process. The first is the Women for Social Progress which worked with the parliament secretariat on implementing a new election management law. This effort represented the first ever-formal government-NGO task force and is a tribute to the growing legitimacy of NGOs in Mongolia. It is also significant because work on the election management law represents an effort that transcends strict gender interests. The second initiative is the work on the law Against Domestic Violence. Since 1996, the Asian Foundation has supported the efforts of the National Center Against Violence (NCAV) and the Women's Lawyers' Association (WLA) to include domestic violence on the public agenda. Above mentioned two organizations leading another NGO campaign on legal advocacy for new legislation on domestic violence and introduced first draft of Mongolia's domestic violence bill in 1997 (Katherine S.Hunter 1999: 8). The Women's NGOs were campaigning for a new domestic violence law. Following a successful hearing on the domestic violence bill in May 2004, the parliament unanimously passed the law Against Domestic Violence. The adoption of the law was a remarkable success for the NCAV and its partners. In less than a decade, Mongolian society had not only accepted domestic violence as a widespread social ill, but also adopted progressive legislation that established domestic violence as a criminal offense.

Since 1990, the national mechanism for women's issues and policy on women has undergone major changes. Women's NGOs and women activists have made considerable progress in getting the government to adopt the National Program for the Advancement of Women and establishing National mechanism for women's issues. The decade of the

transition has coincided with the UN Conferences of the 1990s, and has witnessed the engagement of both Women's NGOs and advocates within government, with the support of UN agencies and bilateral organizations presented in Mongolia. As a result of their concerted efforts, the Government of Mongolia formally adopted the National Program for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) in March 1996 by Government Resolution No.145 (UNIFEM 2001: 66). The Program identified eleven critical areas of concern and provided strategic objectives and actions for 1996-2020 for each. The critical areas were:

- A. Women and Economic Development
- B. Women and Poverty
- C. The Status of Rural Women
- D. Women and Education
- E. Women and Reproductive Health
- F. Women and the Family
- G. Women in Power and Decision-Making
- H. Violence Against Women and Human Rights
- I. National Machinery for Advancement of Women
- J. Women and the Mass Media
- K. Women and Environment

In 1996, the National Council on Women's Issues was established as the primary agency responsible for monitoring the implementation of the NPAW. The government Minister for Health and Social Welfare is the head of the National Council on Women's Issues. Experts of the Human Development Division of the Ministry's Strategic Management and Planning Department are in charge of women's affairs and there are focal points for women's issues in the 21 aimags and city district governors' offices at the local level. Women's issues have been reflected in the portfolio of the Standing Committee of the Great Hural (UNIFEM 2001: 67).

Policy frameworks existed, supported by the National Program for the Advancement of Women, but the institutional machinery is still not functional during this period. The successful implementation of the National Program required strong commitment and political will on the part of the government and all of its agencies as well as active participation of community-based organizations, specifically Women's NGOs, economic entities and individuals. But the capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming by women activists and advocates and within state mechanisms has yet to be generated and mobilized. Women and the national women's machinery have not been able to mobilize effectively to date to promote and uphold rights and to influence the processes and outcomes of the transition. In fact, agency and responsibility for women's issues seems to have been transferred out of formal political and decision-making structures and into less formal institutions of civil society, specifically Women's NGOs. The interplay and tension between these two spheres is manifested both in the drawing up of the National Program for the Advancement of Women, and in the difficulties of its implementation.

Political empowerment has had many evolutions during the transition period. Mongolian women's share of parliamentary seats fell sharply after the transition, from 23 per cent to 3.9 per cent in the 1992 election due to cancellation of the quota system for women's representation (Tsetsegjargal 2009: 83). The small share of women candidates and women elected in 1992 has focused Women's NGOs' attention on the reasons for this phenomenon as well as what to do to change it. Strategies centered on assessing the role of the multi-party system and introducing quotas for parliamentary representation. Notable and successful examples include Women's NGOs joining efforts to increase the number of women

in the 1996 parliamentary elections and the collective request of 23 organizations at the first Women's NGO conference for the government to form a National Women's Council. A roundtable meeting of Women's NGOs entitled "The Election System and Women's Participation" was held in November 1995, at which it was suggested that election social psychology was driven primarily by economic and political elites rather than by the general public or ordinary electors (Katherine S. Hunter 1999: 9).

With regard to the quota, the first coalition of Women's NGOs before the 1996 election proposed reintroducing the quota as the best way to increase women's representation in political decision-making. The second Mongolian Women's NGO Coalition was formed on December 10, 1999. The 27-member Women's NGO Coalition mobilized to increase the number of women in decision making positions for the 2000 national and local government elections. As the result of coalition of Women's NGOs, women's share of parliamentary seats rose to 10.5 per cent in the election of 1996, maintaining the same share in 2000 (Tsetsegjargal 2009: 115-116).

Mongolian NGOs implement different projects during the transition period to solve social problems especially focusing on unemployment and poverty, to conduct training on income-generating activities and job skills, provide information and improve knowledge about reproductive health and human rights. All of these to date have relied on foreign sponsors, and have weak organizational and technical facilities. Specifically the Women's NGOs became very well known in its broad frame activities.

Women's NGOs in Mongolia were not limited to only women's issues. Women's NGOs aim to help people adjust to the new order and to take advantage of it. Being weak in almost every regard does not prevent these

organizations from educating people about their civil society, introduce the basics of the market economy, explain the rule of law, and define the citizen's rights and responsibilities. In this effort, women's organizations were ahead of the government and much more efficient. Women's NGOs continually increased their influence on policymaking through the use of public seminars, meetings with national and local decision makers, information campaigns, and comments on proposed legislation. With support of international organizations several of Women's NGOs have become strong advocates of women's rights and gender equality. However, most of the active NGOs predominately work in the capital in Ulaanbaatar and the many NGO's in the rural organizations and not as successful because of the very limited access to information, support funds, and expertise.

The beginning of the 21st century 44 Women's NGOs was providing services and training, respond to basic security problems, and promote gender equity in law, the workplace, and social relations (Open Society Forum 2005: 16). However Women's NGOs operate on a very limited funding framework and mainly supported by the foreign aid agencies and bilateral organizations, they engaged in an increasingly diverse set of areas. Women's NGOs started to focus on broader issues related to governance, accountability, and openness. In their role as activist citizens, women are defining the norms for citizen participation and civil society in Mongolia's young democracy. Obviously, this is very important for the country's development. And although men are involved in NGOs too, it is fair to say that the Women's NGOs are the leaders when it comes to engaging in the broader public interest.

Women's NGOs now link both individual with coalition efforts, and can link urban and rural NGOs to cooperate on national initiatives.

These NGOs have established the benchmarks for the role of citizen-initiated groups in the country's new democracy and expanded the spectrum of approaches available for citizens to influence public policy. National Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs (MONFEMNET) was founded in 2000 as a network of women's organizations working towards human development and women's rights in Mongolia. Since 2005, the network has undergone intensive reforms, and is now open to any civil society organization that is committed to gender justice, human rights and freedoms, and democracy. Each year, MONFEMNET organize "Through Women's Eyes" Annual Forum which is the biggest event for Women's NGOs. MONFEMNET and the members and partners, in cooperation with the Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES), select a policy issue of strategic importance as the main theme and draw together women's rights and human rights' activists and partners to share analyses and views on the issue and devise strategies for collective action.

Most Women's NGOs were mainly supported by contributions from the foreign donors. Since 2000, several national donor organizations for women activists have been founded. Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES) is the biggest, and was established on July 2000, to raise funds in order to financially support initiatives for advancement of Mongolian women and protection of their human rights. Since its establishment MONES has been working with national and international NGOs, private sector and grassroots.

Recently, Women's NGOs started to focus on human trafficking, especially in women and children. Much needed services for the victims such as legal aid, shelter, and psychosocial support have been provided exclusively by a small number of NGOs such the Mongolian Gender Equality Center and the National Center against Violence. These services have been limited due to their limited capacity while

demand is increasingly growing. Legal and policy framework on trafficking have improved by active advocacy of Women's NGOs. Thus, in 2008, the Criminal Code's Article 113 was amended so as to include the full definition of trafficking according to international standards and the parliament has ratified the Palermo protocol. In 2006, the National Program on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking, Especially in Women and Children, was adopted but shelved until recently.

Mongolian Women's NGOs have been actively participating in international activities on women's issues and have recently increased support to host international conferences and events. The Women's Democracy Network (WDN) was established in March 2006, in response to a growing interest for networking and training among women in countries that had recently transitioned to democracy. The Network's inaugural conference, which coincided with International Women's Day, brought more than 30 women leaders from countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North America together to engage in dialogue about challenges they face in their countries and to lay the groundwork for the establishment of future democracy networks in their regions.

Since the transition, the Women's NGOs has been grappling with the issue of women's representation in politics and a woman's share in the decision making. As the result of several coalition of Women's NGOs, the increase in proportion of women candidates at all elections and The Law on the Election of the Parliament which stated that a "minimum 30 percent of candidates for parliamentary elections from each political party should be women" was passed by the Parliament of Mongolia. The women's quota in elections was one of the significant ways to guarantee women's participation in state policy formulation and

decision making process at all levels and to promote and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of vulnerable groups such as women and children. However Women's NGOs urged the Mongolia's Parliament to respect its duty before the international community by ensuring that women have equal opportunity in legislative decision making processes, Mongolia's Parliament removed Article 28.2 which indicated a 30 percent quota for Women Candidates in the Parliamentary Election on 26 December, 2007. The dispiriting evolution in the indicator for political status does not however capture some of the gains and the consolidation of civil and political rights since the transition. Nor does it show women's initiatives in key issues and their dynamism in Women's NGOs. Women's NGOs still supporting women's leadership both in government and nongovernment positions and want to get more women elected at all levels.

With active involvement of Women's NGOs National Policy on Gender Empowerment was adopted in 2002 and implementation of which is being overseeing by National Committee for Gender Equality, headed by Prime Minister. The policy efforts are aimed at incorporating gender specific activities into projects and policies to correct above mentioned disparities and reinforce women's participation in socio economic activities and increasing benefits for women in terms of employment, access to services, empowerment and capacity building. Women's NGOs are also assigned to chair donor coordination group on gender and gender specialist is working to ensure proper attention to gender concerns. The Women's NGOs as well as gender advocates within the state machineries have been proactive in organizing around agendas for women's advancement. A driving force has been the success of Mongolian women in connecting with the global agendas that have been forged by women's movements worldwide under the aegis of the UN System.

After two decades of fighting to pass a law on gender equality, Law on Promotion of Gender Equality was adopted by Parliament February 14, 2011 in Mongolia. The aim of the new law is to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all political, legal, economic, cultural, and social spheres and the law prohibits any forms of discrimination in these spheres and in family relations. Women's NGOs, like Mongolian Women's Fund and leaders in a coalition of 17 women's groups played significant role for adopted the law.

3. Role of Women's NGOs in Democratization

Analysts contributing to a recent directory of civil society in Mongolia estimated that in 2005, approximately 70 active nongovernmental women's organizations existed in Mongolia (Open Society Forum, 2005: 16). A noticeable "boom" in the creation of new women's organizations took place in the mid-1990s; now the rate at which new ones are forming appears to be slowing down. Women's NGOs have a weight in the civil society well beyond their formal percentage among other NGOs and have been at the forefront of democratic changes in Mongolia by pushing the government to increase its openness, transparency.

Among the Women's NGOs in Mongolia, we can see encouraging signs that bode well for the gradual development of a more democratic society in Mongolia. First, over the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of self-initiated nongovernmental women's organizations in Mongolia. At the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, only a handful of independent women's group existed, operating in a semi underground manner. With the increase of number of women's organizations there is a sure sign that Mongolia's female citizens are becoming more

active in voluntary public life and now see themselves as having important roles to play as political actors, philanthropists, social problem solvers, and simply as autonomous citizens with diverse interests. Women's NGOs in work on a vast range of issues and problems, from charity, hobbies, and professional interests to domestic violence, identifying the problem of trafficking of women across borders, and presentation of gender stereotypes in the mass media.

The activities of all Women's NGOs are connected with the following:

- Human rights, women's social security, reproductive rights, committees of soldiers' mothers, etc.;
- Educational and training organizations for women and related programmes;
- Information work (production, storage, and dissemination of information; women's archives and libraries; information centres and programmes);
- Work with the public and services for women (emergency centres for women, legal and psychological consulting, public reception offices, etc.);
- Family assistance (organizations of single mothers and mothers with many children, mothers of disabled children, work with minors, charity work for poor and other children);
- Women's entrepreneurship (associations, clubs, and programmes);
- Research, resource, and training centres;
- Political activities (parties, women voters' clubs, organization and active participation at rallies, actions, and picketing); and
- Women's creative organizations and associations.

The natural evolution of NGOs in Mongolia has been from urban-based NGOs to rural-based branches in the provinces. These branches, while organizationally linked to their headquarters, are essentially independent by

both financial control and programmatically. For example, The Asia Foundation has supported internship programs for rural activists at the headquarters of the Women's Lawyers Association (WLA) and the Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS), and enabled rural women's participation in almost every activity that took place over the last decade. While increasing public popularity and public respect for Women's NGOs is occurring, most remarkable is the government's recognition of Women's NGOs. A three year effort of nonpartisan voter education activities by Women for Social Progress (WSP) resulted in a tripartite agreement between WSP, the Secretariat of the State Great Hural (Parliament), and the National History Museum. Under this agreement, WSP is responsible for informing citizens of what is going on in the government.

Women's groups operated in virtual isolation from one another in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In contrast, today, particularly in capital city, women's organizations are much more networked with one another and have managed to organize national campaigns uniting dozens of NGOs on issues such as violence against women and the goal of increasing women's presence in politics. Yet given the growing number of Women's NGOs in the country and gradually increasing amounts of information sharing, awareness of one another, and even collaboration on projects, we can now say that a women's movement-albeit a small one-exists and is gaining in strength.

Some testimony to this growing strength is that, in a few recent cases, the mass media have provided positive portrayals of women activists' work. Documentaries on the problems of domestic violence and sex trafficking have recently aired on major Mongolian televisions, and the occasional positive article has appeared in newspapers and magazines. But, most media references to women's organizations continue to be made in an ironic and misunderstanding manner.

Another gradually improving area for women's groups is their relationships with politicians and bureaucrats. The NGOs are now beginning to find more allies in the corridors of political power, and have begun to now show they are having an impact on public policy. For example, Since the transition period, the Women' NGOs has been grappling with the issue of women's representation in politics and a share in the decision making process. As the result of several coalition of Women's NGOs, the increase in proportion of women candidates at all elections however women's representation has not increased yet. Although the charter has not led to concrete political action, it represents a step toward identifying some principles on which many Women's NGOs can agree. Also Women's NGOs and women activists have made considerable progress in getting the government to adopt the National Policy on Gender Empowerment, pass a Law on Promotion of Gender Equality and establishing National mechanism for gender issues.

The adoption of the law Against Domestic Violence was also a remarkable success for the women's movement in Mongolia. In less than a decade, Mongolian society had not only accepted domestic violence as a widespread social ill, but also adopted progressive legislation that established domestic violence as a criminal offense and opened Sheltering service for victims of domestic violence.

On the whole, I can say that Women's NGOs have played a major role in motivating the government to address gender inequities in many aspects of Mongolian social, economic, and political life during democratization period. Attention in the following areas helping ensure that women benefit equitably from development:

- Transformation of public discourse and public awareness: The main achievement of Women's NGOs is that basic ideas and notions of feminist and gender theories have become part and parcel of the life of modern Mongolian society. And, many Mongolians and decision

makers started to understand that these are not personal problems of separate women but are social and political problems of the society.

- Gender-responsive approaches to poverty reduction: Women's NGOs actively participating to planning and implementing gender-responsive programs and involve practical programs that narrow gender gaps in all areas can demonstrate appropriate government response to women's needs.

- Focus on empower women: Women's NGOs continuing to pressure government to take its commitment to protecting women's rights. Women's NGOs have long experience in using international treaties and agreements (e.g. CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action) and the constitution in a wide range of development issues.

- Political participation of women: As the result of several coalitions of Women's NGOs, the increase in proportion of women candidates at all elections. Women's NGOs also helping educate women voters to claim their constitutional rights of political participation, lobbying for issues of specific concern.

- Capacity building among NGOs: Women's NGOs providing gender sensitivity and gender analysis training for other civil society organizations to increase understanding of how mainstreaming gender and addressing gender gaps can maximize poverty reduction efforts.

- Non-formal education: Informing and educating citizens is one of the key areas of Women's NGOs. Women's NGOs contributing to the development of democracy education through extracurricular programs. Women's NGOs making wide use of seminars and training programs on democracy, human rights, gender equality, reproductive health, gender-based violence, civic and voter education, children's rights, citizen oversight of government, citizen participation in budget processes, legal reform, international treaties and many other subjects.

- Internationalized: Women's NGOs became very well known in its broad frame

activities in international level and contributing to improve women's status in the world.

The developments discussed above provide room for optimism concerning the prospects for Women's NGOs as an element of a democracy-promoting civil society. However, a number of characteristics of the Women's NGOs in Mongolia impede its ability to influence society and in some cases even work against its potential role in democratization. Chief among these weaknesses are a lack of connections with its grassroots citizens, so called negative public opinion of the Women's NGOs and women activists, poor links among competing NGOs, and extreme political weakness.

4. Conclusion

The 20th century was marked by a profound emancipation of Mongolian women, the elevation of their educational and professional status and their ultimate and fortunate inclusion into the social, economic, political and cultural life into the nation. Mongolian women's organization focused on the improvement of women's social status up to the 1980s but specifically aimed to approach the gender equality in education, employment and politics.

Prior to democratization, as the women's organizations in Mongolia began to change with a different aspect in the early 1990s. In Mongolia the women's movement began to form as NGOs, and the NGOs initial focus was on provision of the social protection and social security for women that were no longer provided by the state, and started to evolve to new strategies for achieving increased impact of transition on women.

Establishing gender equality in diverse social institutions has been one of the most important objectives of women's organizations worldwide. Paralleling this worldwide phenomenon, the number of women's organizations in Mongolia increased dramatically with the government establishing the national mechanism for women's issues.

Women's NGOs in Mongolia have achieved remarkable progress in advancing women's rights and status within society and become more institutionalized than ever. Creative forms of new networks and diverse feminist subjectivities have come to existence since the mid 1990s in Mongolia. This new generation of Women's NGOs started to extended advocacy efforts, growing from influencing decisions on certain issues to include monitoring or watchdog activities and role in the legislative process. Also Women's NGOs were not limited to only women's issues. They aimed to help people adjust to the new order and to take advantage of it during the last two decades.

Women's NGOs have a controlling weight in the civil society well beyond their formal percentage among other NGOs in Mongolia and have been at the forefront of democratic changes in Mongolia by pushing the government to increase its openness, transparency and accountability through their public education, policy advocacy and monitoring activities on a broad range of issues from women's economic and political rights to violence against women including the domestic violence.

The Women's NGOs in Mongolia played a crucial role in moving societies toward democratization and bring social progress. This paper has acknowledged the main role of Women's NGOs in democratization in Mongolia are following:

- Women's NGOs were in effect supporting the democracy movement in the country and helped broaden the agenda of democratization from narrow political to broader social issues.
- Women's organizations influenced government policies not only through well-qualified and trained activists but also undertake efforts to mobilize the general public for gender and development causes, specially supported that more female citizens are becoming interested in active participation in public life.

• Women's NGOs have made considerable progress in getting the government to adopt the national programs for women and establishing national mechanism for gender issues.

The important role of the women's movement in democratization is service provider which filling the gap by providing the necessary social services for the women and other groups in the society. Women's NGOs do face operational and programmatic challenges, but their progress to date indicates that the Women's NGO definitely will continue to play a key role in advancing Mongolia's democratic development.

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