



**ADMINISTRATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC  
UNDP "DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE" PROGRAMME**

**under the project**

**«PROMOTION OF WOMEN TO CIVIL SERVICE AND POLITICS»  
(under the support of the Swedish Agency for International Development/SIDA)**

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**GENDER ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTIES  
OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

BISHKEK - 2008

The formal history of the development of multi-party democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic started almost at the same time as the establishment of a sovereign state. However, real conditions for the development of the parties - only appeared in 2007<sup>1</sup> due to the acceptance of a new Election Code. It enabled the political parties to become full-fledged subjects of political life and to really participate in the struggle for power.

It is obvious that the rapidity of political events from the date that the Election Code was adopted to the start of the elections to the Jogorku Kenesh - the Republican Parliament did not allow the members of the parties to formulate new strategies and rethink their goals. At the same time, like everywhere else in the world, youth, ethnic and female political resources should have been in demand, since this was required by the new electoral legislation.

This Report is focused and based on specific research on the gender procedure in the political parties precisely at the period of the parliamentary elections. The research is part of a partner project of the Administration of the President of the KR and the UNDP “Promotion of Women in the Civil Service and Politics”.

The Report gives an understanding and assessment of the processes involved in promoting a gender approach in the work of the political parties of the KR and the role their members played in organizing a defined gender procedure.

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**The views expressed in the present publication reflect the opinions of authors and do not necessarily coincide with the position of UNDP in Kyrgyzstan.**

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to this time there was a short period in the history of sovereign Kyrgyzstan (2000-2003) when the elections were conducted based on party lists. The principle of the electoral legislation was a mixed one, and allowed for voting both on one-mandate constituencies and also on party lists. However, because of the short duration of this period of time and the fact that it happened between-elections, it has not become a factor for the development of political parties.

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## List of abbreviations

NAP	National Action Plan for the achievement of gender equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2007 – 2010
JK (the Parliament) of the KR	Jogorku Kenesh (the Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic
AP KR	Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic
OPM KR	Office of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic
NSC	National Statistical Committee KR
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
CEC KR	Central Electoral Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic
FMC	Family Medicine Centre
BFEA	Bishkek Financial and Economic Academy
OshTU	Osh Technological University
JASU	Jalal-Abad State University
Collection of gender disaggregated statistics, KR, NSC, 2001-2005	Collection of gender disaggregated statistics “Women and men of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2001-2005” published by the National Statistical Committee

## INTRODUCTION

The parliamentary elections of 2007 became a major benchmark in the history of the development of sovereign Kyrgyzstan. The importance of these historic events is due to many facts. These include the introduction of a new, i.e. proportional electoral system in the KR, the adoption of special measures in support of women, youth and ethnic minorities in the electoral legislation, the consolidation of a lobby for different sectors of civil society for the introduction of new election principles and an update the institutes for young democracy in our country...

Due to these major changes, one of the most significant achievements of 2007 in the development of the political system of the country became possible; namely the introduction of gender quotas in the election law and the end of a one sex parliament for the first time in history.

There is much research on the issues of the political representation of women, which has established the presence of a direct link between the type of electoral system and the number of the women elected to parliament. However practically all research of this kind has been carried out by studying countries with established democracies. There were only a few examples in which countries with new democracies were studied and in these inconsistent tendencies were noted. In particular, the researcher Meitlend formed a hypothesis “on the presence of a minimal threshold of political development which it is necessary to step over, so that women could be effectively organized and use such institutes as the right to vote in their interests<sup>2</sup>”.

Kyrgyzstan is a country with a new democracy and only recently started to develop democratic institutes and procedures. If in recent years the system of political parties, the policy of gender equality and other key elements of democracy developed mainly on a rhetorical level, then it was in 2007 that it became possible to create a legislative base for both a party system, and the political representation of women.

Studying to a certain extent the unique Kyrgyz experience of an institutional development of political parties and the integration of gender quotas into party procedure is now an important objective, because an understanding of the first lessons and challenges of these processes could become a basis for the further development of our democracy.

The opportunity of carrying out a gender analysis of the past election processes and study of the gender policies of the leading political parties of the country seems a very relevant and promising one. This comes as part of a project “Promotion of Women to the Civil Service and Politics” of the Administration of the President of the KR and UNDP supported by the Swedish International Development Agency. The results from the study are undoubtedly of interest to a wide range of people – for civil servants working on developing the legal system and political and economic strategies for the state, for representatives and functionaries of the political parties which are in the initial stages of developing their parties, for representatives from civil society and international organizations whose aim is to assess and make improvements in the relevant agencies and their action strategy and for scientists working on social problems and studying politics.

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<sup>2</sup> Mozer R. Impact of election systems on representation of women in post communist countries.// gender reconstruction of political systems. Editors N. Stepanova and E. Kochkina. Saint Petersburg, Aleteja, 2004 page 798.

## SECTION 1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH, ITS CONCEPTUAL BASIS AND IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

- The change in the electoral system and the introduction of the proportional electoral principle into our country has helped with the development of political parties. If before political parties had almost no direct means of fighting for political influence and power, with the introduction of elections based on party lists (the proportional system) they became the basic instruments of the political struggle for power. It is obvious, that obtaining this status and such opportunities came at a great cost to the political parties. The new Election Code was adopted just before the start of the parliamentary race (so the parties did not have time to develop their policies in the light of the new legal conditions)
- A number of provisions in the electoral legislation limited the parties' right to create political blocks and did not give any advantages to the parties, which had a long-term history in comparison with newly established parties
- Also the new legislation did create an effective counterbalance to the very old tradition of using an administrative resources of power for the benefit of a certain political party

Nevertheless, the new Election Code, born into a complex and long opposition between the authority and the opposition, was a step forward for the democratic development of the country and its party institutes.

Experience from the most advanced states in Europe testifies to the fact that political parties play a major role in the political mobilization of women and the development of women's political leadership. These parties are at the centre of the political life of these countries. In different European countries there is a certain spectrum of variations between the parties and women, but nevertheless a uniform tendency is traced everywhere. Political parties under pressure from women activists amongst their party members included their programme requirements in their manifestoes and made them official party policy. They adopted a certain system of guarantees to introduce the principle of gender equality into society.<sup>3</sup>

There is hardly any experience of studying post-socialist countries, which are disposing of their legacy of a totalitarian one-party system, from the point of view of studying gender procedure inside the parties and the impact of the parties in promoting gender equality on the state and society. This research is focused on overcoming the lack of this experience and studying gender approaches in governance, the internal structures of the political parties of Kyrgyzstan, as well as revealing gender orientation in the basic party programme documents. As part of achieving the goals of this research, a gender analysis of the legislation of the KR was carried out as regards the political parties and the electoral system, an analysis of the gender procedures in the key political parties, which participated in the parliamentary elections in 2007 and a gender analysis of the documents of the pre-election campaign of the candidates running for Parliament.

*The object of the research* was determined as follows:

- The attitudes of party members to women's political leadership and mind-setting on the necessity of adopting measures to help promote women to leadership positions in the party and in the country. Different ways women struggled for their place and the place of women in the parties (in the pre-election struggle)
- The most successful strategies for reducing gender inequality inside the parties
- Emphasis in party propaganda on the role of women in the family, society and the state

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<sup>3</sup> For more detail, please see "Gender reconstruction of political systems", page 207

The research sample included twelve political parties, which directly participated in the pre-election run. The following methods of research were used: focus group discussions, the studying of documents and structured interviews.

Women-candidates working in the governing bodies of parties - members of political councils and heads of party cells participated in focus-group discussions. One to two representatives were selected from each of the twelve parties for the focus group discussions. A total of twelve respondents participated in the discussions.

The bank of interviews in the given research consists of structured interviews with thirty party members.

Among the documents subjected for analysis, there were charters and programmes of the political parties, information material from the Central Electoral Committee distributed in the course of the elections and pre-election promotion material. Interviews, meetings and discussions in the focus - group were conducted in Bishkek in December 2007.

During the course of the research project many methodical and ethical complexities were encountered:

1. Some parties openly refused to participate in the project, on the grounds that there were no gender inequality problems in their parties.
2. Given the short time period of the electoral process, the limited time for the party candidates and the absence of a systematized database on the operational political parties, the researchers had limited access to information on the quality of the candidates, on the gender procedures in the parties and so forth.
3. A number of respondents refused to participate in the research for fear of possible provocative action in the case of an information leak.

## **SECTION 2. GENDER ASPECTS OF THE LEGISLATION OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC IN THE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

The development of legislation in different countries of the world as regards promoting gender equality and female political leadership shows there are at least two types of instruments for increasing women's participation in politics. On the one hand, it is the development of procedures aimed at prohibiting sexual discrimination and the removal of obstacles in the way of equality; on the other hand –it is the introduction of positive (affirmative) measures, which would give certain advantages and privileges to women in different domains, including that of politics.<sup>4</sup>

The first type of instrument is widely represented in the countries with a new democracy. Practically in all the states of the post Soviet space equality of rights and opportunities for all social and demographic groups of the population has been declared in the key laws, and first and foremost the right to elect and be elected. Also constitutions in the countries of this region (post Soviet region) have introduced a prohibition on discrimination from different attributes, including: race, religious beliefs and sex. The introduction of such legal regulations in the spirit of a policy of equal rights and opportunities testifies to the presence of at least a rhetorical strategy of the state in relation to the concept of gender equality.

The main law of our country – the Constitution of the KR (article 13, items 3-4) - also guarantees equality of the sexes in the spirit of liberal ideology:

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<sup>4</sup> For more detail, please see: Popkova L. Feminists' equality project and post-Soviet political practices.; Jidkova N. Election System, political parties and representation of women in the Russian Parliament // Transformation of gender relations: Western theories and Russian practices. Edited by Popkova L, Tartakovsky I, Samara, 2003

*“All people are equal in the Kyrgyz Republic before the law and court. Nobody can be exposed to any discrimination, infringement of freedom and rights on the grounds of origin, sex, race, nationality, language, denomination, political or religious beliefs or any other circumstances of a personal or public nature.*

*“In the Kyrgyz Republic **men and women** have equal freedoms and rights, as well as equal opportunities to implement these rights”.*

Moreover, in 2003 in the KR due to the efforts of different organizations and institutes of the state and society the Law “On the foundations of the state for guaranteeing gender equality” was accepted, which incorporated concrete mechanisms for the provision of gender equality as regards public administration.

Article 9 of the law says, that the state “provides equal representation for people of a different sex in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the government through legal, organizational and other mechanisms.” The adoption “of temporary special measures aimed at achieving real equality in gender relations” in item 6 of this Law is recognized as one of the legitimate mechanisms for bringing about the equality principle.

Besides national legislation a number of international documents ratified by the KR also recommend the use of affirmative measures to promote women’s political leadership and the elimination of gender inequality, particularly regarding governance. In particular, the “Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women” (CEDAW) in item 4/1 says: “The adoption by participant states of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the establishment of actual equality between men and women, is not acknowledged, as it is considered by the present Convention to be as discriminatory; ... these measures should be abolished, when the goals of equal opportunities and equal rights have been achieved.”

Even more direct and persistent appeals for gender equality could be heard in the Recommendations of the Committee of the United Nations on discrimination after examining Kyrgyzstan’s report on their implementation of CEDAW (both in 1999, and in 2002): (item 37.) “The Committee recommends the Government of the KR to consider the opportunity of adopting a wide set of measures, including quotas, to increase women’s representation in politics and other unconventional areas”.

In the recent years the government of the country has made a number of efforts to introduce not only regulations to ban sexual discrimination, but also to develop legal regulations, which would ensure positive measures in support of sexual equality, which is under-represented in governance. In particular, with this aim in mind in 2002 the celebrated Decree of the President appeared “On further improvement of the human resources policy to attract women leaders to the government of the KR”, which provided a concrete mechanism to advance women into work at decision-making levels.

On the one hand, the issue of this Decree in a situation, when citizens at local level had already begun to forget that women and governance are compatible concepts, was undoubtedly very positive and allowed a whole group of women leaders to enter into decision-making. On the other hand, for women there was “a ceiling for their sex” in their career path to power: They were instructed by the decree to hold second and third positions in the local level of the power hierarchy.

Gender experts, when evaluating the significance of this decree, emphasized that it had not led to the appearance of women-administrators in key positions. Besides many excessive aspects in the procedures of this progressive decree as a whole it did not allow a

new type of a woman- administrator to come to power and frequently only strengthened negative perceptions of measures in support of gender equality with regard to management and power.

Despite an increase in the presence of women in the executive branches of power, quantity indicators for the representation of women in the state authorities at different levels testify to gender disproportion and act as an indicator of the presence of discrimination against women at decision-making levels, particularly in the highest echelons of executive power (see the table).

**Distribution of civil servants in the bodies of state power and public administration, according to their posts on November 1 2005 (%)**<sup>5</sup>

Public administration body	Total		According to posts					
	women	men	highest		senior		less senior	
			women	men	women	men	women	men
Total	41,9	58,1	14,4	85,6	29,7	70,3	38,5	61,5
Parliament of the KR	41,7	58,3	-	100	42	58	41,5	58,5
Government offices of the KR	34,6	65,4	15,2	84,8	31	69	50,8	49,2

However the experience in Kyrgyzstan and other countries of the post Soviet region shows that the presence of anti-discrimination principles in the key laws of the country cannot always in practice provide the checks and balances, aimed at eradicating discrimination.

The latest history of sovereign Kyrgyzstan has known times when on the basis of declarations and rhetoric for equality many social-demographic groups of the population found themselves cut off from any real access to elective power. In particular, when guaranteeing the women of the country the right to elect and be elected, in declaring the state's support for the policy of gender equality, the political system appeared unable to provide even the minimal, symbolic presence of women in parliament in the past convocation of the fourth elective cycle of sovereign Kyrgyzstan.

The National Action Plan for the achievement of gender equality recognizes, that one of the key obstacles in bringing about gender equality in Kyrgyzstan was the preservation of "socio-cultural norms and gender (patriarchal) stereotypes about the role of women in the society, which consolidated the traditionally dependent state of women".<sup>6</sup> The logic of such an explanation, in the opinion of many gender experts, is based on the rhetorical, declarative nature of the strategy, which advocates the gender equality policy in Kyrgyzstan. Only practicable mechanisms are capable of strengthening women's positions as politicians and managers and of demonstrating the strategies needed to promote equal opportunities.

That is why for a long period in 2006-2007 activists from civil society, in particular representatives from women's initiatives, lobbied for the introduction of special measures for women into the electoral legislation. .

On October 22, 2007, the day after the referendum was carried out in the republic, which resulted in the adoption of the new edition of the Constitution and Law of the KR "On the new edition of the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic", the President of the KR

<sup>5</sup> Publication of the MCC of the National Statistical Committee, KR 2001-2005

<sup>6</sup> NAP on achievement of gender equality in KR during 2007-2010.

declared the dissolution of the parliament and appointed early parliamentary elections for December 16, 2007.

According to the new Election Code the parliament should be formed exclusively according to the proportional system, i.e. only based on party lists. Except for a numerical restriction in the lists of candidates (no more than a hundred people), the parties were directed to take into account a representation of people according to sex, age and ethnicity when drawing up their lists of candidates. The regulations of the new law became a positive step towards the achievement of gender equality. In particular, having committed the parties to introducing gender quotas: *“a political party is obliged to take into account that their representation is no more than seventy percent of people from one sex, at the same time the difference in sequence on the lists of candidates, women and men nominated by their political parties, should not exceed three positions”*.<sup>7</sup>

The adopted edition of the Election Code, despite the gender indifferent Law “On political parties” (from 1999), has allowed women of Kyrgyzstan to actively join in political mobilization and the struggle for power. Based on the results of the parliamentary elections according to the proportional principle, out of ninety deputies in the Parliament of the KR, twenty-three were women-deputies (25,5 %). For comparison, the data presented below in the table show gender representation for the deputies of the three previous convocations.

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total number of deputies</b>	<b>Thereof women (number in absolute figures and in %)</b>
1995	105	5 deputies or 4,7 %
2000	105	7 deputies or 6,8 %,
2005	75	0 deputies or 0 %

Women deputies were able to achieve key positions also in the structure of the parliament. In particular, they have held posts of Vice-Speaker to the Parliament of the KR (Baekova C.T.), one was Chairperson of the Strategic Committee on Defense, Safety, Law and Order and the Judicial-Legal Reform (Sydykova L.C.), four –were Vice-Chairwomen on committees: The Committee on Land and Agrarian Issues and Ecology (Sidorenko R.V.), the Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Information Policy (Kulikova G.A.), the Committee on Youth, Gender Policy, Physical Training and Sports (Abdullaeva C.G.) and the Committee on Ethics and Regulations of the Parliament of the KR (Moldosheva D.A).

Movement can therefore be observed in gender representation in the higher legislative bodies of the country - from zero up to 25,5 percent. The inclusion of women into key positions in the Parliament of the KR is proof and vindication of the effectiveness of the special measures in support of female leadership and the proportional electoral system.

### **SECTION 3. POLITICAL PARTIES AND GENDER PROCEDURE IN THE PARTIES PRIOR TO THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

The willingness of the top leadership of the country to proceed by the new principles of the electoral system was obvious even long before the early dissolution of the parliament. Numerous public councils, associations and forums publicly and intensively discussed both the draft of the new Constitution of the KR, and the draft for the new edition of the Election

<sup>7</sup> Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On the new edition of the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on the elections in the Kyrgyz Republic” Chapter. XII

Code. Public discussions in autumn 2006 and the spring of 2007 on how the authorities disposed of the gains of the 2005 Revolution took place in the main squares and streets and took root in the form of a protest movement. The opposition was gaining symbolic capital based on the open and growing criticism of the ruling power. In this situation practically nobody had doubts, that the notorious one sex parliament of the fourth convocation would not reach the end of its term and that in part or completely the principle of elections based on party lists would be introduced. Clearly, some months prior to the dissolution of the parliament some movement had started within the parties. However, recollecting the “lessons” of the short-term introduction of a partial proportional system in the electoral legislation in 2000, many political and public figures waited until the last moment for a true indication of the intention of the authorities to develop the parties. When the president of the country personally joined the founders of a political party “Ak-Jol”, the party heads started to work feverishly on the development of their party membership. Literally just before the start of the pre-election parliamentary period several political parties were registered, including the government “Ak-Jol” party. Most likely, it was thanks to “Ak-Jol” that the Election Code had an absence of regulations concerning a time qualification for parties wishing to participate in elections and consequently newly established parties were allowed to take part in the elections.

It is obvious, that in this situation the majority of parties did not have enough time for maneuver. Even the political parties, which had been methodically building up their parties for a relatively long time and working with party-members (amongst these “Moia strana” and “Sodruzhestvo”), had to make radical decisions at the last moment to be reformed and merged with other party groups. It is no wonder, that representatives from many of the political parties, even those admitted to the elections, during their interviews could not give concrete measurable data about their party numbers (membership), not to mention that they were not able to carry out any targeted work to attract women or work on the needs and requests of the women’s groups in the electorate..

Anyway, a hundred and four political parties were registered in December 2007 in the Ministry of Justice of the KR; thereof 13 parties were headed by women (see the table).

#### **The political parties headed by women**

N	Name of the party	Name of the party head	Registration date
1	Political party “The Democratic Party for the Women and Youth of Kyrgyzstan – “Novaya Sila” (former name “ The Democratic Party of the Women of Kyrgyzstan ”)	Shailieva Tokon	14.10.94, re-registration on 24.09.04.
2	Public association “The Communist party of Kyrgyzstan” 13.09.99.	Ajibekova Klara	13.09.99.
3	Political party “ Respublikanskaia Yedinaya Politicheskaya Partia “Elmuras”	Borombaeva Toktokan	17.08.02
4	Political party “Partia “Soglasie””	Kudabaeva Shatkul	12.12.02
5	Political socialist democratic party “El Yntymagy”	Aknazarova Roza	02.06.05

6	Political party “Yedinstva i Razvitiya “Ene Til”	Mukanbetova Gulzat	16.06.05
7	Political party “Kyrgyzstan Aialdary”	Altybayeva Dylbary	19.08.05
8	Republican political party “Umai Ene”	Sharipova Salima	18.10.05
9	Political party “Soiuz Demokraticheskikh Sil”	1) Baibolov K.K. 2) Beshimov B.D. 3) Lesnichenko Valentina	26.12.05
10	Political party “Avanguard”	Ibraimova Elmira	26.12.05
11	Political party “Mudrost”	Omurkulova Damira	06.02.2006
12	Republican democratic political party “Za Zhizn’ bez Barrierov”	Sysoenko Liudmila”	14.04.2006
13	Republican political party “Kyrgyz Jeri”	Sadybakasova Sharipa	14.07.2006

Unfortunately, at the elections to the parliament in December 2007 only one of these thirteen parties participated. This was the Democratic Party for the Women and Youth of Kyrgyzstan “Novaya Sila”, but it did not meet the five percent barrier and did not pass into Parliament. Also six parties with women-leaders: “Elmuras”, “El Yntymagy”, “Ene Til”, “Kyrgyzstan Aialdary”, “Kyrgyz Jeri” and the Communist party of Kyrgyzstan (in the CPSU) - notified the public and the Central Electoral Committee of their intention to nominate candidates, but for different reasons did not later submit their documents for registration.

The party “Kyrgyzstan Aialdary” had to refuse participation in the elections because of the provision of item 72 in the Election Code, which limits the representation of people of one sex to no more than seventy percent: Based on the testimony of some members of this party “in Kyrgyzstan they were not able to find thirty men, who were ready “to stand under the banner of “the party of women”. However, it is not possible to judge how grounded this informal explanation was from the representatives of the party “Kyrgyzstan Aialdary” for a number of reasons: The absence of open and public data on the political parties, the absence of their own media for the overwhelming majority of parties and the lack of knowledge of the majority of representatives from the parties about information on how their parties have developed. In rare exceptions representatives of political parties from among the heads of the parties could not give information on the number of registered members in their party, the portion of women and men in the general structure of the party and the gender structure of the supreme body of management of the party and other data.

In the course of research it was revealed that respondents from the majority of parties, except “ErK” and “Aalam” had no exact data on the number of their members, and especially on the gender composition of their numbers, therefore data on the number of women in the party were determined by respondents ‘approximately’. In the table there are no data on the parties “Novaya Sila” and SDPK as the heads of these parties were outside Bishkek, and the other representatives “had not been authorized to give information on the party”.

### *Gender structure of political parties*

Name of party	Number of members	Thereof women	Number of people in the political council	Number of women in the political council	Number of women in the political council in %
1. Aalam	22	40 %	12	5	42
2. Ak-Jol	More than 10 000	N/A	35	N/A	
3. Asaba	25 000	15 %	12	2	17
4. Ata-Meken	5 000	45 %	About 40	No data	
5. Ar-Namys	31 000	45 %	13	5	38
6. Glas Naroda	900	50 %	7	0	0
7. Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan	15 000	15 %	15	2	13
8. Turan	3 000	35 %	9	1	11
9. ErK	34 713	48 %	13	5	38
10. Erkindik	4 000	50 %	22	7	32

As can be seen from the above table there is an obvious gender imbalance in practically all of the political parties, particularly among the leaders.

Only in some parties, for example, “Glas naroda” and “Erkindik” approximately fifty percent of the members are women. However in “Glas naroda” there are no women in the political council of the party, and the least number of women in the leadership of a party is “Turan” (11 percent). The smallest number of women is in the Party of Communists and the “Asaba” party - fifteen percent in each. In the leadership of the parties the greatest number of women is in the parties “Aalam” (forty two percent), “Ar Namys” and “ErK” - thirty eight percent in each.

It is significant that active female representatives from the parties, “Ar Namys” and “Erkindik”, have said that women do the basic party work in certain places. In “Erkindik” the largest structural party divisions are also headed by women, however in the highest party administration they are not widely enough represented. According to a member of the political council of “Ar Namys” (a woman), the issue of observing gender equality when electing members of the political council, had not been raised by anybody from the administration or by the members of the party, “there was no need for it.” The Communists explained the minimum number of women among party members and in the party leadership by the fact that after the disintegration of the USSR, the party became regarded as the opposition and was exposed to persecutions from the authorities. Many members of the party worked in underground conditions. “The men-communists did not want to expose women to the dangers, and took all the attacks on themselves, remaining as the active party members and its leaders.”

### *Gender policy and gender approaches in party documents*

Studying party documents, such as the party programmes, pre-election platforms and the Charters of the parties, as well as conducting polls and interviews with the party heads,

demonstrates that none of the eleven parties has a formulated/written policy of gender equality achievement and none of them uses gender approaches in their work. That is it is possible to say, that the parties today are guided by a gender-indifferent or, more accurately, by a gender-blind policy.

In the majority of parties a gender policy has not yet been formulated even at a traditional level. And the issue of gender equality commonly understood as “ *a comprehensive social policy and practice based on legislatively formulated rights of women and men for the equal distribution of economic, political and social resources of society between men and women, citizens of one state; aimed at overcoming the structural inequality in the position of certain social groups of women and men who are in need of additional guarantees for the protection of their rights and interests*” has never been raised.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting, that even the communists’ programme is not characteristic of the former Soviet ideology policy regarding women and does not even have planned measures in support of the family and motherhood. Moreover, one of the candidates from the Party of Communists declared that, “the problem of gender inequality is far-fetched. Personally I have not come across it. Perhaps, such a problem exists in some families, but in the country as a whole there is no gender inequality”.

Almost all the heads and representatives of the parties, be it a man or a woman, explained the absence of a gender policy and a gender section in their party programme by the fact that they “do not have a gender problem in their party”. A member of the political council of the “Erkindik” party is convinced, that the issue of gender discrimination in his party “is irrelevant”, as “half the members of the party are women, and the largest structural party divisions are headed by women”. The leader of the “Aalam” party considers that, “gender inequality is not the worst problem for Kyrgyzstan. Those who raise gender issues are deliberately leading the country away from resolving of its more serious problems.”

One of leaders of the “Glas Naroda” party, who considers that there is no gender problem in his party, admitted that, “ I would willingly employ men to work as cashiers because women take maternity leave and then it takes them half a year to get re-adjusted to work and they are distracted by constantly thinking about their children...”

Not only men, but also many women-leaders and party members are of the opinion that if there were, even thirty percent of women in the party ranks and a few women in the party leadership, gender equality would have been totally achieved, the gender problems solved and there would be no necessity to pay special attention to a gender policy. The majority of the party members do not recognize the connection between gender inequality in management and other relevant day-to-day problems of the state and society: Violence against women, high maternal mortality and the growing feminization of unemployment and poverty.

The examined party documents have no programme component focused on work with women or reflection of their interests in spite of the fact that the majority realize, that this socio-biological group constitutes the majority of the electorate. Individual exceptions are in the programme documents of the “ErK” and “Ak-Jol” parties, one of which has a special programme component “Family and Youth” (“ErK”), and another - a paragraph on the protection of maternal health (“Ak-Jol”).

In the section from the programme of the “ErK” party “Family and youth” two items reflect their entire policy concerning women:

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<sup>8</sup> Rabzhaeva M. Social technologies for achieving gender equality. Sain Petersburg, 2002.

1. *The creation of maternal capital based on the Russian model for the purchase of housing, the education of children, investments in a pension fund into a mother's account and medical treatment for children and mothers.*
2. *The establishment in society of a cult of Family, Mother and Child, monetary compensation to women, who do not want to give birth to their child, but keep his life and health and hand over this unwanted child to the state or another family.*

The “Ak-Jol” programme formulates its proposals in the same traditional key. It contains offers on the protection of maternal health under the third programme vector: Strong country - Healthy People of Kyrgyzstan!

*“The protection of child and maternal health are a priority area in the public health service ... Under the auspices of the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic based on the National Centre for Pediatrics and Children's Surgery and the National Clinical Maternity Hospital of the Ministry's National Hospital, a National Centre for the Protection of Motherhood is be established... We will take care of young mothers separately!”*

There is a typical tendency of Kyrgyz state gender policy towards “familization” and concerns about the nation's genetic fund based an approach within which the social status of a woman is seen through a prism of exclusively family interests, and women only have an instrumental (reproductive) value. This is an approach also shared by the above-mentioned parties.

At the same time the “Ak-Jol” party has developed a gender approach, which plans to establish a female faction in parliament to advance women's rights, including, women's right to land in the case of divorce or division of property. None of other eleven parties, which participated in the 2007 elections, has set forth objectives for a women's wing or faction. Many party heads do not understand the purpose of a women's faction, and have answered rather categorically to such questions, “It is easier for men to come to an agreement on something either over a plank bed or with money”. Other heads considered there was already a woman's faction in their party, which was formed in a natural way because “one out of three vice heads and several leaders of regional organizations are women.”

#### **SECTION 4. A PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN-CANDIDATE IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE JOGORKU KENESH (THE PARLIAMENT) ON DECEMBER 16, 2007.**

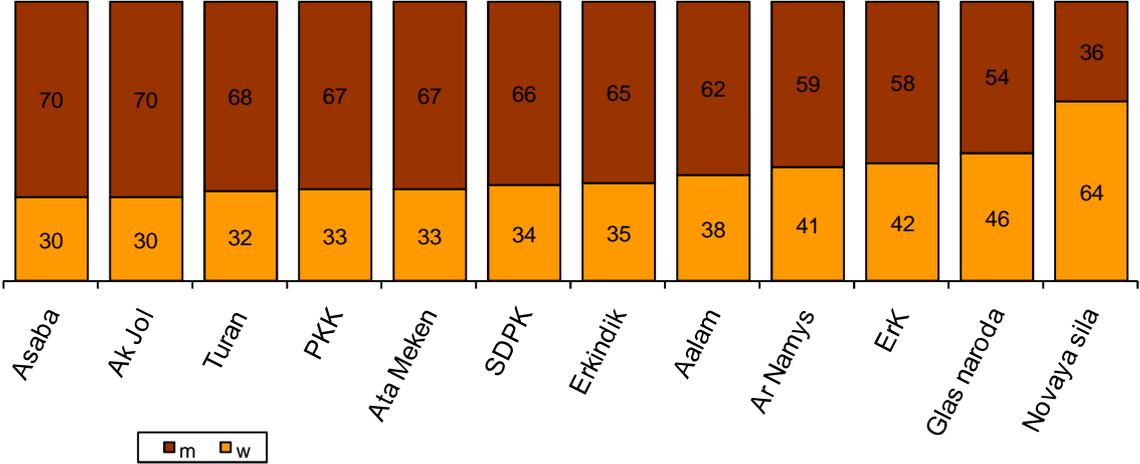
Out of fifty political parties, which announced their desire to participate in the elections of deputies to the JK (the Parliament), a total of twenty two political parties submitted their documents to the Central Electoral Committee to register their lists of candidates. After checking the documents to see if they conformed to the requirements of the Election Code, the Central Electoral Committee made a decision to admit twelve parties to the elections. There were various reasons why some parties were not admitted: Some parties recalled their applications, a number of parties submitted documents, which had certain infringements, including five parties which had violated item 72, namely, the principle of gender quotas in their candidate lists (in this way the Central Electoral Committee denied registration to the Green Party of Kyrgyzstan, the “Taza Koom” party, the Farmer's Party of Kyrgyzstan, the Political Party of Veterans of the War in Afghanistan and Participants in other Local Armed Conflicts, the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (in the CPSU) and the Zamandash party).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> IA "24.kg", 23/11/2007 as well as the CIC website.

Based on the lists submitted to the Central Electoral Committee from the twelve registered parties, it can be seen, that the number of women-candidates nominated was 453 (38 %) of the total number of candidates (1184), and the number of men was 731 (62 %).

Ratio of women to men in the lists of candidates (in %)



The least number of women was nominated from the “Ak-Jol” and “Asaba” parties (thirty women). They strictly alternated women every three positions, and only from the eighty-ninth position did they decrease the alternation to every two and every other position. The maximum number of women – ninety-three - was nominated from the Democratic Party of Women and Youth “Novaya Sila”. They also nominated the maximum number of women in the first five of the party list that is three women. The “Ak-Jol”, “Aalam” and “Asaba” parties nominated two women in the first five on their lists. The other parties limited themselves to nominating the minimum number, i.e. only one woman in the first five of their list of candidates.

Interviews demonstrated that many parties were not ready for the introduction of a gender equality policy: There were not enough women-leaders in their ranks (this also goes for the necessary representation of youth and ethnic minorities). For this reason the heads of many parties decided to go for a maximal “combination” of all the necessary quotas: Their search preferred young women and if they were also not of Kyrgyz ethnicity the party would “win” several places for their traditional members, the men). Many respondents confirmed that the unexpected dissolution of the Jogorku Kenesh (the parliament) and the appointed date for the new elections caused obvious difficulty in adhering to the requirements of the new Election Code. And if the gender quotas were not a condition for admission to the elections, there would be many less women-candidates nominated on the lists, and maybe, they would not appear at all among the first ten applicants.

The leaders of the “Asaba” party admitted that, “the quota requirements regarding women were very difficult to fulfill, as there are not enough trained and active women in the party at the moment”. When they were trying to gather the thirty percent quota, many parties began to invite women from outside. In the opinion of a woman-candidate from the “Aalam” party, “women were only invited to meet the necessary numbers.” They were chosen based on recommendations from party members, acquaintances, friends and colleagues. The leader of same party admitted that, “there was no time to draw up competent party lists.” “Ak-Jol”, being a new party, invited women from other parties. So, Kulikova G. (the Coordinator of the

party “Moia Strana”) and Sadybakasova Sh. (the leader of the party “Kyrgyz Jeri”) joined the “Ak-Jol” Party, like also many other men-members of Ak-Jol, who were recruited from other parties.

In practically all the twelve parties, the lists of candidates were drawn up by the top administration/leadership of the party and approved at their party congress. In most cases the voting was carried out not on a name basis, but for the whole list.

Negative opinions on the introduction of quotas into the new Election Code were exaggerated by the leaders of the political parties, and especially furious were the attacks on the gender quotas. The leader of the communists, I. Masaliev in public interviews to the media during the pre-election period, repeatedly expressed his disapproval of the introduction of this new legislative regulation, which, in his opinion, did not promote the democratic development of the political parties and violated the principle of free and fair competition of the political programmes and their images.

In the course of interviews during our research we also encountered negative views on this innovation or the procedures relating to it. One of the party leaders, who started running for parliament, declared that, “the introduction of quotas was another of the President’s tricks to get votes for “Ak-Jol” from women-voters”. He said, “Today you give quotas to women, and tomorrow to those who are blind, then to androgens and so on.”

Another respondent, a party candidate, considers that “women have once again become victims of a political trick. They have been used to distract the attention of the public from the serious problems, such as for example the introduction of private ownership of natural resources and minerals.”

All the twelve parties, which entered into the pre-election struggle mobilized women and managed to present the necessary number as instructed in the Law and the sequence of deputies according to sex. During the research respondents told us how they evaluated the ‘suitability’ of the women-candidates, who were invited externally from other parties.

### ***Criteria for the selection of women-candidates and their sequence on the party list***

As a result of an interview with the party leaders and a summary of the results of a discussion with women-candidates in a focus group, there appeared some basic criteria, which were to some extent taken into account by the party’s administration when they were selecting women for their list of candidates to the JK (the parliament) of KR. Among the selection criteria the following characteristics and qualities were looked for in the women-candidates (in descending order of importance (i.e. most important first) from the point of view of the respondents):

1. Professionalism and experience of administrative work
2. Party experience and work done for the party
3. Famous personalities and popularity in a certain region
4. Ability to mobilize people and collect the greatest number of votes
5. Representatives of national minorities
6. Availability of financial resources

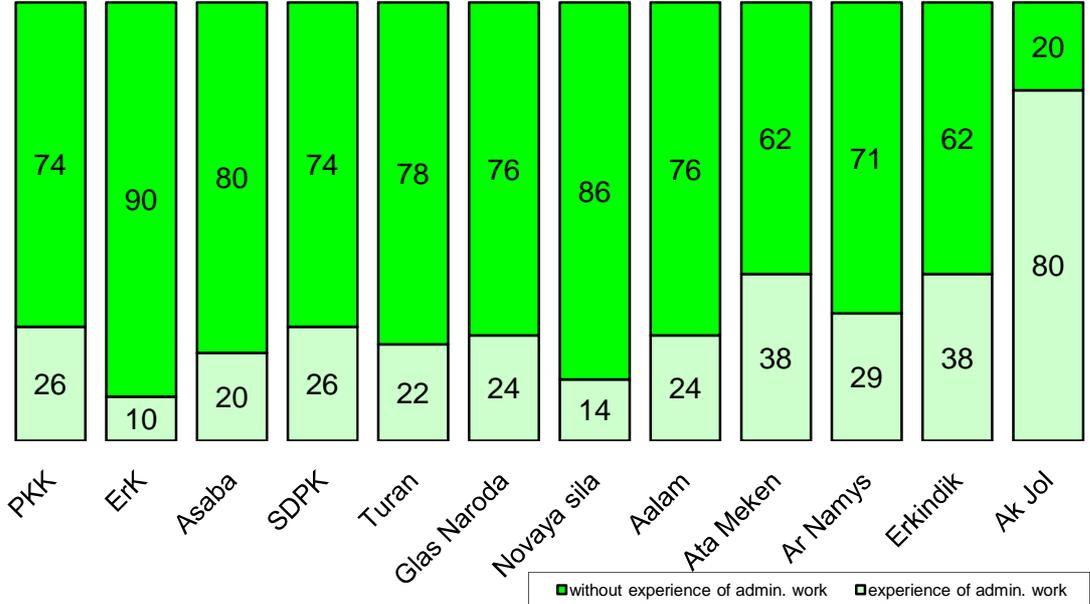
- *Professionalism and experience of administrative work*

One of the main criteria in the selection of women-candidates and their position on the list was their professionalism and experience of work in an administrative post in the government, private or civil sector. Professionalism and experience of administrative work were specified as the basic criteria, primarily among members and candidates from the

“young” parties. These were primarily the parties established just before the 2007 elections, such as “Ak-Jol” and “Aalam” as well as parties, which were created a little earlier, but had not concretely developed, such as “Turan” (established in 2004) and “Glas Naroda” (2002).

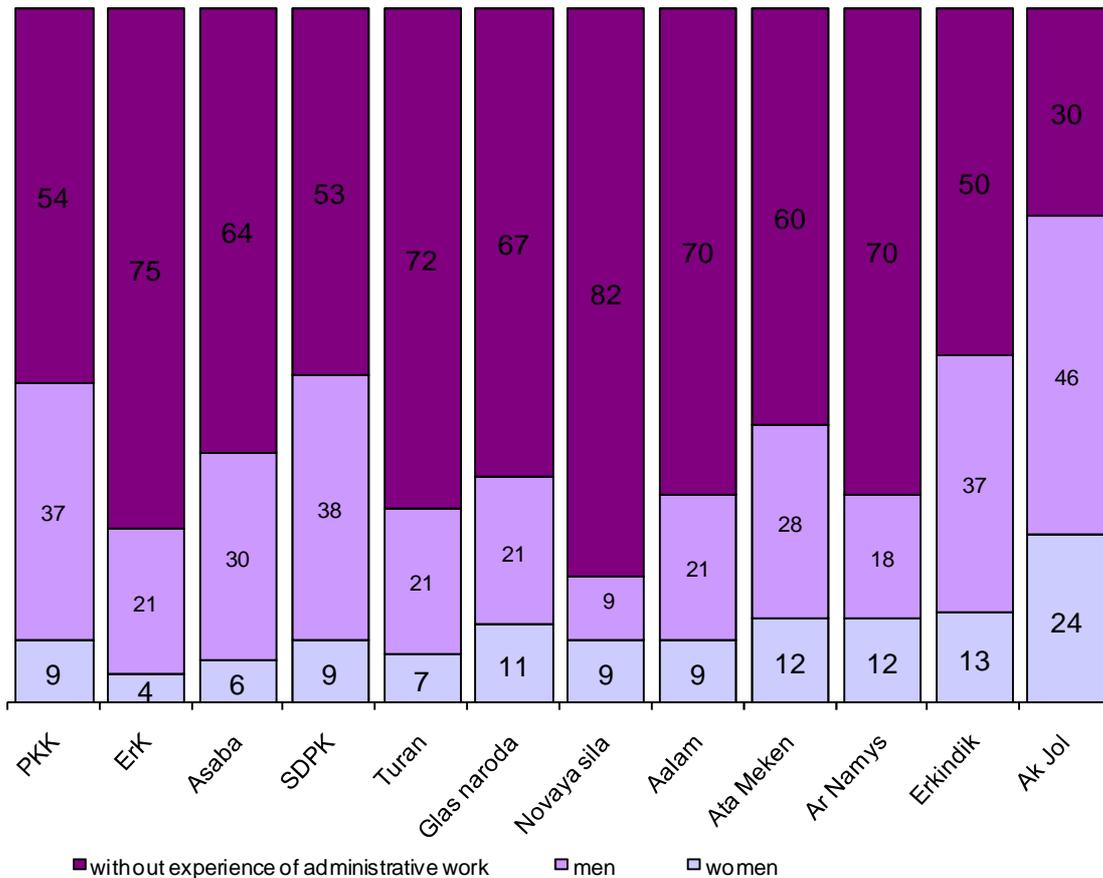
Based on the words of respondents, in the majority of these parties, they tried to select women with experience of administrative/supervisory work in the two first ten names on the list. An analysis of the total number of women from the parties’ list of candidates showed that the greatest number of women-leaders was on the list of the “Ak-Jol” party - eighty percent; thereof fifty seven percent had experience of work as heads of state structures.

**Number of women with experience of administrative work  
(in % of the total number of women in the list)**



When studying the general list of candidates in regard to administration experience, it shows that the “Ak-Jol” party is ahead in comparison with others, also by the number of men who possess experience of administrative work (forty six percent of the total number of candidates).

**Ratio on women and men with experience of administrative work  
(in % of the total number of candidates)**



However comparative data of the whole list of other parties according to experience of administrative work show, that in the parties “with experience” - such as the Party of Communists, “SDPK” and “Erkindik” almost half of all the candidates have experience of administrative work. The criteria of experience of administrative work was very significant for party members, because, it meant primarily that the candidate possessed “the capital of social connections” and the ability to influence voting processes in certain areas, since nobody doubted the use of administrative resources during the elections. Parties aspired to draw in as many candidate-members as possible, who had connections with power structures in order to have at least some levers for the traditional practice of using administrative resources. Only the opposition political parties could not lay claim to such candidates, because these candidates did not wittingly go to them, and those who had been earlier superseded from the ranks of heads and managers, obviously, could not rely anymore on their social connections. It is not accidental that the “Ar Namys” and “Ata Meken” parties were characterized by the lowest parameters of the criterion “experience of administrative work.” Respondents from these parties explained this by the fact that their parties were in opposition and were often exposed to prosecution.

- *Experience of party work and services to the party*

For the “old” parties, such as the Party of Communists, “Ar Namys”, “Erkindik” and “SDPK”, the basic criterion when selecting women was their experience of party work and services to the party. They nominated primarily top party leaders and heads of regional party

cells, then party activists who had experience of party work. For example, Topchubek Turgunaliyev, the leader of the “Erkindik” party publicly refused to invite candidates from other parties, ostensibly their party members were only selected from among their party ranks. At the same time even such parties “with experience”, such as “SDPK” had to invite a number of candidates into their ranks - not only women, young people and representatives from national minorities, but also men of Kyrgyz ethnicity and mature age. It is possible to give numerous examples from the party list of this party (for example, B. Beshimov or R. Otunbaeva, who joined the party literally on the eve of the elections, having come from other parties, or E. Baisalov, who accepted an offer from the party of the post of Executive Secretary of the party also not long before the start of the elections). There were also ‘external people’ on the lists among the party members of “Ar Namys”, while a large number of experienced party workers and colleagues of the leader F. Kulov were pushed aside on the lists of candidates.

- *Famous personalities and popularity in a certain region*

By virtue of the fact that the political culture of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan does make it easy for them to find their bearings in high profile positions and the party programmes therefore the elections based on party lists were for the most part based on the image of the individual leader-candidates. During the elections “people, when choosing which party to vote, expressed not so much their ideological orientations, but to a greater extent their attitude to the image of the leader”<sup>10</sup>, therefore when they formed their lists of candidates, the parties focused on well-known people, capable to collecting many votes both in the centre and in the regions. Particularly important was the popularity of candidates across the nation as in conformity with the new Election Code, parties were required to get 5 percents of the votes of the electorate from the lists of voters across the whole republic, as well as to overcome the so-called “regional limit” of 0,5 percent of the votes from the lists in each oblast.

Women, who were nominated in the first three tens of the lists from each of the twelve parties, were basically famous personalities across the nation: Heads of state bodies, deputies of the JK from previous convocations, leaders of parties and non-governmental organizations and corporate heads.

Thus, “Ak-Jol”’s list was headed by the permanent Chairman of the Constitutional Court Cholpon Baekova. Former Minister of Justice, nowadays private business-woman Nelja Bejshenalieva held fourth position on “Turan”’s party list, Alevtina Pronenko, a deputy of the JK from a previous convocation and ex-minister, was in fourth position on “Asaba”’s party list, while Tokon Shailieva, in the past a deputy of the JK and former oblast governor headed the list of her own party “Novaia Sila”; the dean of the KRSU and known legal expert Lejla Sydykova was in thirteenth position on the “Ak-Jol” party list. In fifth position for Ak-Jol was E. Ibrahimova – the Director of ARIS (the World Bank project ), which had regional offices and allocated investment grants to rural communities, which is why she was known in rural areas across the whole country.

Rosa Otunbaeva, who was recently one of the leaders of the “Asaba” party” appeared in the twelfth position for A.Atambaev’s Social-Democratic Party, used to be prime minister of the republic. In the same party in twenty-third position was a well-known attorney Galina Skripkina.

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<sup>10</sup> “Political parties in Kyrgyzstan”, Bogatyriov B., Imanaliev M., Masaulov S., Hamisov B, Bekbolotov K.

Among the women well-known at regional level it is possible to name people such as Gulnara Derbisheva, the head of the NGO “Insan Leilek” and Cholpon Abdullaeva, the coordinator for “SPK” Talas. Both of them were from Ak-Jol.

“Ata Meken”, which is an opposition party, accordingly focused on oppositional public leaders for its list. Their eighth position was taken by Asia Sasykbaeva, the head of the NGO “Interbilim”. In eighteenth position for this same party was Bermet Bukasheva, the editor-in-chief of the well-known newspaper “Litsa”. In twenty-fourth position there was leader of the NGO “Agency for Social Technology”, which lobbied the introduction of quotas for women, Mira Karybaeva, a gender expert. In twentieth place for this same opposition party was Baktygul Jeenbaeva, who had been dismissed from the post of director of the Kyrgyz Agricultural Financial Corporation. In twenty-ninth position was Rahat Achylova, who in the past had been a deputy of the JK (the parliament). In forty-sixth place was Nurjamal Baibolova, who shortly before the elections to the JK was dismissed from her post of Chairman of the Bishkek City Council.

For the “ErK” party the regional attribute was an important one for defining candidates’ places on the party list. For parties such as “Aalam”, “Turan”, “SDPK”, “Ar Namys” and “Glas Naroda”, the majority of whose members live in Bishkek and areas of the Chui oblast, the main indicator, which played an important role in drawing up their lists, was popularity in a region. The parties, which had strong regional cells across the whole republic, such as “Erkindik”, the Party of Communists and the “Asaba” party, according to their members, did not have problems with selecting women-candidates from the regions.

- *Ability to mobilize people and collect the greatest number of votes*

Along with the popularity of a person, an important role was given to the ability of women-candidates to collect a maximum number of votes from the regions. In the “Ak-Jol” party in seventeenth and twenty-first positions accordingly there were representatives of parties, which had refused to take part independently in the elections: Kulikova G. (the coordinator of the party “Moya Strana”) and Sadybakasova Sh. (the head of the “Kyrgyz Jeri” party). They, obviously, brought with them votes from the members of their parties, as well from people who worked in their organizations: For example, the large AKB Bank “Kyrgyzstan” was for a long time headed by Sadybakasova and had regional branches across the republic. Based on the testimony of the respondents, many parties based on their experience of previous elections according to one-mandate districts also tried to involve clan-and-tribal networks to which their candidates belonged. This was especially noticeable from the pre-election trips of candidates to the oblasts of the country. However in this sense women are much less influential than men. Women were much effective in carrying out campaigning work and that is how they were used.

For example, representatives from the “Ar Namys” and “Erkindik” parties noted that in their parties, women were much more capable of mobilizing people and successfully working with the electorate. An analysis of their election monitoring showed that there was more active voting in those constituencies where the pre-election campaign had been carried out by women-candidates.

- *Representatives of ethnic minorities*

According to article 72 of the new Election Code, it is necessary to present “in the party lists no less than fifteen percent of citizens representing various ethnicities” and “no less

than fifteen percent of people not older than 35 years of age”. Many parties tried “to kill two birds with one stone”: They selected young women-candidates representing ethnic minorities, capable to collecting votes from their region like for example, Sultanhojoeva Tanabar, an Uzbek from Jalal Abad, who was fourth on the list of the “Aalam” party and Tsomartova Afinat, representing youth, an Ossetian, from the “Ata Meken” party and Letova Irina, a Russian, who held sixty fifth place on the “Ak-Jol” party list.

#### *Availability of financial resources*

Time limitations on drawing up candidate lists and the rigidity of quotas according to sex, age and ethnicity brought about general party arrangements - – men were seen as the key “sponsors” of the party campaign, while women had to pay “whenever/whatever possible” or contribute to the campaign by other equivalent means: By the number of canvassers, observers, authorized representatives for the party and volunteers on election day, who were responsible for the catering, and delivering information to the party headquarters and so forth.

That is at the past elections availability of financial capital was not a key factor for the nomination of women. Although in relation to men frequently financial contributions determined their place on the candidate lists.

In the “ErK” party women were made exempt from making a financial payment. In some parties only those women, who were in the first ten were obliged to bring in a financial contribution equal to the men (“Erkindik” and “Glas Naroda”). In the “Aalam” party only the first five candidates had to make a financial payment, and in the “Turan” party only the first ten paid. The size of payment varied in all of the twelve parties from several thousand up to five hundred thousand soms. As one of the leaders of the “Aalam” party said: “Women – it is good, but they should also pay money, otherwise where will the party get the funds to take part in the elections?”

#### *Status profile of candidates: Data from the Central Elections Committee*

The political leaders, when employing strategies to attract the most active and well-known women onto their party lists, formed a certain stratification (by status) profile of the women-candidates. The characteristics of this profile for the different parties were extremely diverse. Especially interesting in the profile of a woman-candidate running for the Parliament seems to be her social status – i.e. her integration in the state structures, institutes of civil society or profit-making organizations.

##### ➤ *Membership of women-candidates to the state, private or civil sector*

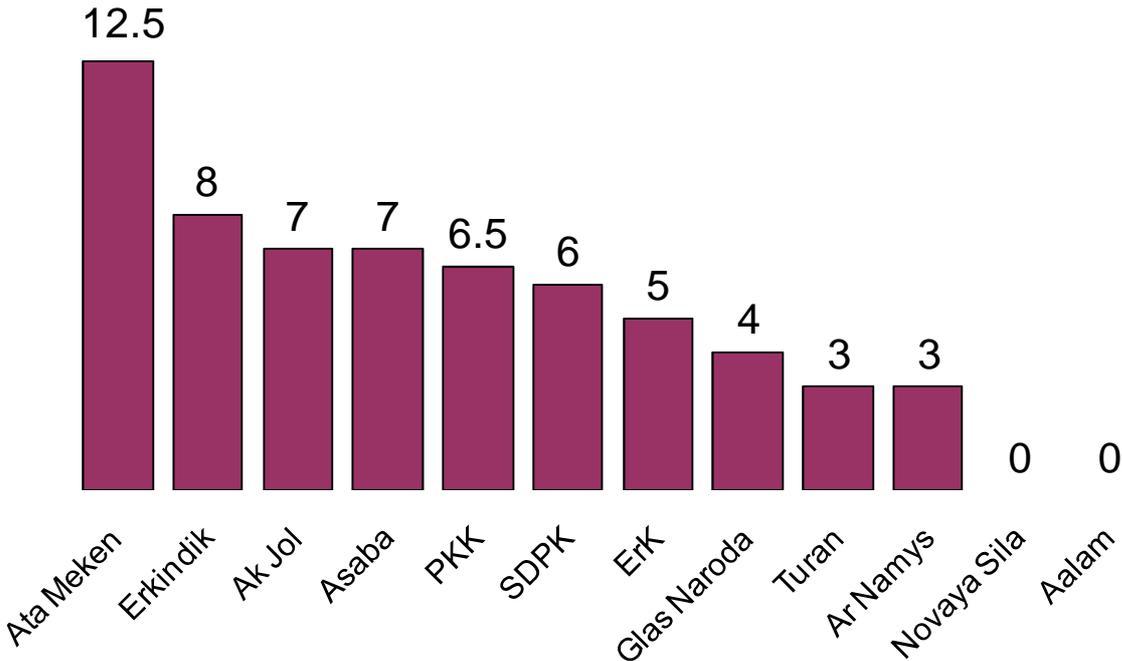
Studying this list according to the women’s profiles revealed that in “Ak-Jol”, the party in power, supported by the president of the country - seventy percent of the women-candidates worked in state bodies and budgetary establishments. Out of thirty women from this party only two are heads of non-governmental organizations. One of the party coordinators explained this by the fact that “NGOs usually search for something negative in the work of the authorities and try to blacken Kyrgyzstan across the whole world. And for work it is important to select like-minded people. In the Alamedinsky rayon there is an NGO, which supports the authorities, but they did not express a desire to be deputies.”

The highest percentage of women from private organizations was in the Party of non-party members “Aalam” - sixty three percent, then in “Ata Meken” - fifty nine percent, and in Asaba - fifty percent. The leader of the “Aalam” party attributes this to the fact that their party, being a party of non-party members, relies on people, who have never been “engaged”

by anybody anywhere, who are independent of the authorities and who have never been members of other parties.

As opposed to the party in power, the opposition party “Ata Meken” on the contrary made a stake for women in the civil sector; on its list twelve and a half percent of the women-candidates are representatives of leading NGO’s in the country. In “Aalam” and “Novaia Sila” there were no representatives from the civil sector among their women-candidates.

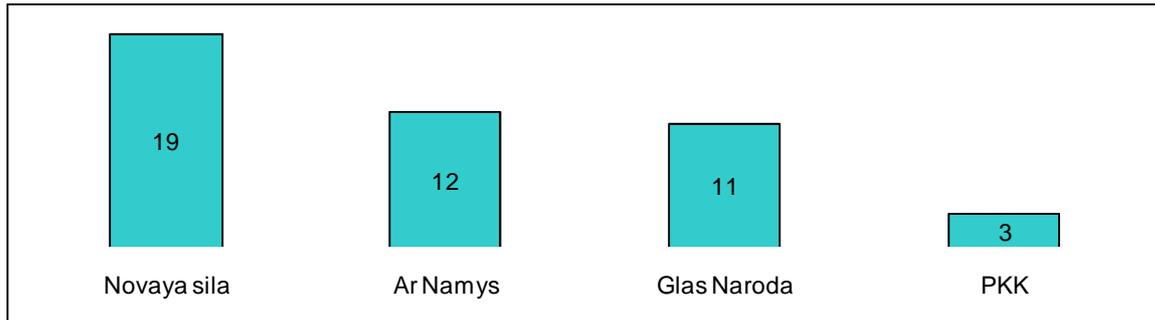
**Share of women, representing the civil sector**



*Pensioners, housewives and temporarily unemployed people*

The highest percentage of pensioners was on the list of the “Novaia Sila” party - nineteen percent, and also in “Ar Namys” - twelve percent. As mentioned above, these parties nominated as candidates for the most part their well-proven activists who had sufficient party experience, and had proved their fidelity to the party. They also involved women who held authority in different areas, primarily pensioners. Evidently, the symbolic capital and the involvement of mature women in various social networks must have assisted with the essential party promotion. Another important factor, which was the reason for a large number of the pensioners or temporarily unemployed women on the lists of the parties in opposition was that women who were connected with the authorities or successful women were reluctant to join such parties for fear of risking their position or be haunted as a result of an unsuccessful outcome of the elections for these parties. Such risks really existed and exist today. In particular, immediately after the elections to the JK Horosheva I.V., who was in the ninth place on the “Ar Namys” list, was made redundant, when she was dismissed from the post of Deputy Director of the Shubin Music School. As one of representatives of “Ar Namys” pointed out, the members of the party working in the public or private sector, usually try not to be exposed, but the announcement of the party list of candidates for the elections to the JK exposed many party members to risk of persecution from the authorities.

*Percentage of pensioners on the lists of women-candidates*

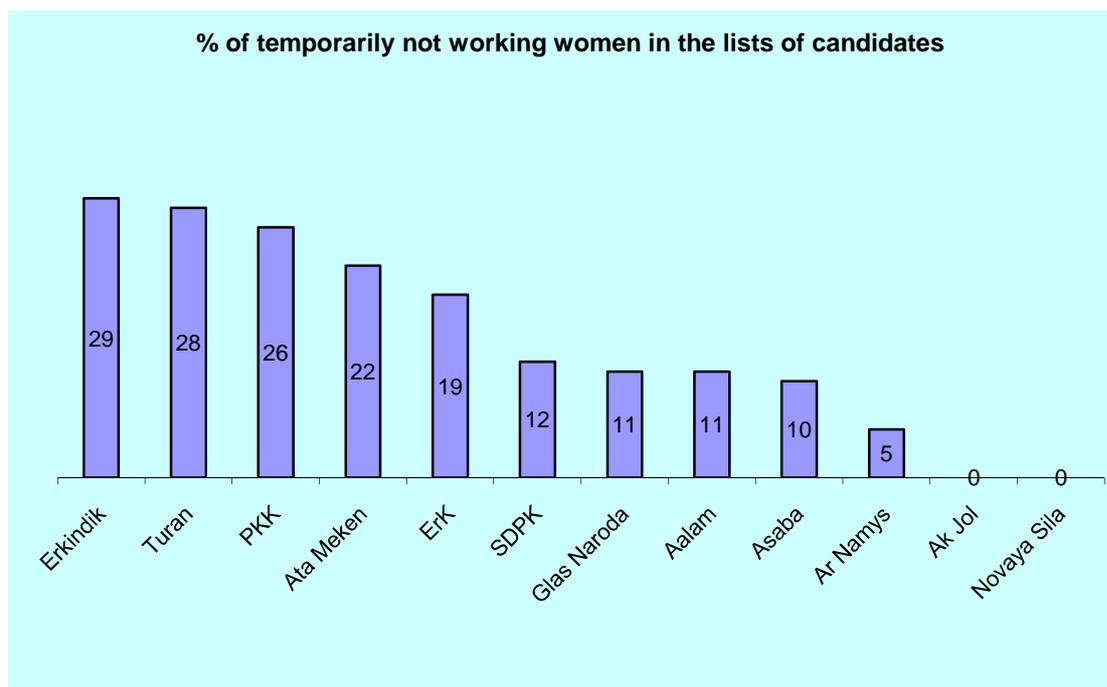


For this reason a number of parties had to attract women candidates as deputies from “protest groups”, or look for them among people “offended” by the current power. The largest number of temporarily not working women was registered in the “Erkindik” party - twenty nine percent, then twenty eight percent in the “Turan” party and twenty six percent - in the Party of Communists. Out of the twenty two percent of the temporarily not working on the “Ata Meken” list were many people, including well-known people such as Nurjamal Baibolova and Baktygul Jeenbaeva, who appeared among the unemployed because of their oppositional views, or rather, because when they had tried to cooperate with the revolutionary power they had not been able to get integrated into it successfully and were ousted as representatives “of the Akaev team”. In “Ar Namys” five percent of the temporarily not working were women who “the authorities had dismissed from state structures or whose private business had been taken over because of their involvement with the opposition party”.

The greatest number of housewives was in the “ErK” party - 19 percent, as well as temporarily not working people - nineteen percent. Representatives of the party explained, that they did not register women, who were working in the private sector by their occupations (for example, if they were involved in commerce or in the service sector).

In the “Turan” and “Glas Naroda” parties many of the respective twenty eight and eleven percent of temporarily not working women-candidates had worked before as assistants or advisers to the deputies of the JK and had lost their jobs as a result of the early dissolution of the Jogorku Kenesh in October 2007.

The leader of the “Aalam” party - a party of non-party members explained the rather large percentage (eleven percent) of temporarily not working candidates-women on their list by the fact that through this they wanted to attract women votes, “So that ordinary women, who read about ordinary candidates, would vote for them”.



➤ *School teachers and teachers in Higher Education Institutions*

About ten percent of women-candidates on the party lists were teachers in schools and teachers in higher education establishments. This is explained by the fact that schools and higher educational establishments had, willingly or not, always been a mobilizing force in elections at all levels. “Novaia Sila” is the only in which there are no teachers on the list. However, in the words of representatives from the parties, the amount of teachers in education might be higher, if not for their fear of losing their jobs or persecution from the authorities. A representative of the “Glas Naroda” party noted, that there were women school directors, who wanted to be nominated as candidates, but were afraid of possible pressure from the authorities. Moreover, practically all of the schools’ directors were traditionally made members and heads of local election commissions by the authorities.

Thus, each of the parties, which participated in the election process, did not have a clearly developed method of drawing up their candidate lists, nevertheless, in practice each formulated and used a special principle in their selection of the women-candidates taking into account a certain status profile. These principles reflected the basic symbolic and social capital of the corresponding political parties.

**SECTION 5. GENDER ASPECTS OF THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE 2007 ELECTIONS.**

Women still occupy a rather modest place in Kyrgyzstan’s political arena. The image of a woman as a politician or a public figure is subjectively perceived by the mass consciousness as an incomplete or insufficient one. It is easily possible to attribute the following declarations to the category of traditional statements: “...if you see a woman in politics, look for the man beside her, who helped her to get there.”

In many respects this is because of the lack of information in promoting adequate images of women-politicians, because of the low level of professionalism of the information campaigns organized by individual women-politicians generally during election campaigns.

In the Kyrgyz Republic there is no special research on the electorate's views on those or other pre-election-advertising campaigns, the impact of the pre-election campaigns and the advertisements of the results of voting.

There is no professional organization in the republic for the promotion of women-candidates as there is, for example, in the history of the State Duma of Russia (Zhenschiny Rossii) or as typically and traditionally occurs in countries with "old" multi-party democracies.

The recent parliamentary elections turned out to be "a test run" for the candidates, because the proportional election principle was called upon to shift the emphasis from people to political ideas and programmes. At the same time the candidates were required to prove their worth - women, men and youth ...

The information strategy of the majority of the political parties used the old clichés of pre-election campaigns, differing only in the number of people, but not in the way they promoted themselves.

Among the media-products of the pre-election campaign each party was given a state package in the form of free television advertising, participation in television debates, advertisements in newspapers, as well as a production printed using pre-election funds. As in recent years even minimal access to the mass media on a national level, which was guaranteed by the state, was distributed un-equally, not adhering to democratic principles. But on the whole the parties themselves independently created their information campaigns. Here again apart from the administrative power resources, which were in favor of the party in power, the lack of a professional approach in the organization of the pre-election campaign also played against the opposition parties.

On the whole in the pre-election practice practically all the parties used or tried to use their representation on traditionalism in Kyrgyz society, reproducing all the myths about the authority of the elders, the priority of men over women and about the family as of a zone of love and harmony ...

The parties also used myths and mythologems of new time, such as for example ideas of friendship between people, equal opportunities for all citizens, a country of human rights, etc.

It was traditional for the majority of parties to feature their first five candidates as a collective photograph in all types of advertising, in the out door advertising and even in the television clips. Some parties published booklets and posters of individual candidates from the first five candidates on the list. The photographs differed only by how the candidates were dressed otherwise they were basically the same. The photographs of the "Turan" and "Aalam" parties were different in some 'ideological' aspects. The first party emphasized the national idea and represented their candidates from different ethnic groups in traditional Kyrgyz clothes on a background of national handicrafts (shyirdaks (felt carpets), for example). The second represented a huge number of their party members, who were obviously meant to personify the mass nature of the party and its candidates' "roots in the people".

The stakes were quite high as regards the ethnic card promoting "Kyrgyz ethnic nature," which was reflected in the slogans and visual images. Only the details of the "ethnic idea" varied a little. Ak-Jol emphasized the old version of multi-cultural development based on the slogan "Kyrgyzstan is our Mutual House" also in the spirit of friendship of the people. For example, these ideas were personified by a photograph of the candidate Galina Kulikova who was shown with a Kyrgyz boy in her arms. The "Ar Namys" political party made a stake at the charismatic image of their leader, the politician Felix Kulov, who was well known in all the regions of the country. His photograph was widespread throughout the media during the

party's pre-election campaign. Like in other party advertising, the photographs of the leaders were accompanied by extracts from their party programme in the form of slogans. Another party "Novaia Sila" adhered to the same strategy, and also printed photograph images of its leader Tokon Shajlieva.

The opposition party "Ata Meken",<sup>11</sup> which was actually not admitted onto paid television made a stake on leaflets, out door advertising and the newspapers. "Ata Meken"'s promotional material was characterized by being relatively diverse in its content and by its mass circulation. In the central streets of Bishkek it was possible to see billboards with images of their first five candidates, which included Tatyana Ponomareva. Another billboard represented the four most well known of "Ata Meken"'s women-candidates: Nurjamal Baibolova, Bermet Bukasheva, Gulnara Iskakova and Cholpon Jakupova. "Ata Meken" also distributed a mass edition of a twenty page book with the party's pre-election platform and an article by O. Tekebaev, the leader of the party on the most well known candidates in the party, including the above mentioned five women, as well as A. Sasykbaeva, R. Achylova and M. Emilbaeva. The party also distributed the free newspapers "Litsa" and "Alibi" with articles about the party and its candidates, including an interview with Asia Sasykbaeva.

"Ak-Jol" in general used billboards all over Bishkek, which featured not so much party candidates as children and youth, who appealed to people to vote for the party with a "bright future". Also the party used television clips, whose focus was usually on the party leader, the president of the country confident in the bright future of the state. The "Ak-Jol", "Ar Namys", "Ata Meken", "Turan" and the "SDPK" parties were "advanced" from a technical point of view using information channels not used before and Internet sites in their pre-election campaigns. "Ata Meken"'s site was the most dynamic, pithy and interesting in design: It contained the list of candidates to the JK with biographies and a photo of the majority of candidates, electronic versions of posters, including a photograph of five of the women-candidates, the latest news about the election results and the hunger-strike, which some members of "Ata Meken" had held. However, like in the overwhelming majority of material of this and other parties, the women-candidates played a second role and were in the background of the party leaders.

On the whole it is possible to say that women were not projected as active and independent in the pre-election campaign and they were practically not shown as professionals.

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<sup>11</sup> Official representative of the party Ch. I. Jakupova applied on repeated occasions to CIC regarding the violation of the party's rights of by preventing them from having commercial air time, because the administration of the NTRK for various reasons stood in the way of an appropriate contract for their party broadcast.

## Conclusion

It has been more than ten years since Kyrgyzstan, after it ratified the international Conventions regarding human rights, undertook obligations to ensure a policy of human rights, including gender equality. However as regards power and administration gender equality still remains an unattainable ideal.

Why cannot women play an important part in politics, when the qualification of sex has been long abolished and the world community has appointed key mechanisms of support of female political leadership? The answer to this question is not so obvious and radical, as it seems at first sight. Experts in different areas put emphasis on various factors when trying to answer it. Some experts point to welfare aspects, some emphasize the unavailability of normative regulations, and other experts refer to the absence of an effective system for monitoring the policy of equality, strict reporting and the responsibility of the state based on the achieved results.<sup>12</sup>

Study of the legislation of the elections processes and the development of the political parties testifies to the priority importance of the political will of the top leaders of the country for gender development and a strategy for implementing its corresponding obligations.

Due to the fact that the political parties in Kyrgyzstan have not been fully developed, very few people even inside parties clearly visualize the programme distinctions and can attribute their party to the left, right or centrist blocks. At the moment the nomination of a candidate from a party is no more than finding the most convenient channel of running for power.<sup>13</sup>

Political parties can already be and are effective tools for the building party democracy in the KR. However further painstaking work is necessary to change the gender procedures inside the parties and orientate the party leaders towards integrating gender training into the parties and expanding practices focused on gender issues in the state. It is important to start this process right now in order to ensure that the development of a party system organically includes gender approaches and principles.

On the basis of Article 77 of the Election Code in the Kyrgyz Republic the Central Election Commission of the KR determined the following: distribution of the deputy mandates received from the political parties: People's party Ak-Jol - seventy one (or seventy eight percent of places in the parliament), Social-Democratic Party (SDPK) - eleven mandates, the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan – eight.

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<sup>12</sup> Analytical review by Anara Moldosheva "Gender Aspects of local elections and elections to the parliament" excellently analyses all the existing approaches and positions on Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>13</sup> This is why even experienced politicians, public figures with experience such as R. Otunbaeva or N. Baibolova (as well as their male colleagues– B. Beshimov, T. Sarpashev, T. Sariyev, etc.) right before the elections decided to change membership from one party to another, sometimes with opposing views and values.