

The Research of Social Life Problems for Disabled Women in Tajikistan

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Letter of Gratitude

On behalf of Tajikistan's Disabled Women League, and the "Set" Program Coordinator, Association of Women with Disabilities "Shyrak", the author wishes to express thanks to each disabled woman who contributed to our sociological research, and whose sincere, concise words comprised our source of information.

The author also extends thanks to the zonal representative of Tajikistan's National Union of Disabled People, which helped to find respondents and their addresses within its provinces.

Finally, we are grateful to each of the unnamed individuals who offered assistance to us.

Please send your opinions and comments to: askar.65@mail.ru

Conclusion

In conjunction with the assistance of the Threshold Association (Kynnys) of Finland and the Program Coordinator of Kazakhstan's Association of Women with Disabilities "Shyrak", the Disabled Women's League of Tajikistan conducted sociological research entitled "The Research of Social Life Problems for Disabled Women Tajikistan". The purpose of the research was to survey and study difficult social problems within the lives of disabled women, and in accordance with its conclusion, to present advice and counsel on the subject to relevant governmental and social offices.

In summarizing research data we would argue that the social problems encountered by Tajikistan's disabled women are not a second-tier cultural problem – in fact they must be viewed as one of the most critical and overwhelming problems facing all of Tajik society.

Research was conducted from February 2007 to May 2007. This report was prepared at the conclusion of that period. Research was conducted in-country despite transportation, climatological, and economic difficulties. A format consisting of 97 questions was utilized. Please see Addition 1 (attached) for a copy of the questionnaire used.

The results of our sociological research indicates that since the post-war years there have arisen an increasing amount of complex problems for Tajikistan's disabled women. It is critical that we address these issues in order to work towards their resolution. Tajik citizens possess an incorrect, pejorative attitude toward our disabled women – in fact they are treated as people of a lower class simply because of their physical defects and/or disabilities. This misconception exists even among close community and families of these individuals. As indicated through our research, more than 70% of disabled women in Tajikistan live in sub-standard circumstances. The monthly salary for the family of disabled women typically is less than 100 somoni. In some areas of our country they are even unable to afford bread for daily consumption. State pensions are unable to meet their families' economic requirements, and administrative and governmental institutions are unable or unwilling to assist these women with job placement.

Disabled women in Tajikistan face discrimination throughout all levels of society. These problems extend even to the rights of marriage and childbirth. Of critical note is the fact that the self-dignity of these disadvantaged women is disparaged as they face discrimination at all levels of society – especially in the home and during times of social transport. Representatives of legal organizations within the government make no attempt to defend their basic civil rights, leading to daily life that is nearly unbearable in its difficulties and repression. Long overdue home repairs needed by their families go unattended by the governmental organization responsible for these

matters. These women are then often obliged to hand-carry water for home use for long distances, or to carry wood for heating, water warming, and for preparation of food.

Many families do not possess important things for housemaking, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and TV sets, and oftentimes they must use these items despite the fact that they are in poor condition and in need of repair.

Common methods of information-sharing - such as TV and radio - do not introduce the problems of disabled women to Tajik society, resulting in their social problems being largely ignored. We found these women to be disillusioned with the governmental system and disinterested in taking part in political processes. They remain distrustful of state systems, despite the fact that they follow social, economic, and governmental happenings, because they feel that they lack a voice in the political arena. Through our research we believe that the work of the newly-organized "Social Aid" section requires modification because it lacks discipline and direction.

It is our opinion that the operative needs of disabled women are also not being met as they conduct everyday life. Regulations are not in place to consider their needs during the construction of residential and administrative buildings. These women specifically identified problems resulting from the lack of special road indexes and signs for the disabled, the absence of special lift machinery on transportation vehicles, and the absence of pandas and other lifting devices in residential, commercial, and administrative buildings.

They desire that their needs be taken into consideration by the appropriate governmental offices, and that they would receive rights equal to those in all other positions in society.

Research also indicates poor physical health for many of these women. Their lower economic status results in their inability to receive proper medical care and treatment. In many hospitals they are required to pay full price for medical services, despite their greatly reduced economic income. In addition, medical equipment sufficient to meet their needs as disabled persons is not available, resulting in lack of diagnosis and/or treatment.

Proposal

- The needs of the disabled must be taken into consideration during the design and construction of administrative and residential buildings, insuring the installation of equipment necessary for their movement for work and life purposes
- The disabled must be given equal opportunity to pursue employment so that they do not suffer reduced income
- There should be special university-entry quotas for disabled women in secondary education and higher education programs
- There must be accessibility for people with disabilities on workplaces
- There must be proper legal defense of the rights of disabled women, protecting them from prejudice in society and in the workplace
- Seminars and lectures should be held in order to better the public's understanding of the difficulties faced by these disadvantaged women
- In order to raise the financial standard for disabled women they must be released from the requirement to pay their municipal utility bills
- There must be programs established to assist these women with their hygienic means and medical bills, either through free medical services or through reduced-cost medical services
- There should be international appeals made to organizations who are able to assist Tajikistan's disabled women organizations with grants
- Hospitals and clinics should be required to provide equipment and services sufficient to meet the medical needs of disabled women
- Media services, both printed and broadcasted, must be committed to raising the public perception of the importance of disabled women
- Tajikistan's government should offer a one-time financial contribution to disabled women who desire to marry
- Research studying the lives and social problems of Tajikistan's disabled women must continue

Preface

Tajikistan is a newly-independent country in Central Asia. It achieved this independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan faced political and social crisis after receiving its independence, and the country descended into civil war, deeply affecting life and social systems. Despite its struggles, Tajikistan established itself as a sovereign country. In the ensuing years since the civil war there have remained negative sociological, economic, and psychological influences throughout Tajik society. Economic infrastructure within the country did not develop to meet the agrarian needs of its people. A large portion of its industrial facilities were also outdated and forced to close after the severing of economic ties with the former Soviet republics.

These economic, societal, and political events undoubtedly lowered the standard of living for Tajik citizens, and left the most poor and disadvantaged members of society even further from the standard of living for the average citizen. Portions of the healthy population found economic relief through labor migration to other nations, but the disabled, orphaned, and poor members of society were neglected during the period of societal restructuring because they were often unable to participate in the economic and political actions of Tajik society. It must also be noted that, in addition to lacking a voice in these arenas as a result of their disabilities, these individuals also lacked a voice simply because they were women.

The Republic of Tajikistan adopted nearly 30 international documents, among which was The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW - July 29, 1999). In addition, the government of Tajikistan adopted special laws and documents insuring the protection of women's rights. Of special note is a presidential decree noting the critical role of women in society – however, it is unclear if this decree includes disabled women.

Official data shows that women comprise 40% of the disabled population of Tajikistan, but observation and research indicates that the correct percentage of these disadvantaged women is actually higher than indicated.

While it is indisputable that life today is very difficult for many sections of Tajik society, it is more so for invalids, particularly for disabled women, because such a large percentage of their numbers lack employment and must live with their parents or other family members.

Due to the absence of favorable social circumstances these women are forced to be satisfied with low pensions, hoping that they will receive charitable aid or support from international organizations. Because their needs and opinions go unheard in political and social forums, their public reputations as “people of a lower class” are reinforced throughout society. Ironically, as previously mentioned, disabled women suffer hardship resulting from the lack of enforcement of existing laws and instructions

specifically enacted to insure that they receive full rights as equal citizens within Tajik society.

Research Purpose

As established, disabled women in our country are desperately in need of aid and assistance. We believe that it is proper for them to receive compassionate aid from governmental, institutional, and international organizations. The problems faced by these women have unfortunately been moved from the center of our country's attention as other difficult problems and situations have arisen. We also noted that these women do not participate in social works, but if they desire to be, they are ignored and not afforded those opportunities. In addition, their needs are not taken into consideration when our government begins social and building projects. Directives from UN, section 19, requests to pursue all practical measures to defend the rights of women throughout the world, and to collect relevant statistics concerning their abuse.

Specific research into the social standards of Tajikistan's disabled women took the following into consideration:

- Family living standards and family economic outlook
- Their work and corresponding financial contribution to their family's budget
- Instances of societal and/or workplace prejudice in their daily lives
- Their use of free time and their ability to be active in the political arena
- Their health and the difficulties encountered in receiving proper medical care sufficient to meet their special needs

Through the process of conducting research and the analysis of our findings we strove not only to identify existing problems, but also to show the importance of addressing these issues within Tajik society.

Throughout our research we kept foremost the need to strive for answers necessary to resolve the problems these disabled women face.

Primarily we are seeking to establish that Tajikistan's disabled women deserve the same social, governmental, institutional, medical, and employment rights as all other members of society, and that through the adoption of this thinking the self-image of these women would be elevated. They cannot be allowed to continue to feel that they are "second-class" citizens!

It must be noted that elevating these women to the standards enjoyed by all other members of society must be reached simultaneously with the evolution of Tajik society as a whole. As all branches of Tajik life develop and mature, the rights and benefits due these disabled women must be taken into consideration, especially where pension and salary standards are insufficient to allow for equal living standards.

It is our sincere desire that the outcome of this research allows us the opportunity to see change within the Republic of Tajikistan for disabled women. We desire the opportunity to present these findings and proposals to relevant offices and organizations.

Methodology

Our basic research unit consisted of 11 persons:

- Chief Manager of Research
- Research Manager Assistant
- 8 Regional Administrators (supervisors): 1-Soghd, 2-Khalton, 1-Badakshan, 2-Dependent Districts of the Republic, and 2-Dushanbe
- Information Specialist responsible for data compilation and computer analysis

Regional Administrators were chosen based on their work experience and knowledge. These individuals were pre-qualified as possessing fluent Russian and Tajik languages, which allowed full opportunity for effective conversation.

Research Period

The research-period length was initially projected as being complete within three months, but initial subject preparation and post-research analysis resulted in an additional month being added to the project's length. This extra month was also necessary in order to make procedural arrangements with the Regional Administrators and with representatives of factories. Time was also spent clarifying various scientific points of the questionnaire.

Training for information-gathering began on March 15th. This training was necessary prior to traveling to the respective regions, and consisted of seminars held with Regional Administrators in which we, together, studied work specialties within their regions and clarified proper methods of collecting information found in the questionnaires. In accordance with pre-established plans, these Regional Administrators also organized working groups within their regions, and conducted training with these groups before they were commissioned to collect the necessary information. Initial time estimates for this portion of the project were set at one month, but difficulties resulting from climatological and transportation issues in the months of March and April made it necessary to extend the work period from April 15 to May 1st. Finally, data collection and analysis was conducted over a period of 10 days – from May 1st to May 10th.

Research Method

Initially, the test questionnaire was organized in accordance with the research's purpose and basis matters, as discussed with representatives of the Disabled Women's League. Analysis of these questions allowed us the opportunity to focus on the critical aspect of social problems within our country for these disabled women, and resulted in the addition of questions specifically addressing difficult issues.

Despite the prevalence of the use of the Tajik language within our country, we elected to print our questionnaire in both Russian and Tajik in order to allow the research participants the freedom of addressing all issues in their language of choice.

The questionnaire was thoroughly tested in Dushanbe prior to distribution to the various regions. The initial questionnaire consisted of 57 questions, but was later expanded to include 97 questions after evaluating answers from the first respondents. This also allowed us the opportunity to better focus on the research themes (See Additional-1). Administering the questionnaire typically took 35 – 45 minutes.

Selecting Regions and Respondents for Research

As we worked through the collection of information from the questionnaire, we chose a work plan and workers to gather the information. We analyzed the demographical structure of Tajikistan in order to identify regions and districts containing the highest concentrations of disabled women (See Addition-2). The information collected suggested 5 areas of research concentration within the country – Soghd, Khatlon, Badakshan, Dependent cities and districts of the republic, and Dushanbe.

One of our first tasks to accomplish was to determine the specific method of gathering information from the questionnaires. We wanted to collect specific, relevant information, and chose the conversation method to accomplish that goal. We chose to ask the questions one-on-one to these women, as group questioning generally reduces the quality, clarity, and candor of the information gathered - specifically, we used the method of coincidental choice. At the conclusion of our work computer program SPSS/+PC was used for data collection and analysis.

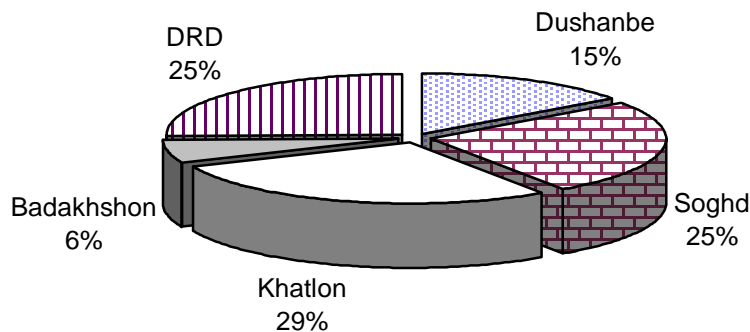
Difficulties which interfered with work quality during the research period

- Neighborhood inhabitants frequently interfered with the research, especially in villages.
- Frequently, family members also interfered with the respondents during the questionnaire time.

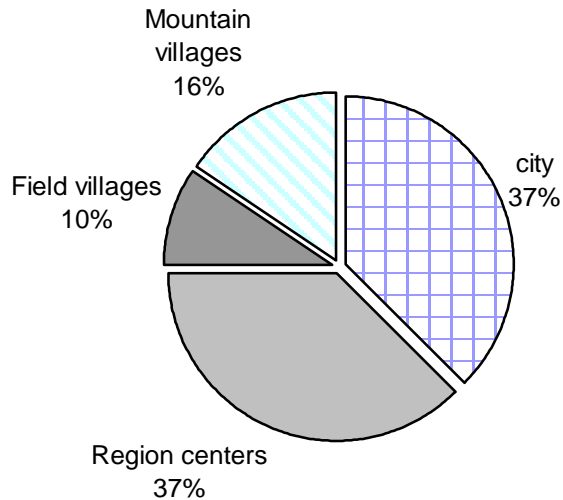
- Many respondents were fearful to give honest answers, despite our efforts to determine the cause and ease their fears.
- We believe that many respondents were not honest when questioned about their contributions to the family budget. The same held true for their answers regarding policies toward disabled women. We believe that they were withholding information or that they were restrained from expressing their true opinions.

Analysis of the Demographical Information Collected

Two main processes were taken into consideration in our research. The first was regional data. We determined that research data must be collected from all regions of Tajikistan. The second was the realization that we must administer the same number of questionnaires within each of the five regions. Achievement of these two goals allowed us to make an accurate comparison of research results among all regions of Tajikistan. We then determined that the best way to show the results is through comparison among the different regions.



Tajikistan is a mountainous country and its people are generally segregated into population centers, with governmental, institutional, and societal infrastructure generally developing most fully around these centers. Because these areas generally hold people of relatively elevated economic status, we found the attitude of respondents in these developed regions to be different from those in the less-developed regions, necessitating the separation of regions for data comparison purposes. It should be noted that information from respondents living in remote and/or mountainous regions was also included in this research, in order to gain accurate information reflecting Tajik society as a whole.



Ages of Respondents

For our research we questioned representatives of different age groups. This research method allowed us to see how age affected the responses given by our country's disabled women. Disabled women are found among all age groups, and involving them in the research was important. From the chart we can see that the age group containing the largest percentage of women was from age 21-30. Women 51-60 years and young women up to 16 years of age were included in the survey. This problem can be subdivided by age. Research shows that the category of disability is important to consider when studying the lives of these individuals.

Ages	<u>Amount of Respondents</u>	<u>In Percentage</u>
Up to 16 years	60	10.4
17 to 20	51	8.9
21 to 30	233	40.5
31 to 40	65	11.3
41to 50	96	16.7
51 years and up	67	11.7

We received much more involvement from respondents within the first and second groups – together their answers comprised 76% of the information collected.

The remaining 24%, made up of the third group of respondents, were disabled girls and young women up to 16 years of age. Our research also indicated numbers of women who were not registered with the appropriate bodies (medical and labor expert commission). The numbers of non-registrants are increasing year by year. Their reasons for not registering were generally fourfold – they feared that they will be asked for money, they simply did not try to register, they were not able to receive assistance to register, and they didn't want others to regret them as disabled people.

For our research we involved women of other nationalities. The percentages among differing nationalities for the respondents are as follows: 79.5% Tajik, 12.3% Uzbek, 4.7% Russian, and 1% from other nations.

Education

Research indicated that Tajikistan's disabled women are typically uneducated. They include 19.1% of women who have graduated from grades 10-11. Disabled women who have received average professional and technical education comprise 5.6% and 5.9% of the respondents, respectively. The majority of these women have not had the opportunity to receive average professional and technical degrees, and of course have been unable to received advanced degrees. Statistics show that less than 5% of the respondents have completed university or technical degrees. Research confirms that this condition seems to be worsening by year, since under the Soviet government of the past, disabled women received more advanced education than they receive today. Data further confirms that the younger generations of disabled Tajik women do not have the opportunity to receive secondary education. The chart below explains these statistics.

Ages	Uneducated women (<u>in percentage</u>)
Up to 16 years	14.4
17 to 20	16.7
21 to 30	43.3
31 to 40	7.8
41 to 50	11.1

Marriage and Family Relationships

Families are critical to the social development of individuals. They are not only the basis for reproduction, they are also the critical psychological environment where the next generation grows and receives education. Tajik traditions allow for each of its

citizens to become family members and have the opportunity to start families of their own.

Families are both the source of life, and the source of teaching important civil and national behaviors. It is important that these traditions be passed from generation to generation. Central to family formation is the recognition of personal rights, and the subsequent recognition of civil problems. This raises the following question: “Are the conditions and opportunities within Tajik society sufficient to allow its citizens the opportunity to raise and support families?”

Our research indicated that 55.6% of Tajikistan’s disabled women are not married and do not have the means to begin families. It is critical to understand that, while these women want to begin their own families, they are prohibited from doing so because of societal stereotypes and prejudices. Tajikistan’s citizens commonly believe that these disabled women do not want to begin families, or that they do not possess the ability to have or raise children, or that they will give birth to unhealthy children that would further burden society. Despite these misconceptions, data indicates that these women truly desire to be happy, and even that they do not perceive themselves as disadvantaged compared with others.

As researchers, we desire for these stereotypes to be lifted from Tajikistan’s disabled women, allowing them to pursue their dreams of raising families of their own.

When asked about the desired sizes of their families, 42.6% of these women indicated that they would like to have 3 or more children, 18.4% would like to have 2 children, and 14.8% expresses the desire to have one child. These responses further confirmed their desire to be recognized as normal members of society.

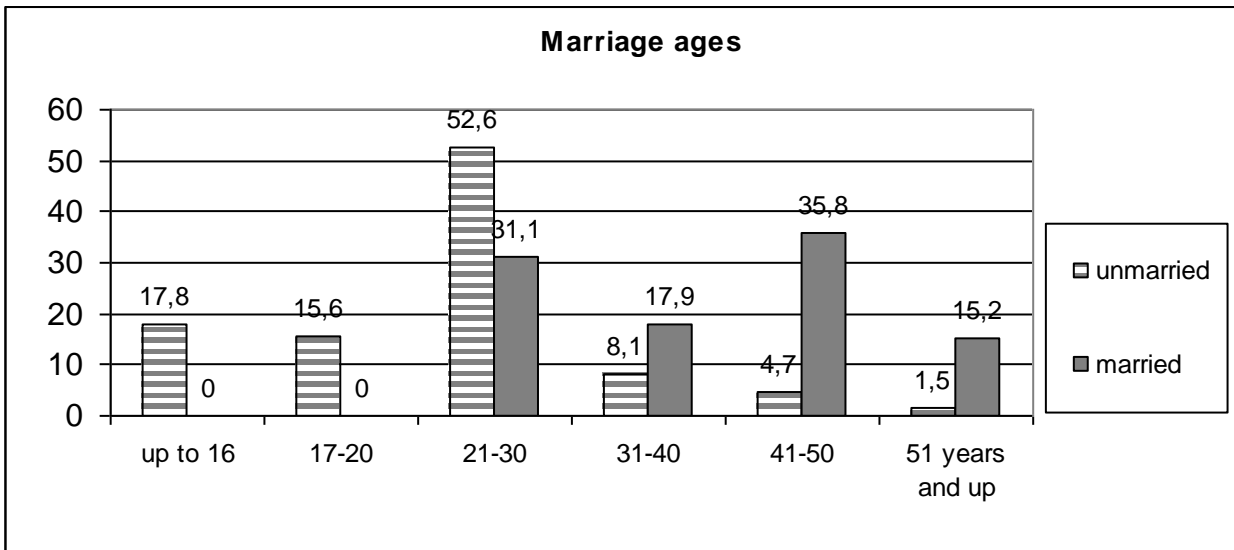
Research indicated four main reasons prohibiting the ability of these women to marry and begin families. The first is concerns societal misconceptions about disabled people. The second is the low income level of these women. The third reason is the basic structure of the family. The fourth is the low standard of living.

Data showed that 78% of the respondents do not have families of their own, and that they live with other family members as parts of households whose economic income levels are average or below average. Monthly income levels of 57.4% of the respondents who did not have families of their own were 100 somoni or less – which equals approximately 30 U.S. dollars. Research also showed the monthly income levels of 31.7% of the respondents were between 200 to 300 somoni – which equals almost 100 U.S. dollars. These income levels unfortunately do not allow for the raising of a family, and even the provision of bread for daily sustenance is difficult. Figures show that the average family size for the household of a disabled person is between 5-8 persons.

Large families obviously require larger financial resources, thus the monies needed for assistance for these disabled women are scarce. Data indicated that 51.8% of Tajikistan’s disabled women live with their parents, and only 35.5% of them stated

that they have their own home. Because of the lack of housing options for their reduced income levels, they are completely dependent on their parents and relatives. Due to these difficulties, a full 85.9% of respondents between 21-30 years of age were not married, and lived with their parents. Research confirmed that those disabled people who marry typically are those who already have a house that they own that they can move into; proving once again that normal or increased economic income levels for Tajik families are critical to their foundations.

Family Status	Place of the resident			
	Own a house	Live with parents	Live with relatives	Live with others
Not married	6.9%	85.9%	3.6%	3.6%
Married	82.3%	4.8%	1.4%	11.6%



Including the age groups from the last 10-15 years indicates that the amounts of women who are married have grown. We define “increased amount” as the absence of opportunity for these women to become married. Calculations show that 51.6% of Tajikistan’s disabled women 41 years and younger have not married.

Employment and Income

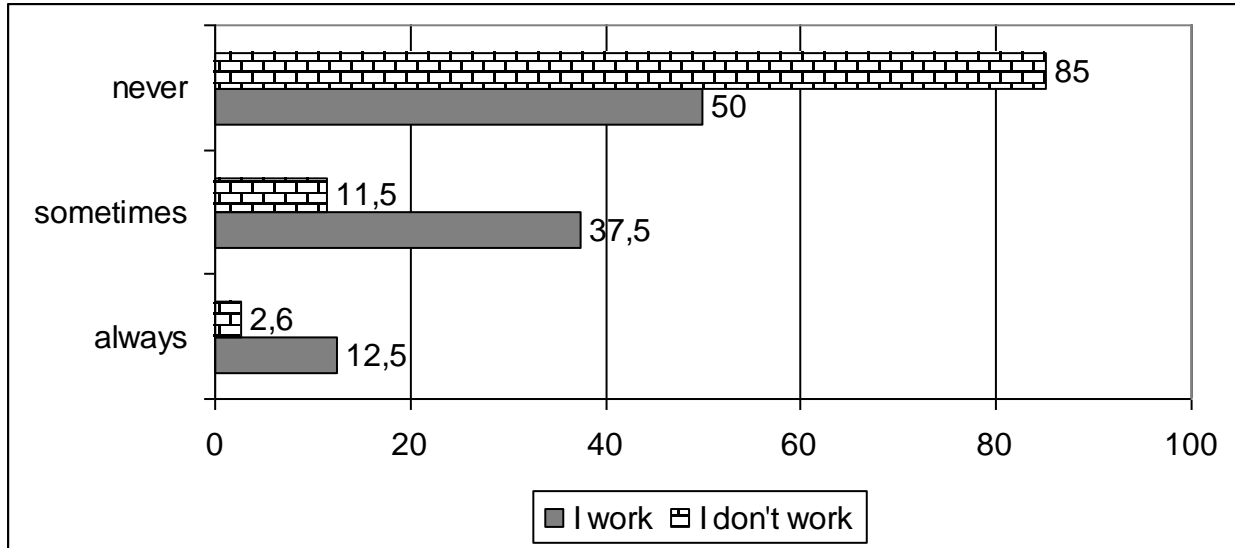
Occupational employment is the major source of income, providing not only money for daily needs, but also facilitating the improvement of professional skills, the betterment of society, and the improvement of one’s self-image. Employment also aids in helping pass the time. International laws confirm the rights of individuals to have

gainful employment within society. Are Tajikistan's disabled women aware of these rights? Research facts confirm that the lack of manufacturing and service-sector jobs within our country do not allow these women the reasonable possibility of employment opportunities. Organizations established to provide employment aid for disabled women during Soviet times no longer exist. The numbers of disabled Tajik women are increasing in percentage. Research data indicates that 81.7% of these women are unemployed. Only 14.1% of respondents reported any income from employment, allowing them to contribute to their family's budgets. Data also confirms that, though unemployed, these women are not searching for work. In response to the question "Have you ever tried to find a job?", 85% of unemployed women responded that they had not (see chart below). Of the remaining 15%, 11.5% of the women have tried in the past to obtain employment; while the remaining 4.5% report that they are continually in the process of searching for work.

Research indicates that labor conditions in Tajikistan are insufficient to allow for the employment of its disabled women. The unavailability of assistance (lifts) in the public transportation system also contributes to their difficulties. Employment is also unavailable for women living in rural areas.

Unfortunately, women requiring the use of wheelchairs for mobilization are frequently unable to use them, particularly in rural areas. Our research indicated a small percentage of women who have needed wheelchairs have applied to the appropriate bodies for assistance, but after long delays were not provided with them. Many of the respondents told us that they would work as street vendors if they were able

to be provided with wheelchairs, but because none were made available for their use, they must simply stay at home and depend upon a small monthly pension of about 30 somoni – 10 U.S. dollars. This amount is grossly less than the amount needed for day-to-day survival within our country.



Despite the existence of organizations within the Republic of Tajikistan who are able to provide aid with occupational employment, our research indicated that a very small percentage of them have sought help. Only 2.8% of women indicated that they were aware of these organizations and could identify their locations when asked “Who did you contact for help in finding a job?” Most of the women seeking governmental assistance took matters into their own hands, and sought their own avenues of employment, since our research indicated that 72% of these organizations have addresses that do not exist. These facts understandably bring discouragement and a feeling of helplessness to Tajikistan’s disabled women who desire gainful employment.

While statistics indicate that there are not enough jobs able to be done by disabled women, these women stated to us that they are willing to perform any type of work necessary become employed. In fact, 79.3% of respondents said that they would perform any type of job which will allow them sufficient income, and for them the amount of compensation is very important.

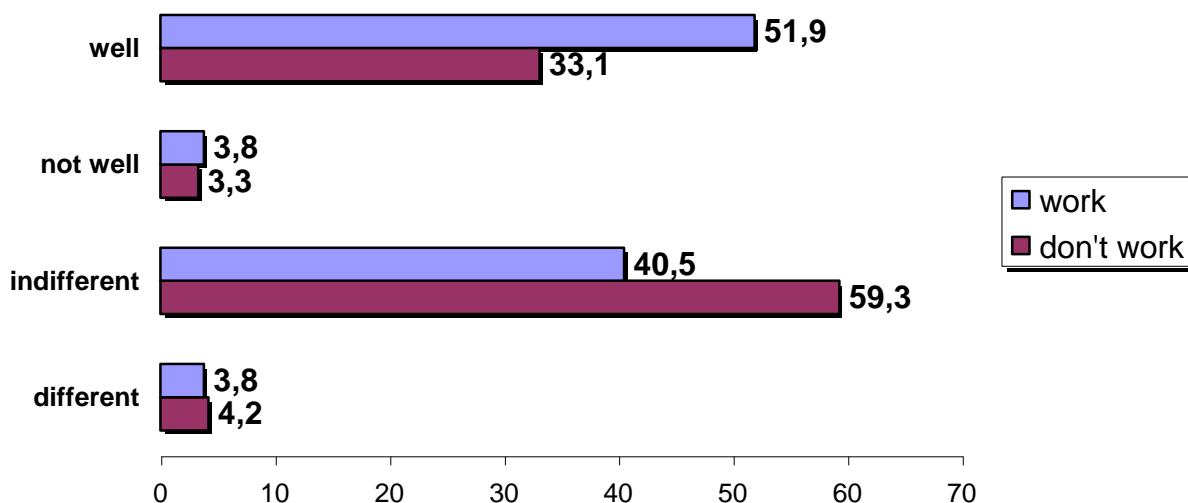
Concerns regarding the locating of a job for Tajikistan’s disabled women were generally centered on 6 issues: Amount of compensation (1st at 79.3%), location of workplace (2nd at 66.1%), labor conditions (3rd at 65.2%), the difficulty of the method of transportation (4th at 58.4%), the possibility for advancement (5th at 35.8%), and the possibility of obtaining relevant job knowledge (6th at 35.0%).

Considerations When Seeking Employment	Numbers of Respondents	In Percentage
Size of monthly salary	456	79.3

Location of workplace	380	66.1
Working conditions	375	65.2
Possibility of arriving to work	336	58.4
Possibility for advancement	206	35.8
Possibility of obtaining relevant job knowledge	201	35.0

Although families throughout the Republic of Tajikistan suffer from economic difficulties, research shows that as jobs are acquired, the economic possibilities of these families are raised. As reflected in the chart below, data indicates that 51.9% of disabled women who work state that they are treated well within society, while only 33.1% of disabled women who do not work are treated well. In addition, the family's honor and esteem within the community is also raised. Research indicates that relationship roles in the family are more easily established and maintained when each member capable of work is able to contribute to the family's budget. Although some members of Tajik society choose to remain neutral and non-pejorative in their attitudes toward disabled women, the majority of our society treats the families of these women with scorn and reproach, and consequently many families attempt to hide the fact that these individuals are not able to contribute to the finances within the family unit.

Societal Attitudes Toward the Employment of Disabled Women



Now we will examine the common domestic expenditures of the incomes of families with disabled women. The purchase of food remains the primary concern, at 96.2%. Medical needs of the family, namely the need to purchase medicines, were the second concern, at 76.3%. Another expense which further strains a small income is the payment of the municipal utility bills. These women have almost no opportunity to use their family income for providing for education for their children or for themselves, or for improving their residences, or for travel, sightseeing, or other leisure activities. This insufficiency of financial income results in the need to borrow money to pay for common needs – not wants. Data shows that only 8.7% of the respondents are able to save any money for their own needs. Research data indicated that 12.3% of the respondents admitted to borrowing money frequently, and 41.2% stated that they occasionally borrowed money in desperate circumstances.

Expenditures	Numbers	Percentage
Food	553	96.2%
Medicine	439	76.3%
Utilities	426	74.1%
Clothing	250	43.5%
Children's Education	208	36.2%
(Own) Education	48	8.3%

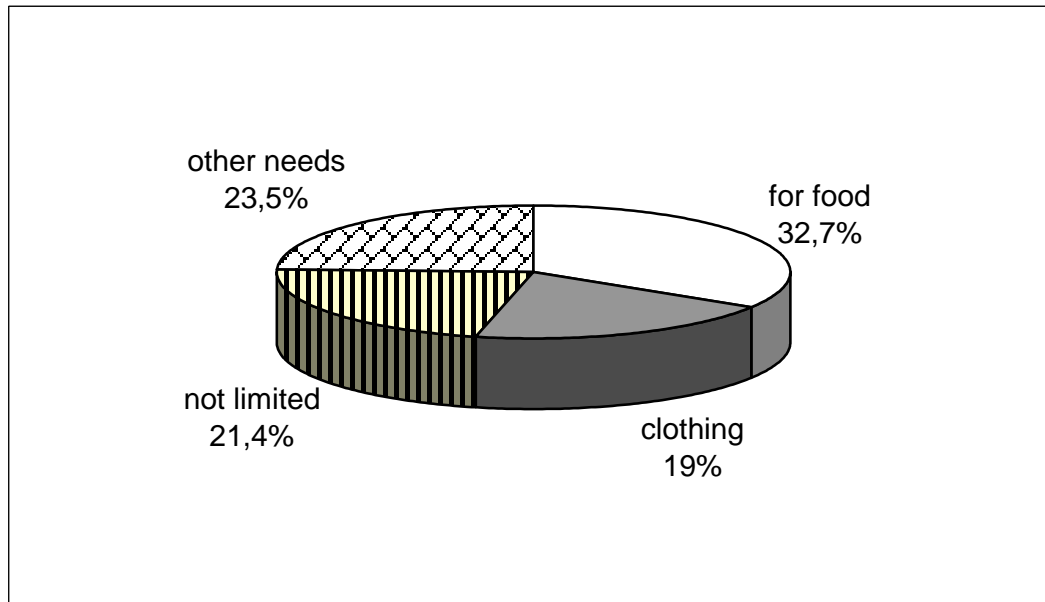
While we know that there are both state aid organizations and international organizations, statistics showed that very few individuals have received aid, and that the vast majority have not received any. The questionnaire indicated that presently 45.0% of the respondents have not any opportunity of receiving assistance, 3.1% of them never get assistance and only 43.5% sometimes have such opportunity. It is our sincere desire that humanitarian aid will be made available in the near future. Corruption is especially rampant in villages, where corruption commonly inhibits the distribution of any aid funds.

The analysis of the data collected confirms that there are not enough employment opportunities available for Tajikistan's disabled women. Their small incomes and pensions, the size of their families, the problems they face when looking for a job and other factors each greatly influence already strained family incomes.

Research indicates that their daily difficulties result in their inability to be able to afford bread, and they may in fact be not receiving proper food intake sufficient to meet their basic dietary needs. Data showed that 32.7% of these disabled women limited themselves in their daily food intake in order to assist their family's financial situations, and that 19% limit themselves when considering the purchase of clothing. Only 21.4%

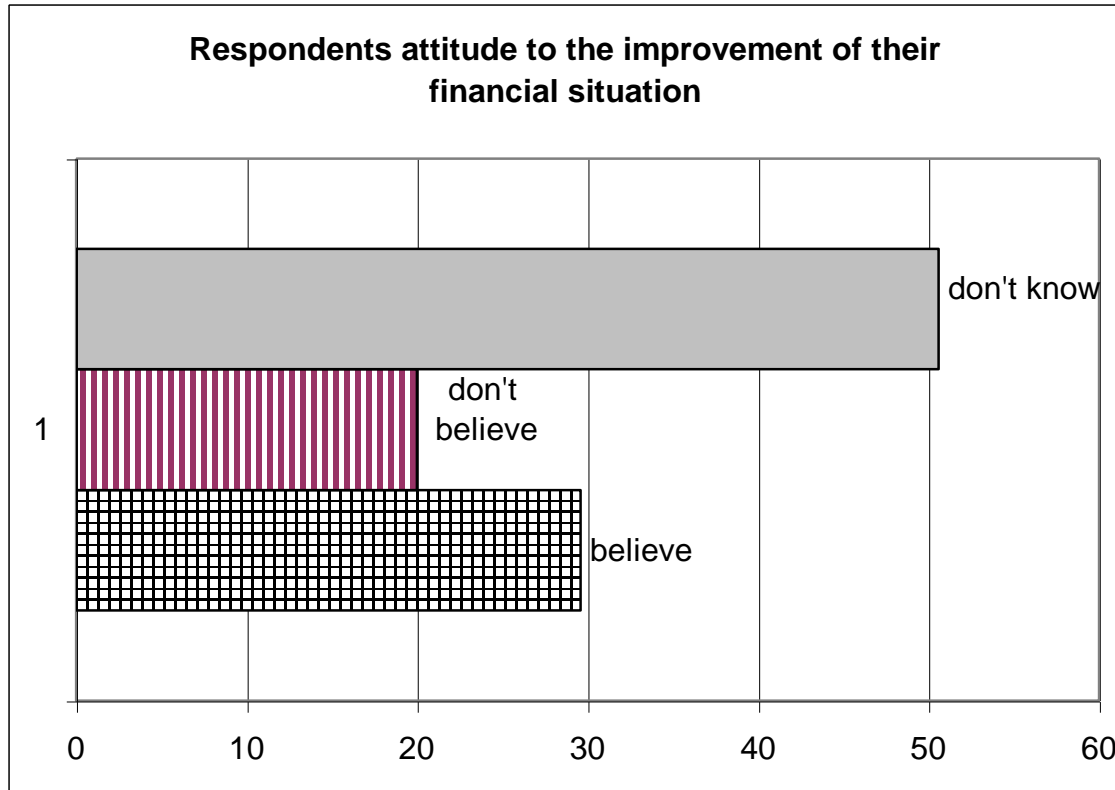
of respondents indicated that they are not limited in their financial expenditures due to a shortage of income.

Tajik people are well aware of the political and economic problems within our country, but how do these women perceive their financial outlook? What hope do these women have for the future? In order to gather relevant data on this issue we developed questions specifically designed to yield information in these areas.



Research indicated that most disabled Tajik women were hesitant to reveal specifics regarding their financial situations over the last 4-5 years. A small percentage of them (24.2%) indicated an improvement in the financial state of their families, but an almost identical percentage (23.5%) responded that the financial situations of their families have worsened. The majority of the respondents indicated that there has been no financial change over the last 4-5 years. These women express hope for a bettering of their finances, but they remain skeptical and unsure how the situation will become better.

Accordingly, 50.6% of the respondents expressed uncertainty when asked “Do you believe that your financial situation will improve in the future?” Generally their answers reflecting hope in changing their financial outlook for the future were uncertain. Only one-third of these women expressed belief that this situation would improve, and a full 20% of them express no hope at all for the improvement of their families’ financial outlook.



Research data led us to conclude that Tajikistan's disabled women face problems resulting from societal problems that have not yet been resolved, and that the majority do not believe that their financial situations can be improved in the future.

Living Conditions

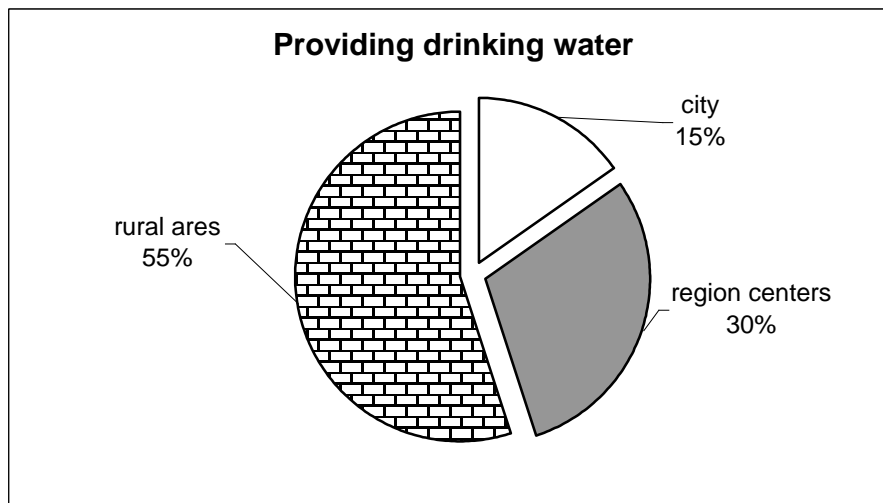
When the financial situation of the family is poor, the living conditions frequently will also reflect the lack of income. As previously mentioned, disabled women commonly spend all of their income on food and other family necessities. Their low income does not allow them the opportunity to raise the standard of living for their families.

Research indicated that, due to reduced or no income, Tajikistan's disabled women are often unable to contribute to the improvement of their families' living conditions, despite the fact that the majority of their houses are old and in need of repair. Some are not even safe for habitation. Currently there are no programs established for financial aid for the families of these women, despite the fact that research showed that 37.4% of these women live in deplorable conditions. Research indicated that living conditions are especially poor for disabled women from rural areas (40.0%), district centers, and also in the regions (42.7%). Situations in the cities are somewhat better, although not ideal (25.9%). Approximately half of the

respondents from cities feel that their living conditions are better than those of disabled women living in rural areas.

Place of resident	Living condition		
	Good	Somewhat better	Poor
City	10.7	62.9	25.9
Region centers	5.5	51.3	42.7
Rural	2.0	58.0	40.0

In addition to the poor overall condition of their homes, these women also struggle to provide drinking water for their families. They frequently do not have indoor plumbing and must go outside to get water. These conditions exist not only in rural areas, but also in administrative centers and within the housing areas of Tajikistan's cities. Respondents advised that they frequently must carry drinking water for long distances. While carrying water is difficult for a healthy person, it is even more so for a physically disabled woman. Research data indicates 55% of women in rural areas, 30% of women in regional district and 15.0% in the city must get their drinking water from sources outside the home.



Tajikistan's disabled women often must build fires to heat this water in order for it to be used, because they do not have hot water heaters. Those that do have hot water heaters often do not have the electricity necessary to run them, and must use wood and tapak (a mixture of animal droppings (cow) and straw) to heat the water. Retrieving wood and making tapak are difficult manual tasks, and the conditions for women living

in mountainous and rural areas are especially difficult because the availability of wood and tapak are seasonal, and so are available some parts of the year, and not at others.

Disabled women are required to work to maintain all areas of daily life for their families. They do housework, cook, care for children, wash clothes, care for domestic animals, etc. These duties are detailed in the chart below:

Description of Duties	Numbers	In percentages
Housework	145	25.2
Cooking	137	23.8
Washing	133	23.1
Care of children	100	17.4
Carrying water	64	11.1

These women frequently use appliances within the home that are outdated, old, broken, and/or out of repair. In fact, some household appliances still in use date back to the Soviet period, and the low family incomes will not allow for their replacement or repair. The impossibility of repair or replacement makes daily life difficult for these women. Access to media and new technologies would ease the domestic burden for duties within their homes. Access to radio and television would allow them the possibility of staying current on local and world news, current events, and social situations affecting their daily lives.

Our research showed that most of Tajikistan's disabled women do not have access to computers, the internet, telephones, and the information they can each provide. Our studies showed that only 2.6% of the respondents have internet access. The remaining 97.4% either do not know how to use the internet, or are totally unaware of its existence. Although international organizations and social centers often provide internet access free of charge, the small percentage of disabled women who are computer literate are unaware of these free services, and so they spend their own money to access the internet. The most readily available means of communication technology remains television, with research indicating 94.1% of these women have televisions, and 70.3% have radios. Internet and telephone usage was shown as much lower – 87.9% of the respondents reported that they are unable to use a computer, and 57.2% do not have a telephone.

Discrimination

Tajikistan is an independent and democratic country. As such, its leaders have signed off on international agreements concerning basic human rights, children’s rights, and gender equality. Tajikistan’s governmental offices are required to reveal instances of discrimination, and they are bound to pursue legal actions against those who violate those rights. Despite this paperwork, and despite our country’s commitment to these principals, there are still people groups within Tajikistan who are discriminated against.

There are still insufficient laws and standards in place within our government to see that these groups of people do not suffer under prejudice and discrimination. Sadly, due to their lack of awareness on social policy and fear of continued discrimination, many of our research respondents were unwilling to freely share their thoughts and feelings on these matters. *Amazingly, for many of these women, the word “Discrimination” itself was not able to be defined* – in fact a full 21.0% of the respondents were unable to answer the following question: “Do you know what discrimination is?” The remaining percentage, though they were able to define the word correctly, were unwilling to address this issue with applicable social institutions. In their efforts to join normal societal processes they frequently suffer discrimination, further prohibiting their integration. These women face exclusion throughout Tajik society – from employers, while using public transportation, in the educational system, etc.

Research statistics indicate that 51.5% of Tajikistan’s disabled women were not hired specifically because of their impairments, and 47.5% have faced discrimination during their education.

Public transportation systems are especially problematic for our respondents, as Tajik citizens frequently seek to humiliate these women (39.8%).

Workplace discrimination is rampant as well. Disabled women are more-frequently fired from their positions, do not receive proper consideration for being promoted to higher positions, and are often neglected when it is proper for them to receive bonus’ from their employers. Because discrimination is so prevalent in Tajik society, these women often express hopelessness for resolution of the prejudice they are subjected to.

Discrimination	Quantity	Percentage
Employment	296	51.5
Education	263	45.7
Transportation	229	39.8

Workplace	160	27.8
Dismission	150	26.1

Research data indicated that women living in rural areas suffer from even greater degrees of discrimination, due mainly to their ignorance of the rights of disabled citizens. Only 7.2% of women in rural settings are aware of these rights. In dense population districts and regional centers these numbers are much higher – 12.0% of women from regional centers and a full 40% of women living in Dushanbe are aware of their rights as disabled citizens of Tajikistan.

Our studies revealed that women living in rural areas are more vulnerable to discrimination than women living in population centers. In researching employment conditions, comparative data regarding promotions at work indicated that the following percentages of disabled women face discriminations in the promotion process: 19.5% for women living in cities, 27.2% for women living in regional centers, and 55.8% for women living in rural areas.

Data on discrimination against disabled women on Tajikistan’s public transportation systems is similar. Women within cities report discrimination percentages of 29.5%, while respondents from regional centers report 27.2%. Disabled women utilizing public transportation in rural settings report discrimination incidences almost two times as high as those from cities and regional centers. Furthermore, discrimination against Tajikistan’s disabled women is unfortunately regarded as a commonly accepted idea, as public perception regarding these women is that they are “second-class citizens”. Because they are not regarded as equal members of society, their rights are not considered in most social and legal venues.

Victims of violent crime are among those who suffer the most from prejudice. Because disabled women are so frequently discriminated against, they commonly have very little self-confidence, and consequently are unwilling to report crime and abuse incidences against themselves. Unfortunately there are only a very few instances of these victims being willing to appeal to local authorities after suffering as crime victims. Tajik tradition and societal prejudices do not allow women to share their problems, and so there are no avenues of assistance its victims. Research data on the reporting of crimes against disabled women showed that only 0.7% reported crimes to government offices, only 0.3% asked for help from neighbors, and 1.7% asked for help from other friends. Sadly, most crime victims were silent and did not ask for help of any kind.

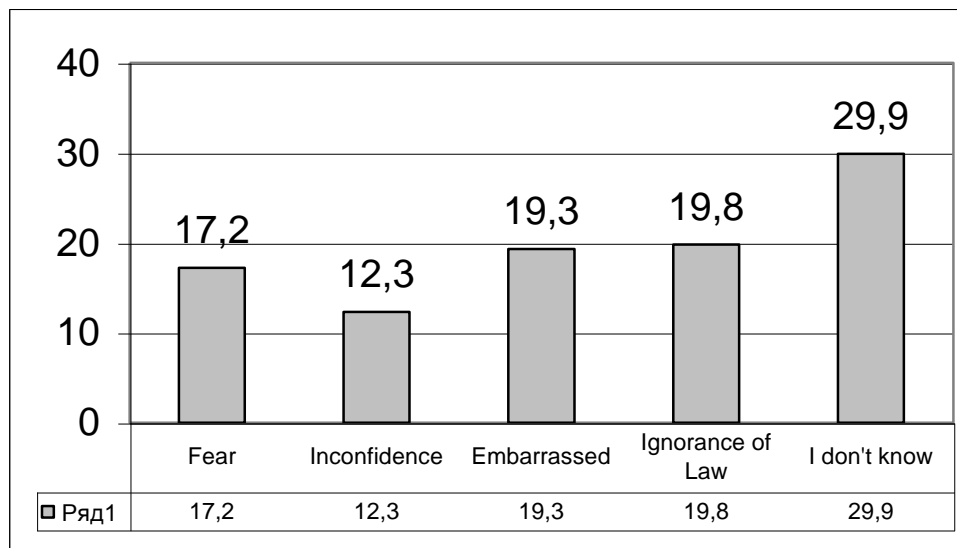
Residence	Factors Effecting Silence Among Tajikistan’s Disabled Women				
	Fear	Inconfidence	Embarrassed	Ignorance of law	I don’t know

City	8.7	13.3	21.4	22.4	34.2
Regional centers	24.4	10.4	24.4	15.4	25.4
Rural areas	30.1	12.6	10.8	20.5	26.5

Why do these women not exercise their legal rights? Research indicated that fear, shame, lack of confidence, and, most-importantly, ignorance of existing legislation insuring their rights are the main reasons. Comparative data suggests that regardless of their place of residence, fear, inconfidence, and embarrassment affect them equally.

As previously mentioned, concerning legal rights for Tajikistan's disabled women, there are insufficient laws now in place, and enforcement of the existing laws is often non-existent. Fear of humiliation when reporting incidents of discrimination further prohibits these women from reporting crime incidents against themselves. To avoid this humiliation, they often choose to remain silent. Frequently they are told "Don't tell anyone. It's a shame – you will be mocked! You are a woman." These words and other similar statements reinforce social stigma against disabled women.

Reasons for the existence and continuation of the neglect of these women's rights center primarily on ignorance of existing legislation (19.3%), social stigma and shyness (19.8%), fear (17.2%), inconfidence (12.3%), and 29.9% of the respondents did not know what to answer when questioned. These are the most common factors restraining Tajikistan's women from fighting against the discrimination they face.



Data from our study confirmed that discrimination against disabled women occurs both in society and within the home. Women living in rural areas suffer discrimination more frequently (6%) than do women living in urban areas (2.5%). It should be noted that, in cases of discrimination, it is friends that most often assist these

women. Within regional centers, friends are the first avenue of help for these women, followed by justice officials, and finally neighbors. However, victims of violence in rural areas confirmed that they do receive help from their neighbors.

Tajikistan's disabled women experience different forms of violence, but the most common is physical violence. These women are often forced to give up their meager pensions and/or humanitarian aid to other family members.

Women under the age of 20 are too often the victims of violence – suffering both because of their impairments and because of their ages. Their pensions are frequently taken from them, and they are physically punished by their families for small things that they do wrong. Their responses indicated that they share details about these incidents with their friends and neighbors.

Data indicates that women between 30 – 50 years old are unaware of their rights. Young women – under 30 years of age – responded that the reasons for their poor social conditions are primarily a poor knowledge of existing legislation protecting their rights as disabled women, followed by their embarrassment of their physical state, and also their fear of being ignored.

Interestingly, one third of the respondents reported not only discrimination against Tajikistan's women, but against its men as well. This fact was noted by 36.3% of those questioned. By a percentage of 34.6% these women believe that disabled women suffer more than disabled men do, while 24.9% were unable or unwilling to answer the question. Unfortunately these women reported that their requests for assistance from government offices were usually ignored. In fact, only 3.1% of disabled women reported that their requests for assistance were ever met, and 35% of the respondents stated that their situations remained unchanged. This data confirms that discrimination against disabled women in society continues, and that it is constant.

Leisure Time and Their Attitudes toward Politics

Research showed that most of Tajikistan's disabled women are unemployed, and that they are homemakers. We asked “What do you do in your spare time?”

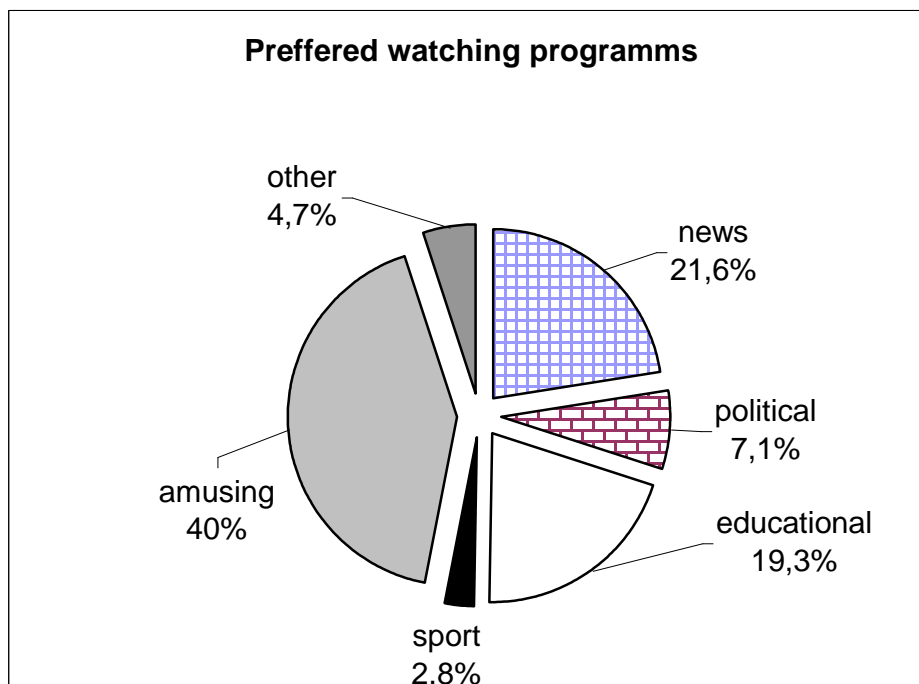
Despite the fact that 60% of the respondents stated that they have plenty of extra time, only 4.2% of them are involved in social works. The daily routine for these women consists of housekeeping, watching television, and listening to the radio. Watching television is the favorite leisure activity for 45% of them, while 17.6% of them prefer listening to the radio. Unfortunately, the reading of newspapers or books were not acknowledged as favorite activities – 9% of the overall group of respondents read newspapers, and only 0.2% read books *due to their inability to read*. For these women, social time with friends was also not as high as we perceived, with 6.1% indicating that they went to visit friends, and 44.9% indicating that they had time for

such visits. Yet, after homemaking, 19.7% of these women indicated that visiting with neighbors was their favorite activity.

However, since television and radio are dependent on electricity, and since the availability of electricity in Tajikistan varies, most disabled women do spend some of their available leisure time visiting with neighbors.

In urban centers newspaper is commonly available, but in rural areas the citizens must read old newspapers that have been passed from person to person. Research data reveals that only 31.3% of disabled women living in urban centers read newspapers, and 37.6% read books.

While television and radio are the main sources for staying current on world and social news, respondents indicated that they do not have proper access to them – 9.9% report that they have no access to television and 26.4% do not have access to radio. Their televisions and/or radios are frequently broken or out of order. An additional benefit of having television and radio access indicated by these women is that they aid in psychological diversion, and in doing so lessen the pain of their feelings of worthlessness. Data indicates that 40% of disabled women who watch television do so for pleasure, mainly watching amusing programs, news, and educational programs. See chart below.

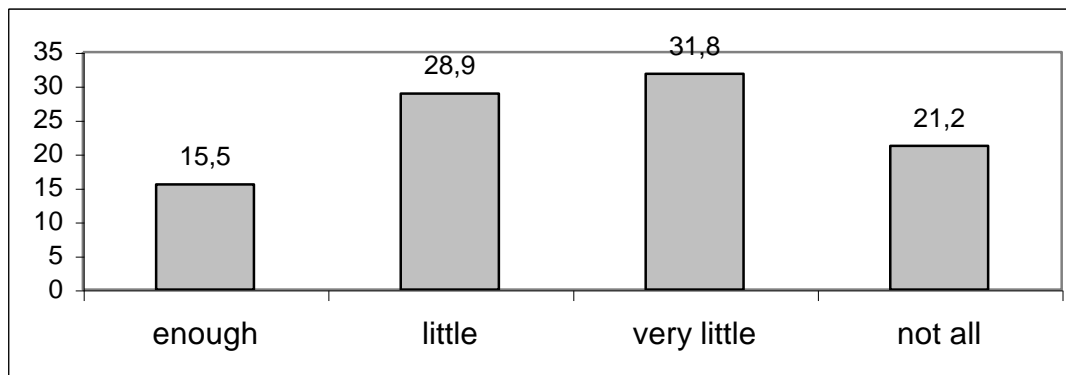


Tajikistan's disabled women acknowledge receiving psychological and social support from family members and other relatives – 20% state that they receive aid in

this way - although a nearly equal percentage of these women – 20.3% - told us that they are ignored by family members.

Most disabled women cannot travel from place to place alone – they must rely on public transportation. These inconveniences detract from their time spent strengthening family ties, and frequently isolate them from other members of society. Problems affecting their ability to use public transportation systems include a lack of accessibility for disabled persons, and lifts meant to accommodate their boarding needs, among others.

Research revealed that most disabled women are not interested in political, economic, or social situations within Tajikistan. Data indicated that 41.9% of these women view politics as the exclusive business of a small sector within society, and that only 12.9% discuss general politics with their friends, while 11.8% indicate interest in specific governmental issues, but say they are not active within the political process. In fact, only 3.2% of disabled women confirmed that they are involved in any type of political activity. Respondents showed a disdain for political issues, and most even sought to avoid addressing the questions altogether, believing it to be the business of other people. They openly stated to us that they do not believe in the political process, and are disappointed with its effectiveness. They do not believe in the ability of politicians to assist them in any way, and consequently only 24.1% of the respondents claimed to participate in election processes. Data showed that 31.8% of these women feel that their government does no care about them at all, and that it does not provide sufficient support to assist with their needs, while 21.2% state that they do not receive any type of support from their government.



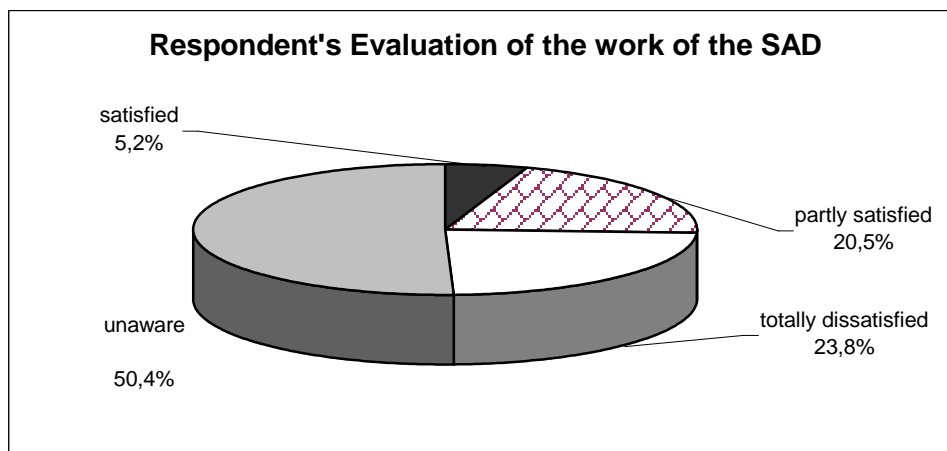
These women state that the bad attitudes of government officials are the main reason for their dissatisfaction. Although they are unwilling to become involved in politics, they are certainly willing to state their opinions. Research indicated that while 13% of these women feel that the reorientation process for Tajikistan is progressing well, a full 33.9% believe it is proceeding slowly, and only 3.3% advised that they were satisfied with the overall activities of our country's government.

In conclusion, most disabled women in Tajikistan analyze and understand the importance of political, economic, and social processes within the country.

Tajikistan's Social Assistance Department (SAD)

Tajikistan's government established the Social Assistance Department (SAD) under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in order to provide social services for its disabled citizens. Although the department has been established for some time, research data indicates that it is unclear if its work is, in fact, providing tangible assistance for our country's disabled people.

In order to find out how much our respondents know about the activities of the Social Assistance Department (SAD) we added specific questions for these women. Research revealed that 72.2% of Tajikistan's disabled women are unaware of the existence of this government office, that 80% of them have never received any assistance at all, and that only 14% use its services.



As indicated, the services of the Social Assistance Department are not available or accessible to all of Tajikistan's disabled women. Unfortunately, this department has no existing means of making its presence and services known to the majority of our country's disabled – in fact a full 50% of the respondents were totally unaware of its existence. As shown in the chart, of the respondents who used the Social Assistance Department's services, only 5.2% were completely satisfied with its assistance, 20% were partly satisfied, and the remaining 23.8% were totally dissatisfied with its services. These figures indicated to us that the Social Assistance Department must increase the quantity and quality of its services, and must also make itself known to the 50% of women that do not even know that it exists. Among respondents, 4.5% indicated that they were ignored when they asked the Department for help. The data received

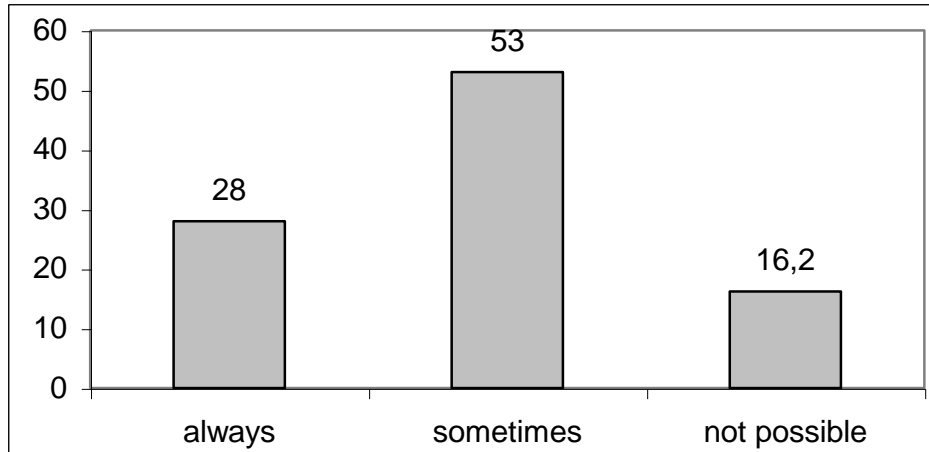
indicates to us that the Social Assistance Department should be completely modified in order to properly meet the need of our country's disabled women.

Relation to Environment and Surroundings

As mentioned earlier, one of the critical problems for Tajikistan's disabled women their ability to properly interact with other members of society. In ordinary life and in emergency conditions these women are unable to travel to necessary destinations. Many of them are unable to travel to visit family and friends. A significant portion of women needing wheelchairs for independent travel often do not have them, and those women and others are prohibited in local and national travel by proper access to streets, avenues, dwellings, buildings, and administrative, cultural, and educational centers. Because many of the women requiring wheelchairs are unable to afford them, or are not provided them through aid organizations, they are forced to move about in hand-made carts or broken strollers. In addition, residential buildings (namely apartment complexes) do not have lifts required to move them from floor to floor. If these women do venture out, there are not sufficient signs and crosswalks to allow for their safe travel. The most significant hindrance to their mobilization is the public transport system – buses, trolleybuses, etc.

Because the public transportation system does not facilitate easy movement for these women, many are forced to walk or travel by wheelchair for long distances – often for kilometers. Because of their immobility, we sincerely desire that the research we have undertaken will lead to better conditions facilitating their travel, for work, social, and leisure purposes.

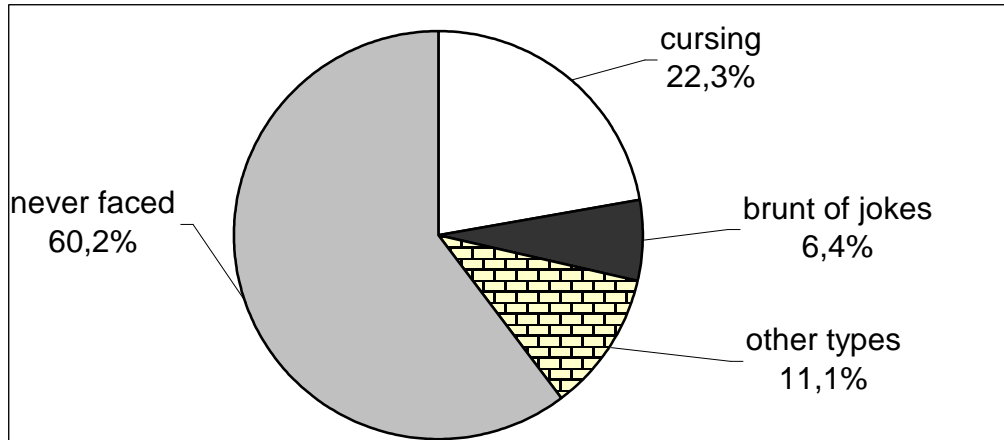
In looking at the ability of these women to go outside of their places of residence, we can divide their numbers into three groups. Only 28.9% of the disabled women we polled were regularly able to go outside of their place of residence. As indicated in the chart below, 53% indicated that they are able to go outside sometimes, and amazingly, a full 16.2% of the respondents were completely unable to go outside of their dwelling places, due to their severe disability.



Figures indicate that 33.3% of the respondents are able to use buses as a means of transportation, 28.9% are unable to do so, and must walk from place to place. An additional 7.5% are forced to move about exclusively by the use of wheelchairs, while 4.7% rely on high-priced taxis to meet their transportation needs. Of critical psychological note is that, during their time of public transportation, these women commonly report reproach from those whom they travel with.

Data indicates that during times of travel or while they cross the street, they are scolded for attempting to move about in public. Research further indicates that, sadly, these women indicate that they become nervous during these times from the reproaches. As shown in the chart below, 39.8% of respondents indicated that they faced these problems, with 6.4% of them stating that they are the brunt of jokes, or that they cursing and/or insults (22.3%), and an additional 11.1% reported abuses of other types. Although the nature of the questions made it difficult to arrive at any hard conclusions regarding the emotional toll on these women, it cannot be argued that the reproach, disdain, and cursing that they endure results in lowered self-esteem for these women.

Because these disabled women feel limited and oppressed, they indicted that they lack normal opportunities for social interaction such as going for a walk, associating with other people, going to the theater or the cinema, watching a sporting event, etc, and consequently perceive themselves as helpless, unwanted members of society.



Research indicates that these women do not view themselves as equal members of society. Despite the fact that they frequently cannot participate in leisure activities such as swimming, watching dance or theater, sightseeing, they still indicated that they would deeply enjoy being able to participate in these activities.

Activities that are desired but not possible	Number	Percentage
Swimming	464	80.7%
Theater	458	79.7%
Sport	456	79.3%
Dancing	452	78.6%
Cinema	449	78.1%
Sightseeing	322	56.0%
Relationships with friends	155	27.0%

As mentioned earlier, one of the basic problems inhibiting the integration of disabled women into society is the inaccessibility of public-use facilities. Respondents indicated that the installation of special ramps and lifts to accommodate their during transportation, employment, social, and leisure activities is critical to aiding this desired integration. They believe that in addition to positive changes in their quality of life, public perception of their role in society would also change – further improving their integration as full, equal members of society. However, current practice within our country during the planning and construction of residential, governmental, workplace, and social-center buildings does not take these needs into account. Data indicates that

64.4% of the respondents desire to use public transportation systems equipped with special pandas and lifts, and that 77% desire that multi-story buildings be so equipped. Visually impaired women have a great need for Braille signs and other aids to allow them to move about freely in society.

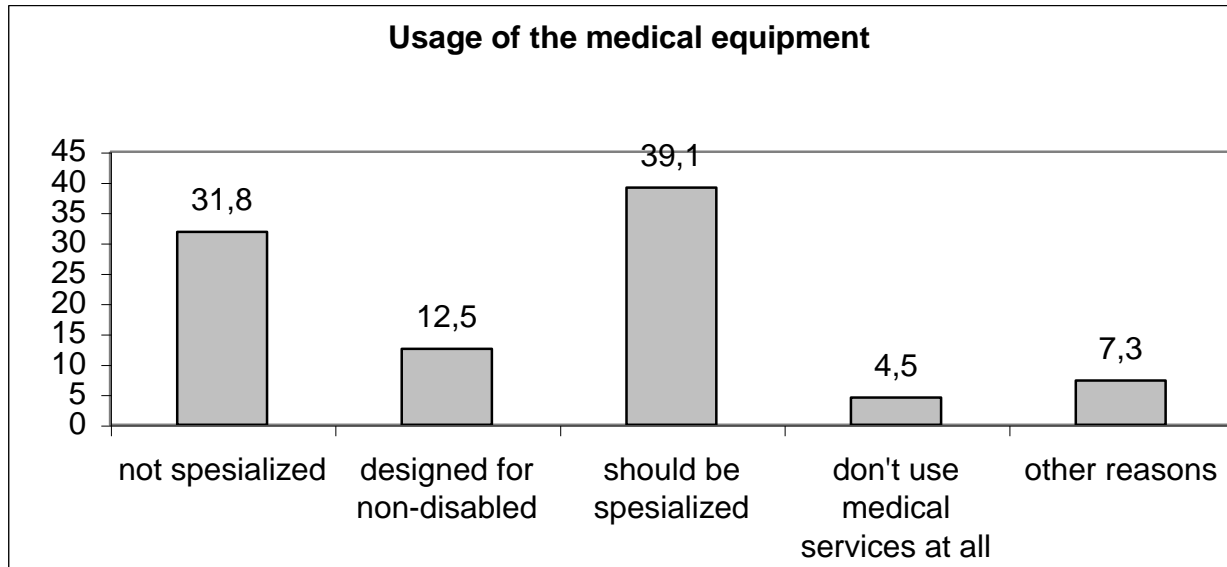
Research indicates that the problem of allowing disabled people efficient means of transportation is one of their greatest concerns, and despite the fact that these problems are not currently being properly addressed, it is our sincere desire that data gleaned through this research will be instrumental in seeing changes effected.

Health and Medical Issues

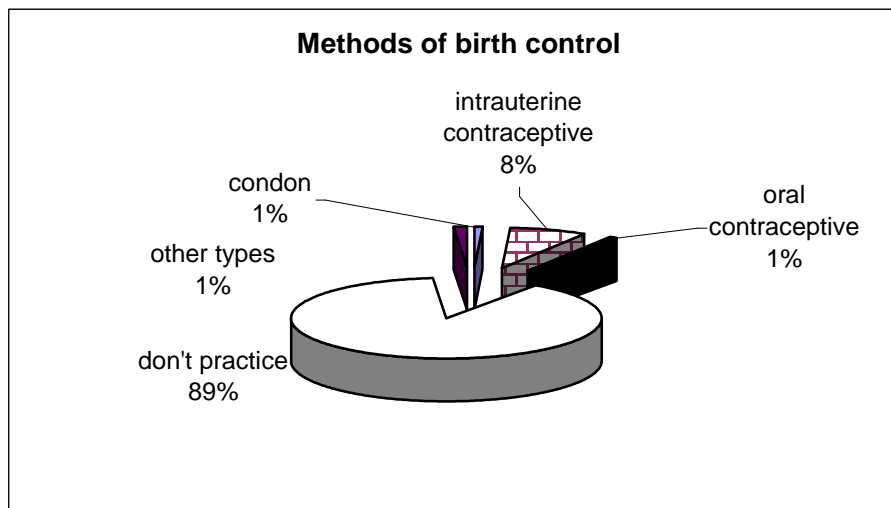
Medical concerns and the quality of medical care received ranked very high among the priorities of Tajikistan's disabled women. Research indicates that these women require better, more specific medical attention and aid than they are currently receiving. Statistics indicate that 46.8% of the respondents perceive their health care of average quality, while 33.9% consider it bad, and 4.9% view it as very bad. Because of the aforementioned reduced income level of these families, many of them do not have the financial means available to even be able to afford medical services. As may be expected, health care in village areas is worse. Of the 4.9% of women indicating that they believe their health care is very bad, 41% live in villages, 37% in regional centers, and only 30% live in cities. Figures indicated that 5.6% of respondents from cities were in immediate need of medical services, yet were unable to travel to receive aid because they could not find anyone to help them get to the hospital. Moving outward from the cities exacerbated the problem, and was confirmed in the data collected, as 6.5% of women in regional centers, and 10% of women in villages reported the same lack of help available to help them travel to receive necessary medical attention. Reasons for lack of help were generally that they are transportationally immobile, that the hospital was too far to be reached, and that their medical needs are not taken into consideration by their families. Doctors who may be able to attend to their needs within the homes of disabled women do not, commonly because these women are poor and unable to pay for medical services, and also because many of them live in areas too remote for reasonable visiting.

Research indicated that the medical needs of Tajikistan's disabled women are typically centered around gynecological, surgery, nervous, and dental specialties. Data shows that 18.1% of these women use gynecological services, but that specialized equipment sufficient to meet their needs is not available. Accordingly, 31.8% of these women noted the same lack of equipment in meeting their dental needs, and 12.5% stated that they are unable to use medical equipment designed for non-disabled people.

Data showed that 39.1% of these women desire to have their special medical needs considered in the future. Due to problems with medical equipment, or difficulties in using the equipment, 4.5% of the respondents do not use medical services at all.



Family planning is one of the most important issues in the lives of these disabled women. The government of Tajikistan is actively involved in the direction family planning for our citizens, but disabled women are unaware of these directives. Research indicates that 89% of the respondents do not practice any form of birth control. Of those that do, 8% use an intrauterine contraceptive and 1% use condom.



Data shows that 12.5% of these women do not use birth control because of the objection of their husbands. Respondents also viewed the alternative of abortion as

preferable to birth control. The intrauterine contraceptive is the most commonly used form of birth control in cities and regional centers, but for disabled women living in villages, use of the intrauterine contraceptive is low because they rely upon abortions if they become pregnant.

Data indicates that the main reason for abortions for these women was due to the guilt of their husbands. In the cities, 6.6% of the respondents blamed their husbands for not allowing them to use birth control, and in regional centers 39.5% blame their husbands, and in the villages this figure increases 53.3%. The percentage of women who choose abortions in the city is 33.3%, and in the villages this number increases to over 40%. Research indicates that these women believe that they should pay for abortion services, regardless of living difficulties or reduced family income as a result of their disabilities, and statistics confirm these findings, with 82.5% of respondents living in villages believing that they should pay for abortion services. Only 34.8% of women having abortions can afford them from their families' budget, so most of our country's disabled women must borrow money in order to fund them. Money from friends and family for 10.1% of these women paid for the abortions.

Data indicates that 40% of the respondents had given birth to at least one child. Of that number, 30% used maternity hospitals. Because of the cost of hospital expenses or due to the distance of the hospitals from their places of residence, 5.6% of the respondents gave birth at home. Of this number, the largest percentage was comprised of women living in rural areas – 10.8% of women in the city gave birth at home, while 52.9% of women from villages gave birth at home.

Of even greater issue than the scarcity of funds for birthing expenses, or the distance to the hospitals, was the perception among our respondents that the quality of care in these maternity hospitals is poor, or that the neglectful attitudes of doctors resulted in poor medical care. Of those respondents who indicated such concerns, 20.3% of women from villages, 8.4% from regional centers, and 7.6% from cities advised that there was almost no doctor control during their time of giving birth. This confirmed to us the prevalence of discrimination against these disabled women in some medical offices.

List of the regions and districts participated in the research:

1.Dushanbe

Somoni district
Sino district
Firdousi district
Shohmansoor district

2.Khatlon region

Bokhtar district
Vakhsh district
Shahritooz district
Kulyab district

3. Dependent Districts

Hisor district
Tursoonzoda district
Rudaki district
Vahdat district
Rasht district

4.Soghd region

Khoojand district
Istaravshan district
Ghonchi district
Isfara district
Zafarabod district

5. Badakhshon region

Khorog district
Darvoz district