



The Field of Women's Organizing in Mongolia: Possibilities of a Feminist Movement

**Report of a Qualitative Study
Commissioned by the Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES)**

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
2009

The Field of Women's Organizing in Mongolia: Possibilities of a Feminist Movement



**Report of a Qualitative Study
Commissioned by the Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES)**

T.Undarya, National Coordinator, MONFEMNET
D.Enkhjargal, Director, National Center against Violence (NCAV)

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
2009

Content

List of Abbreviations

List of Tables

List of Charts

Acknowledgements

Analytical Framework and Research Methodology

- Holistic feminism

- Movements and fields of women's organizing

- Taxonomy and selection of survey respondents/interview subjects

- Questionnaire and key substantive issues

- Political and emotional nature of the research process

- Case studies

- Focus group discussion and collective analysis session

Historical Background

Current Context

The Field of Women's Organizing in Mongolia

A. Survey, Interviews and Group Discussions

- General characteristics of survey respondents

- Movement and networking

- Human rights and democracy

- Women's organizing in Mongolia

- Patriarchy

- Feminism

B. Case Studies

- The Quota Battle

- Human Rights under State of Emergency Protection and Monitoring Coalition

- 16-day Campaign to Stop Violence against Women and Girls

- "Hands Up for Your Rights!" youth campaign supported by MONFEMNET

Conclusion and Recommendations

List of Abbreviations

CCP	Civil Courage Party
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LEOS	Liberal Women's Brain Pool
MDP	Mongolian Democratic Party
MONES	Mongolian Women's Fund
MONFEMNET	National Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs
MP	Member of Parliament
MPRP	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
MWC	Mongolian Women's Committee
MWF	Mongolian Women's Federation
NCAV	National Center against Violence
NGO	Non-Government Organization
WSP	Women for Social Progress Movement

List of Tables

- Table 1. Taxonomy of Actors in the Field of Women’s Organizing
- Table 2. Survey Questions
- Table 3. Respondents’ Age (in Annex)
- Table 4. Representation and Constituent Groups
- Table 5. Target Groups (in Annex)
- Table 6. Defining Movements
- Table 7. Relevance and Significance of Movements in Mongolia (in Annex)
- Table 8. Working or Not Working on Human Rights (in Annex)
- Table 9. Policy Distance vis-a-vis Political Parties
- Table 10. Priority Issues for Women’s Collective Action
- Table 11. Rating Women’s Organized Actions
- Table 12. Proposed Solutions for Improving Women’s Collective Action
- Table 13. Effect of Gender Equality on Mongolian Culture
- Table 14. Need to Abolish Patriarchy
- Table 15. Defining Feminism
- Table 17. Existence of a Feminist Movement in Mongolia

List of Charts

- Chart 1. Feminist Respondents’ Priorities
- Chart 2. Non-Feminist Respondents’ Priorities

Acknowledgments

As activists, we are constantly multitasking and are regularly overworked, perpetually seeking to keep up with the high demand for our human rights, gender equality and democracy promotion work. In this context, it is often a luxury to have time and space and an opportunity to stop for a moment and engage in individual and collective reflection on our own field of practice and explore strategic directions and future avenues.

Yet such analysis is crucial if we are to make progress in the desired direction. Therefore, the writers of this report, T.Undarya and D.Enkhjargal, express our deep gratitude to MONES and particularly to Ms. N.Chinchuluun, Director, for granting us this opportunity to reflect on the current situation of Mongolian women's activism and explore possibilities for promoting a strong feminist movement that is capable of leading to a fundamental transformation of our society. We also thank her for her incredible patience and understanding as this research process became more extended than originally planned.

We would also like to thank all the women that kindly contributed their time, thoughts and energies to answer our questionnaires, provide information about their views and their organizations, and participate in the focus group discussion and collective analysis session. Last but not least, we would like to thank Kh.Enkhzaya, Director of the Women Lawyers' Association, for assisting us in conducting the survey and collecting documents.

Though led by the two of us, this research is in fact a product of our collective reflection, sharing and analysis. The process of conducting this research has been an educational and thought-provoking one. We hope that both the content and the process of this research shall aid women activists in Mongolia in our efforts to build bold and broad-based movements for social change, which integrate principles and insights of feminism.

Undarya and Enkhjargal

Analytical Framework and Research Methodology

This study was commissioned by the Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES) in order to identify obstacles to and effective strategies for promoting feminist movement-building in Mongolia. The study is premised on a normative stance that movement-building in general and feminist movement-building in particular is essential for bringing fundamental social changes towards the development of a gender-just, humane and democratic society that ensures equality, social justice and human rights for all.

While previous studies on Mongolian women's NGOs focused on financial, human and institutional capacities of individual organizations, this study focuses on ideological and political orientations of women activists towards feminism, democracy, human rights and movements. The choice was made due to our conviction that a strong movement is impossible without a clear set of shared values and principles, i.e. a common conceptual, ideological or political framework, and due to our observation that strong collective action by women activists has often been impossible in Mongolia precisely due to unarticulated but deep-seated ideological differences. Shedding light on and openly articulating these underlying tensions is deemed a necessary step in developing a strong and self-reflexive women's movement in Mongolia.

The study was conducted by two women activists who have been engaged in the Mongolian civil society in general and women's rights activism in particular for twelve to fifteen years. Thus, this is a study by "insiders." As such, to a large extent, this study represents in-depth self-reflection and is embedded in our years of active involvement, participant observation and intimate knowledge of the field of women's organizing in Mongolia. It is also guided by our personal commitments as feminists, democrats, human rights activists and Mongolians.

The study is qualitative and is based on our individual as well as collective memories and analyses as women activists; whenever relevant and available, review of reports and publications by women's groups and other background materials; a survey and interviews of women's and women-led NGOs and female public figures; a focus group discussion; 4 case studies, and a collective analysis session based on key findings of the research.

Holistic feminism

Many different strands of feminism exist, beyond the simple definition of the common goal of establishing gender equality and ensuring women's human rights. Therefore, in this section, we make an effort to describe the concept of feminism that has guided our study.

The feminist theory and practice has evolved significantly in the last century, especially since the 1980s. The global women's movement has been challenged and informed by the critical feminist theories developed by women marginalized by the second wave of feminism generally dominated by white, middle-class western women. The so-called "Third World," "black," "Chicana," or "transnational" feminisms have brought to the forefront the complex interactions

of patriarchy and political, economic, cultural, social and other systems of power, which mutually construct, reconstruct, challenge or reinforce each other.

Gender began to be understood as a constitutive element of power relations along with other categories such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, citizenship, age, etc., whose permutations in constructing specific power structures and relations differ from context to context. In other words, gender identities and gender-based inequalities, exclusions and inclusions, are not discreet but are in constant construction and reconstruction through the re/construction of other social categories and hierarchies and vice versa.

Once such interweaving and inter-dependencies are taken into account, the one-dimensional definition of patriarchy as a system that establishes male privilege is no longer sufficient. Patriarchy becomes seen as a resilient but fluid system, which takes on many forms over time and space and interacts with economic, political, cultural and other power systems, establishing complex hierarchies between men and women, men and men, women and women, based not only on gender but also other contextually operative social categories. The analysis of power becomes not only more nuanced and contextualized but also demands the integration of the analysis of power relations embedded in minute details of everyday lives (such as where we sit at a table, what we wear, what we say to our children or friends) with the analyses of large structures such as economic order or political systems.

In sum, this study holds that the feminist goal requires a continuous process of challenging and dismantling patriarchal and all other hierarchical/authoritarian power structures as they are fundamentally inter-related. In this sense, the feminist project becomes much more complex as to dismantle gender hierarchies, it must at the same time address and challenge other inequalities, such as those based on race, class, and ethnicity. While it may be necessary for tactical or strategic reasons to privilege specific categories in certain contexts or at certain historical points, the feminist project must necessarily have a holistic view. Hence, the concept of feminism we use in this study could be termed as “holistic feminism.”

In the Mongolian context, where in democracy and emergent civil society are still fragile, political and economic systems are increasingly oligarchic, and nationalism and traditionalism are on the rise, the feminist project has to take into account the need to strengthen democracy, build robust civil society, protect human rights, promote social justice and combat authoritarian cultural and political tendencies. Ideally, holistic feminism in Mongolia would consistently challenge patriarchal systems as well as support and inform, from the feminist point of view, the processes (and movements) aimed at promoting democracy, civil society, social justice and human rights of all, with a view to achieving a fundamental transformation of the society through the accumulated effects of incremental non-violent reforms.

Therefore, in developing the analytical framework, the researchers paid attention not only to the attitudes and views of activists on gender equality, patriarchy and feminism but also to human rights, democracy, and movements.

Movements and fields of women's organizing

The concept of a movement is an important one for this research as the normative goal is to contribute to strong feminist movement building in Mongolia. In this study, a movement is understood as a set of organized formal or informal groups, which generate broad public support and participation, engaged in collective action towards well defined common goals of changing the society in specific ways and which sustain their activities in the given direction for a relatively long period of time. We see the value and necessity of movements in not simply solving specific critical issues faced by a significant section of a given society but in effecting fundamental social changes, i.e. transforming the power relations underlying societal arrangements. We also see broad public participation as an important element of movements, one that distinguishes a set or organizations from a social movement, which links individuals to organizations in an overarching analytical and political/ideological framework.¹

In Mongolia, there are diverse organizations that are formed and led by women. Many of these organizations can be described as women's NGOs in the sense that they pursue women-specific goals and seek to primarily benefit women. There are many NGOs that see themselves as women's though they do not primarily focus on women's issues but work on health, family, poverty reduction, income generation and other development issues. There are also NGOs that work on gender and gender equality issues but do not see themselves as women's NGOs. Furthermore, a number of the key human rights and pro-democracy NGOs in Mongolia are women-led organizations, some of which actively engage in gender equality promotion and some of which do not. Conversely, a number of key women's NGOs actively participate in the promotion of democracy, human rights and civil society development as well as environmental protection and promotion of social justice.

While most NGOs in the field of women's organizing support the idea of gender equality, many do not see this principle as fundamentally linked to democracy and human rights and fundamentally opposed to patriarchy, paternalism and authoritarianism of any kind. This is also to say that not all women's NGOs are in fact women's rights NGOs as many do not operate in a rights-based framework but, instead, assume a more paternalistic approach and seek to improve the lot of women within patriarchal and authoritarian power structures. Furthermore, NGOs and individual women variously understand patriarchy and feminism and while some openly identify as feminist, most do not and some openly oppose feminism as harmful to the Mongolian society.

This multitude of actors does not necessarily see themselves as a community and do not necessarily work towards the same goal. Moreover, many of the NGOs do not have clear constituencies or membership. Therefore, the researchers refrained from making an assumption regarding the existence of a women's movement in Mongolia and set out to explore the "field of women's organizing," using a more neutral term. This field is seen as a heterogeneous one, fraught with largely unexamined but important ideological, political, social, cultural, institutional and other differences, divergences and cleavages. At the same time, the field is

¹ This definition is loosely based on the definition developed by Srilatha Batliwala in AWID, *Changing Their World. Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements* (2008),

pregnant with certain points of convergence and consensus and unexplored potentials for forging broader collective action.

Developing our understanding of this complexity and shedding more light onto the ideological differences and underlying political tensions, which influence women’s organizing and possibilities of feminist movement-building in Mongolia, is, as previously stated, a key goal of this research project.

Taxonomy and selection of survey respondents/interview subjects

Although the study is a qualitative one, the researchers deemed it important to survey and interview a group of NGOs and individuals who could more or less represent the diversity of actors in the field of women’s organizing in Mongolia. Based on the above-described largely intuitive understanding of the field, we sought to cover women’s, women’s rights and women-led NGOs and individual women who are active in this field, i.e. one way or another engage with gender and women’s issues and/or women’s and women’s rights NGOs.

Using our preliminary knowledge about these NGOs (based on experience), the researchers developed a taxonomy of the NGOs and individuals active in this field, placing them on a continuum with feminist NGOs being at one end and patriarchal NGOs being at the other end. In between, we placed NGOs that promote democracy and human rights and uphold principles of gender equality but do not regard themselves as feminist and NGOs that are politically more conservative, are not human rights-based, support gender equality but also uphold patriarchal traditions.

Table 1. Taxonomy of Actors in the Field of Women’s Organizing			
Feminist	Non-feminist, democratic but supportive	Moderately patriarchal	Patriarchal
Seek to actively dismantle and transform patriarchy as a system that establishes gendered hierarchies, usually privileging males over females	Do not challenge patriarchy though recognize it violates principles of democracy and human rights	Do not consistently challenge patriarchy	Strongly support patriarchy and/or seek to strengthen patriarchy
Actively promote gender equality and women’s human rights (operate within a human rights-based framework)	Support gender equality but usually do not actively promote (operate within a human rights-based framework)	Support and sometimes promote gender equality but in specific spheres and situations and within limits (are not consistently human rights-based)	Do not promote gender equality and women’s human rights but seek to strengthen women’s and men’s patriarchal roles and gendered division of labor (are not human rights-based)
Actively promote democratic/egalitarian governance/power structures	Actively promote democratic/egalitarian governance/power structures	Often disapprove but do not consistently challenge authoritarian/hierarchical	Support authoritarian/hierarchical governance/power structures

		governance/power structures	
Support social justice and equitable distribution of public goods/resources based on the principles of human rights and equality	Support social justice and equitable distribution of public goods/resources within a human rights-based framework	Advocate for equitable distribution of resources in a paternalistic fashion	Advocate for equitable distribution of resources in a paternalistic fashion
Seek to empower individuals (primarily but not exclusively women) to take care of themselves and participate in decision-making	Seek to empower individuals to take care of themselves and participate in decision-making	Seek to improve the lot of people, but usually in a charity framework	Seek to extend charity to people and make 'right' decisions on their behalf
Openly identify as feminist	Do not identify as feminist	Do not oppose feminism	Oppose feminism

The actual NGOs do not always neatly fall into the 4 categories but the survey, interview and discussion results largely confirmed the validity of the above taxonomy. In order to cover a broad range of NGOs and individuals in terms of their ideological (feminist-cum-democratic) orientation, the researchers developed the list of NGOs and individuals to be surveyed and/or interviewed by listing organizations and individuals under each of the above four categories according to our guesstimates.

Altogether, 32 NGOs and 9 individuals were surveyed and/or interviewed. This can be considered as a fairly representative sample as 32 NGOs represent at least 50% of women's NGOs based in Ulaanbaatar that operate relatively regularly. While all surveyed NGOs are based in Ulaanbaatar, some of them work nationally and have branches in rural areas. All survey questionnaires were mainly filled by main representatives of the NGOs, i.e. by board chairs or directors, and by a program officer in one case.

Questionnaire and key substantive issues

The survey/interview questionnaire reflects our conceptualization of holistic feminism and how it would manifest itself in the Mongolian context. The questionnaire consisted of 18 main questions that fell into 7 main groups presented below:

1	Personal details	1. Gender 2. Age 3. Position 4. How long have you worked in NGO community?	These questions were asked to get a general sense of actors in the field of women's organizing in Mongolia
2	Organizational details (not applicable to individuals)	5. How long has the NGO existed? 6. How many people work in the NGO?	These questions were asked to get a sense of variation by experience and level of institutionalization of the NGOs
3	Movements	7. Does your NGO represent a specific	These questions were asked to get

		<p>social group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, what group? - If no, why? <p>8. Who does your NGO target in its work?</p> <p>9. Do you participate in a movement?</p> <p>10. What is a movement in your opinion?</p> <p>11. Is there a need for movement in Mongolia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, why? - If no, why? <p>12. Is your NGO a member of a coalition or a federation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which? 	<p>a sense how the actors in the field define movements and what their attitudes are towards movements in relation to social change. Interestingly, the answers given to the question on why movements are needed or not, were indicative of the extent to which actors value human rights and citizens' right to participation.</p>
4	Human rights and democracy	<p>13. Does the NGO work for human rights?</p> <p>14. If yes, what violations of human rights does the NGO work on?</p> <p>15. What is the primary function of the state?</p> <p>16. Do you agree that Mongolians have a state-centered mentality.</p> <p>17. Is strengthening democracy beneficial to your work?</p> <p>18. Should strengthening democracy be a priority objective?</p> <p>19. What political party's policy is closest to your position?</p>	<p>These questions were asked to get a sense of the extent to which the actors are concerned about basic principles of democracy and human rights. Given Mongolia comes from a highly centralized statist system, the question about the state was key to gauge the nature or quality of democratic attitudes of the actors, i.e. if respondents displayed more statist attitudes, they were considered as less democratic and more conservative politically. The question about parties was important to help identify political (democratic) orientation of the actors and partisan cleavages existent in the field.</p>
5	Women's organizing in Mongolia	<p>20. What should Mongolian women's NGOs jointly focus on as a priority issue?</p> <p>21. How do you rate women's organized actions?</p> <p>22. In your opinion, what should be done in the future to strengthen women's organizing in Mongolia?</p>	<p>These questions were asked to get a sense of how the actors view the field of women's organizing and what issues they prioritize.</p>
6	Patriarchy	<p>23. How will ensuring gender equality impact on traditional Mongolian culture?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If positively, why? - If negatively, why? <p>24. Would you agree that patriarchy needs to be abolished?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, why? - If no, why? 	<p>These questions were asked to identify the extent to which the actors lean toward feminism or patriarchy/traditionalism and how deeply they understand patriarchy and the role of culture in maintaining it.</p>
7	Feminism	<p>25. What is feminism, in your opinion?</p> <p>26. Is there a feminist movement in Mongolia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, why? - If no, why? <p>27. Do you consider your organization/yourself feminist?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If yes, why? - If no, why? 	<p>These questions were asked to gauge the extent to which actors understand, support or oppose feminism and whether they consider themselves feminist or not.</p>

Political and emotional nature of the research process

Surveys and interviews were mainly conducted in August-September, 2009. The process of conducting the surveys was usually combined with individual interviews. With few exceptions, Enkhjargal and Enkhzaya personally delivered the survey questionnaires to the respondents and engaged in a conversation while the respondent was filling out the questionnaire. Often, respondents posed clarifying questions about the survey and inquired about the goal of the research.

This seemingly simple process was in fact politically charged and often emotionally challenging. While most organizations and individuals we had classified as 'feminist' or 'moderately feminist' asked the least number of questions, quickly filled out the questionnaire and sometimes indicated the research looked like a very interesting and worthwhile undertaking, many of the NGO representatives and individuals we had classified as 'moderately patriarchal' and 'patriarchal' reacted very negatively, inquired in detail about the purpose of the research, criticized the questionnaire itself and stalled the process of responding to the questions. Questions that caused most resistance were those regarding policy distance between the NGO/individual and political parties, culture, patriarchy and feminism. In a number of cases, the respondents avoided answering these questions or gave vague answers open to multiple interpretation.

This was a trying process, which demonstrated the political nature of the research project. Respondents were suddenly faced with a set of questions no one had ever openly asked them about even though much of what was asked, e.g., political sympathies, is considered a common knowledge. All of a sudden, NGOs were put before a classification scheme (Are you feminist or not? Which party's policies are closest to your NGO's?) and the more conservative groups (i.e., more statist and more patriarchal groups) were anxious about the consequences of their answers. Often, they refused to answer certain questions or gave vague and indirect answers open to multiple interpretations.

In our opinion, the strong emotional reaction of some of the respondents may in fact demonstrate the importance of this research project, especially in terms of bringing to light many of the hidden differences and divisions, potentially leading to a more transparent process of NGO participation, communication and cooperation in the field of women's organizing.

Case studies

In addition to the surveys and interviews, we resolved to include analyses of several specific cases of collective action, which highlight strengths and weaknesses of women's activism in Mongolia, test the existence of a women's movement and point to the potential of the field to support a feminist movement-building. These case studies include the following:

- women's cooperation on protesting the revocation of the 30% women's quota for the list of candidates in national elections (December 2007-March 2008),

- formation of the Human Rights under State of Emergency Monitoring and Protection coalition (following mass violations of human rights in relation to the July 1st post-election violence in 2008),
- 16-day campaign to stop violence against women and girls (led by the NCAV since 1997), and
- initiation of the “Hands Up for Your Rights!” youth campaign for gender justice, human rights and democracy supported by MONFEMNET.

Focus group discussion and collective analysis session

MONES and the researchers organized two discussions in the process of data collection and analysis. The first - a focus group discussion - was held on September 14, 2009, following the compilation of data from surveys and interviews and issues that arose from them, such as representation, understanding of movements, feminism, attitudes to the state and influence of partisan divides.

The second discussion was held on December 23, 2009, based on the main findings of the research. The researchers presented the analytical framework, research methodology and research goal, emphasizing the normative framework of the study. Then, the analysis of the historical background and current context were presented in detail followed by a detailed presentation of the findings of the surveys, interviews and case studies.

Both discussions generated significant interest and lively and open discussions and constituted an integral and important part of the research as self-reflection and collective analysis by women activists. They were also the first discussions that explicitly centered on the concept of feminism and its significance for Mongolian women activists. We believe these discussions were important not only in terms of improving women activists’ understanding of feminism but also in terms of strengthening their analytical skills and deepening their level of individual and collective self-awareness and consciousness.

Furthermore, the importance of these discussions lies in rendering this research project into a collective process of producing and sharing self-knowledge and part of the process of moving towards the stated goal of the research: fostering a strong feminist movement building in Mongolia.

Historical Background²

The history of Mongolian women's organizing can be counted from 1924 when the Mongolian Women's Committee (MWC) was formed under the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), following the People's Revolution of 1921, which marked the establishment of the People's Republic of Mongolia. The revolution followed the liberation of Mongolia from the Manchu rule, which had lasted for over 200 years, and signified overthrowing of the feudal regime under significant and growing influence of Red Russia. As the MPRP increasingly assumed communist direction and installed itself as the Party-State with the assistance of the Russian Bolsheviks, the MWC evolved as the loyal wing of the Party-State and actively promoted MPRP policies with the extensive help of Soviet women.

In 1924-1940, the MWC directed its efforts to improving literacy levels among women and mobilizing women into public meetings organized by the MPRP. In 1940-1960, the MWC organized intensive campaigns to assist the Soviet and Mongolian armies, overcome the difficulties of the war-time period and, later on, to involve women in the development of cooperatives and collectives and promote civilization and cultural improvements (including personal hygiene, Russian/Soviet-style homemaking and dressing, singing and dancing, etc.). In 1960-1990, the MWC sought to support women's participation in education and employment, including sciences, and involved women in public affairs.³ Throughout this period, the MWC actively promoted cultural Russification and communist propaganda, serving as part of the extensive mobilization and control structure of the Party-State. Similar to the MPRP itself as well as the quasi-governmental mass organizations such as the Mongolian Revolutionary Youth Federation, the MWC had a hierarchical organizational structure with sub-committees at all provincial and sub-provincial levels and all major organizations.

The transition to democracy and market economy, which followed the collapse of the Soviet Block, dramatically changed the field of women's organizing. As pro-democracy dissident groups began to emerge towards the late 1980s and the pro-democracy movement gained momentum, many women became members of the clandestine groups and actively participated in the public demonstrations and hunger-strikes. As the MPRP Polit-Bureau stepped down and democratic institutionalization process began, many of these dissident women became active members of the new opposition parties. However, soon enough, already in 1990-1992, these women began to form women's groups either within or outside the political parties but firmly within the field of democratic opposition. Thus, the Mongolian Social Democratic Women's Movement was formed within the Social

² There is not much, if any, available studies on the history of women's organizing, especially in the post-socialist period, as well as the impact of the pacted democratic transition, influence of the former socialist party and mass organizations and partisan polarization (democratic versus former communist) on the post-socialist development of the Mongolian civil society as well as political, social and cultural life of the Mongolian society on the whole. In the absence of authoritative secondary studies to rely on, the researchers presented in significant detail the content of the "Historical Background" and "Current Context" chapters at the collective analysis session (with 20 diverse representatives of women's organizations) held on December 23, 2009. This version incorporates the feedback provided by the participants.

³ This periodization was formulated by the Mongolian Women's Federation. See: Mongolian Women's Federation, *Introduction* (Ulaanbaatar 2009).

Democratic Party and became reformed as a formally independent and non-partisan Women for Social Progress Movement (WSP). Around the same time, female members of the Mongolian National Democratic Party formed an organization named the Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS).

Along with the formation of various citizens' movements and organizations including the Democratic Union, the establishment of WSP and LEOS in 1992 as formally independent organizations mark the beginning of the democratic civil society development in Mongolia. The WSP and LEOS were not only among the first citizen-initiated as opposed to Party-State or MPRP-formed organizations but also the first independent women's groups. Although both NGOs were born from the opposition political parties and for several years continued to be closely tied to and supported by the parties, they had a largely independent stance, especially vis-à-vis the MPRP-dominated government and the Mongolian Women's Federation or former MWC.

In view of the massive changes in the society, the denouncement of communism, drastic transition to a democratic regime, and rapid emergence of independent women's groups, the MWC had to redefine itself to continue its existence. Consequently, the MWC sought to reform into a non-governmental, non-partisan organization, an umbrella body for all women's groups in Mongolia. It renamed itself as the Mongolian Women's Federation and invited emergent women's groups to become members of the MWF. While some of the new groups such as the Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association accepted the invitation and joined the MWF as a member organization, pro-democracy women's groups such as the WSP and LEOS resolutely rejected the invitation, arguing that the MWF was a communist organization opposed to democratic reforms and challenged the legitimacy of the MWF's claim to national representation.

NGOs such as WSP and LEOS clearly viewed Mongolian women as capable and important contributors to the process of democratization and social development. Therefore, at the initial stages of their formation, they defined their goal as that of contributing to the democratic reforms and social progress by mobilizing women's talents and knowledge towards these ends as well as promoting women's status and roles in the society. Interestingly, LEOS had expressly stated women's movement building and development of civil society through women's leadership as key goals in addition to promoting democracy. These vibrant NGOs served as new loci for women's organizing, generating debates and discussions on women's role in democracy and social progress. They also actively assisted the democratic opposition as this was seen as essential for promoting democracy in Mongolia. In turn, the opposition political parties supported WSP and LEOS by providing office space, sharing their computer, printer and other resources, as well as information and international networks.

The situation began to change, however, in part under the influence of international donor organizations, which required NGOs to be non-partisan, were beginning to frame Mongolia as a Third World country, understood Third World Women as objects of empowerment and, therefore, viewed women's NGOs as organizations that did or should exclusively focus on narrowly defined women's

issues.⁴ Hence, new women's NGOs began to move further away from the political parties (though still strongly sharing the overall political goals) and focus on more women-specific issues. Both of these shifts were rather problematic. The concept of non-partisanship was a difficult one to understand and accept in the context of continued dominance of MPRP and the socialist mass organizations which had been carried over into the post-socialist period largely intact and had retained their institutional cultures and networks. The new democratic parties and institutions were still very fragile and required all the support that could be mustered. Secondly, the notion of needing to address women-specific issues was not easily understood given the hangover of the socialist propaganda that Mongolia had achieved equality of men and women. Women activists lacked knowledge and analytical capacity to identify gender inequalities and discrimination against women and clearly articulate them to the public and decision-makers.

On one hand, international donors prevented Mongolian women from developing their organizations organically by imposing specific criteria for their support while themselves lacking sound contextual understanding. On the other hand, their assistance played a key role in promoting the development of women's NGOs and strengthened them institutionally and programmatically. Largely owing to the donor support, women activists and women's NGOs emerged as leaders in the emergent NGO sector. While men gravitated towards political parties and eventually the decision-making positions, women gravitated towards civil society wherein they quickly came to play an active and visible role. So much so that some analysts have referred to the Mongolian civil society as matriarchal.⁵

Women-led and women's rights NGOs have indeed played a pioneering role in spreading civic and voter education, promoting human rights and women's rights, fostering government accountability and transparency, broadening public discussions, and establishing important examples and models of citizen participation in public affairs. However, despite common references to such leading roles of women activists, the broader picture and the field of women's organizing is far more complex and divided. This study attempts to analyze this heterogeneous field and identify different 'camps' of women's and women-led NGOs to analyze them in terms of a women's movement and determine the extent to which Mongolian women activists embrace feminist (and democratic and human rights-based) analyses, values and principles.

⁴ The position of the researchers is that women's issues are broad, comprising political, economic, social, cultural and religious systems. However, the dominant trend has been to define women's issues narrowly, without taking into account the intersecting power structures and the need to influence their transformation.

⁵ For more on the impact of transition on civil society development, see: Center for Citizens' Alliance, *NGO-Government Policy Dialogue in Mongolia, Country Report* (Ulaanbaatar, 2006).

Current Context

As the State of Civil Society in Mongolia report concluded, the Mongolian civil society is developing and surviving in a largely unfavorable political, economic and cultural context.⁶ At the end of the second decade of the post-socialist period, Mongolia's democracy remains highly precarious. According to a recent assessment by national experts, "democratic and non-democratic characteristics are fairly proportional and the situation could turn either way"⁷ and Mongolia is regrettably classified as a "flawed democracy."⁸ Following a decade of rather successful democratic institutionalization between 1990 and 2000, Mongolia experienced significant backsliding from previous democratic gains in the second decade of its post-socialist history.⁹

The politics has increasingly grown zero-sum and persistent corruption coupled with the flow of mining profits have increased the stakes and intensified competition among the political elites. By the same token, the male-dominated political elites have sought to secure their positions by every possible means including manipulation of the electoral law and the use of electoral fraud. Mounting electoral fraud and growing frustration of citizens over self-interested politics, disappointing performance of the main political parties, persistent poverty and increasing inequities, culminated in the first ever in Mongolia's post-socialist history post-election violence in July 2008. Further, the power-holders used the incident to impose a State of Emergency and crack down on unarmed citizens. On the night of July 1, 2008, over 800 citizens were arrested, many subjected to police brutality, at least 5 people were killed and many more were injured.

The continued dominance of the MPRP with its subsidiary institutions, often facilitated by international organizations through support to government, has impeded the development of a healthy multi-party system. The Mongolian Democratic Party (MDP), a result of a merger of center-right and center-left opposition parties, united mainly on the anti-MPRP platform, has failed to produce viable socio-economic policy alternatives to the MPRP. Both parties have used strongly populist messages whilst both have consistently supported the neoliberal agenda, which favors transnational capital and big businesses. As a recent Asian Development Bank assessment stated,¹⁰ the Mongolian government has not pursued a pro-poor growth despite formal statements and policy documents on poverty reduction.

⁶ Center for Citizens' Alliance/ICSFD Ulaanbaatar Secretariat, *State of Civil Society in Mongolia, 2004-2005 Civil Society Index Report for Mongolia CSI* (Ulaanbaatar, 2006).

⁷ Observation based on the rating of Mongolia by national experts on various aspects of its democracy. See: UNDP, *Common Country Assessment Update*, June 2009.

⁸ Economic Intelligence Unit's 2008 Democracy Index. Mongolia is ranked 58th out of 167 countries rated. See: UNDP, *Common Country Assessment Update*, June 2009.

⁹ See for more on this: Undarya Tumursukh, "Arrested Democratization and Glimpses of Hope" forthcoming in Korea Democracy Foundation, *2009 Asia Democracy*. Erosion of public trust in democratic institutions was also recorded by the Political Education Academy research: D.Ganbat, "Democratization and Mongolia," presented at "20th Anniversary of the Democratic Revolution. History of Mongolia's Democracy - Model in Asia" International Academic Conference, Ulaanbaatar, December 10, 2009. The World Bank Governance index 2008 also recorded similar deterioration.

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank, *Country Poverty Assessment, Draft Report* (February, 2009).

Although the MDP has largely failed to consistently maintain principles of democracy and human rights and serve as an effective opposition to the MPRP, the main differences between the parties have remained on the political axis. MDP continues to support liberal democratic policies and is more supportive of human rights whereas the MPRP has largely discouraged independent citizen action and human rights activism and even led to egregious violations of human rights and democratic principles. This division was very pronounced during and after the State of Emergency announced by the President of Mongolia Mr. N.Enkhbayar (former MPRP Prime Minister, MPRP Chair, and Speaker of Parliament) and mass violations of human rights. The MPRP accused the protesters of destroying public and private property and framed the discussion in those terms, emphasizing material losses, whereas the MDP focused on police brutality, torture and the shooting of 5 citizens to death and wounding others. The MDP also focused on extensive allegations of electoral fraud and its contribution to people's frustration and spontaneous demonstrations.

Smaller parties have played much less significant role with the exception of the Civil Courage Party, the only party chaired by a woman. The CCP, compared to the MPRP and MDP, is more progressive and supportive of human rights, democratic governance and especially gender equality. However, the CCP remains a minor party, with fewer supporters nationally and few (currently only 1) seat in the parliament. The CCP and the Green Party frequently join coalitions with the MDP and represent a loose network of opposition parties.

These differences between party stances are of significant importance for the civil society organizations dedicated to the promotion of democracy, human rights and women's rights as these goals cannot be achieved separately from each other. However, the divisions are more complicated with regard to the gender equality aspect. While the CCP is much more women-friendly, it plays a minor role in the national politics as the tone is set and rules of the game are negotiated between the MPRP and MDP, two parties that are largely dominated by upper middle-class men who do not have interest in sharing political power, especially with women and especially with women with a feminist perspective.

At times, the party leaders display open and vehement opposition to women's participation in politics at decision-making levels. This was clearly demonstrated when 2 parliamentarians from both parties presented a bill to the parliament to amend the election law of 2005. Their amendment proposals included the revocation of the women's 30% quota. The parliament quickly moved to approve the proposal but was met with a coordinated opposition from women parliamentarians from all parties and from civil society women. In the ensuing debates, many of the male parliamentarians verbally attacked their female colleagues and used subtle or outright derogatory language when referring to women. In other words, with regard to keeping high-level politics as a strictly male domain, the MPRP and MDP had a strong consensus.

Gender equality and women's rights are not, however, important concerns for the citizenry at large. Hence even though there has been a strong general trend of declining popular support for both MDP and MPRP, the society is still largely

divided between MPRP members and sympathizers and MDP and third party members and sympathizers. This cleavage ranges from moderate to extreme in various sections of the society. In many rural areas, partisan affiliation is a major factor, which determines not only who will socialize with whom but also who will have a job and access to other resources depending on who was controlling the local government. In most cases, MPRP has controlled the resources.

The partisan divide is not merely political, it is also social and cultural. MPRP, which controlled the country for over 70 years during socialism and had a nationwide membership and extensive institutional structure that went down to the smallest administrative units, offices and factories and penetrated even family units, has to be understood not only as a political party but also as a sub-culture with its own value system, worldview, web of institutions and ways of relating to each other. Overall, MPRP field has a more hierarchical structure, is more institutionalized, actors are less likely to use the language of democracy and human rights in the public discourse, are more disciplined and more likely to follow the party leaders, support the wide-spread state-centered mentality, use feudal Mongolian aesthetics (as part of the revival of tradition and customs), see women primarily as mothers and treat independent NGOs with suspicion while emphasizing service delivery roles of NGOs.

By comparison, the non-MPRP field in which MDP members and supporters play a key role, is less institutionalized, less hierarchical, hold democracy as their key symbol and regularly use the language of human rights and democracy, emphasize the need of the government to serve people's needs and be open and transparent, less frequently use feudal symbols and aesthetics, are slightly more likely to see and accept women as individuals and citizens, and support advocacy and watchdog roles of NGOs and often form such groups.

The cultural context is further defined by the growing nationalist movement, which actively promotes patriarchal gender hierarchy in the family and society at large in conjunction with the feudal hierarchy between government and citizens. The nationalists broadly share and promote a biologized definition of the Mongolian nationhood and argue that maintaining the purity of the gene pool is a condition for maintaining national sovereignty and security. Furthermore, in this framework, the blood is transmitted from the father whereas the mother contributes the bones. Therefore, if a Mongolian woman bears a child from a foreign man, she pollutes the Mongolian gene pool. However, if a foreign woman bears a child from a Mongolian man, the Mongolian man is seen as strengthening the gene pool by diversifying the genetic structure of Mongolians.¹¹ Although these biological notions about Mongolianness are not new, they are being propagated in a new political, cultural, economic and media context. Such outright discrimination against women goes unchecked by the government, despite being signatory to CEDAW and many other international treaties.

¹¹ See: D.Enkhjargal, "Nationalism and Women" in MONFEMNET, *Women's Rights and Media. Five Case Studies* (Ulaanbaatar: Munkhiin Useg Group, 2008), 1-18. Also, see on Mongolian nationalism: U.Bulag, *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Tumursukh Undarya, "Fighting Over the Reinterpretation of the Mongolian Woman in Mongolia's Post-Socialist Identity Construction Discourse," *East Asia* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 119-146.

In the post-socialist setting, media contributes significantly to the establishment of negative gender norms. Media is not only a conduit for paternalistic discourse of the state and nationalist discourses, but also an active agent, which promotes consumer capitalism and bourgeois patriarchal roles for men and women, especially through advertising. Thus, media portrays women mainly as young and beautiful creatures who are desired and provided for by men or as housewives whereas men are portrayed as successful businessmen with power and money. The situation is compounded by the fierce competition for profit as well as partisan political control (mainly by MPRP and MDP) over most of the media organizations and very limited space for independent and responsible media.

Underlying the saturation of media (over 30 Mongolian TV channels in Ulaanbaatar) is an increasingly inequitable economic system. Privatization of state-owned enterprises carried out in the 1990s and the distribution of economic opportunities and resources since then have led to an increasing gap between the rich and the poor. In 2004-2007, a period of unprecedented high growth in Mongolia, which more than doubled the GDP per capita, the income of the richest 10% increased 8 times more than the income of the poorest 10%¹² and the gini coefficient grew from 0.33 to 0.36.¹³ Poverty not only remains high at 35.2% but is significantly higher in rural areas at 46.6% while relatively lower in the capital city at 21.9%.¹⁴ The significant and increasing development gap between Ulaanbaatar and the rest of the country is a key feature of the Mongolian society, one that has fueled significant migration from rural areas to the capital city and other urban areas. Despite evidences of the inappropriateness of neoliberal policies and inability of the free market to address the needs of the majority and reduce poverty, the main political parties continue to pursue economic policies that largely center on the capital-intensive mining sector rather than labor-intensive agriculture and manufacturing.

Shortage of adequate international and national funding and lack of state commitment to supporting NGO development translates into a largely unfavorable financial environment for civil society development, especially in rural areas. NGOs that work for democracy, human rights and gender equality are almost completely dependent on international funding. Available funding, however, is, as a rule, provided on a short-term project basis and excludes core funding. Such funding schemes, to some extent, allow Mongolian NGOs to survive while maintaining at least a minimum level of activities but fail to enable them to build strong and sustainable organizations and alliances capable of developing and consistently implementing long-term strategic plans of action. Still fueled by strong and consistent support of NGO leaders but propped by limited outside support, the future of the Mongolian NGO sector remains fragile.¹⁵

¹² Asian Development Bank, *Country Poverty Assessment. Draft* (February, 2009).

¹³ *Implementation of Millennium Development Goals. Third National Report* (Ulaanbaatar: Admon, 2009), 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ See for more: Center for Citizens' Alliance/ICSFD Ulaanbaatar Secretariat, *State of Civil Society in Mongolia, 2004-2005 Civil Society Index Report for Mongolia CSI* (Ulaanbaatar, 2006). Also refer to documents and proceedings of the Civil Society Forum 2009, which marked the first official celebration of the National Civil Society Day, January 29, 2009.

At the same time, the role of civil society is crucial for promoting democracy, human rights and gender equality; holding the government accountable and pushing for greater transparency; developing and actively promoting alternative development policies; and, most of all, educating, mobilizing and empowering citizens and grassroots communities. While more and more grassroots organizations and movements have begun to emerge, especially in the environmental sector, there is still a low level of understanding that social change requires broad movement-building. In fact, many civil society actors have negative attitudes to movements, which are associated with street demonstrations, people with lower level of education, and 'crude' methods, and prefer to call themselves, and work with, professional (office-based) NGOs and networks.

Thus, the location of women activists who promote women's human rights and gender equality is a difficult one. As women, they are under pressure to form a unified front with all women but are unable to do so given many women's NGOs operate in the MPRP field and support MPRP structures, culture, policies and leaders, and/or promote patriarchal gender norms, power structures and roles. As democrats, they are compelled to align with the MDP and some of the smaller parties but find themselves in opposition to MDP on the issues of gender equality, neoliberal politics, government corruption and elitism.

The society, media, political parties and government still lack understanding of the role of civil society in the democratization and development process and hold a largely negative view of NGOs and civil movements. Women's NGOs and leaders are frequently accused of pursuing selfish goals of attaining political power and are assumed to have a lot of funding from foreign donors. They are also accused of importing western notions of feminism and gender equality, which are unnecessary in the Mongolian context due to the wide-spread assumption of high level of gender parity. Similarly negative attitudes exist towards human rights and democracy-promotion NGOs.¹⁶

Therefore, to build strong movements based on feminist, democratic and human rights principles, feminist activists and NGOs find it necessary to engage simultaneously on multiple fronts based on a holistic feminist approach: promote democratic governance, human rights, gender justice, social justice and educate citizens on the significance of civil society and movements. In the current context of post-socialist Mongolia, women's efforts to bring social change have to be necessarily multi-faceted and holistic. It is hoped this study shall assist us in developing effective strategies to build organizations and movements that shall bring social change towards a more equitable, humane, gender-just and democratic society.

¹⁶ Some of this can be glimpsed from: Ch.Bazar, "Women in Civil Society," in MONFEMNET, *Women's Rights and Media. Five Case Studies* (Ulaanbaatar, 2008: Munkhiin Useg Group), 1-18.

The Field of Women's Organizing in Mongolia

A. Survey, Interviews and Group Discussions

Altogether, the researchers managed to survey and/or interview nine individuals and thirty two NGOs, including five women-led human rights and democracy promotion NGOs; four women-led NGOs that work on family, health and development; and one youth-led campaign for human rights, democracy and gender justice. All NGOs except for the youth campaign are formally registered organizations. The "Hands Up for Your Rights!" Youth Campaign is not an independent NGO but a loose group of over 100 young men and women (with the core group being about 20-30, depending on the activity), supported by MONFEMNET, National Network of Mongolian Women's NGO, as part of its goal to promote a culture of youth activism for human rights, democracy and gender justice and build a strong movement for women's human rights in Mongolia. Two young men responded to the survey on behalf of the campaign participants. However, their responses were treated as one as they represent one entity, the youth campaign. Also, they were the only men to participate in the survey.

Although the four-category taxonomy was used in selecting individuals and NGOs to be surveyed and/or interviewed, it was deemed more appropriate to analyze the collected data by grouping the respondents into only two categories - feminist and non-feminist - based on their self-identification. This decision was made in order to maintain a degree of anonymity, given the sensitivity of the subject matter for many of the respondents. This decision shall, however, not undermine the research goal as the key concern is not to describe specific NGOs as feminist, non-feminist, democratic or undemocratic but to identify key trends of divergences and convergences and ideological orientations existent in the overall field of women's organizing in Mongolia.

The focus group discussion was held on September 14, 2009, involving a small but diverse group of women activists, all of whom had participated in the survey. The fourteen women expressed divergent opinions about the Mongolian women's movement, feminism, patriarchy, and public attitudes towards the state but all, without exception, actively participated in the discussion and generously provided clarifications and insights. The collective analysis session was held on December 23, 2009, involving a broader group of women. Results of both discussions confirmed the trends that emerged from the survey and interviews and provided additional information.

General characteristics of survey respondents

Of the 41 respondents, 17 (4 individuals, 12 NGOs and 1 unregistered group) defined themselves as feminist; and 24 (5 individuals and 19 NGOs) either stated they do not know (6) or identified themselves as not feminist (18). For the purposes of this analysis, the 17 were considered as feminist (based on their self-identification) and the remaining 24 as non-feminist.

Age-wise, no significant variations between feminists and non-feminists were detected although there may be a slight tendency for the feminist sub-field to be

slightly younger, in terms of individual as well as organizational age. There were more relatively later entrants into NGO activism (1-6 years of engagement) in the feminist category and all NGOs that identified themselves as feminist were formed after 1990 whilst in the non-feminist category, there were 2 NGOs formed in the 1920s and 2 formed in 1989 (Table 3 in Annex).

Interestingly, 2 human rights and democracy promotion NGOs identified as feminist whereas 3 identified as not feminist. Two of the NGOs that focus on family, health and development issues identified as feminist and 2 as non-feminist. The youth-led campaign identified itself as feminist.

Movements and networking

The first substantive section was on movements. As presented earlier, the researchers identified movement as a set of organized formal or informal groups, which generate broad public support and participation, engaged in collective action towards well defined common goals of changing the society in specific ways and which sustain their activities in the given direction for a relatively long period of time. Therefore, whether or not NGOs see themselves as representing specific social groups and have clearly defined constituencies in mind was deemed important to explore.

All but 4 (1 feminist and 3 non-feminist) NGOs stated they represent specific social groups. Interestingly, when asked to list the groups they represent, 5 (2 feminist and 3 non-feminist) NGOs, stated their organizational goals such as promoting women's political participation, reducing poverty, assisting young artists, and protecting businesswomen's interests. This indicates a degree of confusion regarding representation and constituencies. It is possible that this was the first time some of the NGOs were directly asked if they represent any groups and, if so, whom they represent.

When including the above "confused" statements as indirectly indicating (if indeed they were) groups whose interests the NGOs represent, 10 of the feminist and 12 of the non-feminist NGOs indicated they represent women, often listing specific groups of women. Thus, feminist NGOs listed women in general as well as women whose rights are violated, teenage mothers, young women, female heads of households, women victims of domestic violence, women victims of sexual violence, and rural women. Non-feminist NGOs listed women, girls, female heads of households, businesswomen, rural women, disabled women and women-mothers.

None of the feminist NGOs used the term "women-mothers," which may be indicating an important ideological difference as the term "women-mothers" is one that is commonly used by the more conservative groups in the Mongolian society and expresses a definition of womanhood as coterminous with motherhood. In this framework, womanhood is divided into 2 discreet stages: the first is that of girlhood and virginity (preparation for motherhood) and the second is that of motherhood (and housewife). Adult women who are not mothers are seen as an aberration. The value of women is seen in their reproductive role. Consequently, women's individual rights and freedoms are not seen as a priority.

None of the non-feminist NGOs mentioned women victims of violence although 3 of the non-feminist NGOs reported they work on gender-based violence and discrimination against women. In general, it would not be surprising not to find NGOs that claim to represent women victims of domestic or sexual violence among non-feminist organizations. Addressing violence against women cannot be effectively pursued outside the feminist critique of patriarchal power relations. Hence, it seems logical that all NGOs that claim to represent women victims of violence would identify themselves as feminist, provided they are sufficiently familiar with feminism as a theory and ideology (or as an analytical framework).

That at least 3 NGOs that focus on gender-based violence (human trafficking, sexual violence, rape, and sexual harassment) and discrimination against women, led by women who have worked in the issue area for over 7 years, either hesitate to identify as feminist or consider themselves not to be feminist is rather interesting. This may indicate insufficient understanding on their part of patriarchy and unequal power relations between men and women as the root causes of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, 4 of the feminist NGOs listed other social groups in addition to women: majorities and minorities whose rights are violated such as indigenous people and the poor, teenage boys, citizens, unsupervised children, and child victims of domestic violence. Two of the non-feminist NGOs listed, in addition to women, groups such as low income families and vulnerable groups. This seems to indicate a broader, more multi-faceted nature of some of the NGOs' work.

Lastly, 2 feminist and 4 non-feminist NGOs did not specifically list women, girls or mothers as groups they represent. Instead, they listed young people/students; alcohol, tobacco and drug addicts; citizens whose rights are violated; journalists and media professionals; and NGOs. One of these groups does identify itself as a women's NGO and actively participates in women's networks. One group involves both young men and women and expressly pursues feminist goals. The remaining three groups do not identify as women's NGOs though support gender equality as part of democracy and human rights principles.

Table 4. Representation and Constituent Groups		
Does your NGO represent any social groups?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Yes	12	16
No	1	3
If yes, which groups? (Straightforward/ clear answers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women (mentioned by 6 NGOs) • Majorities and minorities whose rights are violated (women, indigenous people, the poor) • Young students (18-25 years old) • Teenage mothers • Teenage boys and girls • Young women up to 25 years old • Citizens • Female heads of households (single mothers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women (mentioned by 5 NGOs), women-mothers (mentioned by 2 NGOs) • Groups that use alcohol and drugs • Citizens whose rights are violated • Journalists, media professionals • Girls • NGOs • Low income families • Female heads of households • Children

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsupervised children • Children and women victims of domestic violence • Rural women • Women victims of sexual violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups • Disabled women
If yes, which groups? (other answers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are attached to ...party, we promote ... party leadership policies and political levels • We seek to promote women's political participation, women in decision-making and women's economic power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting women's and children's rights • Assist businesswomen, protect their rights; as business environment is not healthy due to changes in government and political leadership, represent businesswomen. • Reduce poverty, especially among rural women, support young artists
If not, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We serve the society on the whole, without specifying age or sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ... issues concern society on the whole (mentioned by 2 of the 3 NGOs)

In terms of organizations and groups that NGOs target, there were no significant variations (See Table 5 in Annex). The responses clearly indicated the importance NGOs attribute to influencing top-level political decision-making processes by focusing on policy/law/decision-makers, parliament and central government. Many of the NGOs also target local government, line ministries and law enforcement agencies. In addition, NGOs target the public in general, youth, media and NGOs. Two NGOs in the non-feminist category gave statements of goals instead of listing the entities they target as did the other respondents. One stated “to establish fair trial” and another “to influence injustice in government.”

When asked to define movements, one feminist and five non-feminist respondents did not answer this question and one non-feminist organization was confused about the question (she simply wrote “unemployment”). The rest of the respondents, regardless of categorization, emphasized organized action of citizens or groups of citizens united by their opinions and views towards a specific goal. Feminist respondents tended to more frequently mention human rights (ensuring conditions for exercising and enjoying human rights) as a goal of movements while respondents in both categories clearly defined movements in terms of a people's struggle, especially against the wrongdoing by the state. A non-feminist women's NGO, by contrast, stated that movement is about “properly presenting one's views and opinions [to decision-makers] according to laws, regulations and rules.”

Interestingly, 2 (1 feminist and 1 non-feminist) NGOs defined movements as temporary phenomena. One stated that movements are “temporary coalitions” and the other defined it as “a beginning of any struggle.”

Overall, respondents in both categories referred to “solving a specific issue” rather than transforming the society and/or bringing social change. Only 1 feminist NGO clearly linked movements to changing the society.

Table 6. Defining Movements
What is a movement, in your opinion?

Feminist	Non-feminist
<p>Types of answers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement for women’s rights; women’s global movement, Mongolian women’s movement • Specific social groups, sections of a society united by their views and policies, not necessarily organizations • Mechanism for conveying public opinions to government and enlarging citizen participation in public affairs • Organized action to solve social problems through public participation • Changing laws and implementing them in life, step by step, united for a specific goal • Group of people, united, seeking to make society understand their views; activities based on uniting of views and goals for development and human rights • Group of people united to improve some issue, to change society by influencing government and the public • Influence policy makers to make right decisions and oppose wrong decisions • Work together for common interests, for ex. on women’s quota, against discrimination against women • Organized activities comprising many to oppose wrong policies of state and violations of human rights • A variety of activities to create conditions to enjoy human rights • Awareness-raising for common interests, lobbying, organizing among rural communities • Temporary coalition, organized action of specific social groups to solve critical issues and seek solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression of political and civil rights enabled by democracy • Voluntary activities based on trust, with views for a good society • Unite views, struggle to protect common interests, inform the public, convey public opinion to the state and influence the state • United public force, organized to solve a particular issue • Set of activities aimed at making society better and expressing own opinions • Unified struggle for a certain period of time for a certain purpose • Working together to solve a specific issue • Groups of individuals representing certain social groups with a common mission or within a certain time period • Expressing opinions and voice on critical issues, demanding rights • Representation of the public opposing violations of human rights and seeking to ensure social justice • Citizens activities to protect their interests • A form of citizen’s unification and collective expression of ideas and opinions and a beginning of any struggle • A group united by their opinions • A group united to solve a specific issue • Force of solidarity capable of expressing the interests of the most number of people • Process of involving social masses united by leadership, aiming to solve a specific issue • A group of people, but goals maybe can be different • Properly presenting properly presenting one’s views and opinions [to decision-makers] according to laws, regulations and rules
Did not respond:	
1	5 + 1 (“Unemployment”)

There was an impressive consensus among feminist and non-feminist respondents that movements are needed in Mongolia. Only 2 respondents, both identified as not feminist, stated movements are not needed. One stated that movements are not needed because it is possible to express one’s opinions through NGOs (she did not answer the question on what a movement is). The other respondent stated that “the time of movements is over in Mongolia, now the civil society needs to move onto a new stage of development.” This is in line with her definition of a movement as “a form of citizen’s unification and collective expression of ideas and opinions and a *beginning* of any struggle.”

A similar thought was expressed by a feminist respondent who, despite stating that movements are necessary in Mongolia, held that people “can unite as networks, coalitions, and clubs” to “solve issues more effectively” and that it is not necessary to be called movements.

These responses along with some of the responses to the previous question indicate that for some actors in the field, movements are not very different in nature from networks, coalitions or even individual organizations. Thus, they see that NGOs or networks can well substitute for movements and may in fact be more effective than movements in solving specific issues.

The reasons given by the rest of the respondents generally converged on the following, without very significant variation by feminist or non-feminist categories:

1. People can be more effective in influencing policies and bringing changes when they are united
2. The government has failed to ensure justice and human rights, hence people need to unite to struggle
3. There are many critical issues accumulated in the society, which need to be solved through collective power
4. Convey people's opinions to leadership levels
5. Protect common interests

Overall, feminist and some of the non-feminist NGOs had a tendency to emphasize the first 2 reasons and citizens' strong voice and participation, exercise of human rights and freedoms, the need to hold the state accountable and transparent, and implementation of democracy. A feminist organization stated that "a movement which is well organized towards a specific goal is a driver of social development and is social capital itself." Another feminist respondent stated that through movements, "it is possible to change the established mentality of people." There was also a strong sense of valuing movements in and of themselves as a process of people's participation and collective empowerment, particularly vis-à-vis the state, which is often seen as causing injustice.

Non-feminist women's NGOs tended to more frequently cite the 3rd, 4th and 5th reasons and were slightly more likely to value movements' utilitarian value in solving specific issues and promoting common interests. One NGO, a conservative women's organization, stated that movements are needed to "present public's thoughts to the higher leadership," i.e. the state/government, which is still seen by a significant percentage of Mongolians as "higher" - more important and competent - than people. Another stated that movements are needed "to achieve societal wellbeing and mutual trust" and emphasized that it is important that movements do not become "politicized."

Thus, majority of the activists expressed a very positive view of movements as necessary processes and forms of citizens' organization for improving the society. However, their responses indicated a fairly limited view of movements as methods or mechanisms for "solving specific issues" rather than bringing fundamental changes in the society or social transformation. This may be the reason why some activists believe that movements are not necessary or that they may not be the most effective approach.

Significantly, some of the actors express caution, at times even aversion, to movements. This is most likely due to the general negative perception of citizens' movements in post-socialist Mongolia. Since 2000, there has been a revitalization

of public demonstrations staged by various forms of citizens' groups which commonly referred to themselves as movements: "Movement for the Just Privatization of Land," "Movement for Radical Renovation," "Citizens' Movement" and "Green Movement." These groups staged dramatic protests, challenging the ruling party/parties and boldly demanding accountability for (alleged) cases of corruption and abuse of power. In an effort to undermine the credibility of these struggles, power holders nicknamed these groups as "street movements," often using derogatory terms such as "hooligans" and accusing them of breaking laws, particularly the 1995 restrictive law on public demonstrations.

It appears that this rhetoric, backed by the state machinery including pro-government (pro-MPRP) media, has had far-reaching impact on the society, including women activists. This can be seen from the following statement made by a focus group discussion participant who has worked for over 10 years on violence against women and women's human rights and (hesitantly) identifies herself as a feminist:

"I do consider that I am participating in a women's movement. I suppose a movement is when many people come together on a voluntary basis. But people feel negative towards movements ever since people with tractors¹⁷ attacked their government. Maybe we should use a different word."

It is significant that the activist chose to describe the 2002 peaceful protest of the Movement for the Just Privatization of Land against oppressive MPRP-dominated state as "attacking their government." This choice of words expresses a widely shared sentiment that open confrontation vis-à-vis the state and decisive actions of citizens to demand their rights and state accountability are not "nice" or even justified forms of citizen actions. Crucial forms of citizens' struggle such as protests and public demonstrations are widely seen to be "too political" or "politicized" and have become condemned as crude, uncivilized and even illegal¹⁸ acts. Hence also the need for some of the actors to qualify that movements should not be "politicized" and that (legitimate or good) movements are about "properly presenting one's views and opinions [to decision-makers] according to laws, regulations and rules." Many NGOs have sought to distinguish themselves from "street movements" by emphasizing their use of more "business-like" methods of cooperation and coordination with the state.

¹⁷ In 2002, the MPRP-dominated parliament passed, in near secrecy, the laws on land ownership and land privatization. The laws gave significant advantage to large landholders and would have locked the farm workers in servitude and/or poverty. Upon accidentally learning that such laws had been passed, the northern farm workers mobilized as the Movement for the Just Privatization of Land and resolved to stage a 100 Tractor Demonstration in Ulaanbaatar. Due to blatant intimidation and oppression by all levels of government, the 70-80 demonstrators managed to come to Ulaanbaatar with only 33 tractors. Although their demonstration was peaceful, the government responded by using brutal force, culminating in a mass arrest of the demonstrators and confiscation of their tractors.

¹⁸ This notion of illegality of public demonstrations is due to intentional and unintentional misinterpretation and misuse of the Law on Public Demonstrations by government, media and citizens in general. According to the law, an organization that plans to hold a public demonstration should inform the local government so that the latter could take necessary protective and coordinating measures. However, this procedure is generally misunderstood as the need to ask for the permission to stage a demonstration. Local governments and the police have claimed they had not issued permits for demonstrations and have arrested peaceful protesters for organizing "illegal" demonstrations and for disturbing public order.

Therefore, not too surprisingly, despite overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards movements in general, when asked if they participate in any movement, 3 of the feminist NGOs did not respond and 13 of the non-feminist respondents replied negatively.

Further, when asked if they are members of any networks, coalitions or federations, 1 of the feminist respondents (newest entrant into the field) and 2 of the non-feminist NGOs stated they are not. Overall, the feminist NGOs had a denser networking (on average, based on their reports, which were possibly not exhaustive), they were members of 3.4 networks or coalitions (minimum of 0 and maximum of 6) whereas the non-feminist NGOs were, on average, members of 2 networks or coalitions (minimum of 0 and maximum of 4). The group that was not a member of any coalitions in the feminist category was the youth campaign that has existed for only a year whereas the 2 NGOs in the non-feminist category were not members of any networks or coalitions despite having been in existence for over 10 years. Furthermore, feminist NGOs and women-led human rights and democracy promotion NGOs tended to be more integrated into regional and international networks and coalitions.

Human rights and democracy

All but 1 individual respondent in the feminist category, stated they work on human rights and listed a range of types of rights and violations of human rights. These included: civil and political rights (elect and to be elected, right to free assembly, free expression), social and economic rights (right to education, work, life in a safe and healthy environment), and freedom from violence, especially domestic and sexual violence.

All but 4 women's NGOs in the non-feminist category stated they work on human rights. Several NGOs in this category, however, listed development or other issues such as unemployment, poverty, school drop-outs, poor women, inequality, water pollution, trash, and human rights education instead of specifying the types of human rights violations they work on. One NGO simply wrote "protecting women's interests" and another wrote "violation of the law." The rest, similarly to feminist NGOs, listed civil and political rights, various economic rights, gender-based violence, and discrimination.

There was a strong consensus on the importance of democracy as a primary goal of Mongolia as a country and as a necessary factor for the NGOs to achieve their organizational goals. All respondents, without a single exception stated democracy was important. A feminist individual respondent qualified it as one of several other important goals. Two feminist NGOs emphasized "very important."

However, when asked to define the primary duty of the state, there was some variation. Majority of the respondents listed the following:

1. Protect citizens' interests
2. Serve citizens (fairly and equally)
3. Protect human rights and freedoms (constitutional, fundamental)

4. Ensure security (human security)
5. Develop and implement appropriate policies
6. Ensure favorable conditions for people to live, work, etc.

Feminist NGOs and women-led non-feminist NGOs tended to emphasize the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th of the above functions whereas non-feminist women's NGOs tended to emphasize the 1st, 5th and 6th of the functions listed above in addition to highlighting the provision of law and order. The following are some examples of responses given by feminist NGOs regarding the primary duty of the state:

- “Coordination”
- “Conduct policies based on human rights of Mongolian citizens.”
- “Protect citizens and create an environment for fully exercising fundamental rights.”
- “Protect fundamental rights of citizens, strengthen democracy, properly run the state mechanism, and properly implement the country's development policy.”

Non-feminist women-led NGOs gave the following responses:

- “Ensure guarantees for the equal enjoyment of constitutional rights by all citizens”
- “Serve citizens, be accountable and open to citizens”
- “Provide quality, timely services to citizens”

The following are examples of responses given by non-feminist women's NGOs:

- “Protect citizens, preserve state sovereignty”
- “Protect citizens' interests, serve citizens”
- “Define state policies, ensure conditions for people's livelihoods, implement laws”
- “Represent the country and the people, develop partnerships, serve interests of people and the country”
- “Strictly enforce laws and rules, protect citizens' health, and create conditions for improving people's lives”

It is possible to observe a difference in the use of language by feminist, women-led non-feminist and non-feminist women's NGOs. The 2 of the former groups more frequently use the language of human rights, democracy and state accountability whereas these terms are generally absent from the responses of the non-feminist women's NGOs, especially those with more conservative stances.

These differences were further explored by the question on whether or not the respondents agree with an empirical observation that “Mongolians have a state-worshipping (state-centered) mentality.” This question caused some difficulties for the respondents as can be see from their rather varied responses. Some of the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement as an empirical observation whereas some responded by interpreting the statement as a normative one. This question was a key test of the democratic quality of the respondents' views regarding state-society and state-citizens relations.

Most feminist respondents agreed with the empirical statement and critiqued the state-centered attitude. Several of them saw this as a dominant mentality among Mongolians, which is carried over from the socialist past or even before then when Mongolia was governed by *khaans*:

“Mongolians had lived in an authoritarian regime for hundreds of years and the mentality of worshipping the state has become a fundamental part of the political, social, cultural tradition and education and this mentality is not changing fast enough.”

“Because we had monarchy since the early days, people want to be governed by few and worship those few.”

“Elderly and the middle-aged have retained the socialist mentality of following only one party and this attitude is slowly changing in the processes of social progress.”

Several respondents emphasized that people predominantly privilege the state, thinking that the state is the answer to all their problems and wait for the state to solve their issues. One young respondent stated “the majority of people I know worship the state as if it were a god and they think the state is separate from and more important than the people.” Two respondents emphasized that people not only worship the state but also blame the state for all ills while 3 of the respondents observed that the state-centered mentality is changing, with young people becoming more critical and less likely to blindly trust the state.

The non-feminist category was rather clearly divided on the issue. Non-feminist women-led NGOs and 4 non-feminist women’s NGOs agreed with the statement from a critical point of view. Similar to feminist respondents, they attributed the state-centered attitudes to the lingering socialist mentality, tradition and lack of knowledge about the functions of the modern democratic state. An NGO stated that people worship the state because they are so dependent on it and several emphasized that instead of worshipping the state, people should monitor it and demand that it properly serve the people in a transparent fashion.

The rest of the respondents in the non-feminist category supported the statement normatively. The following are examples of their justifications:

- Mongolia lies between two large neighbors, a [strong] state shall protect citizens though some aspects of this mentality such as relying on the state for everything are not positive
- Mongolians have a tradition of respecting the state but this trust is being lost [as the state is not functioning properly]
- The 2,300 year history of the Mongolian state is about supporting the development of citizens, households and government (from the sayings of the medieval queen)
- People must respect the law and worship the state
- The state is the force that will protect national sovereignty.

One of these respondents disagreed with the empirical statement, however, holding that “although such tradition existed before, now the government is unable to secure people’s trust.”

During the focus group discussion, one of the non-feminist activists made the following statement, which provides further insight into the complexity of existing attitudes towards the state and state-society relations:

- The state should be the guarantee for security and serve the citizens. State, civil society and private sector should work actively together. Initial steps in this direction are being made, for example, contracting government services to NGOs. Our NGOs need to present themselves correctly. The state complains that NGOs always criticize them. Each side should understand each other correctly. The trend in the society is moving towards greater understanding and cooperation... The tradition of worshipping the state has existed for a long time. It should not be summarily denounced.

Three distinct approaches to conceptualizing the state and state-society relations emerge from this study:

1. Citizens are above the state, the state must ensure security and human rights and provide services to citizens; citizens form the state and should/have a right to monitor the state activities and hold public servants accountable. This is a stance that is more compatible with norms of democracy and human rights. This view was mainly expressed by feminist respondents, non-feminist human rights and democracy promotion NGOs and a minority of non-feminist women's NGOs.
2. State is above citizens, it makes and implements laws and policies, protects citizens and ensures national sovereignty; citizens must obey and worship the state. This is a traditional (feudal and socialist) undemocratic stance. This view was expressed by a group of non-feminist women's NGOs.
3. State and citizens/civil society and private sector are equal partners, they should understand each other and cooperate for the wellbeing of the society; civil society should seek to develop partnership with the state and perform government functions based on contracts instead of criticizing the state. This is a less authoritarian stance but is not fully compatible with the principles of democracy and human rights as it disregards the unique powers the state has vis-à-vis the society/citizens due to possessing the monopoly of coercive means and taxation rights; specific obligations of the state to serve citizens by virtue of being formed through popular elections; and the rights and responsibilities of citizens to oversee the operations of the state. This view was expressed by some of the non-feminist women's NGOs.

The question about the policy distance between the individual or NGO and specific political parties presented difficulties for a number of the respondents, especially for women's NGOs identified as non-feminist. Feminist respondents tended to indicate their views are closest to the policies of the Mongolian Democratic Party (9 of 18) while 2 indicated MPRP, one stated she doesn't know and the rest either listed both MPRP and MDP or explained that they support either of the parties depending on the issues or that all parties have their strengths and weaknesses but all are generally weak in terms of implementing promises.

In the non-feminist category, 7 respondents (3 individual respondents, 2 women-led human rights and democracy promotion NGOs, and 2 women’s NGOs) indicated their views are closest to those of MDP. One individual and 3 women’s NGOs indicated their views are closest to those of MPRP. Three NGOs indicated MPRP as well as either MDP or CCP, 4 did not answer and the rest either circled all, stated they are non-partisan or indicated they support none of the parties. Thus, non-feminist NGOs tended to avoid giving straightforward answers to this question more than the feminist NGOs. It can be seen that political ideologies matter significantly in the field of women’s organizing and constitute a rather sensitive, somewhat hidden, topic.

Table 9. Policy Distance vis-a-vis Political Parties		
Which political party’s policies are closest to yours or your organization’s?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
MDP	9	7
MPRP	2	3
CCP	1	0
MPRP, MDP	1	2
MPRP, CCP	0	1
None	1	2
All	0	1
Other responses	4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No conflict with any party’s policies All have strengths and weaknesses, all are poor in implementation of promises Hard to say, depends on the issue and time Don’t know 	3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don’t want to answer but our organization is democratic Both parties do not implement promises Non-partisan

It is rather interesting that a number of respondents, including a democracy promotion NGO, treated MDP and MPRP as having same policies, whether or not they indicated they agree with neither or that they do not disagree with either of the main parties. Whilst the 2 parties do not significantly differ on economic policies and on gender equality and women’s rights issues, their positions cannot be assumed to be identical with regard to human rights and democracy issues. Hence, given strong views of women activists on human rights and democracy and given post-election violence and mass violations of human rights by MPRP-dominated state authorities just a year ago, this reported equidistance from MPRP and MDP requires further exploration.

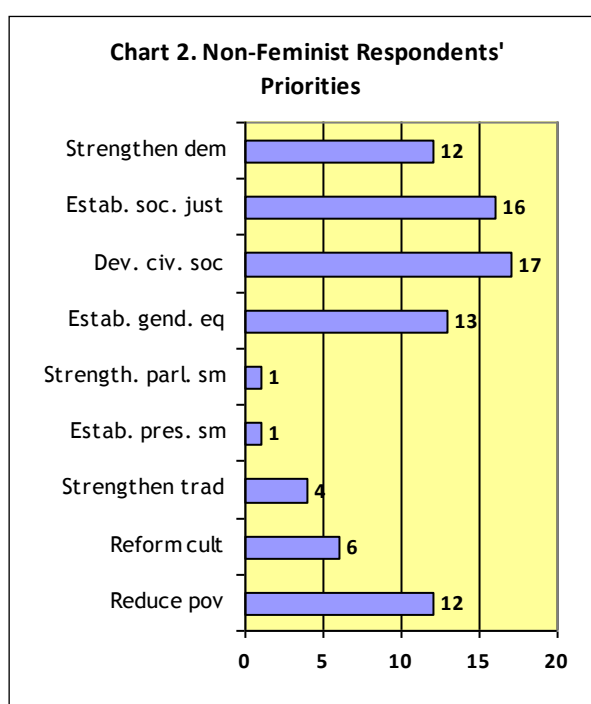
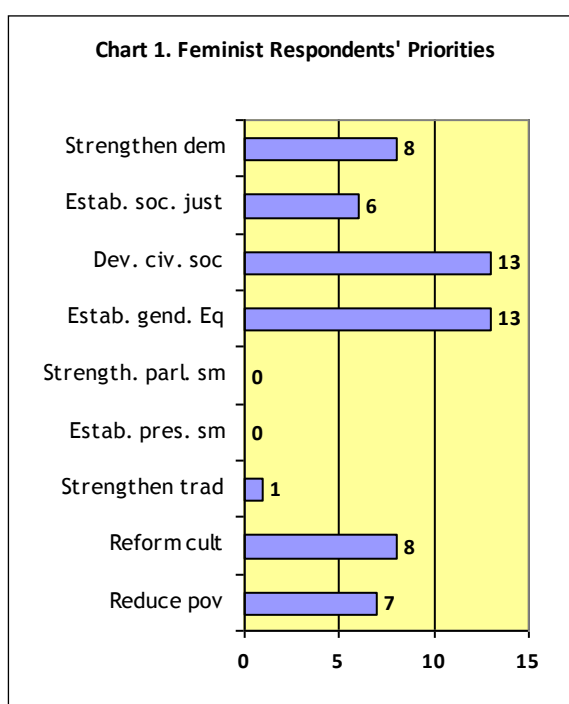
In any case, it is safe to suppose that the field of women’s organizing reflects the polarization of the society along the former communist and democratic lines represented by the MPRP and MDP. Given the prominence of this cleavage in the post-socialist Mongolian society, there is no reason to believe that the field of women’s organizing would be somehow outside or above this societal landscape.

In this section, it is clear that there is a need to deepen discussions on democracy beyond general statements and explore more deeply and explicitly linkages

between women’s organizing and promotion of democratic governance, development of democratic culture and mentality, and promotion of human rights.

Women’s organizing in Mongolia

Interesting responses were given to the question on issues women activists should focus on collectively. With 4 exceptions, feminist respondents listed “Ensuring gender equality” among 3 priority issues. However, those 4 did list “Reforming culture,” which is considered to be close in meaning to “Ensuring gender equality” in this context. By comparison, 11 non-feminist respondents did not list “Ensuring gender equality” and only 3 of them had listed “Reforming culture” including 1 women’s NGO, which added that women’s NGOs should collectively focus on “Improving mothers’ ethics.”



Feminist NGOs prioritized “Ensuring gender equality,” “Developing civil society,” “Strengthening democracy” and “Reforming culture,” followed by “Reducing poverty” and “Ensuring social justice.” Interestingly, one of the NGOs self-identified as feminist also listed “Strengthening tradition and culture,” which was included in the list of multiple choices as a marker for a support for patriarchal tradition, i.e. status quo. The same NGO, however, also listed “Reforming culture.”

Non-feminist respondents listed, in the descending order of frequency, “Developing civil society,” “Establishing social justice” and “Establishing gender equality,” followed by “Reducing poverty” and “Strengthening democracy.” Six NGOs listed “Reforming culture” but 3 of them also listed “Strengthening tradition” including the one that added “Improving mothers’ ethics.” Four non-feminist respondents, all women’s NGOs, mentioned “Strengthening tradition” (one of these also stated “Reforming culture”). Furthermore, one NGO mentioned “Establishing a presidential system” (a marker for supporting a more centralized,

less democratic system) and one added a goal of “Establishing a museum of mothers.”

It would appear that ensuring gender equality is a clear priority for feminist actors along with civil society development whereas gender equality is not seen as the primary goal for non-feminist NGOs. Six women’s NGOs in this category did not list it among priority issues. Instead, they emphasized democracy, civil society development, poverty reduction and social justice. Similarly, feminist activists pay more attention to reforming culture whilst non-feminists are slightly more likely to support the status quo. Some of the non-feminist NGOs explicitly support traditional roles of women as mothers and seek to improve mothers’ ethics or establish a museum of mothers.

There is a remarkably strong consensus on the need for women activists to direct collective efforts towards developing civil society and strengthening democracy. However, this too should be further explored as it is likely that women activists have somewhat divergent understanding of civil society, its nature, key value and functions.

The issue of establishing social justice was mentioned more frequently by non-feminist respondents. It should be born in mind that each of the respondents may have interpreted this term differently. While the intention of the researchers was to explore if women activists link women’s rights and gender equality to the development of a more just and equitable economic order, the term “social justice” may not have clearly expressed that meaning. This is another conceptual issue that should be further discussed among the actors in the field.

Majority of the respondents assessed the level of women’s organizing in Mongolia as medium. Only 2 respondents, one feminist and the other non-feminist, assessed it as good enough. The former, a young man, explained “all issues in the society are being addressed by women” and the latter, a middle-aged woman, wrote “women’s NGOs are working well, especially MONES, to promote women’s interests.”

Table 11. Rating Women’s Organized Actions		
How do you rate women’s organized actions?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Good	1	1
Medium	13	16
Weak	3	7
Why?		
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All issues in the society are being addressed by women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women’s NGOs are working well, especially MONES, to promote women’s interests
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not worse than any other sector of civil society; conscious of the need to better organize, are able to unite on issues and views Not well organized enough Not sufficient but have become known in the society and are conducting many activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak capacity to stage an organized struggle for common interests Need to move beyond the first level achieved, increase NGO capacity, work for development and lead the process of solving social problems Weak in terms of unified policies and activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disunified, unable to support each other • Beginning was very dynamic and strong, now not great and not bad; successful in bringing out many critical issues to public attention • Not effective, unable to unite, working only within the limits of a few leaders • On some issues, we are able to unite and work together and not on other issues. There is no one way to answer this question • No unified policies and strategic planning, participation is uneven, activities are ad hoc and disunified • The state does not support civil society, there is no financial support, initiatives are purely maintained by NGOs' own resources • Information is not available • Not always able to work together, there are many difficulties and there is no support, so NGOs work mainly on their own issues on a short-term basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think they are at a development stage, every organization seeks to achieve its goals, but have understood the need to unite • Women's NGOs were the first to emerge, now there are many of them but are unable to unite on specific issues • Time is an influencing factor • No unified, common values; have various interests, which conflict with societal interests • Sometimes we are not able to accept each other and work together • Do not produce specific results because they undertake multi-faceted activities and dilute their force; capacity is low, do not have strong commitment • There is no environment to work in an organized manner, no opportunities • Women candidates were unable to win in parliamentary elections because women were unable to unite • Leaders are unable to accept each other and work together • Too many small organizations, especially in Ulaanbaatar, they should unite in networks and coalitions • Limited at the level of leaders • MONFEMNET is playing a role in the society
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information in the society is weak • Not enough unity, become politicized • Unable to unite, a few people monopolize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to fully cover key issues faced by women • Women's NGOs are developing but not working enough to cooperate, make common decisions, accept each other • Only work for the interests of their organizations • Not going beyond the level achieved before, not courageous and have no initiative • Women's NGOs do not unite • There are attitudes to put oneself over others, be too proud; organizations make profit using women's names

Explanations provided by the respondents demonstrate very high expectations and demands for women's collective actions. The majority of the respondents expect women activists to be able to unite for common interests, develop unified policies and strategies, work in harmony, consistently follow specific issues and deliver tangible results. Furthermore, as a non-feminist respondent indicated, women's NGOs should cover all key issues faced by women, and, as another statement indicated, enable women candidates to win in the national elections.

In assessing the level of women's organizing, however, majority of the respondents do not take into account the conditions in which women's NGOs operate, the

amount of financial, institutional and human resources they have, the level of organizational development, and the ideological differences they may have. As a result, majority of the respondents rather harshly critique women's NGOs and tended to blame individual actors or organizations for the currently unsatisfactory level of collective action.

That women were unable to unite was mentioned frequently by both feminist and non-feminist respondents as a causal factor and as a factual statement. However, feminist respondents tended to be more nuanced, stating that women's NGOs are able to unite at times on certain issues but not consistently so and that while women's organizing may not be strong, it is not worse than in other sectors of civil society. A number of feminist respondents assessed women's organized actions rather positively, stressing their success in bringing critical social issues to the public attention, ability to unite on issues, and conducting diverse activities. Several feminist and non-feminist respondents also provided rather thoughtful explanations, linking the weakness of women's organizing to the overall environment, current level of civil society development, and lack of government and financial support for women's organizations. In addition, several respondents stated that women's organizing is at a development stage, that they have understood the need to better cooperate and become more organized and integrated and that this is a matter of time.

Some of the harshest critiques were expressed by 4 feminist and 10 non-feminist NGOs. Some of these critiques were leveled against women leaders, stating, for example, that women's organizing is limited to leaders, that a few individuals have monopolized women's organizing and that leaders are not able to accept each other. Inability of women's NGOs and women activists to accept each other was mentioned several times. Similarly, several respondents stated women's NGOs pursue their narrow organizational goals, that they lack courage, commitment and initiative. A women-led NGO stated that women's NGOs' values contradict societal values. Another respondent criticized that women's NGOs get politicized and indicated that was the reason for women's inability to forge collective action. A conservative women's NGO expressly stated that women's NGOs act arrogantly and make profit using women's names.

A rather detailed and highly critical observation was provided by a long-time participant in the field of women's organizing who nevertheless considered herself to be not feminist:

- MONFEMNET tries to work on women's issues and bring specific issues to public and policy attention but this work is not sufficient. On one hand, this is because other women's organizations and leaders have not developed sufficiently. On the other hand, Mongolian women's organizations do not strongly cooperate with international organizations and are not in line with global trends. In addition, private lives and financial security of leaders of the women's organizations are weak. Hence, they are not always capable of contributing financially for common causes and are unable to fully commit themselves. In short, the weakness of Mongolian women leaders is that they do not understand that forging a strong movement requires self-sacrifice.

These statements point to the existence of sharp divisions and conflicts in the field of women's organizing and indicate that a significant number of actors view the field of women's organizing excessively negatively. Feminist actors and some of the non-feminist respondents who work for gender equality tend to view the field more positively and see women's organizing as a work in progress and take into account the broader political, economic, financial and cultural context. By contrast, some of the feminist and most of the non-feminist actors tended to measure the current level of women's organizing quite harshly against very high standards. They held that women's NGOs are unable to unite and saw this as a failure of individuals, i.e. women NGO leaders, who are unable to put aside their pride, differences or narrow organizational interests for the sake of common goals.

The focus group discussion provided further insight into existing divisions in the field of women's organizing and women's own perceptions of those divisions. Thus, a participant who leads a non-feminist democracy promotion NGO and considers herself to be an outsider to the women's movement stated the following:

- We are a movement if we have a unified goal, a common goal. In Mongolia, we have laid the foundations but it is very thin. We have not achieved the movement we desire. Every year, women organize a meeting "Through Women's Eyes," discuss and share information concerning selected critical issues but results are nowhere to be seen. Of course, results cannot be easily achieved but still it seems we are unable to make changes on issues that may be small. Simply, on every March 8th, organizations like MONFEMNET and MWF organize their separate large conferences and people watch and wonder if women are divided into two camps.

Another participant, representing a non-feminist women's NGO, stated:

- The MWF became a civil society organization after 1990 but people still perceive it as an old (conservative) organization. Although women's organizations are working strongly, it seems they are not joining into one current. On one hand, people say X & Y (names of 2 women's/human rights activists) take project money and talk about human rights. On the other hand, they say, MWF is taking government money and not doing anything. But we are all working in our own directions. Maybe we will become a movement if we set 3-year common goals and work together to achieve those goals.

These statements suggest that key divisions in the field are those represented mainly by MONFEMNET and MWF. MONFEMNET was formed in 2000 and reformed in 2007 and is increasingly moving towards an explicitly feminist, democratic and human rights-based approach. Since 2006, MONFEMNET, in cooperation with MONES, has been organizing forums entitled "Through Women's Eyes" to develop and share gender-sensitive and rights-based analyses of political, economic, social, cultural and human rights situation in Mongolia and promote strategic alliance-building and collective action on the basis of shared analysis and common values and principles. MONFEMNET forums have been convening about 300 participants including women activists, civil society actors, and government representatives.

Due to financial limitations, MONFEMNET has been unable to ensure strong rural participation.

MWF has also organized annual women's conferences, drawing over 1000 participants with very strong participation of rural women. The most recent forum organized by the MWF was called "Women's United Forum" and drew about 1200 participants. The half-a-day forum addressed two critical issues: environment and food security.

The same issues as well as child protection, human trafficking, prostitution, gender-based violence, protection of human rights defenders and civil society development were addressed at the 2009 "Through Women's Eyes Forum." The difference was the framing of the issues. MONFEMNET framed the issues in terms of redefining the concept of national security as human security and insisted the state policy should be rights-based and gender-sensitive, taking into account specific vulnerabilities of women and girls. The forum sought to remind the Mongolian state of its primary duty to ensure security of the people and criticized the state's failure to fulfill this duty as well as its blatant violations of human rights and freedoms.

The MWF forum focused on what women wish to and can do to solve environmental and food security problems and how they could cooperate with the government and private sector. The language was accordingly different. A MWF representative stated during the focus group discussion that women who attended the MWF forum had a strong consensus that their rights are not the key issue, that the real problem is the environmental degradation. Further, she posed a question, if "in general, in the future, we should talk about women's status or about women's rights."

Although MWF and MONFEMNET clearly command very different amounts of resources, with the former being able to draw over 1000 participants and the latter convening over 300 people, the two organizations seem to be seen as representing two competing subfields. The fuzzy boundaries between the subfields are marked by women's differing attitudes to women's issues, the role of women in the society, human/women's rights, state and state-society relations. Although this kind of a cleavage can be considered to be natural in a post-socialist society, it seems to make women feel highly uncomfortable and dissatisfied, even ashamed of their inability to unite.

It may also be indicative of a trend that of the 8 NGOs (2 feminist and 6 non-feminist) that assessed the level of women's organizing as weak, 3 indicated they do not participate in any movements and one had not answered that question. Furthermore, their level of engagement in networks and coalitions was generally low, participating on average in 1.4 networks or coalitions, ranging from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 3. Thus, it may be that actors that do not engage regularly with other women's organizations through networks and coalitions, tend to be less informed about cooperation among women's groups and are more critical of the field.

The responses to the question on what needs to be done to strengthen women's organizing were generally divided into the following categories:

- Strengthening common conceptual, ideological and philosophical understanding
- Improving infrastructure and environment for women's/women's rights NGOs
- Promoting organizational, managerial, and institutional capacity-building
- Promoting community-building and solidarity
- Improving public relations and image making

The responses indicate that non-feminist respondents and some of the feminist respondents attribute the perceived unsatisfactory level of women's organizing to a lack of proper management, effective strategizing, coordination, leadership training and capacity-building. By comparison, many of the feminist respondents prioritize the need to deepen the conceptual understanding of issues, values and principles and, through constructive in-depth discussions, build a common platform to bridge conceptual, ideological and philosophical gaps, i.e. promote collective action based on shared and deeply understood values and principles.

A number of feminist and non-feminist respondents emphasized mutual respect, understanding, acceptance, and equality as well as unity and solidarity. The statements indicate that a significant number of actors feel the field of women's organizing is lacking in these qualities. While indeed there is significant room as well as need for improvement in the field in terms of solidarity building and effective organization, this strong emphasis on unity and solidarity may also be due to a nostalgia for the perceived effectiveness, simplicity and order offered by the centralized, top-down decision-making structures of the socialist period. In other words, coming from a highly organized and centralized regime, women activists, especially the elder generation and those with more conservative political views, may be feeling that the current pluralist, heterogeneous, largely democratic and very dynamic field of women's activism is too disorderly and disorganized. Furthermore, they may be equating this perceived lack of organization with lack of effectiveness and impact.

It is revealing that one of the respondents proposed to organize regular (quarterly) joint campaigns on specific issues. And another, one of the most conservative groups, proposed to set up a governmental/quasi-governmental agency that would be in charge of women's issues and provide support to NGOs. Suggestions such as these may be indicating deep-seated longing for more organization and direction, suggesting greater centralization either under state power or in the familiar hierarchical structures of "umbrella" organizations. In this connection, the tension between the need and desire for more effective organization and collective action and the need and desire to preserve the dynamic pluralism of the field is an issue that needs to be kept in mind in the future.

Patriarchy

Very few and simple questions were asked to gauge the respondents' understanding of and attitudes toward patriarchy, a central concept for feminism, and the importance of culture in maintaining patriarchal power relations.

When asked if ensuring gender equality would have a positive or negative effect on Mongolian culture, without exception, all respondents who identified as feminist stated that the effect would be positive (or that there would be no negative effect). Majority of the respondents who identified as non-feminist, gave the same response. However, 2 of the NGOs did not answer the question, 1 conservative respondent stated she does not know and 1 women's NGO stated that the effect would be negative unless gender equality was tied to ethics. She implied that increasing gender equality would lead to increased confrontation between men and women unless women's ethics were simultaneously raised. This statement falls squarely within a patriarchal paradigm in which women are assigned specific roles as mothers and wives. So long as women perform those roles well, they may have more rights and freedoms. However, gaining more rights and freedoms is seen as potentially detrimental to their moral obligations as defined by patriarchy.

This thinking is wide-spread in the Mongolian society both among men and women and, in its extreme forms, constitutes mysogyny. For instance, one of the conservative groups covered by this research stated 2 years ago in a conversation about women's human rights that "women become witches if they gain too much rights and freedoms." While such staunchly patriarchal groups may be a minority in the field of women's organizing and feel marginalized within the field, they are able to tap into the dominant patriarchal sentiments in the society, especially mother-worship, and even mobilize valuable resources from government and private sector based on the glorification of (patriarchal) motherhood.

Despite the strong consensus among respondents on the positive effect of gender equality on Mongolian culture, their views begin to diverge as they provide explanations (see Table 13 below).

A significant number of respondents, especially among the non-feminist category, view Mongolian culture rather positively. Four of the non-feminist respondents, including 2 women's NGOs and 1 individual who has led a women's NGO for many years, see no conflict between gender equality and culture as they hold that gender inequality and discrimination are non-existent in the Mongolian culture and that men and women are equal and have always mutually respected each other (group 1).

One feminist and 4 non-feminist respondents (group 2) emphasized that Mongolian culture has important progressive aspects whilst admitting, albeit indirectly, that the gender discrimination and inequality are a part of the Mongolian culture and tradition. They see valuable potential in constructively engaging with culture and tradition, reviving, strengthening and building on its positive aspects to promote human rights and freedoms, gender equality and respect for women.

Two non-feminist NGOs did not answer the question. The rest of the responses fall into 2 categories: those who prioritize ensuring human rights and equality (group 3) and those who emphasized the positive effects on society and development

(group 4). The latter could be termed as “utilitarian” and the former “rights-based” but are not mutually exclusive and a number of the respondents expressed both views.

Table 13. Effect of Gender Equality on Mongolian Culture			
		Feminist	Non-feminist
1	Mongolian culture is not patriarchal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mongolian culture contains no gender-based discrimination • Nothing to conflict with culture • Since ancient times, women respected men and men respected women • Equality is there, the key is to improve implementation
2	Mongolian culture has progressive elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a way to revive progressive aspects of Mongolian culture and tradition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we use tradition properly, there are many possibilities to ensure women's rights • Mongolian culture contained respect for women (for example, Buddhism) • Mongolian culture disapproves domineering behavior and attitudes • In our culture and tradition, there is foundation for desiring, supporting and promoting equality
3	Equality and human rights will be ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditions that violate human rights and disrespect women shall be abolished • All people shall be equal regardless of sex • That my rights are limited by another's rights will become a reality • Tradition and culture shall be changed to support and respect human rights, hence women will be able to participate in decision-making • Less gender-based human rights violations, less violations of the rights of women and girls • Equal opportunities and conditions shall strengthen justice and democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have equal rights with men to elect and be elected and are equal in every regard • Equality of men and women shall be ensured • Strengthen democracy, change traditional perception of women, realize constitutional rights and equality
4	Good for ensuring societal harmony, development and modernization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If women are content, men too are content; equal people can better enrich culture • People will be more likely to respect and love each other • Ensure sustainable development, attitude to development will change • Equal participation of men and women in development will positively influence culture and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mongolia has a small population, not valuing and fully involving women who are 50% of the population has a negative effect on development; women work hard, carry societal burdens, so they should be equal • Important for ensuring balanced development of the society • Understanding and culture of mutual respect will develop in

		<p>tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men's health, education and behavior will improve • Increased participation of women will help solve many critical issues • Justice will be established, corruption reduced and will solve many issues 	<p>the society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilize social resources for development, justice, reduce risk for men themselves • National sovereignty • Harmonize Mongolian culture with global trends, need to combine tradition and modernism • Tradition of mutual respect will be in line with the modern society • Culture will be modernized
--	--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Both “utilitarian” and “rights-based” views clearly indicate an acknowledgement that there is a conflict between gender equality and cultural status quo and that ensuring gender equality will necessarily involve challenging and changing the culture and traditions. Both views welcome these changes and strongly believe they will lead to the improvement of the society towards a more humane, less violent and more just society. The difference comes in the emphasis.

Feminist and some of the non-feminist respondents focused primarily on the positive effects of these cultural changes on ensuring human rights and freedoms, equality between men and women, equal participation of women in decision-making, women's rights, especially women's right to live free from violence, and strengthening of democracy.

Many of the non-feminist and some of the feminist respondents, however, highlighted positive effects that will flow from the ability of women to enjoy their rights and freedoms on par with men. They argued gender equality and ensuring cultural changes would make society more harmonious, ensure more balanced and sustainable development, promote peace and mutual respect in the society, and several also cited positive effects on men's lives and personal development.

There may be two reasons for these responses. Some of the respondents may indeed value gender equality and women's rights primarily because of the presumed positive effects on the society. Such a stance would be considered to fall outside the rights-based approach and would be termed as utilitarian, i.e. gender equality is good and needed so long as it has a “utility” for the society in the sense of fostering development and harmony.

However, some of the respondents may have a rights-based perspective and value gender equality in and of itself for the sake of women's human rights regardless of consequences for the society but may have proposed utilitarian arguments because they see them to be most effective in convincing an imagined “unconverted” audience of the important positive effects of gender equality on the society. Again, it is important to have in-depth discussions on these perspectives to sharpen our concepts and arguments.

The issue was further explored by a direct question on whether or not the respondents agree that patriarchy needs to be abolished. When the question was formulated this way, more respondents assumed a more conservative position. All

feminist respondents expressed a critical view of patriarchy and all but one (see below) agreed that patriarchy needs to be abolished whereas 9 non-feminist respondents agreed with the statement, 9 disagreed and 6 did not answer the question.

Table 14. Need to Abolish Patriarchy		
Do you agree that patriarchy needs to be abolished?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Yes	16	9
No	1	9
Don't know/ no answer	0	6
If yes, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't correspond with today's mentality If one regards another as inferior, it is unjust; the rights of one gender should not be privileged over the rights of another There will be mutual respect among people Patriarchy is not just domination by men but all other types of domination, like by <i>dargas</i> (bosses/officials), hence against democratic principles At most levels, women's status is lower, men's policies do not positively influence the society Democratic value of equality, including gender equality, shall be achieved There will be no domination based on sex, people will be liberated Patriarchy is unjust and strengthens many negative, wrong cultural trends Women carry majority of the burden but do not share power, if they enjoy their rights, they will be able to share men's power Women approach development more wisely, based on a long-term vision, adhere more to principles and are less likely to get corrupt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That some remnants of patriarchy have remained so far, has caused many problems for many people Ying and yang exist in constant motion because they maintain balance/equality Patriarchy still exists, men are considered as heads of households and it is permissible for them to abuse alcohol and act violently towards their family members and avoid doing housework It is not sex that determines everything by individual qualities If we talk about tradition, patriarchy was established later, Mongolian men and women had supported matriarchy Conflicts with democratic principles and values If patriarchy persists, it will continue to be the basis for violations of women's rights and hold back development Global trend is moving away from masculinized societies Because ensuring equality of men and women is a factor in development Too harsh, unjust policies; corruption and injustice are wide-spread; state structure is not right
If no, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard to reform a tradition that has existed for thousands of years, but it is possible to established equality, mutual understanding and respect in family relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No country has abolished patriarchy, in Mongolia, women exercise real power in the family There is no patriarchy in Mongolia I think patriarchy is not very dominant in Mongolia Patriarchy in a classical sense does not exist in Mongolia In humankind, man has always been the head but equal Need to respect the husband but also need to ensure political equality of men and women

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By respecting fathers, children will learn to respect others but they should also be taught to equally respect their mothers • Men and women are complementary to each other, there is no need to privilege any of the genders
--	--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The one feminist respondent that disagreed with the statement did so more for pragmatic reasons than ideological. She held that abolition of patriarchy is an impossible goal given the system has existed for thousands of years and suggested to, instead, focus on a (more manageable and realistic) goal of establishing equality and mutual respect in family relations.

The respondent does not see power hierarchies within the family as an integral part, indeed a cornerstone, of a patriarchal structure and that implications of establishing gender equality at family level are far-reaching in terms of deconstructing patriarchy. Precisely for this reason, family, personal relations and the private sphere have been a central focus for feminist theory and practice. Establishing equality in family can be understood as coterminous with dismantling patriarchy and constitutes a daunting task, as feminist experiences would testify.

Similar contradiction is contained in the statement of a non-feminist respondent who disagreed with the need to abolish patriarchy. She held that Mongolian women enjoy real power in the family though admitted that patriarchy exists. She too stated that abolition of patriarchy is unrealistic as no country has achieved this goal.

Several non-feminist respondents expressed approval of the current system, which they view to be gender-balanced, just and harmonious: “men and women have always respected each other,” “men and women are complementary and there is no need to privilege any gender,” “men have always been heads of households but equal,” etc. This “blindness” to patriarchy is shared by the 3 non-feminist respondents who simply deny the existence of patriarchy in Mongolia, hence for them the question on whether or not patriarchy needs to be abolished is a completely irrelevant one.

This blindness towards the patriarchal nature of the society may be a result of several factors:

- Hangover of the socialist propaganda, which maintained that equality between men and women has been achieved and Mongolian women are educated and empowered;
- Middle-class, middle-age, heterosexual and khalkha (majority ethnic group) bias of the women activists who, in their everyday lives, enjoy relatively high degree of power and privilege and do not encounter severe violations of their rights and hence assume, based on their limited experience, that such violations do not exist;
- Lack of embeddedness of women’s NGOs in the grassroots and the disconnect from the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups of women

such as poor women, women with disabilities, women from sexual and ethnic minorities, etc.

- Lack of analytical capacity of women activists and retarded development of social sciences, including gender studies in Mongolia.

The responses of the individuals and NGOs that did agree that patriarchy needs to be abolished, also provide ample food for thought. Sixteen out of 17 feminist respondents and 9 out of 24 non-feminist respondents held this position but their reasons differ, mirroring their responses regarding the effect of gender equality on culture. Feminist respondents more frequently defined patriarchy as an unjust system that imposes harmful hierarchies, promotes negative cultural trends, conflicts with democratic values and principles and prevents enjoyment of equality and human rights.

At the same time, several feminist and non-feminist respondents marshaled the same utilitarian arguments, indicating that abolition of patriarchy shall promote development by “unleashing” women’s power. A feminist respondent cited presumed moral superiority of women such as resilience in the face of corruption, wise approach to development, long term vision, etc., suggesting that if women gain power, they will rule better than men.

Such assertions are frequently made in the Mongolian context, especially during election campaigns. They are rather problematic as, on one hand, they lack clear evidential basis, and, on the other, they reinforce double standards used in politics, demanding women to be perfect to be considered as legitimate politicians while for men it is enough to be “just good enough” or even “not too bad” or “not worse than others.”

The responses given by the actors regarding patriarchy indicate not only diverse attitudes and understandings of patriarchy but connote divergent worldviews and fractured realities women activists inhabit. Some see themselves living in an unjust patriarchal system, which views women as inferior to men and serves as the basis of human rights violations, especially of women. Some view themselves as living in a society that is largely egalitarian but in which some remnants of patriarchy still exist, causing problems for many people’s lives. Some view themselves as living in a fully egalitarian society where gender discrimination and inequalities do not exist and women enjoy real power, especially in their families. Finally, for some of the women, patriarchy is a totally irrelevant concept as they see themselves as living in a natural societal order wherein men and women exist in harmony and balance, performing different roles but complementing and fulfilling each other.

Feminism

The last set of questions in the survey focused on feminism and sought to explore how the respondents understand feminism, if they support or oppose it, whether they consider themselves feminist or not and why.

When asked to define feminism, 4 of the non-feminist respondents did not answer. One stated that she is unable to answer because she does not understand which strand of feminism is meant in this study. Another indicated she does not

understand the question. Five non-feminist respondents wrote nonsensical statements (“incomprehensible, disorderly, chaos of education and culture,” “too loose, that is likely to change”) or did not give direct answers (“not a subjective issue but a scientific definition,” “feminism developed strongly in the 20th century but later gender and development became dominant,” “understanding of gender”).

Table 15. Defining Feminism	
What is feminism, in your opinion?	
Feminist (17)	Non-feminist (24)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement/struggle for women’s rights and equality between men and women • Idea that men and women are equal • Ideology to ensure gender equality • Ideology that sees women as humans and respects women’s human rights and freedoms • Ideology and theory to ensure women’s equality in all spheres of life • Ideology that seeks to ensure gender balance • Research possibilities for increasing women’s status, value and participation in development • Women’s equal rights and participation • Only privileges women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement and ideology to empower women and increase their capacity • Usually explained in relation to history of struggle for women’s rights • Feminism brings up women’s issues, supports the disadvantaged sex • Ensure gender equality • Movement to protect women’s rights • Ideology to abolish patriarchy, ensure gender equality and gender justice (don’t know beyond this) • Theory about women’s rights and legal protection • Relations of gender equality • Activities that respect women’s interests, support their participation • Be feminine, lead others by the refined wisdom of women • Leadership in society, over-emphasizing women’s rights

Not surprisingly, feminist respondents tended to give clearer definitions of feminism, describing it as a movement, struggle, ideology or theory that posits and promotes equality of men and women. Some gave somewhat weak definitions such as “ideology that seeks to ensure gender balance” and “researching possibilities for increasing women’s status, value and participation in development.”

One feminist NGO gave a somewhat unexpected answer, stating that feminism is about “privileging women only.” A similar definition was given by a non-feminist NGO, which held that feminism was about “over-emphasizing women’s rights.” Another non-feminist NGO with conservative views defined feminism as about being “feminine” and “leading others by the refined wisdom of women,” also advancing an argument based on a presumed moral superiority of women and inherently feminine qualities of women.

The rest of the non-feminist respondents defined feminism similarly to the feminist respondents. Interestingly, the strongest definition was provided by a women-led human rights NGO: “Ideology to abolish patriarchy, ensure gender equality and gender justice (don’t know beyond this).” This NGO consistently supported gender equality and democratic norms but still identified itself as not feminist.

When the respondents' explanations of why they do or do not consider themselves as feminist are considered, it appears that most respondents do define feminism as one way or another having to do with promotion of gender equality and women's human rights. Despite such understanding, however, many of the actors consider that feminism is about privileging women over men, which makes them feel uncomfortable. Therefore, a number of non-feminist respondents stated they do not consider themselves as feminist because they do not discriminate by gender, promote gender equality, work for both men and women or for the society in general.

Several responses indicate that women think feminism is somehow separate from development and human rights. A women-led human rights NGO representative stated that her organization is not feminist because it works on human rights. Another NGO that has worked for over a decade on women's and gender issues stated it is not feminism because the organization works to promote development. This respondent also mixed organizational position with the views of individuals working for the organization: "People with different views work in our organization and ours is a development organization."

One of the non-feminist respondents expressed a highly negative view of feminism:

"Though I worked for many years for women's rights, I think feminism is negative for Mongolia because when women are too aggressive, there comes a strong negative backlash from the society."

This statement expressed an attitude that is common in the Mongolian society, which views feminism as an aggressive ideology or movement and feminists as unreasonable, radical and aggressive women, who upset the society's harmony and order. It would appear that many activists who work for gender equality and women's rights as well as activists who promote democracy and human rights do not wish to be seen as feminists because of the prevailing negative attitude towards feminism in the society.

Reasons for identifying oneself/one's organization as feminist or not feminist	
Feminist (17)	Non-feminist (24)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science has proven that men and women are equal • Women are equal to men in rights and capacity, make a large contribution to society and will contribute even more • Because I support women's rights • Because we embrace the principle of ensuring women's equality • We work to bring just social changes through women's participation • The goal of the campaign is to ensure human rights and freedoms, gender justice and democratic norms • We promote women's rights to be elected • We seek to spread understanding of gender equality through our services through we do not conduct advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though I worked for many years for women's rights, I think feminism is negative for Mongolia because when women are too aggressive, there comes a strong negative backlash from the society • No need to discriminate by sex • We work to ensure equality of men and women • We work for human rights, especially the right to fair trial • People with different views work in our organization and ours is a development organization • Our culture is more based on gender equality • Our organization's goal is to serve everyone equally • We address women's issues as part of a

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work to protect and promote women’s rights • I have worked for years to promote gender equality • We seek to influence government, organizations, private companies to promote gender equality • All our activities are directed to promoting rural women’s political participation, economic and social status and build their capacity • We conduct training, research, and advocacy for women’s rights • Only women work in our organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • holistic approach to societal issues • We seek to establish a new trend of establishing gender equality, not prioritize women • We seek to ensure equal rights of family members • Education and respect for women and girls in the family will also influence men • Only women work in the union • We respect the highest standards of compassion and education/upbringing
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Some of these issues were further clarified by the responses to the question on the existence or non-existence of a feminist movement in Mongolia. Somewhat unexpectedly, quite a number of the respondents, especially those in the feminist category, held that a feminist movement exists in Mongolia. Majority of them stated that the fact that there are organizations and individuals that work to promote women’s rights and gender equality, often cooperating, even if they are not well organized as a collective, are not always effective and are somewhat detached from the people, is a manifestation of a feminist movement.

Is there a feminist movement in Mongolia?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Yes	14	8
No	2	12
“Don’t know”/ Difficult to answer/ No answer	1	4

It was encouraging that both young men from the youth campaign expressed a strong support for feminism and indicated they regard the existence of the youth campaign as a sign that a feminist movement exists in Mongolia:

“Hands Up for Your Rights is a feminist campaign.”

“[The campaign] seeks to ensure gender equality and equity.”

Equally encouraging were the following statements by feminist and some of the non-feminist women’s respondents, arguing that a feminist movement does exist:

“Women’s rights movement exists.”

“Women are turning to women’s organizations to protect their rights, organizations exist that work for women’s rights, women’s coalitions and networks influence decision-makers and professionals - this is a movement.”

“There are organizations and professionals who fight against violence against women.”

Two feminist respondents view the movement to be at the very initial stage of development. One of them specified as follows:

“The feminist movement exists but at its very initial stages. There are articles [essays] that express the initial, foundational attitudes [ideas] and many use them, even if not fully consciously, and men too express ideas in support of feminist ideas.”

Four of the non-feminist respondents who stated that a feminist movement does not exist in Mongolia, expressed similar opinions:

“There is a beginning but a feminist movement per se does not yet exist.”

“Maybe it is at a development stage.”

“There is a manifestation of a weak feminist movement.”

“It is not fully formed yet.”

Quite significantly, 2 NGOs that identified themselves as not feminist, one that works on gender issues and another that works on media freedom and democracy, stated that a feminist movement does exist and expressed strong opinions on the importance and necessity of a feminist movement in Mongolia:

“Women’s rights violations are wide-spread, hence there is a dire need to work for women.”

“It became necessary to work to protect women’s rights because in the old [socialist] society there was a wrong idea that men and women had achieved equality.”

Statements of 3 non-feminist NGOs, 2 of which stated a feminist movement exists and 1 of which stated the contrary, further confirmed the existence of a negative perception of feminism as an extremist, radical and even fanatical position:

“The feminist movement exists in the sense that activities are conducted to ensure women’s rights at all levels but it has not reached the level of fanaticism.”

“A feminist movement needs to be there to a certain extent but it should be not radical, it’s important to have mutual trust in a society.”

“No women’s NGOs exist with too feminist an ideology.”

“Individuals and organizations that seek to promote equality of men and women exist, spreading information and understanding among the public and are increasingly recognized and accepted by the society.”

The only feminist organization that stated that a feminist movement does not exist in Mongolia held that there are a few feminist organizations, indicating that their existence does not necessarily constitute a movement.

The non-feminist organizations that stated that a feminist movement is non-existent, gave the following explanations, quite a few of which are difficult to interpret:

“Doesn’t exist in the classical sense.”

“Discrimination against men, women, young, old and poor exists.”

“Don’t feel it.”

“Not conducted activities in this direction.”

“[It exists] only as talk.”

“State is not implementing laws, so right now, no.”

“Not heard of it.”

Thus, a significant number of women activists, not only those who openly identify as feminist but also those who do not consider themselves feminist, strongly support feminism and endorse the need for a feminist movement in Mongolia. There is also a substantial group, which supports gender equality but nevertheless considers feminism to be too radical and fanatical. Then, there is a group that has not engaged with the term or concept of feminism, hence did not comprehend the question about feminism posed in the survey.

The focus group discussion and the collective analysis session returned to the issue of feminism. These discussions, in addition to the survey and interview results, lead to the following observations:

- Women activists have differing understandings of feminism as well as different levels of understanding. However, there is a very strong interest to explore the concept further and learn more about feminism and how it relates to human rights, democracy, tradition and culture.
- Women who have significant understanding of feminism, agree that the society is not receptive to feminism but disagree on the course of action. Most women who identify as feminist believe there is a need and possibility to explicitly base their actions on feminist values and principles. Others, even those who think that patriarchy is not a serious issue in Mongolia, hold that feminism and even gender are very sensitive issues and hence should be approached/promoted with caution and preferably indirectly, disguised under “milder” terms such as gender equality.
- Many activists demonstrate strong, deep-seated fear of going against patriarchy and/or men. One activist who has worked in the area of promoting gender equality for over 10 years, stated that “We should admit that in this society patriarchy is so strong that we simply cannot work towards eliminating patriarchy. We just need to admit this fact and make peace with it. The word ‘feminism’ is too strong, we can’t use it. Maybe the solution is to use ‘gender equality.’ Otherwise it’s too difficult.” Another long-term participant in the field stated “Mongolia has had nomadic husbandry. Therefore, women have been relatively free. Patriarchy, in its classical sense, never existed in Mongolia. Therefore, if we begin to talk about feminism, men will feel irritated. It’s better to talk about gender equality/equity.”
- Although terms ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ are commonly used by women activists, they do not necessarily invest such terms with the same meaning. Thus, a number of women stated that the term ‘gender’ means equality between men and women or that ‘feminism is gender.’

- Although there is a broad consensus on the importance of ‘gender equality’ and agreement on the usability of this term, some of the women may be in fact defining equality as ‘equivalence,’ i.e. different but theoretically equivalent roles and spheres of men and women in the overarching patriarchal framework of gender division of labor (men - public/productive, women - private/reproductive).

The very process of this research, contrary to fears expressed by many of the women activists regarding the use of the term ‘feminism,’ clearly demonstrated that there is significant interest among women to explore this concept and, therefore, significant room for sharing feminist analyses, values and principles in the field of women’s organizing. It is also clear that women activists need to engage in deeper conceptual discussions, clearly articulate their differing worldviews, assumptions, value systems and principles and unpack commonly used terms such as ‘gender,’ ‘gender equality,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘social justice,’ as well as ‘feminism.’

B. Case Studies

This section shall present brief analyses of 4 case studies, which highlight strengths and weaknesses of the field of women’s organizing and potentials for building a strong feminist movement in Mongolia. The case studies are presented mainly as illustrations of the different aspects of the field.

The Quota Battle

At the very end of 2007, as most Mongolians were busy celebrating or preparing to celebrate the New Year, two members of parliament, one from the MDP and the other from MPRP, suddenly proposed amendments to the 2005 election law. The proposed amendments included a cancellation of the 2005 clause, which demanded that political parties ensure that at least 30% of their candidates for parliamentary elections are women. The motion merely formalized prior clandestine agreements between the two main parties. Accordingly, the parliament swiftly moved to discuss the issue in view of the upcoming elections in June, 2008, and, without any public discussions, promptly voted to revoke the quota (on December 26, 2007).

Four partisan women’s NGOs affiliated to MPRP, MDP, CCP and the Republican Party, who had successfully lobbied for the introduction of the quota in 2005 through the Women’s Partnerships in Politics and Governance Forum they had jointly founded, were the first to protest the proposal to revoke the quota. They wrote letters to the Speaker of the Parliament and talked to their respective parties but felt overpowered by their male colleagues.

The partisan women brought the issue to the attention of MONFEMNET, National Network of Mongolian Women’s NGOs, and the Mongolian Women’s NGO Coalition. Consequently, MONFEMNET and the NGO Coalition called for an urgent meeting of members and other women’s organizations. Setting aside their differences and internal conflicts, women’s NGOs focused on pulling their resources to exert strong pressure on politicians to repeal the cancellation of the quota.

MONFEMNET obtained a grant from the Urgent Action Fund, mobilized support of male civil society colleagues (based on partnerships developed in the course of working for human rights, democracy, civil society development and anti-corruption) and engaged women from almost all of the provinces through a series of video conferences. Individual women and NGOs made in kind and cash donations to the joint campaign. Partisan women's NGOs contacted women parliamentarians from their respective parties and urgent consultations were held between women activists and female parliamentarians. Women activated their ties with various media organizations and through their collective efforts succeeded in capturing media and, consequently, public attention for several weeks, turning women's quota into a hot topic of conversation, reaching hair salons and streets.

While the quota was the main cause and subject of this campaign, from the beginning, women had not realistically hoped to restore the quota given the political realities. However, women activists and politicians proceeded to secure a meeting with the President of Mongolia (largely thanks to the MPRP women's connections). Subsequently, in early January, 2009, the President vetoed the revocation of the quota.

Although the President's veto in Mongolia is weak as it stands only if a third of the parliamentarians agree to accept it, the issuance of the veto forced the parliament to hold a substantive discussion on pros and cons of the quota and justify its revocation. Furthermore, quite unexpectedly for both parliamentarians and women, the parliament accepted the Presidential veto as, thanks to the lobbying tactics of the women, enough MPs voted in its favor. This victory was short-lived, however, as male parliamentarians found a token reason to invalidate that vote. Thus, on the next day, the parliament voted again and predictably overturned the previous day's decision.

These events were highly televised due to the live transmission of parliamentary sessions and significant media interest. The unprecedented action of the parliament to take a re-vote with an explicit goal of forcibly issuing a decision that would serve their interests led many journalists and citizens to side with women. In response, politicians from both MPRP and MDP launched intensive media campaigns to discredit women, misinterpret the function of quotas, and protect the political domain as an exclusively male sphere, drawing on traditional patriarchal sentiments. A pro-MDP daily newspaper published a series of particularly misogynist articles¹⁹ while several prominent MDP leaders aggressively attacked female parliamentarians.

Although the women did not succeed in restoring the quota and were, more importantly, unable to maintain this unity and level of energy in the next months to support women candidates in the 2008 elections, the campaign clearly showed remarkable ability of women activists to mobilize for an effective, nation-wide collective action across various divides. The campaign was able to unite women from different political parties, non-partisan women, women from NGOs and

¹⁹ These articles were analysed as part of the case studies on media representation of women and gender issues. See: M. Bolormaa, "Women's Political Participation" in MONFEMNET, *Women's Rights and Media. Five Case Studies* (Ulaanbaatar: Munkhiin Useg Group, 2008), 19-35.

women from the government, women who do not hesitate to be “political” and those who generally shy away from “politicization,” women from Ulaanbaatar and women from the rural areas. This diverse participation was directly visible through press conferences and televised debates.

The campaign sent a strong message to male parliamentarians that women can put up a strong resistance and that their opinions cannot be summarily ignored. More importantly, the campaign contributed to increasing public education on the importance of democratic representation of women and the necessity to hold male-dominated state institutions accountable for their unethical, illegal and unconstitutional acts. Through this campaign, women also gained substantial credibility among journalists, which has had positive effects on subsequent campaigns of women’s and human rights NGOs.

Human Rights under State of Emergency Protection and Monitoring Coalition

The 2008 parliamentary election, held on June 29, was highly controversial and fraught with the questioning of the validity of the law itself, intentional exclusion of women, illegal and partisan operations of the General Election Commission, extensive allegations of electoral fraud, imbalanced coverage by media and finally post-election violence.²⁰ Public outrage mounted as the vote counting results began to come in, largely in favor of the MPRP and MDP. Voters, men and women, began to spill onto the streets already on June 30th, claiming that “the election results do not reflect the actual choices of the voters” and that “the election has been rigged.” They appealed to all other voters who shared this view to gather the next day on the central square to protest the election results.

Indeed, the next day, on July 1st, thousands of voters gathered on the Sukhbaatar square (main square outside the parliament building), protesting the election results. Towards late afternoon, a part of the crowd marched toward the MPRP building to demand explanations. The protesters were surprised to see that the building was already surrounded by a protective belt of policemen clad in full riot gear.²¹ The police were immediately perceived as being partisan and their subsequent actions reinforced this perception and provoked violence. For reasons that to this day have not been fully examined, the peaceful demonstration deteriorated into a violent confrontation between citizens and the police, a fire broke out first in the MPRP building and, later, in a section of the nearby Cultural Palace. Civilians, including many young men and boys as well as women, vigorously participated in the destruction of the MPRP building, some of them shouting “Down with MPRP!” and “Away with the Communists!”

The President, backed by the cabinet, took draconian measures by announcing a 4-day State of Emergency and unleashing the police and the army forces in the middle of the night onto the civilian population without proper warning to ensure the protection of fundamental human rights. Fire guns were used and at least 5 people were killed. About 800 people were arrested, many were subjected to

²⁰ Much of the debates surrounding the 2008 election were captured in the following compilation: Open Society Forum, *State Transparency: Fair Elections* (Ulaanbaatar, December 12, 2007).

²¹ It should be noted that this was the first time that citizens saw police force in riot gear, which had a strong psychological effect in and of itself.

police brutality, questioned without a lawyer and forced to sign self-incriminating statements under duress. All television channels except for the formerly state-owned Mongolian National Public Television (MNPTV) were closed down and the latter functioned under strict government censorship, reporting news fed by the police and the government. The only functioning television channel aired a footage of the Prime-Minister (MPRP) bowing to the burnt MPRP building and appealing to the people to come to the assistance of the MPRP. The National Human Rights Commission visited detention centers and declared they saw no evidence of human rights violations. Subsequently, the courts distributed severe penalties to about 200 citizens based on unsubstantiated accusations of setting fire to the MPRP building and causing major destruction of public and private property.

Women human rights activists were among the first to react. They closely observed the events on July 1st and began to consult with each other towards the evening as it became clear that violence would escalate and the government would use it as an excuse to crack down on the civilians. Women gained access to air time on a popular pro-democracy independent television channel and made a public appeal to political leaders to set aside their arguments over election outcomes for the time being and urgently cooperate to prevent further violence and potential fatalities. As soon as the women got off the air, the television channel was forced to inform viewers about the announcement of the State of Emergency and the presidential order to shut down its operations.

On July 2nd, women activists began to mobilize civil society actors and actively participated in issuing statements questioning the need for government's drastic measures, protesting the shutting down of private television and radio channels, and appealing to the Mongolian National Radio and Television to maintain an independent status and provide balanced information. Women activists from women's rights and human rights NGOs formed the backbone of the Monitoring and Protecting Human Rights under State of Emergency coalition of over 20 NGOs. The coalition was formed practically overnight, supported by a modest but critical financial contribution of the Open Society Forum.

Given the highly charged political context and sharp polarization of the society along party lines (MPRP versus other parties), coalition members took utmost care to clearly articulate its goal and identity. In order to ensure credibility and ward off any accusations of serving political interests of individuals and parties that lost in the election, the coalition members refused to admit any party-affiliated NGOs and any individuals who had contested in the 2008 elections, including close friends and colleagues. They clearly articulated their goal as that of protecting human rights and documenting human rights violations.

On July 4th, about 150 volunteers - NGO activists, human rights advocates, lawyers and students - organized into 9 teams and left for 9 critical locations - detention centres and hospitals - to carry out an independent documentation of human rights abuses and provide free legal assistance to the detainees and their family members. The coalition was critical in informing the domestic and international community of the reality of human rights during and after the state of emergency through press conferences, live television programs, and English-language e-mail alerts, and providing legal aid to victims of police brutality. Through a team of 10 lawyers (9

women and 1 man), supported by the Open Society Forum, the coalition has continued its work of provided free legal aid and documenting human rights violations by the police, courts, and public prosecutors.

The July 1st events tested the quality of Mongolian democracy and commitment of Mongolian civil society. Women human rights activists undertook significant personal risks by leading the coalition and making public statements. It is suspected that key members of the coalition were put under surveillance and that phones were tapped. That women played such a key role in the defense of human rights and that civil society actors were able to form a broad coalition and effectively function in a highly charged political atmosphere speaks to the strength of personal courage and commitment of the NGO activists as well as their ability to undertake collective action.

On the other hand, the July 1st events highlighted partisan cleavages existent in the field. Although several key members of MONFEMNET as well as the staff of the coordinating office played an active and critical role in the coalition,²² MONFEMNET was not mobilized as a network within the coalition. Most of MONFEMNET's members did not respond to the coordinating office's call to collective action and some cautioned against "politicization." It was strongly felt by the staff and some of the members that on this issue, MONFEMNET would not be functional as a network due to underlying partisan divisions and lack of strongly shared commitment to human rights. Hence, coordinating office staff as well as staff of some of the member organizations participated in the coalition as individuals.

16-day Campaign to Stop Violence against Women and Children

The Global 16-Day Campaign to Stop Violence against Women and Girls was initiated in 1991 by the Center for Global Women's Leadership based at Rutgers University, NJ, USA. The National Center against Violence (NCAV) initiated this campaign in Mongolia in 1997 and has led other women's organizations to join the campaign, ever increasing the scope of the participants. Since 2004, the campaign led by NCAV, began to involve not only children's and women's rights NGOs but also human rights organizations. In recent years, the campaign, under the leadership of NCAV, has begun to involve more men and boys as well as young women and girls.

The campaign has played an important role in raising public awareness on violence against women and girls, strengthening NGO networks and coalitions, and advocating for state actions to combat gender-based violence. The campaign fosters NGOs' collective efforts to hold the state accountable for fulfilling its obligations under international treaties such as the CEDAW and national laws such as the Constitution and the Law on Combating Domestic Violence.

An important side-effect of the 16-day campaign is that of strengthening NGO networking and ability to function in a coordinated but decentralized manner. As

²² For the first two weeks of the civil society mobilization, MONFEMNET in fact served as the coalition headquarters. The National Center against Violence, MONFEMNET member, played a prominent role in the coalition with their lawyers providing direct assistance to victims and leading documentation teams.

such, the campaign is making an important contribution to developing new, pluralist and egalitarian but nevertheless (at least potentially) effective forms of cooperation in contradistinction to the traditional highly centralized and hierarchical models.

Furthermore, the campaign links domestic women's rights activism to the global movement for women's rights and helps disseminate information to activists and NGOs who do not have regular access to foreign language information.

"Hands Up for Your Rights!" youth campaign supported by MONFEMNET

The Youth Campaign "Hands Up 4 Your Rights" is a rather unique phenomenon in Mongolia. It was initiated soon following the July 1st events with support of MONFEMNET coordinating office to foster youth development and youth activism for human rights, gender justice and democracy. It was conceived as a fun, dynamic and participatory mechanism, capable of overcoming the atmosphere of fear caused by the state's repressive actions. It was also envisioned by MONFEMNET as a genuinely youth-led process, which integrates gender equality and feminist analysis into the promotion of human rights and democracy.

The campaign was launched after a series of extensive discussions with about 30 interested young men and women, mainly students, on the key goals, principles, values and institutional arrangements. To deepen mutual understanding of key concepts, the first training was improvised and held for two days. The program covered human rights, democracy, social change, campaigning and (feminist) analysis of patriarchy as a fundamentally undemocratic, hierarchical and violent system. This analysis covered not only gender-based hierarchies and pre-given strict gender roles and norms imposed on individuals but also heteronormativity as another key feature of patriarchy, which leads to the violation of human rights of sexual minorities.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the youth, both men and women, were most interested in the gender, patriarchy and heteronormativity issues. The youth campaign quickly evolved into a vibrant process of youth participation and peer education on human rights, civil society and gender equality, boldly and creatively addressing gender discrimination, violence against women and girls, and LGBT rights issues.

MONFEMNET staff was initially cautious about explicitly introducing feminism as they were careful about not imposing on the organic development of the youth campaign as a youth-led process. However, the campaign was conceived by MONFEMNET within a feminist paradigm and the staff intensively shared with the youth feminist analyses, principles and values. In about a year since the beginning of the campaign, young men and women began to ask for more structured information on feminism. In response to their request, MONFEMNET staff and the NCAV organized the first in Mongolia Youth Workshop on Feminism. Both young men and women eagerly engaged with feminist values and principles and carried the discussions and collective and self-analyses beyond the workshop.

These discussions among campaign participants and a subsequent formation of the Young Feminists Club by the young women led some of the young men to quit the

campaign on the grounds that MONFEMNET privileges girls and women, contrary to its commitment to gender equality. However, this development led to the strengthening of the campaign as an inclusive mechanism of youth empowerment and youth activism for human rights, intensifying young women's participation and integrating gay and transgender youth. In 2009, the youth presented the first in Mongolia amateur human rights multimedia theater with explicit feminist and gay rights messages, projecting a dynamic image of young human rights activists. The theater was well received by the human rights and women's rights community, LGBT rights groups and mainstream young people.

The youth campaign demonstrates real and exciting potentials for building a holistic and more egalitarian movement for human rights and democracy, based firmly on feminist principles and analyses.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has constituted an important process of self-reflection by the authors as well as other participants in the field of women's organizing in Mongolia. The analysis shows that there exists a vibrant women's movement in a largely polarized field of women's organizing. The movement is not cohesive and is marked by important ideological differences and is, at times, polarized along partisan divisions, reflecting the prominent political cleavage in the post-socialist Mongolia between a pro-MPRP subfield and a pro-MDP subfield. Despite such divisions, women are able to engage in strong collective actions on specific issues such as women's political representation or violence against women. Due to the lack of institutionalization, organizational weaknesses and insufficient funding, however, they are often unable to sustain such actions for long periods of time. Hence unified actions often resemble occasional bursts of energy.

Existing ideological and political divisions should not, however, be glossed over as they form important obstacles to the development of an effective, more strategic and transparent as well as more self-aware movement for women's rights, which is capable of explicitly identifying itself with feminism. It is clear that the field consists of partially overlapping but fractured subfields or subcultures with distinct worldviews, value systems, ideological and political orientations. This heterogeneity, which remains unexamined and unarticulated, causes significant degree of unease, distrust and even animosity among women activists.

The situation is heightened by unrealistically high expectations by women themselves for unity and desire for highly organized, tightly coordinated models of collective action. This may be due to the legacy of socialism in which people were integrated into centralized, hierarchically structured mass organizations, and resultant low tolerance for and understanding of diversity, pluralism and decentralized models of coordination and cooperation. Consequently, majority of women activists are highly dissatisfied with the current state of 'disunity' and 'disorder,' which they perceive as a major weakness that stems from poor leadership and weak organizational capacity.

While all women actors express strong support for gender equality and democracy, it is clear that at least the following clusters or camps co-exist in the overall field of women's organizing:

1. Feminist organizations and activities which actively promote gender equality as an integral part of democracy and human rights, frame women's and gender issues explicitly in a human rights framework and consciously challenge patriarchy. Most of the actors in this field are active in advocacy for human rights, democracy, and social justice and are consciously political. They tend to be integrated into multiple national, regional and international networks. On the political axis, this group is more likely to identify with MDP.
2. Individuals and organizations who actively promote human rights and democracy. Most of these actors do not identify themselves as feminist and do not actively promote gender equality and women's rights but do, as a

matter of principle, support gender equality as an integral element of democracy and human rights. These actors often closely cooperate with the feminist actors, forming tight coalitions such as for civil society development, anti-corruption, democratic governance and human rights and tend to be consciously political. Some of these actors acknowledge that patriarchy exists and should be eliminated to ensure human rights of women and gender equality and some consider that patriarchy is not an issue in Mongolia. This group also tends to be integrated into multiple national, regional and international networks. Participants in this sub-field are more likely to identify with MDP's policies on the political axis.

3. Organizations and individuals who work on women's issues and promote gender equality but do not identify themselves as feminist. This group tends to identify itself as working for development and serving all members of the society, without distinguishing anyone by gender. They generally acknowledge that patriarchy exists in one form or another (weak patriarchy or remnants of patriarchy) but do not seek to openly challenge it. They see themselves as refraining from "politicization" by avoiding open conflicts and confrontations with the government or men as a group and emphasize cooperation, flexibility and adaptation. These "soft" approaches are also seen as uniquely feminine strengths. This group is also relatively well integrated into national and international networks. These actors may support any or both of the main political parties.
4. Organizations and individuals who work on women's issues, see themselves as promoting gender equality but stay within a patriarchal paradigm. These actors either support gender equality in only certain spheres or only to moderate degrees. Thus, they may prescribe and even advocate patriarchal gender norms and gender division of labor within the family while strongly supporting gender equality in the economic or the political realm. Or they may understand gender equality at decision-making levels as women achieving 30% but would consider 40%-50% as excessive and even undesirable. These groups condemn "politicization," tend to be more pro-government, advocate "soft" and "smart" feminine approaches. This group tends to be less well integrated into various networks and coalitions and is generally detached from regional and international processes. They tend to demonstrate more generalized support for MPRP, going beyond agreement on political ideologies.
5. Patriarchal organizations and individuals who generally advocate complementarity and harmony between men and women. If they support gender equality, it is more likely to mean equivalence in separate spheres seen as naturally and distinctly masculine and feminine. These actors generally do not use the language of human rights and do not support the principles of individual rights and freedoms of women on par with men. Participation of this group in various NGO networks tends to be limited. This group tends to be strongly pro-MPRP and pro-government.

Such diversity in the field of women's organizing should not necessarily be assumed to be a negative phenomenon. However, in order to strengthen networking,

coordination and cooperation among women activists, it is important to better understand these divergences and foster in-depth discussions on values, principles, worldviews, ideologies and political positions. It is not sufficient to only discuss management, organizational capacity-building and collective tactics and strategies.

Despite significant negative attitudes towards the Mongolian women's movement and feminism expressed by many of the respondents, the study points to strong potentials for promoting a feminist movement-building in Mongolia. A significant number of actors see that the feminist movement is developing in Mongolia and the continued expansion of the 16 day campaign and the Hands Up for Your Rights youth campaign's feminist initiatives indicate strong potential for further dynamic development of feminism in Mongolia.

While the purpose of the study is not to recommend explicit or openly confrontational tactics and strategies and while the researchers acknowledge the validity of suggestions voiced by more "cautious" women activists to use more neutral terms and creatively use tradition and culture, the authors still highly recommend initiating regular and open discussions on feminism. Considering widespread misconceptions about feminism as well as ample potential for developing a particularly Mongolian concept of feminism (such as the concept of 'holistic feminism' we attempted to articulate in this study), feminist actors and interested organizations and individuals are likely to benefit greatly from such discussions.

In addition to the concept of feminism, the field would benefit from further exploration - through research, analysis and collective reflection - of the following issues:

- *Democracy*: while democracy is supported by all actors, it is clear their understanding of democracy differs significantly. There is a need to deepen discussions on democracy beyond general statements and explicitly explore linkages between women's organizing and promotion of democratic governance, development of democratic culture and mentality, and promotion of human rights.
- *Human rights based approach*: while many actors in the field report they work on human rights, most are not fully familiar with the rights-based approach and continue to function within a protectionist, paternalistic approach. Their attitudes and activities are also often exclusionary and discriminatory.
- *Civil society*: there is a remarkably strong consensus on the need for women activists to direct collective efforts towards developing civil society. However, this too should be further explored as it is likely that women activists have somewhat divergent understanding of civil society, its nature, key value and functions, which is evident from common negative perceptions of movements.
- *Social justice*: given growing disparities in the Mongolian society, linking human rights and gender equality activism to a sound critique of the socio-

economic order and macroeconomic policies gains greater significance by the minute. This study revealed the need to better articulate the concept of social justice and deepen and analysis and understanding in this area.

- *NGO effectiveness*: the study demonstrates that the majority of the actors in the field are highly dissatisfied with the current level of women's organizing. There is a need to explore what counts as effectiveness when it comes to NGO work and its impact, what strategies are best suited to further NGO effectiveness and what methods can be used to measure the effectiveness and impact of NGO work for social change.

In addition, it would be useful to explore creative, non-confrontational marketing strategies for feminism. In this regard, the youth campaign points to possibilities of "marketing" feminism in a way that would be more appealing to the young generation and all individuals and organizations who proclaim they are committed to human rights and democracy.

At the end, we would like to emphasize that this study did not attempt to render a definitive assessment of the field of women's organizing in Mongolia. It did, we hope, bring up important directions for future exploration towards building a strong feminist movement. We certainly hope the study shall generate more in-depth and open discussions among women activists and promote greater self-awareness, reflexivity and mutual understanding in our field.

Annex

	Feminist	Non-Feminist
Personal Age		
20-29 yrs	2	0
30-39 yrs	3	3
40-49 yrs	3	6
50-59 yrs	7	11
60-69 yrs	2	3
		(1 person did not indicate her age)
Individual's "NGO" Age		
1-3 years	1	1
4-6 years	4	0
7-9 years	1	4
10-12 years	2	7
Over 12 years	8	12
	(1 person did not indicate how many years she has worked in NGO community)	
Organizational age (not applicable to individual respondents)		
2000-2009	7	6
1990-2000	6	10
1920-1989	0	4

Activities of which organizations do you seek to influence/target? (For example, the police, local government, etc.)		
Target organizations or groups	No. of feminist NGOs that mentioned	No. of Non-feminist NGOs that mentioned
Law/policy/decision makers; government; parliament	7	10
Local government	5	9
Law enforcers	3	3
Line ministries (education, health, social welfare, etc.)	2	3
Political parties	1	1
CSOs/NGOs	2	2
Hospitals	1	0
Donors	1	0
Youth	1	0
Women's NGOs	1	0
Women	0	1
Public, citizens	0	3
Media	0	1

Table 7. Relevance and Significance of Movements in Mongolia

Are movements needed in Mongolia?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Yes	17	22
No	0	2
If yes, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach a specific objective, ensure freedoms • Ensure social progress, make it just, monitor state, ensure accountability • Helps intensify participation in developing and implementing state policies and channeling it constructively • Solve issues more effectively but not necessary called as movements - can unite as networks, coalitions, clubs • Strong voice and participation of citizens will improve society • Solve issues, change society, promote justice • Will be able to break established thinking in people's minds; In a democracy, it is necessary for groups of people to openly express their ideas • Will be able to genuinely implement civil and democratic society • Many critical issues in society, need to change and improve it, need to start by ourselves instead of waiting for others to do it for us, hence need movements • Because any decisions of government are non-transparent and violate human rights • Citizens' movement is a real process of truly ensuring citizens' participation in civil society • Open possibilities of solving issues together, not struggle alone, people will have more faith/hope and become more active • Organized movements with specific goals are drivers of social development, constitute social capital • Human rights, especially women's rights are not ensured and democracy is not developing properly • Because constitutional rights are not ensured • Make government less bulky, more effective, distribute government functions to CSOs, increase participation, improve accountability, provide equal opportunity for every person to participate in creating and sharing wealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unite citizens, influence decisions • Many critical issues faced by citizens that require citizens' participation, for ex. mining, environment; influence policies • There is still excessive influence of one person, former communist party pressure and dominance, intimidation; abuse of power at political levels; people abuse nature, food security issue, right to live in a health and safe environment is violated • To solve some of the societal problems • To learn to unite and solve issues collectively • Movements for change and rights is important • Opportunity to exercise human rights and freedoms, power of many is as important as the sea • Absolutely necessary to make social development more appropriate, accessible, just and right • Many issues have accumulated in the society, CSOs are unable to address them all • Many issues - social and human rights - that need to be resolved • Government not able and willing to solve the problems faced in the society, so need pressure of certain kind of a movement • Environmental issues and human rights violations are on the rise - need to bring to the attention of the government, civil society, people, discuss together and make changes • Poor people are unable to give bribes, they have no acquaintances, can't find work, are unable to work freely • Justice is lost, corruption networks, policies artificially keep people in poverty - need to stop this • Convey citizen's and women's thoughts and views to decision-makers • Important for protecting interests of people who are partisan and non-partisan - society accepts [better when we are organized as movements] • Influence state policy • Reaching people, becoming a movement and bringing changes in people's lives • There are more than one issues that require unified force to protect the

		people's interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To achieve the wellbeing of the society and mutual trust (but without politicizing) • Present public's thoughts to the higher leadership • Protect common interests, demand government to fulfill its duties
If no, why?	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible to express one's opinions through NGOs • Civil society needs to reach a new level, the time of movements is over

Table 8. Working or Not Working on Human Rights		
Do you/your organization work on human rights?		
	Feminist	Non-feminist
Yes	16	20
No	1	4
If yes, which types of human rights violations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative image of women in the media, domestic violence • Civil and economic rights • Violence against women • Housing, food, nature, right to development, participation and fair trial • Discrimination against women, violence, economic rights • Human rights education for youth to prevent human rights violations • Right to elect and be elected • Right to education, health protection, life in a safe and healthy environment, reproductive rights • Voter education, candidate training • Domestic violence, violence against women and children • Right to work, free assembly, political rights • Unsupervised children, domestic violence, sexual violence • Right to work, economic rights, human rights • Women's right to life (freedom from violence), to live in a safe and healthy environment, to education • All types • Domestic violence, violence against children, sexual violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil and political rights • Monitoring research, domestic violence, trafficking • Study, work, speak, publish, be protected, elect and be elected • Domestic violence, right to property • Violation of the law • Gender-based violence, human trafficking, rape, sexual violence • All types • Women's rights, girls' rights • Right to free expression • Political rights, discrimination against women based on gender, sexual harassment • Human rights education • Right to live in a safe and healthy environment, water pollution, desertification, trash • Discrimination, violence • That human rights are being violated through economy • Protect women's interests • Unemployment, poverty, constitutional rights and freedoms • Women's unemployment • Children at risk of dropping out of school, women-mothers from vulnerable groups • Inequality, reduce poverty, common fundamental rights

Table 10. Priority Issues for Women's Collective Action
Which issues should women's organizations prioritize for collective action? Circle 3 issues you

consider as priority. (Although respondents were to circle only 3, 8 respondents circled more than 3 issues)				
No.	Issues	Feminist	Non-feminist	Comments
1	Strengthening democracy	8	12	
2	Establishing social justice	6	16	
3	Developing civil society	13	17	
4	Establishing gender equality	14	13	4 feminist and 11 non-feminist respondents did not list this issue. However, all 4 feminist respondents listed "Reforming culture" while only 3 of the 11 non-feminist respondents did so.
5	Strengthening parliamentary system	0	1	
6	Establishing a presidential system	0	1	The same NGO also listed "Strengthening democracy"
7	Strengthening tradition	1	4	
8	Reforming culture	8	6	1 of the feminist and 3 of the non-feminist NGOs also listed "Strengthening tradition" and 1 non-feminist NGO added "Improving mothers' ethics"
9	Reducing poverty	7	12	
10	Other	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving mothers' ethics • Establishing a museum of mothers • Protecting environment 	

Table 12. Proposed Solutions for Improving Women's Collective Action			
		Feminist	Non-feminist
1	Conceptual, ideological and philosophical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold deep discussions on specific issues, develop constructive critique, deep understanding of rights and freedoms, respect for self and others • Discuss values, principles and strategies • Bridge [ideological] gaps, discuss values • Become capable of seeing issues in a similar way, agree on principal issues, critique and accept critique fairly, deepen shared understanding and commitment to human rights and freedoms • Speak out with one voice on 	

		critical issues related to democracy, human rights and development, prioritize public participation	
2	Infrastructure, environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote improvement of civil society environment Develop conditions for sustainable operations State needs to improve the legal framework for providing financial support to NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop legal framework
3	Organizational, managerial, institutional capacity-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Base activities on team management, involve youth, revise strategic plans Expand cooperation, better organize Work more on policy advocacy, develop selves more Cooperate through increasing participation of women, especially women without access to information Build capacity, develop human resources (train at least 100 women) Ensure unified policy and strategic planning Train capable and educated men and involve them in gender equality issues Develop an information database and better disseminate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize issues on which to work collectively Proper management, better organization, specialization in specific areas Develop capacity, strengthen organizations, increase democracy and transparency of NGOs Coordinate activities, expand cooperation, openly exchange information Link rural women's movement to national movement Organize broad-based actions involving members and supporters (on a quarterly basis) Develop, train leadership Cooperate with state, NGOs and volunteers Conduct collective action direct at society and people Put a specific goal and work toward it to achieve results, proceed step by step and not swing to many different issues
4	Community-building, solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote mutual understanding Respect and accept each other Ensure unity and solidarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect each other, work based on equality Improve mutual understanding Raise level of consciousness
5	Public relations, image making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use mass media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common message to influence the society
6	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid politicization and conflict of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express common interests of women who form majority in the society Establish an organization in charge of women's issues under a government agency Ensure women's representation at decision-making levels to develop and implement laws that protect women's rights