The Central Asia and Mongolia Gender Data Portal

a tool for collaborative and non-violent knowledge production

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1 Introduction

The Central Asia and Mongolia Gender Data Portal (CAMGDP), available at camgdp.org, collects and describes quantitative and qualitative resources, highlighting regional data from local sources on gender issues that may otherwise be suppressed. The Central Asia and Mongolia Gender Data Portal (CAMGDP) is designed to assist scholars, academics, activists, students, and other citizens in finding gender-related data on the countries of Central Asia and Mongolia. The portal compiles quantitative and qualitative data sources, informational websites, media publications, and organizations of various levels ranging from the international to the local that work in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia. By highlighting local sources to an international audience, and providing an integrated portrait of a range of sources across these countries, we hope that CAMGDP will be useful to a global audience.

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1.1 Why Gender Data?

Major international organizations such as the UN and World Health Organization shine a spotlight on women's issues, but their data collections, while important, are limited. National and local organizations outside of the West do collect and provide more detailed data, but often without a gender lens. In particular, information on minoritized populations or othered gender and sexual preferences may be suppressed, with discussions of these issues only available outside of mainstream organizations. This portal is an attempt to bridge that gap and remedy the lack of gender-related information by bringing together a diverse array of sources to shed light on these issues. Gender itself intersects with education, health, economic outcomes, and many other dimensions of interest to researchers, and therefore the portal also serves a broad range of social sciences. Defining the scope of the portal is necessary, however, given the limitations of time and capacity, and therefore other major areas of interest such as business and financial data, environmental and climate data, and so on, are not represented.

Our Central Asia and Mongolia Gender Data portal acknowledges the limitations of quantitative data available on Central Asian countries. Quantitative data sources are described, but due to the frequent lack of reliable and compre-

hensive data, we focus on qualitative and less traditional data to provide a more nuanced understanding of gender issues in the region. We also offer guides to introduce historical nuances of each country's contexts, which are essential to understanding the current state of gender equality in Central Asia. We recognize that there are differences in development and access to resources among Central Asian countries, and we strive to provide data that reflects these differences.

1.2   Why Central Asia and Mongolia?

The republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan share a common heritage as post-Soviet states, along with Mongolia as a client state of the Soviet Union. All underwent a particular form of Soviet-style modernization, and all achieved independence with the fall of the Soviet Union. In the case of Mongolia, while nominal independence had been established earlier, the fall of Soviet Union and loss of Soviet patronage and control led to the same kind of political upheaval that the other Central Asian republics experienced while establishing their new states. Many commonalities exist in their linguistic and cultural heritage, deriving from the influence of the Turkic and Mongolian nomadic empires that shaped their history. Since independence, each of these states has attempted to recover its cultural heritage while changing economic models, a process that can be particularly gendered as well. Issues of economic development, political justice, sexual identity, and many other related topics can be studied in a cross-national context, with the countries of Central Asia and Mongolia forming a group that has particular import for the study of the impact of colonialism, the Soviet and post-Soviet economic impacts, linguistic and cultural minority/majority issues, and the influence of religion on gender-based outcomes. In addition to their research interest, these countries are home to over 84 million people, and are therefore worthy of study in their own right.

2   Mission Statement

Given the rising interest in the region, our goal is to provide a guide to everyone committed to non-violent knowledge production on Central Asia and Mongolia. We aim to not only comprise a list of sources as a starting point for research but to assist in critical analysis of the gender-related data and publications available on Central Asia and Mongolia. While INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations) and their contribution are important, our portal prioritizes local

initiatives and grassroots organizations in an effort to give them the same credit and exposure that their international and foreign counterparts often receive in Western scholarship and media. By creating a comprehensive data portal with relevant reflections, remarks, and facts to contextualize data quality and availability, we hope to help researchers find local, regional, and international initiatives, publications, and secondary sources and engage in more collaborative and egalitarian work with Central Asian and Mongolian communities that respects local knowledge. This portal is meant for academic and non-governmental use only. We do not support and do not wish to contribute to any state-sponsored surveillance, especially when it comes to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities of Central Asia and Mongolia. If your organization or publication do not wish to be listed on our website due to safety concerns, please contact the editor, Ryan Womack, using the email editor@camgdp.org or via the contact information at https://ryanwomack.com/contact

3 Organization of CAMGDP

Gender-related data can appear in many different ways. It is primarily related to the rights and affairs of women and children, as well as the LGBTQIA+ community. Just like in the real world, no social issue is devoid of the gendered aspect, which is why we include sources that may not have gender as their primary focus but that do engage with the gendered aspect in their work. We include not only quantitative datasets and published reports but narratives, oral histories, local discourses, storytelling, and other important types of references that complement quantitative data, often providing the only insights when quantitative data is missing. While we roughly divide the sources into quantitative and qualitative, we understand that many sources fall outside of this binary or are located at the intersection of both.

4 Features

CAMGDP contains two major sections:

Sources - descriptive entries of resources that provide relevant data and information. CAMGDP does not host datasets, but serves as a gateway to data resources.

Guides - The Getting Started guide for each country explains the main fea-

tures of the site in context, with links to selected resources about that country. The Gender Research Guide takes a more expansive approach, describing the historical and social context for each country and limitations and considerations in gathering research data on that nation.

Descriptive information is provided on the *About* page.

Resources are tagged by country, language, source type, contributor, and theme. The tag schema is flexible, so additional criteria may be added over time, such as dates of coverage or data features. As sites are added, tags are combined and refined to best reflect the resources. The tags provide a customizable gateway into the materials that will allow a variety of uses as the site's content expands.

The resources are divided into various sections, as well as by each country.

- *International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)* - includes international organizations and institutions that engage in some form of gender-related data reporting on the region. These are organizations founded and based outside of Central Asia and Mongolia.

- *Local and Regional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)* - includes both regional and country specific organizations that represent grassroots efforts and local initiatives related to gender issues. This section includes Central Asian regional organizations, as well as smaller local activist efforts. While organizations in this section may receive funding and support from international and foreign institutions, they are primary located in Central Asia and/or Mongolia and their work primarily concerns Central Asian countries and/or Mongolia.

- *Government* - includes official databases, publications, and press centers at the national level for each country.

- *Independent and International Media* - includes media sources with a track record of reliable and fact-checked reporting and journalistic writing. This section consists of both Central Asian or Mongolia-based publications and foreign publications that regularly cover the region. Social media sources are also identified.

- *State-affiliated Media* - includes publications that have been linked to a state apparatus or that are state-owned. Relevant tags are provided for each data source for easier website navigation.

An RSS feed is available to track newly released and updated content.

5   Collaboration & Contributing

A primary long-term goal of CAMGDP is to enable collaboration and contributions from anyone with an interest in gender data for the region. We welcome suggestions for useful resources that fit the mission of this site, as well as comments and corrections, particularly from citizens of the states in Central Asia and Mongolia. Please contact the editor, Ryan Womack, using the email editor@camgdp.org or via the contact information at https://ryanwomack.com/contact. The project is built using a GitHub repository at https://github.com/ryandata/camgdp_docsy/ and so git edits and pull requests can be used. These GitHub editing and contact links are built into every resource page to enable easy contributions. If scholars of Central Asia are interested in making larger or longer-term contributions to expanding sections of the site, that is also most welcome! The intention is to reflect and amplify local knowledge and expertise to the greatest extent possible, creating a community-based and community-built resource, with the editing role focused on bringing consistency in the level of description and organization provided but otherwise limited, so that diverse and distinctive voices are preserved.

6   Languages

In order to make CAMGDP accessible to citizens of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia, elements of CAMGDP are being made available in the national languages of those countries, as well as common languages in use across the region and internationally (Russian and English).

The home page and "About CAMGDP" page will be available in all languages, and the overview guides for countries will be available in the relevant national language for that guide. For example, the overview guide for Kazakhstan is available in Kazakh and Russian, in addition to English.

Individual resource descriptions (listed under the "Sources" tab), will only be available in English, but link to the original sources in multiple languages. It is not feasible to both continually update the site with relevant resources and to translate each of the resource descriptions. Resources are tagged to identify the external resources with content available in each language, such as those listed on the Kazakh language page. We encourage readers to use online translators such as Google Translate if they need assistance with the English-language

descriptions.

7   Personnel

Ryan Womack, Data Librarian at Rutgers University, is the lead for the project and editor for the site. He provides data and statistical expertise, and also language background in Russian, Mongolian, as well as familiarity with Turkic languages. Further information about Ryan is at https://ryanwomack.com.

During summer 2022, Aizada Arystanbek, PhD student in Sociology at Rutgers University, compiled and analyzed data sources on Kazakhstan, the initial country studied. Arystanbek provides expertise in gender issues with a particular focus on Central Asia, along with fluent Russian and Kazakh language. She continued her research in summer 2023 on resources for Uzbekistan.

8   Platform & Technical Issues

CAMGDP is built with Hugo and the Docsy template. Docsy provides direct implementation of multiple language internationalization of site content. Hugo-generated content resides on GitHub, providing a complete version history. The site's web presence was migrated from AWS to Render due to the unreliability of AWS (see the description of this disaster). Render provides rapid refreshes of site content whenever the source GitHub content is updated, making site maintenance easy.

Hugo, as a static site builder, provides ease in building and hosting the site. Features such as tags and language sections become easily linked and bookmarked static URLs. In addition to allowing instant feedback and editing suggestions, the use of GitHub with Docsy provides a transparent history of edits and changes to the sites, with the latest update and change stamps visible on each source page.

9   Development

CAMGDP is under active development. Research on Kazakhstan began in summer 2022, along with prototyping of the website. The initial public release of the website was in May 2023. Research on Uzbekistan was conducted in summer 2023, with work on Uzbek translations, additional resource descriptions, and

site refinements ongoing until May 2023, when release 0.3 was finalized. Each year another country will be researched, with Mongolia research to begin in summer 2024. Ongoing work will also fill in major international data resources for the region and other Western compilations of information on Central Asia and Mongolia. Additional thematic guides on LGBTQIA+ and Media resources are under preparation.

10 Additional Information and Acknowledgements

Please visit the site at camgdp.org and get more information, including other presentations and videos, at ryanwomack.com/camgdp. Thanks to the Rutgers University Libraries for supporting this project.