

# **Social work & the changing welfare system in Kazakhstan**

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# Introduction

This presentation will map out the development of social services and social work within the changing welfare system in Kazakhstan

# Personal social services (as proxy to SW)

- (1) form the third pillar of the social welfare system, supplementing benefits in kinds and financial benefits
- (2) fulfill personal rather than physical or intellectual needs
- (3) performed by persons on persons in direct social interactions
- (4) delivered by professionals and paid employees in social service occupations as well as volunteers in an organizational context
- (5) comprise the areas of prevention, diagnosis, and social and occupational rehabilitation (Claudius, 2006, p.93).

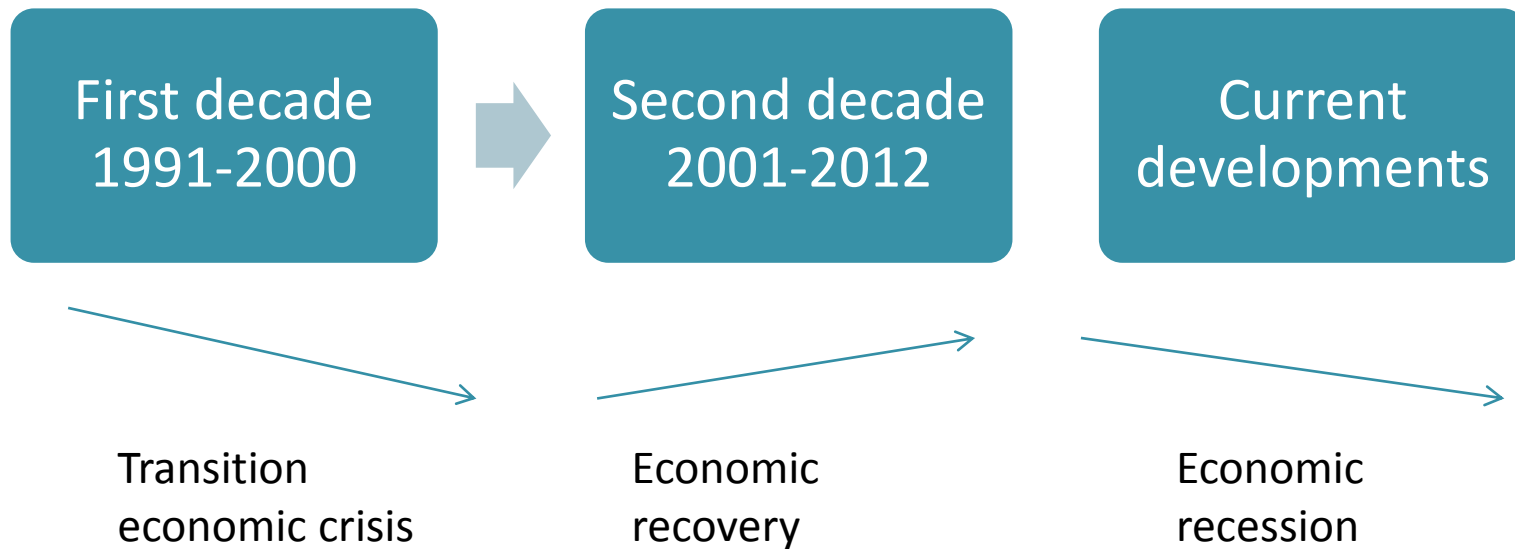
# Map of Kazakhstan



- Republic of Kazakhstan
- Independent since 1991
- Population 16.8 million
- GDP p/c \$13,600
- Poverty 5.3%
- 54% urban
- Life expectancy 69
- Kazakhs 63%, Russians 38%

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, "Commonwealth of Independent States, Map 1994," *Making the History of 1989*, Item #393

# Three periods in the evolution of welfare provisions



# 1991-2000: Socioeconomic context & Family

- GDP dropped by almost 40% in 1996 (vs 1989)
- Real wages fell by 50% (World Bank, 1998)
- Poverty 15% in 1990; 35% in 1996; 39% in 1998 (monthly income < state-defined subsistence minimum of US\$70 per capita)
- “New poor”: low-paid/low-skilled workers, the unemployed, large households, female poverty, rural poverty and regional inequality
- Family: increase in family disruption, poverty, and children’s deprivation

# 1991-2000: State focuses on economy and political reform

Welfare retrenchment:

- Cuts in public expenditures on health and education (1996: 30-35% of the 1991 level)
- Privatization of public programs (higher education, some health care services, child care, housing)
- Cuts in income transfers programs and monetization of in-kind benefits
- Cuts in public social services (child care, special education)
- Pension reform: 1998 eliminated the Soviet-type pay-as-you-go (PAYG) pension scheme, guaranteed minimum pension plus mandatory individual contribution based pensions

## 2000-2012 State: Revival of social welfare

- After 10 years of contraction, economy started to grow in 2000 by 10% each year, reaching the 1989 level in 2003
- Increase in govt expenditures on health, education and social services (in abs. numbers)
- Several income transfer programs for families with children (re)introduced
- The idea of govt funding of NGOs



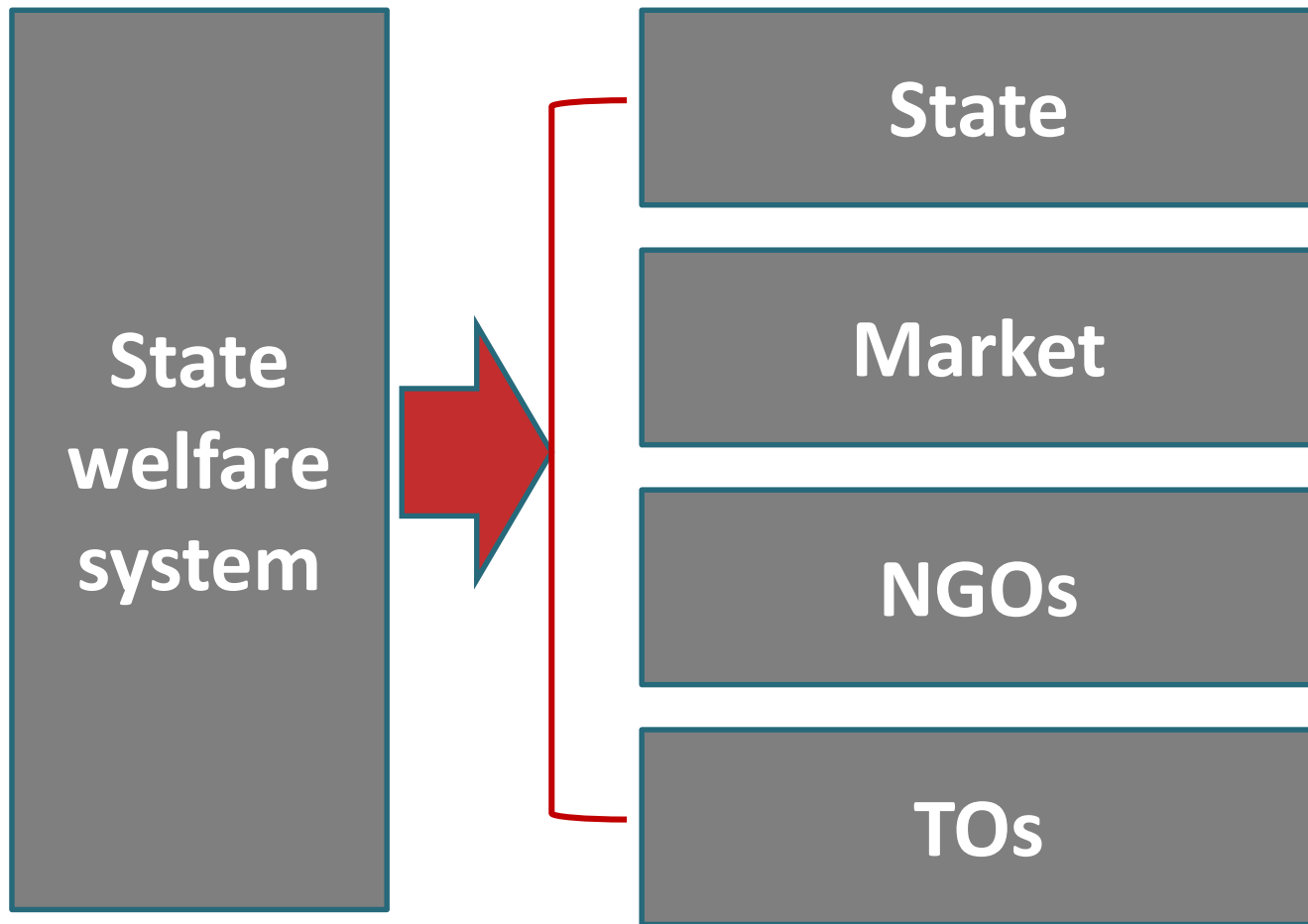
# Welfare developments: from universalism to contributory and means tested programs

- New labor legislation (e.g., new Labor Law and later Labor Code) redefined the roles of employers, workers, and the state in the provision of welfare.
- The Concept of Social Protection, 2001, sought to address deficiencies in welfare benefits for the poor, unemployment insurance, and retirement benefits; among other measures, resulting in the establishment of a mandatory Social Insurance Fund.
- The state Program for Combating Poverty and Unemployment was adopted in 2000.
- In 2002, means-tested social assistance targeted at the poor was introduced; eligibility criteria were linked to subsistence minimum (ILO, 2004).

# Three-tier social welfare system

- The first level: state-guaranteed non-contributory universal programs including minimum old age pension, disability benefits, allowances due to loss of a bread-winner, and newborn child allowances.
- The second level: mandatory individual retirement contributions and mandatory social insurance for disability, unemployment, and loss of a breadwinner (survivor insurance).
- The third level: voluntary individual programs such as social insurance, voluntary private pension schemes, and employer responsibility insurances)

# Post-Soviet welfare transformation: from state monopoly to welfare mix



# Emergence of different professional SW fields

- (1) Social work as practice of NGOs engaged in advocacy and social service provision
- (2) Social work as practice of governmental organizations, linked to the reform of state institutions
- (3) Social work education programs provided by the departments of sociology, psychology, social pedagogy, former political economy departments

# 2000-2012: Introduction of social services and social work

- 2002 Law on socio-medical & pedagogical correctional support to children with SN—>a network of GOs to provide assessment and targeted services to CWSN. Problems: limited funding, lack of professionals, medical model
- 2005 Law on social contracting: mechanism for state funding of NGOs activities of ‘social significance’: issues with access
- 2008 Law on special social services: social services for families and individuals in 10 categories of a difficult living situation

# **Social work as practice of NGOs: Linked to political reform**

- Started in the 1990s
- Linked to political reform and civil society development
- Emerged as practice of newborn NGOs
- Shaped by foreign aid and IOs

## NGOs' social services provision

- Various activities addressing social issues and needs: e.g., child protection, assistance to migrants and refugees, rights of people with disabilities, children with special needs, violence against women, environmental issues, etc
- Funding, policies, approaches, and ideas shaped by global policies and IOs





# ARDI (Association of parents of children with disabilities)

- Established in December 1991 by a group of parents of children with special needs to provide support to families and children.
- In the 1990s, ARDI focused on providing humanitarian assistance and raising public awareness on the issue.
- ARDI organized fund-raising media campaigns, brought medical specialists, reached out to international charity organizations to provide children with wheelchairs, advocated on behalf of families to help them to access social housing, cooperated with various international organizations and government agencies to provide home care and cash assistance to the most vulnerable children, etc.
- In 2004, ARDI opened a daycare center for children with special needs that provides physical therapy, education, and socialization.

## **Social work as practice of NGOs**

- NGOs have developed as flexible, open, adaptable organizations, able to learn, adopt and translate international ideas, and provide social services to groups in need
- NGOs struggle to provide continuous reliable social services due to unreliable, short-term, and restricted foreign and public funding

# Social work as practice of govt organizations

- Started in the 2000s
- Resulted from new pieces of legislation adopted in the 2000s
- Emerged as practice of newly created and of reformed institutions
- Influenced by Soviet institutional legacies (paternalistic state, welfare as state protection)

# Law on Special Social Services (2008)

- Special social services [are] a complex of services [which are] providing to an individual (family) experiencing a difficult life situation conditions for overcoming occurring social problems and [are] aiming at the creation for them [individuals] equal with other citizens opportunities for the participation in the life of the society.
- Social worker [is] a worker providing special social services and (or) executing the assessment and defining of needs in special social services, [who is] possessing the required qualification, in accordance with the set requirements.

# SW as function of new & reformed state organizations

- In the late 2000s, social work introduced in government facilities:
  - homecare departments for children with special needs,
  - institutions for children and adults with disabilities,
  - residential institutions for the elderly,
  - and shelters for the homeless,
  - schools,
  - primary health care settings
- Lack of professional training, lack of awareness of professional identity, lack of professional skills

# SW university programs

- Introduced in 1992:
  - The Department of Social Work and Social Education of the Karaganda State University (KarGU) has been educating Social Work specialists at the baccalaureate level since 1992 and at the Master's level since 2002.
- Now there are 20 university programs in SW
- Faculty lack SW education
- Curricula: theoretical bias

# Emerging social work fields

Who provides services?	NGOs	Government organizations
When did it start?	1990s	2000s
Who pays?	TOs, since 2005-state	The state
Who uses services?	'Old' and 'new' categories of beneficiaries	'Old' categories
Legal frameworks	International policy instruments, TOs' policies	National legislation, international policy instruments
Knowledge base for services	International policy instruments, discourses of TOs, NGOs interpretations	Lack of knowledge due to Soviet institutional legacies (lack of SW)
Value systems: Rights vs needs	Rights more than needs	Needs more than rights

# Current developments in welfare provisions

- Context: Economic recession and budget cuts
- Continuing restructuring of social welfare
- Unemployment benefits: short-term, public jobs
- Targeted social assistance: pilot activation programs (work incentives)
- Pension reform (an increase of retirement age for women; nationalization of pensions funds; pension benefits tied to contribution)
- Healthcare: mandatory health insurance to be introduced soon
- Elder care: gerontology law drafted



# SW and changing welfare system in Kz: Some concluding thoughts

- Welfare system has been in flux
  - restructuring from universal to selective programs,
  - reduction in benefits and access to benefits,
  - shift to means tested benefits
- SW has emerged as different, non-coherent fields of practice and knowledge
  - practices of NGOs, GOs and university programs

# Welfare reform and another recession: back to austerity

- Within the changing welfare context, SW has multiple duties:
  - Provide professional support to compensate for the lack of welfare provision
  - Use international frameworks to ensure the fulfilment of social rights
  - Advocate for neglected groups and needs
  - Advocate for policy reforms on behalf of vulnerable groups