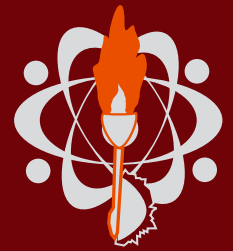


Armenian Association of Women with University Education



**Alternative Report
on the implementation
of the Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women
in the Republic of Armenia
in 2009-2012**

Yerevan 2014

Armenian Association of Women with University Education

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Open Society Foundations - Armenia



Armenian Association of Women
with University Education

The Alternative Report
on the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN *Convention*
on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2009-2012
has been made out within the framework of the Project
Women's political participation and civic initiatives: Prospects
for the achievement of gender equality in Armenia
implemented by the experts
of the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies and Center for Democracy & Peace
with the support of
the Open Society Foundations-Armenia

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and other materials used in the Report.

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Armenian Association of Women
with University Education

«Կանանց նկատմամբ խտրականության բոլոր ձևերի վերացման մասին
ՄԱԿ-ի կոնվենցիայի իրականացումը Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում
2009-2012 թթ. ընթացքում»

ալլընտրանքային զեկույցը

պատրաստվել է

Համալսարանական կրթությամբ կանանց ասոցիացիայի փորձագետների կողմից
**«Կանանց քաղաքական մասնակցությունը և քաղաքացիական նախաձեռնությունները.
զենդերային հավասարությանը հասնելու
հեռանկարները Հայաստանում»**

ծրագրի շրջանակներում

Բաց հասարակության հիմնադրամներ-Հայաստանի աջակցությամբ:

Համալսարանական կրթությամբ կանանց ասոցիացիայի փորձագետները
երախտագիտություն են հայտնում հանրապետության նախարարություններին,
քաղաքական կուսակցություններին և հասարակական կազմակերպությունների
ղեկավարներին և ակտիվիստներին կլոր սեղանին և ֆոկուս խմբերին մասնակցելու
համար, ինչպես նաև բոլոր նրանց, ովքեր տրամադրել են
նյութեր և վիճակագրական տվյալներ

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Նյութերի օգտագործման դեպքում հղումը պարտադիր է:



The Report has been prepared by the following group of experts:

- Dr. Jemma Hasratyan** AAWUE President, Head of the Center for Gender Studies, PhD in Education
- Ms Tamara Hovnatanyan** AAWUE Board member, Political analyst at *Novoye vremya* newspaper, Editor-in-Chief of *Women & Politics* newspaper
- Dr. Lilit Zakaryan** AAWUE Vice-President, Senior research fellow, Institute of History, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, PhD in History
- Ms Gayane Armaghanova** AAWUE Vice-President, President, National Union of Professional Organizations of Healthcare Employees of Armenia
- Dr. Harutyun Marzpanyan** Head of *General Economics* Department, Ijevan branch of Yerevan State University, Doctor of Economics



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Introduction

The UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), which was adopted on December 18, 1979, is a comprehensive document that reflects longstanding efforts on the part of the UN to systematize international legal norms for the protection of women's rights.

Armenia ratified the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* on June 9, 1993. It thereby assumed a vast array of obligations that entailed the implementation of comprehensive measures aimed at eliminating discrimination and ensuring full development and advancement of women in the political, public, economic and cultural life of the country.

The CEDAW is specific in that it makes it incumbent on a State Party to take all appropriate measures to reform profound mental structures and to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women.

Furthermore, accession to the Convention means that a State Party not only declares respect for equal rights of men and women but also takes on a responsibility to ensure equal opportunities for their enjoyment.

The main specific feature of the Convention is that it stipulates for monitoring the State Parties' compliance with its provisions. The existence of the CEDAW Committee as an expert body coordinating the system of monitoring grounded in the Convention does undoubtedly enhance the latter's effectiveness in comparison with other documents that declare gender equality. The necessity of fulfilling the obligations under the Convention is reflected in virtually all subsequent international documents on gender equality, in particular in the Beijing Platform for Action and in the Millennium Development Goals. Armenia endorsed both documents.

In the period that followed the ratification of the Convention by Armenia the country submitted four reports to the CEDAW Committee, the initial report in 1996, the second (period-



ic) one in 1999 and the combined third and fourth periodical reports in 2008 (for the period of 2002-2007). The CEDAW Committee made its Concluding observations to the Government of Armenia's the combined third and fourth periodical reports in 2009. Thus, the next report by the Government covers the period from 2009 through 2012.

According to prevalent practices, in the course of the preparation of their next periodic reports the governments are guided by the Concluding observations and recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee with respect to the previous reports. This approach has been taken in the process of drawing up the present alternative report.

The Committee's observations regarding the Armenia's Reports of 2009 expressed concern about:

- *the absence of effective gender policies and of a gender impact assessment of the legislation and inadequate measures taken by the State to overcome the discriminatory practices that target women,*
- *a wide gap between the legislative norms, which guarantee equality between the sexes, and their implementation as a result of gender-neutral policies,*
- *inadequate awareness on the part of the general public and the Government officials concerning the Convention and the gender equality policies, lack of public awareness of "discrimination against women" and attempts to discredit the idea of gender equality,*
- *ineffectiveness of temporary special measures taken with a view to correcting a gender imbalance in the legislature,*
- *low representation of women in the RoA National Assembly and in local self-government bodies,*
- *underrepresentation of women in decision-making in public administration at all levels and limited influence of women on the country's policies and on the processes in the public and political life of the society,*
- *the absence of the national machinery as an instrument for the elimination of discrimination against women,*
- *prevalence of gender stereotypes in the society and the absence of government's measures to eliminate them,*
- *reproduction of a stereotypical image of women by mass media and the latter's lack of acceptance of the gender equality idea,*



- *horizontal and vertical gender segregation in employment and in the labor market and women's significantly low de facto average wages as compared to those of men,*
- *significantly higher share of women among the officially registered unemployed and women's limited access to loans and resources,*
- *substandard working and living conditions of rural women,*
- *absence of gender-sensitive policies in the field of education, existing risks of decreasing participation of girls in education system and weak leverage of women on the formulation of education policies,*
- *low level of State funding of the health-care sector and limited access to adequate general health-care services for women,*
- *insufficient State measures to combat violence against women, lack of legal and social protection of victims of violence and absence of intolerance of the general public against all forms of violence against women,*
- *the absence of systematic collaboration of State entities with civic groups in promoting gender equality.*

The above issues were given special attention in the course of the preparation of the present report.

The CEDAW Committee also urged the Armenian Government to ensure wide dissemination in Armenia of the said concluding observations and of other international documents that aim at achieving gender equality.

However, the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations have not become a subject for a serious public discussion. They have not merited consideration by the National Assembly and the Government and have not been given due attention by non-governmental organizations. The general public is not aware of them.

The discussions that were held were few and far between and limited either to the initiatives of a close circle of women's organizations that take an interest in the issues or to the involvement of the same organizations in formalistic discussions staged by the Ministries responsible for the preparation of the reports.

The present Alternative Report on the implementation in Armenia of the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* has been drawn up by a group



of experts from the Center for Gender Studies and Center for Democracy & Peace of the Armenian Association of Women with University Education within the framework of the Project *Women's political participation and civic initiatives: Prospects for the achievement of gender equality in Armenia* with the support of the Open Society Foundations-Armenia.

The Report covers the period after the Government's third and fourth combined periodic report, i.e. years 2009-2012 (in some instances the dynamic of the issues is presented including earlier periods).

The Goals of the Report are:

- **independent assessment** of the country's implementation of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* in virtually all key sectors and of the fulfillment of the obligations, and
- **identification of the problems** that impede the implementation of the Convention in the Republic of Armenia, and
- **ascertainment of possible solutions** presented as recommendations for the Armenian National Assembly, Government, other entities of State power, political parties and NGOs so that gender issues are taken into consideration in the legislative practices and gender component is integrated in the Armenian Government's programs aimed to promote gender equality, and for civil society institutions to enhance their efforts to promote gender equality and encourage women's political participation.

Expected Outcomes:

The preparation and open discussion of the Alternative Report will be instrumental in:

- *identifying a real situation of women in the present-day Armenian society and the extent to which their right to participate in all spheres of the country's public and political life is protected,*
- *increasing responsibility of the authorities for the implementation of State gender policies and for the attainment of gender-balanced participation in public administration at the level of political decision-making,*
- *providing recommendations that will help avoid biased interpretations of the existing sit-*



uation of women and will be conducive to the rejection of measures of an imitation nature in the field of elimination of discrimination against women,

- *drawing attention of civil society institutions (political parties, NGOs and mass media) and public at large to the control over the fulfillment of the obligations assumed by Armenia regarding the implementation of the Convention,*
- *supplying the country's non-governmental, primarily women's, organizations with data, facts and tools for the advancement of interests and for the protection of rights of women,*
- *stimulating social partnerships between the authorities and civil society institutions for overcoming discriminatory practices, advancing gender equality and promoting democracy in the country.*

Format of the Report

The preparation of the Alternative Report has been done on the basis of the CEDAW Committee's reporting guidelines and special procedural guides for drawing up periodic and alternative reports¹. The experts also studied the experience of NGOs in a number of countries in the preparation of alternative reports. The format selected from the variety of the existing forms and approaches and modified taking into consideration the specifics of the Armenian situation is in line with the general guidelines for alternative reports. It incorporates three main components:

1. *Introduction. The Country's Profile*
2. *Executive Summary*
3. *Article-by-article analysis with the identification of problem areas in each Article and with the provision of recommendation to various authorities and non-governmental entities as to how discriminatory practices reviewed in the Report can be eliminated.*

Even though the CEDAW does not contain an Article on violence, the authors found it important and advisable to present in the Report the issue of violence against women. The analysis of that issue is presented after Article 16.

¹ See, e.g., recommendations contained in the Procedural Guide prepared by the INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTION WATCH.



Report Preparation Methodology

In selecting the methodology the experts' group followed the CEDAW Committee-established reporting guidelines and the special procedural and format guidelines for NGOs producing official periodic and alternative reports. The selected methodology is grounded in the combination of three components, *viz.* assessment of the situation, article-by-article analysis and thematic approach with a focus on the issues most significant for the country.

While writing out the Alternative Report for the CEDAW Committee, the experts believed it was expedient to make an in-depth analysis of only the key obligations assumed by the country regarding the implementation of the Convention. This approach enabled them to present the *de jure* and *de facto* situations in all areas of concern and to focus on the recommendations for overcoming pernicious practices.

The experts' group took into consideration the CEDAW Committee's observations and recommendations regarding the four previous reports submitted by the Armenian Government. It also relied heavily on the findings of a number of studies conducted within the reporting period by the Armenian Association of Women with University Education as well as of the studies conducted by other NGOs and international organizations and foundations.

The following issues were analyzed in an article-by-article fashion from the perspective of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations:

- *Term “discrimination”*
- *State Parties' commitment to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women*
- *Measures to ensure the advancement of women*
- *Temporary special measures*
- *Modifying the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women*
- *Suppression of all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women*
- *Elimination of discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country*
- *Women's equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality*
- *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of education*
- *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment*



- *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of health care*
- *Economic and social benefits*
- *Elimination of discrimination against rural women*
- *Women's equality with men before the law*
- *Elimination of discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family*
- *Violence against women*

The most detailed analysis is presented regarding the following core issues:

- *national machinery* as a necessary and mandatory condition for exercising control over the implementation of the Convention and for mainstreaming gender into State policies,

- *women's political participation* as an issue of women's underrepresentation in the legislative and the executive branches of government at a level of political decision-making. That underrepresentation minimizes women's opportunities to influence State policies and results in the perpetration of discriminatory practices in all areas of socio-political and socioeconomic life,

- *discrimination against women on the labor market and in employment*, extremely slow unemployment and poverty reduction among women, removal of women from active participation in governing bodies of economic structures and in the processes of the country's socioeconomic development.

While preparing the Report, the experts made use of the data and findings of a number of studies and sociological surveys that had been conducted in 2008-2012 by the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies and the AAWUE Center of Democracy & Peace. The experts had been directly involved both in conducting those studies and surveys and in analyzing the findings.



Armenia: Country Profile

Official name: Republic of Armenia

Territory: 29,740 square kilometers

Population: 3.2 million (as to preliminary results of the Census of 2011), with women constituting 52% and men 48%. 37% of the population reside in rural and 63% in urban communities, with over 35% of the population being residents of the capital city of Yerevan.

Ethnic composition: Armenians – 97%, ethnic minorities include Yezidis, Russians, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews and others.

After independence was declared in 1991, the overall socioeconomic and socio-political situation in the country was determined by the process of systemic reforms aimed to establish a free-market economy and to build a democratic State. The reforms are still underway in the “no war, no peace” situation, which is the result of the Karabakh conflict. The reforms carried out through “shock therapy” exacted a huge social cost from the very beginning manifested in large-scale unemployment, a dramatic growth of material and human poverty, unprecedented expansion of the scope of unearned incomes and corruption, a growing gap between social groups and, ultimately, rapid deterioration of the country’s demographic balance. The most vulnerable groups of the population, including women, have been affected most of all by the social burden of unwelcome changes.

The decade preceding 2008 was characterized by a marked improvement of the country’s macroeconomic indices, by an almost 10% annual economic growth on the average and by a creation of a number of prerequisites that are necessary for raising people’s living standards and quality of life, even though socioeconomic changes were on the whole unfolding according to the “growth without development” scenario. Within those ten years the per capita GDP increased 7-fold (\$ 503 in 1999 and \$ 3,684 in 2008), while the poverty level decreased more than 2-fold (55% in 1999 and 27% in 2008). Nevertheless, most of the results of the economic growth were appropriated by affluent social groups.

The positive momentum of the macroeconomic stabilization did not last into 2008-2012 mostly because of the impact of the global financial and economic crisis and of weak competitiveness of the country’s economy. In the situation of economic stagnation and high inflation employees’ real wages declined, while poverty level went up by almost 10 percentage points (from 24% to 34%). In 2012, the minimum wage in the country was 32,500 AMD (about \$ 80)



and the minimum pension was 10,500 AMD (\$ 26), while the value of the minimum consumer basket was estimated to be over 50,000 AMD. A high level of social insecurity in conjunction with a high level of shadow economy, national currency fluctuations, inadmissibly uneven income distribution, systemic corruption, social atomization, mass-scale emigration and other negative phenomena have placed serious barriers to comprehensive socioeconomic development of Armenia.

A number of important socio-political developments have been unfolding recently in Armenia that may prove fateful for the country's further development. On the one hand, Armenia contemplated membership in the Customs Union. On the other hand, within the framework of the *European Neighborhood Policy* the official negotiations for Armenia to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union had reached the final stage. The focus of those negotiations is, *inter alia*, on the format of cooperation of Armenia with the EU. In line with the obligations assumed by Armenia, the process of reforming the legislative, human rights protection, education and other systems was launched to make them meet the European standards.

In February 2010, the Armenian Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and in May 2013 the RoA National Assembly adopted the *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. Thus, a certain institutional framework is created in the country for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and for the establishment of the national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

In 2012, Armenia ranked 87th out of 186 countries of the world by the UN Human Development Index and 59th by the Gender Inequality Index (GII, which does not take the factor of income into consideration)². While those ranks tend on the whole to indicate a positive view of the gender situation in Armenia, they, however, do not reflect a true state of affairs in a number of important aspects.

² *Human Development Report*, 2013.



Executive Summary

2009-2012

The socioeconomic and socio-political situation in Armenia after the declaration of independence in 1991 was the result of systemic reforms that aimed to build a democratic State and free-market economy.

Even though the reforms that were conducted in line with the ‘shock therapy’ principle and the ‘growth without development’ scenario laid some groundwork for improving the country’s macroeconomic indicators, nevertheless, the results of the economic growth for the most part went to the well-to-do social groups and the national wealth got concentrated in the hands of a group of oligarchs.

The reforms had a high social cost as they were accompanied by mass-scale unemployment, a dramatic growth of material and human poverty, unprecedented expansion of the scale of corruption, and growing social differentiation of the population.

Some positive trends of macroeconomic stabilization of the previous period such as an almost 10% annual economic growth on the average and a 7-fold increase in the per capita GDP did not create the conditions that are necessary for raising the level and quality of people’s life in the subsequent periods in the country’s development.

In 2009-2012, the economic growth rates were not maintained not only because of the impact of the global financial and economic crisis and of weak competitiveness of the country’s economy but also because of a slow increase in the industrial development rates, low effectiveness of agricultural production, growing extent and degree of corruption, the ongoing process of social differentiation of the population that led to growth in unemployment and to higher poverty rates, to male outmigration on an unprecedented scale, to lower birth rates and to social dissatisfaction of population.

Economic stagnation and high inflation rates led to a decrease in real wages of employees, while the poverty level increased. In 2012, the minimal wages in the country was 32,500 AMD (about 30 USD) and the minimum pension was 10,500 AMD (26 USD), while the value of the minimum consumer basket was estimated at over 50,000 AMD. The social burden of effected reforms has had an adverse impact first of all on the most vulnerable groups of the population, including women.

In recent years a number of important events occurred in the political life of Armenia, which can prove fateful for the county’s further development. Within the program of the



European Neighbourhood Policy the official negotiations on Armenia's association with the European Union entered the final stage in 2013. The negotiations focused on defining in greater detail the cooperation format. According to the obligations assumed by Armenia, the process of reforming the legislative, human rights, education and other systems was launched with a view to harmonizing them with the European standards. The attainment of gender equality is included alongside other issues in the activities of the *European Neighbourhood Policy*.

In 2009-2012, the Armenian Government took a number of steps *to carry out* the recommendations provided by the *UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* with regard to Armenia's combined third and fourth periodic reports and *to implement* gender policy and *to improve* gender situation in the country.

In February 2010, the Armenian Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, while on 20 May 2011 it adopted the Protocol Decree № 19 "On approving the "*Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015*", which entails gender mainstreaming of the Government's programs and policies.

In line with the 20 May 2011 RoA Government Decree the standing commissions for the implementation of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and on gender equality were set up in all regions of the country. The commissions are headed by Deputy Regional Heads and are composed of employees of the Regional Governors' offices and of representatives of non-governmental organizations.

In December 2012, the RoA Government amended the Charter of the Women's Council affiliated with the RoA Prime Minister and recommended that the Council be regarded as a national machinery for gender equality.

In May 2013, in line with the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee, the National Assembly adopted the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. In June 2013, the country's President signed the Law, whereupon it took effect.

The *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* is a document that seeks to meet to the maximum extent a number of the requirements of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In particular, the Law introduces the concept of "gender-based discrimination", regulates the issue of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities to women and men in the fields of politics, public administration, labor and employment, entrepreneurship, health care and education and pro-



vides the opportunity and the procedure for protecting citizens from discrimination on the grounds of sex and legal responsibility for discrimination.

The RoA Election Code was amended according to the recommendation of the CEDAW Committee and the gender quota in the political party lists in the RoA parliamentary elections was raised from 15% to 20%. A 20% gender quota was also introduced in the political party lists in the Yerevan City Council elections.

In recent years, with a view to mainstreaming gender into political and public practices and to raising gender awareness the RoA Government together with non-governmental organizations hold annual contests for the Prime Minister's award in the categories "The best urban community and the best rural community in implementing the gender policy," "The best female entrepreneur" and "The best media outlet in providing coverage of gender issues" that aim at eradication of gender stereotypes and at advocacy of non-stereotypical images of women by mass media.

At the same time the Armenian Government failed to implement adequately the recommendations on a number of important articles of the Convention and areas provided by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports.

The amendment of Article 108 of the Election Code to raise the gender quota in the political party lists in the proportional representation elections to the Parliament, which was adopted by the RoA National Assembly in 2011, contains a certain discriminatory approach and does not guarantee the application of that principle to the first 5 candidates who top the list and stand the best chance of being elected. The implementation of the quota during the 2012 parliamentary elections revealed its ineffectiveness as none of the nine political parties running for parliament had a female candidate in the top five places on their lists.

The share of women on the political parties' lists in the elections was 22.8% on an average. However, after the elections the representation of women in the RoA National Assembly was 10.7%, a very small increase from 9.2% after the parliamentary elections of 2007.

The 20 per cent quota set by the Election Code of Armenia was to a certain extent neutralized also by post-election withdrawals.

Gender imbalance in local governments remains a problem for local democracy. The results of local elections held in 2012 demonstrate a low level of women's participation: there were only 43 women (or 3.5%) among 1,237 candidates running for the position of a Head in 638 rural communities.



Women account for 8.6% in local Councils, which are elective bodies. Their representation there increased by merely 2.4% as compared to the 2008 elections.

The representation of women in the Yerevan City Council somewhat increased. 10 women (or 15%) were elected to the City Council in the 2012 local elections.

Women's representation in the position of Heads of rural communities decreased as compared to earlier elections. Out of 866 rural communities only 19 (or merely 2.3%) are headed by women. There is not a single woman in the elective position of a city/town mayor in 48 cities and towns of the country.

There still exists a gender imbalance at the top level of the executive branch of government. In 2013, among 19 Ministers (i.e. in a political position whose holders take part in political decision-making) there were only 2 women: the RoA Minister of Culture and the RoA Minister of Diaspora. There are only 7 women among 66 holders of a discretionary position of a Deputy Minister who have some influence on political decision-making. In regional administrations, there are 2 women out of 22 Deputy Regional Governors and 2 women out of 10 Heads of Office.

Even though the share of women in the top-level positions in the civil service grew from 10.4% in 2007 to 14.0% by 2013, nevertheless, there is not a single woman among the Advisors to the RoA President, while among 6 Advisors to the RoA Prime Minister there is only one woman who deals with health sector. Women still constitute a majority among the low-paid civil servants holding junior positions in the executive branch of government.

The RoA Ministry of Education and Science did not carry out the recommendation made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women “to review all school textbooks to eliminate gender-role stereotypes” and “to implement programmes encouraging girls to enter non-traditional study courses.”

Despite the fact that institutionalization of gender education is designated as a priority of the country's gender policies, the process has been unfolding slowly and involving an insignificant part of students. The RoA Ministry of Education and Science did not built on the experience gained in 2005-2008 in institutionalizing gender education in general secondary schools and in institutions of higher learning.

Even though women account for over 70% of employees in the education system, their low representation in the leadership of government-run higher education institutions and vocational schools results in their limited leverage concerning the formulation and implementation of education policies as a whole.



Despite the fact that the RoA Constitution, the RoA Labor Code and the RoA Law *On State Labor Inspection* enshrine the principle of an equal pay for equal work and prohibit differentiation on the grounds of sex on the labor market and in the field of employment, the average monthly net income of men significantly exceeds that of women virtually in all spheres regardless of type of economic activity or status. In 2012, the average monthly net income of women in this country comprised 59% of men's income, while the average salaries of women constituted 64.4% of men's salaries.

As at 2012, in this country 55.2% of women and 72.1% of men were economically active. Women comprised 48% and men 52% of the total employed population³.

At the beginning of 2013, the number of the officially registered unemployed in the country was 69,400 (including 49,200, or 71%, women),

Even though the general public's perception of the adoption of the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* was on the whole positive, however, quite soon after its adoption it met certain opposition from radical groups with conservative leanings. Those groups used print media, social networks and TV to discredit the Law manipulating the public opinion and presenting the concept of "gender" as advocacy for sex change and as support for sexual perversions aimed to destroy family, which is a traditional national value.

Owing to the lack of adequate efforts to disseminate information to the public at large, some segments of the population accepted uncritically the misinformation about the adopted *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. Furthermore, women's inadequate awareness of the rights under the CEDAW Convention and spelled out in the adopted Law accounts for the fact that not only ordinary citizens but also some female members of parliament, political party activists and journalists ended up among the opponents of that law and who questioned the necessity of the adoption of the gender equality law.

Under the circumstances, with a view to defusing the situation the Armenian Government submitted to the RoA National Assembly a suggestion to remove some gender-related definitions from the Law. This motion further encouraged the "anti-gender group" that started demanding that the law be repealed. Having examined the RoA Government's proposal and discussed the issue with gender experts and NGO sector representatives, the RoA National Assembly's Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs made a decision to review within a year the amendments proposed by the RoA Government.

³ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2013. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2013, pp. 107-108.



In its Concluding observations concerning Armenia's four national reports, the CEDAW Committee mentioned the absence of the national machinery in the country and drew the Government's attention to the necessity of establishing it. The issue of the establishment of a national machinery for the advancement of women is addressed also by the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* and the *Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015*. Nevertheless, so far the national machinery that would meet the requirements of the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 6 and of the Beijing Platform for Action has not been set up yet.

As a result of the absence of the national machinery the implementation of the Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015 and coordination of the operation of the existing institutional mechanisms are ineffective, the strategy of mainstreaming a gender component into political practices is not adequately pursued, gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in power and decision-making are growing, while women's representation in the legislature and in bodies of local democracy remains low. The country's commitments under the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and other UN Conventions are not adequately met.



PART I

Article 1 Term “discrimination”

Problems:

- *Lack of public awareness of “discrimination against women” and attempts to discredit the idea of gender equality*
- *Inadequate awareness of the Convention on the part of the general public and officials*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁴

The Committee regrets the absence of an explicit and comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, both direct and indirect, in line with article 1 of the Convention within the State party’s legislation.

The Committee remains concerned that the provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocol as well as the Committee’s general recommendations, the views adopted on individual communications and inquiries, are not sufficiently known across all the branches of the Government, including the judiciary law enforcement personnel and women themselves.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁵:

⁴ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 10, 11, 12 & 13.*

⁵ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 10, 11, 12 & 13.*



- to enact appropriate national legislation containing prohibition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 and article 2, subparagraph (b) of the Convention, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination;
- to raise awareness with respect to the nature of indirect discrimination and the concept of substantive equality among Government officials, the judiciary and the public;
- to promote knowledge and understanding of the Convention and gender equality through training programmes on the Convention and its Optional Protocol as well as the Committee's general recommendations and the views adopted on individual communications and inquiries, in particular for the judiciary, the legal profession, the police and other law enforcement officials, including Government officials, and political parties;
- to design and implement awareness-raising campaigns targeting women, in order to raise their knowledge of their rights under the Convention and the communication and inquiries procedure provided by its Optional Protocol and thus enhancing their capacities to claim their rights;
- to ensure the wide dissemination in the State party of the present concluding comments in order to make the people, including Government officials, politicians, parliamentarians and women's and human rights organizations, aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure *de jure* and *de facto* equality of women, as well as the further steps that are required in that regard.

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁶

The recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding prohibition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 and article 2, subparagraph (b) of the Convention, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination, are reflected in the national legislation, *viz.* in the *Law of the Republic of Armenia on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* that was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (RoA) on 22 May 2013 and signed by the RoA President on 11 June 2013.

In particular, the Law *introduces* the concept of “gender-based discrimination”, including both direct and indirect discrimination, *prohibits* discrimination, *provides* the opportunity and

⁶ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/*, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 10, 11, 12 & 13.



the procedure for protecting citizens from discrimination on the grounds of sex and *introduces* legal responsibility for discrimination.

However, the “anti-gender campaign,” which was launched in the country in the aftermath of the adoption of the Law and which aimed to discredit the idea of gender equality by spreading misinformation about the Law, showed that the Armenian Government actually failed to fulfill the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the wide dissemination of the concluding observations of the Committee regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia in 2009⁷. Those concluding observations contain a number of recommendations aimed to raise awareness of the officials at all levels of the executive power as well as of the judiciary, leaders and activists of political parties and NGOs regarding the problem of discrimination against women and the issues of gender equality. It turns out that the public at large, including members of parliament, Government officials and politicians, was uninformed about the steps that have been taken by the country to ensure legal and substantive equality of women as well as about further steps that have to be taken to achieve that. The general public is not informed either about the additional available ways to protect their civil rights in line with the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Owing to the lack of adequate efforts to disseminate information to the public at large, some segments of the population takes the misinformation about the adopted Law at its face value. Furthermore, women’s inadequate awareness of the rights under the Convention and spelled out in the adopted *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* accounts for the fact that the group of people who speak out against the Law include not only ordinary women but also women activists of political parties and journalists who question the necessity of the adoption of the law on gender equality.

The current situation concerning the Law is evidence that the problem of the lack of awareness is still pressing. The public opinion polls conducted in recent years support the view that the existence of discrimination against women is not recognized by broad segments of the population, including, not infrequently, by Government officials and that quite a few women are not aware of the discrimination.

The findings of the sociological survey, which was conducted in 2011⁸, demonstrate that even though 46.6% of the respondents admit the existence of discrimination against women in Armenia, 41.1% believe that there is no discrimination, while 12.5% did not have a definitive

⁷ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/* Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 /

⁸ *Gender dimension of civic and political participation in Armenia*. Report on findings of the sociological study. Yerevan: UNFPA & Caucasus Social Studies Center, 2011, p. 40.



opinion. The percentage of those who think that discrimination exists is clearly higher among women than men (49.1% and 43.3% respectively). In the experts' view, the factor of gender is not a definitive predictor, which predetermines the answer to that question⁹ because the differences between women's and men's views are not significant (about 6-7%). Failure to perceive discrimination as a problem is a consequence of inadequate legal knowledge and culture of the society. When asked "In what spheres discrimination against women is manifested to the greatest extent?", the respondents replied: "in the system of political elections" (23.8%), "in the sphere of public administration" (23.7%), "in political parties" (13.6%), "in employment sphere" (11.6%) and "in all spheres" (11.4%).

Similar results regarding the spheres where discrimination manifests itself most visibly were received in earlier studies¹⁰. The comparative analysis demonstrates that within the past 8 years there has been a somewhat positive dynamic in an increase of the number of the respondents who recognize discrimination against women.

In experts' opinion¹¹, the data of recent surveys indicate that there is a clear public perception that discrimination exists in this society and that this problem should be solved. Furthermore, the majority in the society are prepared psychologically and ideologically to consistent implementation of the principle of non-discrimination¹².

Recommendations

To the RoA Government:

- *to ensure measures aimed at raising awareness of the public officials and civil servants about the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and about the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;*
- *to take measures aimed at producing useful publications for general public that explain the principal tenets of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Government's Gender Policy Concept Paper that seeks to ensure the achievement of gender equality and gender-balanced participation of women and men in all spheres of the country's public and political life;*
- *to design and implement measures aimed to raise people's legal awareness and to famil-*

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Political participation in the transition society: Gender equality dimension*. Yerevan: AAWUE, 2006.

¹¹ *Gender dimension of civic and political participation in Armenia*. Report on findings of the sociological study. Yerevan: UNFPA & Caucasus Social Studies Center, 2011, p. 43.

¹² Ibid.



- iarize them, inter alia, with the international legal instruments ratified by Armenia and with the country's international obligations in the field of attaining gender equality;*
- *to use the education system and the system for professional development of civil servants, mass media and civil society institutions to undertake large-scale awareness-raising campaigns addressing the “RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” (which seeks to promote gender equality and parity democracy in the society and to attain social justice and tolerance) with a view to countering the deliberately wrong ideas about gender and gender relations that are circulated in social networks and mass media through manipulation by some individuals;*
 - *to promote the activities of non-governmental organizations aimed to raise women's legal knowledge so as to help them become aware of discriminatory practices and to build their capacity to defend their own rights.*

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to initiate an awareness-raising campaign concerning the goals and objectives of the “RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men”;*
- *to make it a standard practice for the parliamentary standing committees to require periodic reporting by the Government on the implementation of provisions and recommendations of the international legal instruments on gender equality and women's rights protection ratified by Armenia;*
- *to expand and systematize periodic meetings with representatives of the NGO sector to discuss the most topical issues that need to be addressed through legislation;*
- *to conduct periodic meetings and discussions with civil society institutions on current issues of the gender policy and gender equality and to expand collaboration with women's NGOs sector.*

To the NGO sector:

- *to provide expert and logistical support to the Government in conducting an awareness-raising campaign concerning the goals and objectives of the “RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men”;*
- *to expand collaboration with mass media on explaining the goals and objectives of the gender policies of the State.*



Article 2

The country's commitment to conduct the policy of elimination of discrimination

Problems:

- *Lack of awareness on the part of the general public and the Government officials concerning the gender equality policies*
- *Inadequate measures taken by the State to overcome the discriminatory practices that target women*
- *A wide gap between the legislative norms, which guarantee equality between the sexes, and their implementation*
- *The absence of a gender impact assessment of the legislation; prevalence of gender-neutral wording in legal documents and programs.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia¹³

The Committee is concerned that the principle of equality between women and men has not been expressly articulated in the State party's legislation, in accordance with article 2, subparagraph (a) of the Convention.

The Committee expresses concern at the lack of express and comprehensive legal provisions prohibiting discrimination against women, and at the State party's preference for gender-neutral policies and programmes,

The Committee is concerned that there is no case law where the Convention is used.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee urges the State party:

- *to accelerate the adoption of the proposed law on gender equality and to embody the principle of equality of women and men in the proposed law on gender equality, in line with article 2 (a);*
- *to adopt a gender specific approach in its policies and programmes;*

¹³ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 10, 11, 12 & 13; 38-42).*



- to establish an ongoing process of regular consultation and collaboration with non-governmental organizations on matters relating to the implementation of the Convention and on all issues pertaining to the promotion of gender equality be ensured, including in regard to the follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments and in the preparation of future reports;
- to ratify the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

In 2009-2013, the Armenian Government took a number of measures aimed to implement the Committee's recommendations on the implementation of the gender policies in the country.

In February 2010, the Armenian Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*.

On 20 May 2011, the Armenian Government adopted the Protocol Decree № 19 "On approving the 'Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015'," which entails gender mainstreaming of programs and policies.

From 2011 on, the Armenian Government approves annual programs of activities for the implementation of the RoA gender policy and publishes reports on earlier programs.

The RoA National Institute of Labor & Social Studies provides gender education to medium- and lower-level civil servants within the framework of professional development courses.

In October 2012, the Armenian Government published the Guidebook *Gender sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators*. The National Statistical Service issues annually a publication with sex-disaggregated data *Women and men in Armenia*.

In 2009, in line with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues of the Republic of Armenia set up with the support of the UN Development Programme a group of experts to draft the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. The group consisted of a member, experts and a Deputy Head of the Legal Department of the RoA National Assembly, a Head of the International Legal Relations Division of the RoA Ministry of Justice, a Head of the Department of the National Institute of Labor & Social Studies of the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues and experts from NGOs.

Discussions of the Draft Law were held in all 10 regions of the country and in the city of



Yerevan with the participation of broad segments of the population. Discussions were also held in all the Ministries of the Republic of Armenia. In addition, a parliamentary hearing was conducted with active participation of civil society representatives.

Women's NGOs had been actively stressing the necessity of the adoption of this Law. They demonstrated an intense interest and activism in the course of the discussions and proposed some amendments to the text of the Draft Law. The Draft *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* also received positive reviews by international experts.

Even though the number of amendments made by the Armenian Government to the text of the Draft Law weakened it in terms of the mechanisms to secure gender equality and even though the changes proposed by NGOs in the aftermath of the adoption of the law in the first reading were rejected, its adoption, nevertheless, was to become an important milestone in the attainment of gender equality in the country.

The Armenian Government submitted the Draft *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* to the National Assembly in late 2011. It went through all three stages of review in the National Assembly and was eventually adopted in May 2013. The Armenian President signed the Law on 11 June 2013.

The law is the document that incorporated to the maximum extent the CEDAW Committee's recommendations regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia, took into consideration the Committee's concerns relating to the earlier report and reflects a number of the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In particular, the Law:

- introduces the concept of "gender-based discrimination" into the legislation,
- prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex,
- introduces the concepts of direct and indirect discrimination into the legislation,
- provides the opportunity and the procedure for protecting citizens from discrimination on the grounds of sex,
- introduces legal responsibility of officials and employers for discrimination,
- contributes to the development of culture of gender equality and to the elimination of gender stereotypes that underlie discriminatory practices,
- outlines the spheres, framework and timeline for the use of temporary special measures aimed to redress a gender imbalance,
- codifies the necessity to establish national machinery for gender equality, and
- makes provisions for the monitoring and reporting mechanism concerning the implementation of gender policies.

The *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*



regulates the issue of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities to women and men in the fields of politics, public administration, labor and employment, entrepreneurship, health care, education, etc.

Even though the general public's perception of the adoption of the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* was on the whole positive, however, quite soon after its adoption it met certain opposition from radical groups with conservative leanings. Those groups interpreted, albeit groundlessly, the concept of gender as advocacy for the sex change and for sexual perversions and demanded that the Law be recalled.

The *campaign* launched against the Law as well as the *attempts* to manipulate the public opinion with regard to “gender,” “gender equality” and related terms demonstrated the lack of awareness on the part not only of the general public but also of some members of the Armenian Parliament, government officials, politicians and public figures concerning the existing problem and the necessity to eliminate discrimination against women, to attain gender equality in the country and to fulfill international obligations assumed by the State, including the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW).

Inadequate awareness of the public at large regarding the goals of the country's gender policies and the international legal instruments ratified and the programs approved by Armenia jeopardized the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* and provided fertile soil for dissemination of misinformation with a view to discrediting the Law and to obstructing its implementation. Within the framework of the so-called *All-Armenian Parent Committee* the *Anti-Gender Group* started disseminating through social networks and some media outlets the materials that discredit the Law as well as leaders of some NGOs that have been dealing with gender issues, gender education and gender awareness-raising of the population for many years. In the Manifesto issued by the *All-Armenian Parent Committee* the *Anti-Gender Group* not only threatened them with “exposing” their activities through mass media but also with physical violence.

Women's NGOs and their leaders who had been actively lobbying for the adoption of the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, engaging in advocacy for the Government's *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and promoting the implementation of gender equality principle in the society were subjected to severe criticism.

The State entities, including law-enforcement agencies charged with putting an end to threats made to NGO leaders and to statements deliberately discrediting leaders of NGOs, first of all women's NGOs, did nothing to contain the activities of the Anti-Gender Group that launched a smear campaign through print and electronic media against the above-mentioned Law, manipulating and presenting the concept of “gender” as support for sexual perversions aimed to destroy family, which is a traditional national value.

The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the Armenian Government submitted



to the RoA National Assembly a suggestion, as a compromise, to remove the definition of “gender”¹⁴ from the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. Rather than solving the problem the proposed amendment aggravated it because it gave an opportunity to the group, which opposes the Law, to manipulate various unofficial documents and to demand that the Law be abolished.

The existing situation demonstrated that only a narrow circle of government officials, who are responsible for the implementation of the gender policies, experts and representatives of women’s NGOs, are aware of the documents adopted by the Armenian Government.

A number of women’s NGOs shared a view that the Armenian Government’s decision was hasty and did not remove the necessity to elucidate the meaning of the term “gender,” to conduct a wide-scale awareness-raising campaign concerning gender policies and **to explain the necessity of attaining gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development and elimination of gender-based discrimination.**

It turned out that members of the Armenian Parliament and those government officials who are responsible for the implementation of the gender policies were not ready to explain those policies.

Even though the Armenian Government made a provision requiring introduction of a gender impact assessment of legislation, yet not all the draft laws submitted to the National Assembly are subjected to the said gender impact assessment in advance.

The government officials, who are responsible for drafting laws and drawing up development programs, have not sufficiently mastered the methods of mainstreaming gender into political practices and into legislation.

The real practices do not match the broad rights of women that are codified in legal norms. The mismatch between the rights and opportunities is a main obstacle to ensuring equality to women and their protection from discriminatory practices.

In its Concluding observations relating to previous Armenian reports the CEDAW Committee noted the absence of precedents of using the provisions of the Convention in the country’s court practices for the protection of women’s rights. However, the heads of the judiciary took no step in that direction. Within the reporting period there has not been a single precedent in court practices of protecting women and men from discrimination in line with the CEDAW Convention and other international legal instruments ratified by Armenia.

Under Article 143 (“Breach of citizens’ legal equality”) in Chapter “Crimes against constitutional human rights and freedoms of citizens” of the RoA Criminal Code, discrimination on a large number of grounds, including on the grounds of sex, is punishable with a fine or with imprisonment for up to

¹⁴ *Gender* is an acquired, socially constructed behavior of individuals of both sexes, a social aspect of the relations between women and men, which is reflected in all spheres of public life, including politics, economy, law, ideology, culture, education, science and health care.



2 years or, in case of individuals abusing an official position - with imprisonment for 2 to 5 years.

In investigation and court practices the cases of discrimination against women are virtually non-existent and the legal culture regarding this issue has not been developed yet. The only exceptions are cases when severe harm has been caused to health or when victims of domestic violence die.

Bridging the gap in legal awareness of general public, women's non-governmental organizations provide some support to women in legal matters. As evidenced by the practice, women turn for legal assistance primarily with regard to *family problems* (dissolution of marriage, awarding of alimony, etc.), recognition of property ownership as well as employment- and pension-related problems. NGOs that deal with violence against women undertake quite large-scale activities aimed to raise legal awareness and to provide women with legal advice and attorney services for free. Information about the international legal instruments that aim to protect women's rights is also disseminated primarily through efforts put forth by women's NGOs.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to consider the rejection of the proposed amendments to the RoA "Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men" because those discredit gender policies and gender terminology;*
- *to initiate activities aimed to explain goals and objectives of the RoA "Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men."*

To the RoA Government and the RoA National Assembly:

- *to establish expert groups with a view to ensuring a gender impact assessment of laws at the time of their drafting and mainstreaming gender into medium-term development programs;*
- *to support special information and awareness-raising campaigns targeting the implementation of the RoA "Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men;"*
- *to take measures aimed to raise awareness of government officials at all levels about the country's gender policies and about the ideology of gender equality.*

To the country's judiciary:

- *to set precedents for using the provisions of the CEDAW Convention in court practices when hearing gender-based discrimination claims.*



Article 3

Measures to ensure the advancement of women

Problems:

- *The absence of the national machinery for the advancement of women as an instrument for the elimination of discrimination against women*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia¹⁵

While welcoming the establishment in 2002 of the Department of Women's, Family and Children's Issues (within the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues), the Committee regrets the lack of an adequate structure of a national machinery for the advancement of women in the State party.

The Committee is concerned at the lack of visibility and political recognition of the Department of Women's, Family and Children's Issues and in particular its limited capacities to efficiently promote, coordinate, monitor and evaluate national gender equality programmes and policies.

The Committee also notes with concern that the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) does not have a specific division dealing with gender equality.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia¹⁶

- *The Committee reminds the State party of its responsibility to fully ensure Government accountability for gender equality and women's enjoyment of their human rights in the implementation of the Convention;*
- *The Committee refers to the guidance provided in its general recommendation No. 6 and in the Beijing Platform for Action on national machinery for the advancement of women, and urges the State party to enact a gender equality bill which would establish a national machinery for the advancement of women with necessary financial*

¹⁵ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 18 and 19.*

¹⁶ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 18 and 19.*



- and human resources for the effective implementation of gender-mainstreaming strategy in all governmental policy areas, including during the process of review of all new legislation by the Constitutional Court as well as within the budgeting process;*
- *The Committee also calls upon the State party to establish within the office of the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) a specific position charged with ensuring gender equality.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

In line with the CEDAW Committee's recommendations concerning the 3rd and 4th periodic reports a position of the advisor to the Ombudsman on issues related to ensuring gender equality was instituted in the office of the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman). That gives additional opportunities for protection of women against discrimination and domestic violence.

The necessity of the establishment of a national machinery for the advancement of women is reflected in the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* and in the *Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015*.

In line with the February 2010 Protocol decision of the RoA Government "On approving the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*" the RoA Minister of Labor and Social Issues was tasked with coordination of gender policies in the country.

Following the 20 May 2011 RoA Government Decree, standing commissions for the implementation of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and on gender equality were set up in all regions of the country. The commissions are headed by Deputy Regional Heads and are composed of *employees* of the Regional Governors' offices and of *representatives* of non-governmental organizations.

Efforts are currently put forth to energize the commissions set up in the country's regions and to better specify their competences. There is a clear need to make members of those commissions more knowledgeable in the field of gender. To that end the assessments of the operation of those commissions is done with the support from international donors, in particular, UNICEF. Targeted educational programs to be conducted by gender experts from the NGO sector are planned for commission members.

In December 2012, the RoA Government amended the Charter of the Women's Council affiliated with the RoA Prime Minister and recommended that the Council be regarded as a national machinery for gender equality.

At the same time the Women's Council, which was established back in 2001, does not meet the criteria set for the national machinery by the CEDAW Committee General



Recommendation № 6¹⁷ and by the Beijing Platform for Action¹⁸. The powers of the Women's Council are not sufficiently broad to effectively perform functions of the national machinery and to respond promptly and flexibly to various sociopolitical processes that are related to implementation of gender policies or that require elucidation.

Thus, during the anti-gender campaign that was launched in July 2013 and that aimed to discredit the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* adopted by the RoA Parliament in May 2013 the Women's Council did not take any steps to explain the goals and objectives of the Law and to present the official point of view. Neither did it publicly speak out against the wrongful actions, attacks and manipulations regarding gender terminology thereby demonstrating incompetence as national machinery for gender equality. Besides, the Women's Council failed not only to issue a statement in support of the Law but also to take measures to defend the rights of women's NGOs and of their leaders who faced harsh criticisms and threats made by those who opposed the use of the term "gender" as well as the *gender equality Law*.

The lack of adequate understanding of national machinery is still not a rare occurrence in Armenia and clear distinction is not always made between the national machinery and institutional mechanisms. None of the existing entities formulates and implements the gender policy of the State in full, monitors and coordinates the activities of the regional bodies set up in this field, evaluates their activities aimed to attain gender equality and to mainstream gender into the country's political practices and legislation or engages in proactive efforts to prevent discrimination.

As a result of the absence of the national machinery:

- a) *the commitments under the CEDAW and other UN Conventions are not adequately met;*
- b) *the drafting of relevant laws and submission of international legal instrument for ratification is not initiated in a timely fashion;*
- c) *gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in power and decision-making and in women's representation in the legislative and executive branches of power becomes even more accentuated;*
- d) *women's representation in local governments is extremely low;*

¹⁷ According to the Recommendation, the national machinery must: (a) Advise on the impact on women of all government policies; (b) Monitor the situation of women comprehensively; and (c) Help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination. See: CEDAW Committee. *General Recommendation No. 6* "Effective National Machinery and Publicity" (seventh session, 1988). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/index.html>.

¹⁸ National machinery is defined in the Beijing Platform for Action as "the central policy-coordinating unit inside government." It has to be located at the highest possible level in the Government, falling under the responsibility of a Cabinet minister. The machinery has to have adequate powers and competence, including the "opportunity to influence development of all government policies." See Beijing Platform for Action, para. 201, especially sub-para. (a) and (d).



- e) *the implementation of the Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015 is not effective;*
- f) *the strategy of mainstreaming a gender component into the legislation and political practices is not adequately pursued;*
- g) *the gender dynamic is not monitored and the emergence of problematic situations is not identified;*
- h) *efforts to use the expert potential of independent and government-run research centers, higher education institutions, NGOs, etc. for the formulation and implementation of gender policies are not sufficiently effective;*
- i) *the coordination of activities of the existing institutional mechanisms is not effective.*

The institutional mechanisms in this country encounter such serious problems as:

- the focus only on the problems of motherhood, women's health and social security, without paying adequate attention to issues of women's participation in political and economic spheres at the level of power and control over the execution of decisions;
- marginalization of the mechanisms in the overall configuration and arrangement of government entities; they are "ghettoized" in the social sphere and in the sphere of social security; the tendency of moving them into the decision-making entities is non-existent;
- some government officials who make decisions do not recognize the significance and importance of gender equality;
- insufficiently clear mandate and functions of the existing institutional mechanisms; substitution of imitational mechanisms for institutional mechanisms;
- the lack of adequate potential and resources for conducting studies, monitoring and full-fledged gender expert assessment;
- inadequacy of financial and human resources that leads to certain dependence on technical, financial and programmatic assistance of international donors;
- weak links between the existing mechanisms with non-governmental organizations.

The results of the study of the operation of institutional mechanisms in Armenia that is currently conducted by a group of experts with the support from UNICEF will be instrumental in making recommendations concerning the structure and improved operation of the national machinery and institutional mechanisms on gender equality.

Recommendations

- **To request the RoA President to consider establishing a position** of an Advisor to the RoA President on gender policy and on ensuring gender equality;



- To set up in the Public Council affiliated with the RoA President the Committee on gender policy & on ensuring equality between women and men in all spheres of public and political life of the country, while assigning demographic issues to a separate committee.

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to consider the establishment of a sub-committee on gender equality and gender assessment of legislation within the framework of the Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs;*
- *when the RoA Law on Local Self-Government is amended – to recommend the establishment of Committees on gender issues and gender mainstreaming of 4-year development programs in bodies of urban and rural self-government;*
- *to amend the RoA Law on Human Rights Ombudsman establishing a position of a Deputy RoA Ombudsman on issues of ensuring gender equality (thereby replacing the existing position of “an advisor on women’s issues”).*

To the RoA Government:

- *to establish an effective national machinery within the RoA Government, which will become the Central entity for formulation and implementation of gender policies and which will coordinate the operation of all institutional mechanisms;*
- *to establish a position of an Advisor to the RoA Prime Minister on gender policy and on ensuring gender equality;*
- *to establish closer control over the fulfillment of the international obligations assumed by Armenia;*
- *to set up Gender policy commissions in all Ministries and State Committees, which will be headed by the Chief of Staff or by a Deputy Minister (or by a Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee);*
- *to set up a Gender policy commission in all Regional Governors’ Offices to be headed by a Deputy Regional Governor; to establish a full-time position of a Commission Secretary with a view to making the operation of the commissions effective;*
- *to establish a Commission on gender policy and on attaining gender equality in all urban bodies of local self-government and to appoint the Chief of Staff of Town Halls as a Chairperson of the Commission;*
- *to set up a research center on gender equality issues as an independent entity in the system of the National Academy of Sciences for studying and monitoring a whole range of issues related to gender mainstreaming of legislation and political practices.*



Article 4

Temporary special measures

Problems:

- *Ineffectiveness and limited nature of temporary special measures that were taken in the country with a view to correcting a gender imbalance in the legislature.*
- *The absence of the mechanism of temporary special measures that would seek to increase women's representation in decision-making in the executive branch of government and in local governments as well as in the system of civil service.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia¹⁹

The Committee is concerned that a 15 per cent quota for women set by the Election Code has been ineffective.

The Committee is further concerned that no other temporary special measures have been utilized by the State party as a matter of general policy to accelerate the achievement of the de facto equality between women and men in all areas of the Convention or to improve the situation of women's rights, in particular with regard to women in the workplace and the participation of women in politics.

The Committee is also concerned at the apparent lack of understanding of the concept of temporary special measures, as stipulated in article 4(1) of the Convention and further explained in the Committee's general recommendation No. 25.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee calls upon the State party:

- *to provide for specific legislation for the implementation of temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's*

¹⁹ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 16 and 17.*



General Recommendation No. 25 in order to accelerate the realization of women's de facto equality with men in all areas;

- *to expedite the process to amend the Election Code to raise the 15 per cent quota, and consider raising it beyond the proposed 20 per cent.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men that was adopted in May 2013 states the necessity to apply legal and logistical measures as well as temporary special measures to ensure gender equality.

The recommendations made by women's non-governmental organizations to get those mechanisms outlined in greater detail and to apply the quota principle in public administration and local governments and in civil service were rejected during the discussion of the Draft law. The lack of clarity will definitely make the implementation of the provisions contained in the Law more difficult. Therefore, it is premature to think that the Committee's recommendation to legislate temporary special measures "as a matter of general policy to accelerate the achievement of the de facto equality between women and men in all areas of the Convention" has been implemented in its entirety.

The issue of introduction of specific measures to increase women's representation in decision-making in the executive branch of government and in local governments as well as in the system of civil service has not been yet addressed by legislation. It tends to confirm once again the point made by the Committee that the idea of temporary special measures is not always understood adequately²⁰ and that the State party may fail provide adequate explanations and may justify its approaches through predominant market or political forces, such as those inherent in the private sector, private organizations, or political parties.

States parties do not necessarily distinguish clearly between temporary special measures taken to accelerate the achievement of a concrete goal for women of de facto or substantive equality, and other general social policies adopted to improve the situation of women and the girl child²¹.

Special privileges granted by the national legislation to pregnant women and mothers in the sphere of employment and to women serving their sentences in penal institutions may not be regarded as temporary special measures because they are of a permanent nature.

²⁰ *General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20> (English).pdf

²¹ *General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20> (English).pdf



The mechanisms that would contribute to increasing women's participation in local elections and in public administration have not been designed yet. The *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* states the necessity of increasing women's representation in all spheres of public life. However, the proposed measures to achieve that are limited merely to informational and educational activities in support of women's leadership, although such efforts are a necessary but not sufficient measure for obtaining a definitive outcome. The quota principle is secured by legislation only for the parliamentary elections and the municipal elections for the Armenian capital, the city of Yerevan, in the proportional representation elections.

The Armenian Election Code also lays down the quota principle for women's representation in the Central and Regional Electoral Commissions that secures a critical mass (30.5%) of women among members of the Regional Electoral Commissions²². At the same time, women account for no more than 16% of the leadership of those commissions.

The recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to consider amending the Election Code of the Republic of Armenia to raise the gender quota beyond the proposed 20 per cent in the parliamentary elections was implemented only partially²³.

The provision to increase a gender quota for the political parties' lists in the parliamentary proportional representation elections was passed by the RoA National Assembly in 2011 with the following wording: "The number of representatives of each gender must not exceed the 80% of each integer group of five candidates (2-6, 2-11, 2-16 and subsequently till the end of the list) starting from the second number of the electoral list."²⁴

Even though the Code strove for a gender-neutral wording, the Article, nevertheless, contains a discriminatory norm that rules out the application of the above principle to the first five candidates on the list who stand the best chance of being elected.

It is of concern that despite the absence of discriminatory norms in the Armenian legislation the wording of the gender quota in the Election Code contains a discriminatory approach because it limits the opportunity for women to be at the top of the political parties' list in the proportional elections.

²² *Election Code of the Republic of Armenia*, Articles 40 & 41.

²³ The opinion of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about inadequacy of the existing quotas is supported in light of the fulfillment of the obligations assumed by Armenia within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. According to the 2010 Armenian National Report on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the share of women among members of Parliament, Regional Governors, Ministers and Deputy Ministers was to reach, in line with the targets within MDG 3, at least 25% by 2015. However, as to the 2010 data, that share did not exceed 7%. Therefore, the experts stated in the Report that the 15 per cent quota set by the Election Code for women's representation in the political parties' lists was insufficient to secure a 25 per cent representation of women at a decision-making level.

²⁴ *Election Code of the Republic of Armenia*, Article 108.



The implementation of the quota during the 2012 parliamentary elections revealed its ineffectiveness. The studies demonstrated that none of the nine political forces running for parliament had a female candidate in the top five places on their lists²⁵.

Having increased the gender quota in the Election Code to 20% and having increased the share of women on their lists to an average of 22.8%, less than a half of women nominated by the parties were eventually included in their groups in the parliament. After the 2012 parliamentary elections the women's representation in the National Assembly is merely 10.67%. Thus, the 20 per cent quota set by the Election Code to increase women's representation was to a certain extent neutralized because of intra-party reshuffles and withdrawals, with their motives for the most part unknown to the society at large. The studies²⁶ demonstrated that the mechanism introduced by the legislation with a view to assisting women was not up to the task.

Women's organizations recommended to raise the quota to 30% and to alternate male and female candidatures on the party lists, starting from the top of the list. Those recommendations, however, were rejected. The proposal to maintain quota in case of withdrawal, i.e. to transfer a MP mandate to the next woman on the party list when the elected female MP gives it up, was not accepted either.

The necessity to raise the quota of women's representation in the RoA National Assembly is supported by the findings of the surveys conducted in this country. Thus, according to the findings of the survey conducted back in 2008 by the RoA National Institute of Labor & Social Studies²⁷, when asked: "How many women, do you think, should be in the Parliament?" 85.5% of the respondents indicated 20% to 50%. The findings point out to a dramatic mismatch between societal expectations and women's actual representation in the Armenian Parliament.

The findings of the surveys probing public attitudes to quotas for women demonstrate the number of the respondents who favor the use of quotas tends to grow. 43% of the respondents in 2008²⁸ and 57.2% in 2011 expressed a positive attitude towards quotas in politics and public administration. Thus, the society at large is on the whole more progressive and less conservative than the greater part of the political "elite."²⁹

Experts claim that there exists a substantial potential of social support for the policy of advancement towards gender balance in the legislature and at all levels of public administration.

According to the respondents, the optimal representation of women is 36.55% in the

²⁵ *Women's political participation in the 2012 parliamentary elections*. Yerevan: AAWUE, 2012.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Causes of women's underrepresentation in decision-making*. Yerevan: RoA National Institute of Labor & Social Studies, 2008.

²⁸ *Gender dimension of civic and political participation in Armenia*. Report on findings of the sociological study. Yerevan: UNFPA & Caucasus Social Studies Center, 2011.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 49.



Parliament, 32.73% in the Government, 24.70% among Regional Governors, 25.87% among mayors in cities and towns and 25.21% among Heads of rural communities.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to consider raising the quota for balanced representation of women on the political party lists in the proportional representation elections (as prescribed by the RoA Election Code) to at least 30 per cent so as to ensure a critical mass of women in the legislature;*
- *to amend Article 108 of the RoA Election Code so as to prevent women's "voluntary" withdrawal of their candidatures and to ensure that women's representation in the RoA National Assembly is in line with the gender quota set by the law³⁰;*
- *to discuss an issue of adopting a proportional representation system in urban local governments with a view to correcting a gender imbalance in urban municipalities.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to consider the introduction of temporary special measures to support women in competitive selection and appointments of officials to top positions in the executive branch of power.*

To Political Parties:

- *to apply a gender-balanced approach when drawing up political party lists and when distributing mandates after the elections;*
- *to establish mechanisms for promoting women to political parties' leadership;*
- *to design a system for preparing a pool of eligible women for nomination;*
- *to take measures to ensure a gender-balanced nominations to political offices with a view to attaining a critical mass in terms of women's representation in power;*
- *to expand the sharing of the lessons learned with other countries' political parties that have a successful experience of attaining a gender balance and of using temporary special measures for the advancement of women.*

To Mass Media:

- *to conduct campaigns to explain the necessity of the use of temporary special measures with a view to correcting a gender imbalance in the executive and legislative branches of government.*

³⁰ The agenda of women's NGOs of the country includes two approaches aimed to preserve the gender quota: to establish a gender quota for political party groups represented in the Parliament or to include a provision stipulating that in case of elected woman's withdrawal of their candidatures she will be replaced by the next woman on the political party list.



Article 5

Modifying the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women

Problems:

- *Prevalence of gender stereotypes in the society.*
- *The absence of government's measures to eliminate gender stereotypes and sexism.*
- *Reproduction of a stereotypical image of women by mass media.*
- *Lack of acceptance of the gender equality idea on the part of mass media.*
- *Deliberate and manipulative distortion of the essence of gender equality by mass media.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia³¹

The Committee reiterates its concern about the deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes subordinating women and the strong stereotypes regarding their roles and responsibilities in the family and society expressed in its previous concluding observations (A/57/38).

These attitudes and stereotypes present a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are a root cause of women's disadvantaged position in political life, the labour market, education and other areas.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia³²:

- *to take urgent measures, in particular in rural areas, to initiate change in the widely accepted subordination of women and the stereotypical roles applied to both sexes,*
- *to initiate and conduct awareness-raising and educational campaigns targeting, inter alia, officials, rural community leaders, teachers, parents, and young girls and boys, in accordance with the obligations under articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention,*
- *to elaborate the role of the media in eradication of such stereotypes including by encouraging the journalists who promote non-stereotypical and positive images of women and the value of gender equality for society as a whole.*

³¹ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 20 and 21 .*

³² *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 10, 11, 12 & 13.*



Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

Within the framework of the *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* a number of goals and objectives were set that aim to promote gender equality policies, elimination of gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices through gender education and raising public awareness, including via mass media.

At the same time despite the fact that institutionalization of gender education is designated as a priority of the country's gender policies, the process has been unfolding slowly and encompasses only an insignificant part of the students. The process of raising gender awareness of the public at large is absent and has yet to be systematized. Imparting gender knowledge and shaping civic responsibility of school and university students have not yet become a priority in the education system. The education system is not focused on helping students internalize norms and principles of gender equality and on shaping their civic responsibility.

The task of shaping an active citizen and of enhancing women's leadership potential has been undertaken by non-governmental organizations, in particular women's NGOs, that have been making great efforts to shape women's active civic stance and mentality that gives due consideration to State interests, to develop skills of organizational activities and to enhance their willingness to contribute to eradication of gender stereotypes prevalent in this society and to change the views of the "natural mission" of women in the Armenian society.

Armenian Association of Women with University Education has undertaken to introduce gender courses in 12 universities and gender knowledge classes in 32 high schools with the support of the Ministry of Education & Science.

A considerable amount of activities targeting the enhancement of women's leadership potential and civic activism has been undertaken since 2000 by the *Women's Leadership School* of the Armenian Association of Women with University Education. The main focus of the *Women's Leadership School* is to raise gender awareness and to enhance women's leadership potential. Using it as a model, a number of other women's NGOs set up similar women's leadership schools that provide gender education to NGO activists and to journalists within the format of the School or special seminars.

With a view to mainstreaming gender into the political and public practices and raising gender awareness the State and non-governmental organizations hold a number of contests aimed to eliminate gender stereotypes and to promote a non-stereotypical image of women by media.

In recent years the Armenian Government holds annual contests for the Prime Minister's award in the categories "The best urban community and the best rural community in imple-



menting the gender policy,” “The best female entrepreneur” and “The best media outlet in providing coverage of gender issues.”

In the last 5 years the British Council with the support from the UK Embassy in the Republic of Armenia and the OSCE Yerevan Office and a number of international organizations held an annual contest Na/Né for the best media portrayal of women.

Armenian Young Women’s Association in cooperation with Oxfam-Armenia holds an annual contest to select “Women - heroines in agriculture.”

The UNFPA Armenia Country Office initiated a contest of journalists’ coverage of the issue of sex-selective abortions in Armenia.

Even though the contests have become an effective instrument to combat stereotypes, contribute to advocacy of a non-stereotypical image of women and motivate journalists to provide coverage of gender issues, nevertheless, the formulation of a gender-sensitive policy in media remains a serious and topical problem.

The analysis of media demonstrates that most journalists, including those who promote the images of successful women, do not have sufficient knowledge to be active actors in advocacy of the State gender policies and of the gender equality ideology. Serious flaws still exist in training and professional development of journalists in this country. Gender education for journalists is provided only in several universities either as elective courses or in master degree’s studies.

The journalists’ lack of solid knowledge and firm convictions was revealed most clearly during the campaign that was launched in social networks in August-September 2013 against the *Law of the Republic of Armenia on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* that was adopted by the RoA National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on in May 2013 and signed by the RoA President in June 2013. Deliberately distorting the State policy aimed to attain gender equality in the society and presenting the gender ideology as “the policies aimed against the traditional national values and at destroying the Armenian family,” a group of individuals demanded that the Law be abolished.

The methods used within the framework of the anti-gender campaign that targeted the Law are essentially gross violations of the RoA *Law of the Republic of Armenia on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* that explicitly prohibits dissemination of information that discredits the idea of gender equality. Nevertheless, in the course of the counter-propaganda the public is purposefully given misinformation which seeks to sway public opinion in favor of traditional patriarchal views about the role and place of women. The campaigners deny the existence of gender stereotypes, discrimination and violence against women and attack women’s rights.

Even though this Law emphasizes the necessity to develop and promote the culture of gender equality, to disseminate via media the materials advocating the idea of gender equality and



to protect the society from the propaganda against gender equality, it turns out that the media community on the whole was not prepared to put forth counter arguments based on the gender policy of the State and explain the goals and objectives of that policy.

Furthermore, even though the reproduction of gender stereotypes via media, culture and education is, according to the Law, a manifestation of indirect discrimination, the legislation does not provide real levers to combat the propaganda of discriminatory practices in print media and, especially, in social networks.

The campaign that sought to affect the public opinion in favor of traditional patriarchal views of the role and place of women was carried on during the parliamentary, presidential and local elections that were held in the country. Over that period numerous manifestations of sexism towards women were registered. However, they did not trigger a proper reaction of the public at large, relevant law-enforcement entities, political parties and NGOs.

The practices of combating sexism in advertising and media are non-existent in the country. The State bodies do not monitor the situation with manifestations of sexism and do not react to them.

The Ethics Commission of the RoA National Assembly did not react to the sexist comments made by one of the presidential candidates³³ who targeted women running in the parliamentary elections and who questioned the women's right to engage in politics.

That *prevalence* of patriarchal views in the society on the subordinate role of women and *persistence* of stereotypes regarding women's role and place in the society are a problem was once again confirmed during the research on sex-selective abortions. Prevalence of such abortions landed Armenia among the countries with a serious imbalance in the newborns' sex ratio. According to the studies³⁴ conducted by the National Statistical Service with the support from the UNFPA Armenia Country Office, one of the main reasons for the imbalance are patriarchal prejudices, which tend to strongly favor boys over girls. In the experts' estimate, the practice of sex-selective abortions proves that in the eyes of the society women have lesser value than men, which is a manifestation of discrimination.

The role of mass media in the reproduction of stereotypical attitudes has become a topic of a number of studies as well as of the monitoring of media within the last two years³⁵.

³³ Vardan Sedrakian, a candidate in the 2013 presidential elections.

³⁴ *Sex imbalances at birth in Armenia: Demographic evidence and analysis*. Yerevan, 2013. *Prevalence of and reasons for sex-selective abortions in Armenia*. Yerevan, 2012.

³⁵ Gender monitoring of media on the following topics: *Woman's image in representations of the Armenian media*, 2011, *Media coverage of gender issues*, 2010 ("ProMedia-Gender" NGO with support from UNFPA); *Woman's image in Armenian advertisements* (Research group of grantees of the Open Society Foundations-Armenia); *Woman's image in Armenian TV series* (Center for European Studies, Yerevan State University); *Stay clear of stereotypes* (NGO "Society without Violence" with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).



According to the findings of the studies and of the monitoring of media conducted within the last two years³⁶, 86% of the individuals about whom people read in the Internet and in print media in Armenia are male and only 10% of the information space is allocated to women. News are also made by men: there is only one woman per every six men newsmakers. The expert community, too, speaks primarily in a male voice: there is only one woman per every eight male experts. Women account for 67% of the authors of those publications.

The opinions of female experts do not virtually make their way to the pages of periodicals, as a result of which a stereotyped perception is construed of women as unable to demonstrate public and political activism and to influence decision-making.

Dissemination of stereotypical attitudes about the role and place of women and the traditional image of woman who limits herself to the family space was identified also during a content analysis of commercials as well as in the TV series where a character of an unemployed housewife who busies herself with rumors and intrigues and who is not infrequently subjected to psychological and physical violence by her husband is predominant³⁷. Characters of employed women who combine family life and career are virtually non-existent. Women's NGOs time and again drew public attention to the issue of violence popularized in the Armenian TV series.

The issue of stereotypes and of their impact on political and public activism of women was identified by numerous studies conducted by domestic non-governmental organizations³⁸. The studies³⁹ have revealed that 31.1% of the respondents noted stereotypical attitudes and mentality of the public as one of the main obstacles to the attainment of gender equality in public life and to women's advancement. 15.4% of the respondents pointed at unequal distribution of family roles between men and women, 13.7% - at physiological differences between men and women that predetermine role specifics in the social system, 12.7% - at socioeconomic difficulties and 12.3% - at men's aggressive posture in social relations. The survey findings clearly indicate the necessity of developing a new gender culture in the present-day Armenian society⁴⁰.

The initiative of the "ProMedia-Gender" NGO to create WomenNet.am informational-ana-

³⁶ Analytical Report. Monitoring. *Woman's image in representations of the Armenian media*, 2011.

³⁷ *Woman's image in Armenian TV series*. Center for European Studies, Yerevan State University, 2012.

³⁸ *Gender dimension of civic and political participation in Armenia*. Report on findings of the sociological study, 2011 (Caucasus Social Studies Center with support from UNFPA); *Women's perceptions about human rights and their behavior regarding the protection of human rights*, 2012 ("Women for Democracy, Shahkhatun" NGO); *Women in local self-government*, 2011 (Caucasus Institute); *Women's political participation in the 2012 local and parliamentary elections* (Armenian Association of Women with University Education); *Causes of women's under-representation in decision-making* (RoA National Institute of Labor & Social Studies, 2010).

³⁹ *Gender dimension of civic and political participation in Armenia*. Report on findings of the sociological study. Yerevan: UNFPA & Caucasus Social Studies Center, 2011, pp. 45, 66-67.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 46.



lytical portal and the periodic publication in the past 5 years of the free newspaper supplement *Woman and Politics*, which aims to promote the idea of gender equality and to eradicate gender stereotypes, have made a certain impact on the country's media space. However, the experience of that resource is not sufficient for the formulation of gender-sensitive policies for media outlets. Gender journalism is not adequately developed in the country.

Recommendations

To the RoA Government:

- *to introduce gender education into high schools with a view to inculcating in the young generations the values of an egalitarian, democratic culture and to eradicating stereotypical views about the woman's role and place in the society;*
- *to introduce special gender courses into universities in line with the Bologna agreements and to focus teaching on shaping students' civic qualities and social responsibilities;*
- *to support the activities of Centers for gender Studies affiliated with NGOs aimed to disseminate gender knowledge and to raise public awareness;*
- *to contribute to the formulation of gender policies of media outlets, to introduce the practices of encouraging media outlets to provide coverage of gender issues, to organize campaigns and actions aimed to overcoming discriminatory practices and sexist approaches in media;*
- *to promote the establishment of partnership models of collaboration "power structures – NGOs – media outlets" for the advocacy of public and political activism of women and for the elimination of gender stereotypes;*
- *to take measures – in collaboration with civil society institutions - to protect the society from all types of gender-based discrimination;*
- *to prevent negative practices that discredit the idea of gender equality and to react in a timely and active fashion to instances of sexism.*



Article 6

Suppression of all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women

Problems:

- *Insufficient measures to address the main causes of trafficking and prostitution.*
- *Inefficient arrangements for identifying victims of trafficking and prostitution.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁴¹

The Committee is concerned about the growth in human trafficking and the fact that there are insufficient measures to address the main causes of trafficking. It is further concerned about the lack of protection for women at risk of trafficking, limited support and lack of shelters for the victims and regrets the very limited data with regard to the trafficking of women and teenagers for sexual exploitation and is particularly concerned by the absence of information regarding the outcome of the various measures taken in this regard

The Committee regrets the limited data on the scope of prostitution, including with regard to efforts to address the social and economic factors leading to prostitution. The Committee also notes with concern that women who engage in prostitution are subject to administrative liability in the form of fines imposed on them, thus revictimizing the victim while the clients are not subject to any sanctions.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁴²:

The Committee urges the State party:

- *to implement effectively its national action plan to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2007-2009;*
- to effectively enforce article 132 of the Criminal Code, and to take measures addressing the main causes of trafficking in order to further curb the phenomenon;*

⁴¹ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 24 & 26.*

⁴² *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 25 & 27.*



- to further expand funding for shelters for victims of both gender-based violence as well as of trafficking, which it has initiated in 2009; and
- to take all the necessary steps to ensure the rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of trafficking;
- to include sex-disaggregated data and information on the exploitation of prostitution in its next periodic report;
- to strengthen measures aimed at addressing the factors driving women and girls into prostitution;
- to put services in place for the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of women and girls involved in prostitution; and
- to abolish the administrative liability imposed on women engaged in prostitution and to address the demand for prostitution.

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The efforts to combat trafficking were energized from 2002 on. The Armenian Government set up an Interagency Commission and approved the *Concept Paper on preventing illegal transportation, transfer and trafficking in human beings*. In line with the Concept paper three national programs were adopted and implemented:

- the 2004-2006 National Action Plan on prevention of illegal transportation, transfer and trafficking in human beings from the Republic of Armenia;
- the 2007-2009 National Program to combat human trafficking in the Republic of Armenia; and
- the 2010-2012 National Program to combat human trafficking in the Republic of Armenia.

The programs outlined measures that aimed to prevent and prosecute trafficking in persons and to protect victims of trafficking.

In February 2013 the Armenian Government approved the new 2013-2015 National Program to combat human trafficking in the Republic of Armenia.

In order to ensure a constructive approach to combating human trafficking (the approach which is based on cooperation between all the agencies and parties concerned dealing with the phenomenon and its consequences) the *Council on Trafficking in Human Beings* chaired by the RoA Deputy Prime Minister was established in 2007. The Council is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Economy, Finance, Education & Science, Labor & Social Issues, Health, and Sports & Youth Issues as well as of the Prosecutor General, Director of the National Security Service under the Armenian Government and the Head of the RoA Police.



With a view to enhancing effectiveness of investigations and to tightening control over prosecution of human trafficking offences the structural reforms of the criminal prosecution bodies were carried out in 2007. In the Office of the Prosecutor General of the country a Division for crimes against humans was established. A specialized unit was set up in the Main Directorate of the RoA Police for combating organized crime, while investigations of trafficking-related criminal cases are conducted exclusively by the Division for investigations of particularly important cases of the Main Investigations Division of the RoA Police.

Measures were taken in the country within the reporting period to improve the criminal law framework to combat human trafficking. The legislative amendments introduced into the RoA Criminal Code within the past 4 years (in particular, the amendments package adopted in 2011) aimed to provide a better definition of trafficking victims, to impose severer punishments for trafficking (both in terms of imprisonment and seizure of property) and to exempt trafficking victims from criminal liability.

Given the fact that when trafficking occurs outside Armenia the fact of exploitation is registered abroad; thus, international cooperation acquires considerable importance. Armenia has already adopted all international and regional documents aimed to combat human trafficking. The country is actively engaged in international efforts to combat trafficking.

In 2008, the Armenian Government approved the *Procedure for the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking*, which regulates interaction between government bodies and local governments. According to the document on the referral mechanism, provision of medical and psychological assistance, shelter and further rehabilitation and social reintegration of trafficking victims is the responsibility of the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues in collaboration with non-governmental organizations that provide relevant services and are partially funded from the State budget since 2009.

Attaching utmost importance to trafficking prevention measures, law-enforcement agencies together with NGOs have put forth more energetic efforts to raise public awareness of human trafficking, paying special attention to young people. Special courses have been introduced for senior high schools students.

As a result of the measures taken, the identification of trafficking victims has improved. According to the official data released by the RoA Prosecutor's Office, in the country 13 cases of trafficking were registered in 2010, 16 cases in 2011 and 19 cases in 2012. For the most part it is sex and labor trafficking. Victims are taken primarily to United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Russia. The official data do not reflect the prevalence of the phenomenon in Armenia (especially considering large-scale labor migration from this country) because victims conceal the fact of crime and often retract their testimony when pressured by crime groups.

The NGO sector in Armenia has taken an active part in addressing issues of prevention of



exploitation and human trafficking. Such organizations as *Hope & Help, Democracy Today, UMCOR-Armenia, People in Need, Armenian Relief Union, World Vision Armenia, Association of Audio-Video Reporters* and other NGOs operating in this field have been doing much work to raise awareness of general public (and especially of the at-risk groups segment) about the problem. They also provide necessary consultative, informational, medical, psychological, legal and financial assistance to trafficking victims facilitating the latter's social reintegration.

The Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia has made a certain contribution to prevention of trafficking. Within the framework of the adopted *2009-2012 Strategy of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia To Combat Trafficking & Forced Labor* informational-educational seminars were held in all regions of the country for various groups of potential labor migrants, legal consultation centers were set up on a *pro bono* basis in the regions which are supplied with information materials about migrants' rights and mechanisms for their protection, about risks that illegal labor migration entails and about necessary precautions to avoid the risk of becoming victims of trafficking and forced labor.

Given the large scale of labor migration out of the country, a grave problem at present is to identify victims of trafficking and forced labor. In most cases victims do not turn to law-enforcement agencies since they do not want to face bureaucratic difficulties. As they enjoy public trust to a certain extent, non-governmental organizations can help with the problem of identifying and assisting trafficking victims.

According to various international organizations, Armenia's status improved to Tier 1 due to effective efforts of the Government. Armenia is now considered among the world's most successful countries in combating human trafficking. In 2012, there was an increase in investigations and prosecution of trafficking criminal cases with stiff punishment of perpetrators, and no suspended sentences handed down. Armenia recognizes the existence of the trafficking problem and makes consistent efforts to streamline and coordinate activities aimed to identify victims of trafficking, to provide them assistance and protection and to help them with social reintegration. In August 2013, the Main Directorate of the RoA Police for combating organized crime drafted the Republic of Armenia *Law on identification of and support to victims of trafficking or exploitation*.

Efforts are made in the country to study the situation with and to prevent prostitution. 217 street prostitutes were registered in Armenia in 2011. Their main age groups are 18-25 (20%), 25-30 (45%), 35-45 (28%) and over 45 years of Age (3%). According to the official data, there are no minors among street prostitutes in Armenia⁴³. As of late 2012, 240 street prostitutes were registered by the Prevention unit of the Directorate for public order maintenance at the RoA Police.

⁴³ Panorama.am 20.10.2012. Information provided by Mr. Ara Srapian, Senior Inspector with the Department for special assignments at Directorate for public order maintenance, RoA Police.



Taking into consideration the fact that prostitutes constitute a risk group in terms of spreading sexually-transmitted diseases, they are periodically referred by law-enforcement agencies for STD testing, including HIV/AIDS testing. When necessary, they receive treatment (within the framework of the services commissioned and paid for by the State) in the Dermatovenerologic center. According to the Center's data, 60% of tested prostitutes are diagnosed with sexually-transmitted diseases. Each year, 1 or 2 prostitutes are diagnosed with HIV.

Engagement in prostitution does not entail criminal liability under the current legislation. However, law-enforcement agencies can impose a 20,000 AMD fine on prostitutes as an administrative penalty and a 40,000 AMD fine, when detained again. There is no penalty for clients of prostitutes.

With a view to preventing the spread of prostitution the law-enforcement agencies in close collaboration with non-government organizations make concerted efforts to raise public awareness about the real situation and to mold public opinion about the problem. The centers set up by non-governmental organizations provide legal, medical and psychological assistance to those who need it.

Recommendations

To the RoA Government:

- *to intensify efforts to raise awareness of various segments of the population, including potential labor migrants, about a high risk of becoming a victim of trafficking, and engaging non-governmental organizations, trade unions and media in those efforts;*
- *to tighten control over the activities of the agencies that find employment outside the country for Armenian citizens;*
- *to consider increasing funding for centers that provide assistance and rehabilitation to victims of trafficking, violence and prostitution;*
- *to the Council that deals with trafficking issues – to periodically examine the trafficking situation with the help of experts from the NGO sector.*

To non-governmental organizations:

- *to intensify efforts aimed at identifying victims of trafficking and providing them with assistance in social reintegration.*



PART II

Article 7 Elimination of discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country

Problems:

- *Underrepresentation of women in decision-making in public administration at all levels and in local self-government.*
- *Low representation of women in elected bodies (in the RoA National Assembly and in local self-government bodies).*
- *Limited influence of women on the country's policies and on the processes in the public and political life of the society.*
- *The absence of systematic collaboration of State entities with civic groups in promoting gender equality and in conducting information and advocacy campaigns to explain the importance of women's participation in public and political life.*
- *Weakness of women's NGOs and the latter's insufficient use, in their activities, of modern technologies of lobbying for women's rights and interests.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

While welcoming the amendment to the Election Code establishing a 15 per cent quota for women, and a minimum of one woman out of every 10 candidates, the Committee is concerned that the quota has been ineffective.

The Committee is further concerned that no other temporary special measures have been utilized by the State party as a matter of general policy to accelerate the achievement of the de



facto equality between women and men in all areas of the Convention or to improve the situation of women's rights, in particular with regard to women in the workplace and the participation of women in politics.

The Committee is also concerned at the apparent lack of understanding of the concept of temporary special measures, as stipulated in article 4(1) of the Convention and further explained in the Committee's general recommendation No. 25.

The Committee remains concerned at women's very low participation in political and public life, especially with respect to their representation in decision-making bodies, including the National Assembly, the Government, the diplomatic services, regional and local municipalities and the high level of judiciary.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee calls upon the State party

- *to expedite the process to amend the Election Code to raise the 15 per cent quota, and consider raising it beyond the proposed 20 per cent;*
- *to implement national awareness-raising campaigns about the importance of women's participation in public and political life, specifically in rural areas;*
- *to increase women's representation in political and public life;*
- *to review the use of temporary measures according to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and in the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 25 and 23. The application of such measures to increase women's political representation should include the establishment of benchmarks with timetables or increased quotas;*
- *to ensure the safety of women in political life and encourage their participation in public affairs.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

In the period following the 3rd and 4th periodic reports the RoA National Assembly and the RoA Government took certain measures to eradicate gender-based discrimination and to ensure balanced participation of women and men in all spheres of the country's public and political life.

The Women's Council affiliated with the country's Prime Minister focuses on making pos-



itive changes. Upon the Council's recommendation, the RoA Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* in February 2010 and the *Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015* in May 2011.

By the Prime Minister's Order the Commissions for implementation of gender policies were set up in regional administrations – in the Regional Governors' Offices. As an authorized body, the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues is responsible for the implementation of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and the *Strategic Program of Gender Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2011-2015*.

In the past two years, with a view to encouraging gender-sensitive policies the Women's Council affiliated with the country's Prime Minister initiated contests to give awards to the *Best rural community in implementation of the gender policies* and to the *Best urban community in implementation of the gender policies*.

At the same time the analysis of the situation demonstrates that despite some positive dynamic the underrepresentation of women in public and political life in Armenia has not been overcome yet.

Even though women in Armenia have equal rights with men to participate in public and political life, nevertheless, the securing of opportunities equal to those of men remains a pressing problem caused by deep-seated and constantly reproduced gender stereotypes.

In the executive branch of government, among 19 Ministers (the position of Minister is political⁴⁴; Ministers take part in political decision-making) there are only 2 women. Those are the RoA Minister of Culture and the RoA Minister of Diaspora⁴⁵.

According to the 2013 data, there were only 7 women (i.e. 11.2%) among 62 individuals holding the discretionary position of a Deputy Minister who have some influence on political decision-making.

Women hold the position of a Deputy Minister in the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues, in the RoA Ministry of Economy, in the RoA Ministry of Education & Science, in the RoA Ministry of Culture, in the RoA Ministry of Finance and in the RoA Ministry of Urban Development.

The percentages of women and men holding political and discretionary positions in the executive branch of government are presented in Table 1 below.

⁴⁴ Under the Armenian legislation, the hierarchy in the civil service includes three categories of position, viz. political and discretionary positions and civil servants.

⁴⁵ In 2008, there was only one woman among Ministers.

**Table 1. RoA Ministers and Deputy Ministers in 2008-2013⁴⁶**

2008		2009		2010		2011		2013	
<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>
7%	93%	7%	93%	10%	90%	10%	90%	11%	89%

The share of women in the top-level positions in the civil service grew from 10.4% in 2007 to 14.0% by 2013⁴⁷.

At the same time there is not a single woman among the Advisors to the RoA President, while among 6 Advisors to the RoA Prime Minister there is only one woman who deals with health sector. In 2008-2012, there was one woman among 10 Regional Governors⁴⁸. As of 1 September 2013, there were 2 women out of 22 Deputy Regional Governors and 2 women out of 10 Heads of Office.

In 2012, women constituted 36.6% of the RoA President's staff and 42.2% of the RoA Prime Minister's staff⁴⁹. However, as a rule, they hold the positions where they have no influence on decision-making, including the decisions on gender issues.

Thus, there still exists a gender imbalance at the top level of the executive branch of government, where officials have a say in decision-making. Women still constitute a majority among the low-paid civil servants holding junior positions in the executive branch of government.

Women's representation in the legislature also remains low. 8 political parties and one electoral bloc that united 10 opposition political parties took part in the 2012 parliamentary elections. In line with the CEDAW Committee's recommendations regarding Armenia's 3rd and 4th combined report for 2002-2007, shortly before the elections the RoA National Assembly of the 5th convocation amended the RoA Election Code raising the gender quota in the proportional representation elections from 15 per cent to 20 per cent. It was legislated that the number of representatives of each gender on the political parties' lists must not exceed the 80% of each integer group of five candidates starting from the second number of the electoral list. In line with the amendments, women accounted for 20 or more per cent in all political parties' lists; however, the outcome of the elections was that only 14 women (or 10.7% of all elected MPs) made it to the Parliament. **The dynamic of representation of women and men in the legislature is presented in Table 2** below.

⁴⁶ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, pp. 150-151. Data for 2013 have been calculated by us.

⁴⁷ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, p. 156.

⁴⁸ Ms Lida Nanian was a Regional Governor in Shirak region from 2007 to 2010 when she submitted her resignation.

⁴⁹ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, p. 156.



**Table 2. The dynamic of representation of women and men
in the legislature in 1999-2012**

Year	Women	Men
1999	3.1%	96.9%
2003	5.3%	94.7%
2007	9.1%	90.9%
2012	10.7%	89.3%

The comparative analysis of the latest two parliamentary elections in Armenia demonstrates that 12 women⁵⁰ (i.e. 9% of the total number of MPs) were elected to the Parliament in 2007, when a 15 per cent quota was set for political parties' lists, whereas in the 2012 elections, when the gender quota was raised to 20 per cent, 14 women were elected to the Parliament. In other words, as compared to the previous elections the number of women in the Parliament after the 2012 elections increased only by two (or by about 2%).

One of the reasons of women's underrepresentation in the country's Parliament became a widespread practice of women withdrawing in the post-election period. According to the Central Election Commission's data, in the aftermath of the 2012 elections, 102 individuals running in the elections withdrew their candidacies. 26 (or 25%) of them were women. 3 women who were elected to the Parliament but then withdrew their candidacies were from *Prosperous Armenia* party.

The analysis of the electoral processes revealed unequal opportunities for women as compared to men in the majoritarian (single-member district) elections. In 2007, not a single woman was elected to the Parliament in the majoritarian elections. In 2012, there were more women candidates than in the previous elections. However, out of 11 women who ran in the majoritarian elections only two were elected. Their candidacies were supported by representatives of big businesses and by the leading political party. In virtually all electoral districts women's ranking was quite high. Most women got the second or third largest number of votes in their districts. Virtually everywhere women lost to owners of big businesses whose material and logistical resources are much greater.

One of the obstacles to women's more active participation is the absence, in political parties, of the system of training women leaders and promoting them to the top positions both in the political parties and in the national elections of all levels.

The analysis demonstrates that even though women account on the average for 35-40% of the

⁵⁰ One of women elected to the Parliament was later appointed as a member of the RoA Constitutional Court; thus, there were only 11 women (8.4%) in the Parliament after that.



membership of leading political parties, they are, nevertheless, inadequately represented in the parties' leadership and at the level of party decision-making. As a result, they do not make an impact on the party policies and on the way the election campaigns are prepared and conducted. That there are many women in political parties does not mean that they are very active politically and does not guarantee their influence in the party or indicate that they have a high status.

The studies have revealed that governing bodies of many political parties do not make conscious efforts to raise their members' awareness about the necessity to take special measures in their parties as a tool for attaining gender equality and as a precondition for developing internal party democracy.

The political parties' policies *remain imitational* from the perspective of the introduction of gender approaches into political practices and of the attainment of tangible results of gender equality. The programs of most political parties do not contain provisions targeting the attainment of gender equality, the enhancement of women's political participation and the promotion of women to power and decision-making. Gender issues are not included in the moral and value systems of political parties as well as in party traditions and political ideals. Party leaders' political conduct is not conducive to the advancement of women. Their public speeches rarely include a gender discourse. The organizational measures taken by political parties, in particular, the establishment of women's councils or other groups in parties are piecemeal and do not result in greater influence of women in political parties.

The authorities at all levels, the education system, mass media as well as political parties *do not implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the necessity of implementing awareness-raising campaigns to promote the public's positive perceptions about the role and importance of women's participation in public and political life and to eradicate gender stereotypes in the public mind.*

Local self-government is an important system in democratic governance; however, democracy has not been built yet at the level of urban and rural communities. Gender imbalance in local governments is among the numerous problems that democracy faces at the local level.

There were not many women candidates running in local elections held on 9 and 23 September 2012. Among 1,237 candidates for the position of a Head in 638 rural communities there were only 43 women (i.e. 3.5%). Not a single woman ran in the elections of mayors in 48 cities and towns of the country.

The representation of women in the Yerevan City Hall somewhat increased. In 2008, there were 5 women (or 9.6%) out of 52 members of the City Council. After a 20 per cent gender quota was set by the RoA Election Code in 2012, 10 women were elected to the City Council (or 15% of 65 members) in the 2012 local elections.



More active participation of women in local elections would facilitate their gaining political experience that predetermines to a large extent their subsequent political career.

The dynamic of gender representation in the judiciary shows certain growth of the number of women in it: women constitute 21% of judges and 39% of attorneys in Armenia.

Table 3. Gender representation in the judiciary in 2009-2011

	2009		2010		2011	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Persons						
Judges	46	170	45	166	46	169
Attorneys	219	762	380	638	440	689
Percentage						
Judges	21	79	21	79	21	79
Attorneys	22	78	37	63	39	61

The country's women take an active part in the NGO sector. Despite the fact that the process of civil society building in Armenia is slow, nevertheless, women's NGOs play an important role among civil society institutions.

According to the data of the National Statistical Service, the number of legal entities registered in the State Register Agency of the RoA Ministry of Justice, as at 1 May 2012 reached 3,900 (while in 2007 the number was 2,726). In 2012, women's organizations in the country constituted 6.5% of the total number of all non-governmental organizations, as compared to 2.8% in 2007. During that period the number of women's NGOs grew from 76 to 250, i.e. more than 3 times. However, women's organizations do not have much leverage in the public and political life of the country because of the lack of consolidation of the women's civic movement.

The findings of various studies indicate that the following factors impede the evolution and strengthening of the civic sector: the *State policies* that are not conducive to the strengthening of NGOs, *competition* for leadership and *lack of mutual respect* among heads of organizations, *slow introduction* of a democratic style of governance in the practice of non-governmental organizations and *lack of a dialogue* between the State and civil society.

The Public Council, which was established in 2008 under the RoA President, does not make sufficient efforts to represent interests of citizens and non-governmental organizations in the formulation and implementation of State policies. Its activities do not sufficiently promote the



establishment of traditions that would facilitate the civil society building and the implementation of civic initiatives aimed to protect the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens and non-governmental organizations.

The Public Council has not yet become an instrument for the protection of the citizens' constitutional rights and for securing equal rights to all groups of the population, first of all women.

This is evidenced, *inter alia*, by the developments in Armenia related to the attacks on the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. When a campaign was launched in July 2013 to discredit the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which had been adopted by the RoA National Assembly on 20 May 2013 and signed by the RoA President on 11 June 2013, the Public Council failed not only to react promptly to the attacks on gender equality but also to support the Statement made by its Committee on Gender Issues & Demography. The Statement critically assessed the actions of the group of individuals who engaged in deliberate manipulation of gender terms and in misleading the public opinion by describing the Law as a document that undermines the national family values. The Statement was supported only by the Public Council's Committee on Civil Society Development.

The campaign against the *RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* became a monitoring of sorts also for evaluation of the authorities' policies in gender equality advocacy.

The anti-gender campaign clearly showed that authorities at all levels do not make adequate efforts to advocate for the Government's *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and to promote gender equality ideas, thereby making it possible for the destructive groups to mislead the general public through manipulation of gender terms.

The absence of the awareness-raising campaign that the Government and political parties should have conducted to explain the importance of women's participation in public and political life led to harassment of activists of the movement for gender equality.

The campaign against the Law also demonstrated that discrimination against women in the country's public and political life has not been eliminated yet. Even though some Armenian human rights NGOs spoke out in support of the Law, many civil society institutions not only failed to respond and to speak out in support of the Law and equal rights for women but their passive stance energized the campaign against activists of the civic movement for gender equality.

The review and assessment of prevalent *mentality* of general public and of *political practices* in the country were instrumental in identifying the following underlying causes:

- the absence of the awareness-raising campaigns that would explain the importance and necessity of women's participation in public and political life of the country;



- notwithstanding the measures that have already been taken, the State policies are not gender-sensitive yet; its nature is essentially imitational and effective steps are not taken to promote women and to redress the gender imbalance in decision-making in public administration;
- the absence of the national machinery for gender equality;
- imperfection of election processes: toughness of political struggle and a high level of commercialization of elections;
- a low level of presence of women in the business sphere; small number of female entrepreneurs;
- underestimation on the part of political parties of the necessity to design measures to increase representation of women at a decision-making level in political parties and in power;
- weakness of democratic institutions, including non-governmental organizations, first of all women's NGOs. And lack of consolidation of the women's civic movement;
- mistrust of female candidates that is grounded in the lack of public and women's awareness of *discriminatory practices*;
- prevalence of *patriarchal attitudes* in the society and *gender stereotypes* that do not encourage women's political participation;
- the absence of legal mechanisms that would stimulate political parties' interest in the advancement of women;
- prevalence of values of the masculine political culture; mass media's furthering of stereotypical views that limit women's participation in the political life of the society.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to conduct a wide-scale public awareness-raising campaign promoting the "RoA Law on the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men" and to include into it the mechanisms for securing gender equality in all spheres of public and political life of the society;*
- *to review the issue of amending the RoA Election Code raising the quota for women's representation in political party lists in the proportional representation elections to 30 per cent and including a provision to the effect that in case an elected female MP resigns her MP mandate shall be transferred to the next woman on the party list.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to take measures to boost effectiveness of implementation of State gender policies ;*



- *to establish a national machinery for gender equality and to exercise an efficient control over the Ministries' and regional public administration bodies' fulfillment of Armenia's international obligations to advance women to power at the level of political decision-making;*
- *to ensure the complete fulfillment of the State's international obligations regarding the attainment of gender equality and an increase in women's representation in politics;*
- *while providing funding to political parties - to take into consideration the gender policies implemented by them and whether those policies promote women's political participation;*
- *to continue and expand introduction of gender courses into high school and university curricula;*
- *to implement educational programs through all types of media with a view to raising gender awareness of the public;*
- *to design and introduce special educational programs for journalists aimed to support women's political participation and leadership;*
- *to encourage the conduct of PR media campaigns seeking to eliminate gender stereotypes and to advance women.*

To Political Parties:

- *to design and take comprehensive measures aimed to mainstream gender into political parties' programs and practices; to undertake targeted and effective gender education of party membership;*
- *to take a system of measures aimed to train future women leaders and to set up mechanisms for the advancement of women to parties' governing bodies;*
- *to improve the forms of collaboration between women's councils of political parties and women's non-governmental organizations on political advancement of women.*

To Non-Governmental Organizations:

- *to introduce into NGO practices the effective forms of training women for public and political activities, including the broadening of their political, legal and economic knowledge, teaching them the technologies of organization of election campaigns and collaboration with mass media, and conducting psychological training sessions on leadership;*
- *to organize on a broader scale the Women's Leadership Schools in the capital city and in the country's regions to teach women activists the modern technologies of organization of public and political activities;*
- *to collaborate more actively with political parties on issues of gender equality and to attract members of women's councils of political parties to Women's Leadership Schools.*



Article 9

Women's equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality

Problems:

- *People's inadequate awareness of relevant provisions of the CEDAW Convention.*

There are no concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia regarding this Article.

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The RoA *Constitution* (adopted in 2005) and the RoA *Law on Citizenship* (passed in 1995) incorporate the basic provisions of the CEDAW Convention regarding women's equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. In line with the requirements of the Convention the RoA *Law on Citizenship* (as amended on 8 December 2011) describes *the citizenship of the child* whose parents acquire or lose citizenship of the Republic of Armenia or in case of adoption. Nevertheless, the general public is inadequately aware that women have equal rights with men to retain or change their nationality when they marry a foreign national; the same applies to their children's citizenship. In court practices there have been no cases related to violation of women's equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality.

Recommendations

To the RoA Government and the RoA Presidential Commission on Citizenship Issues:

- *to come up with measures aimed to help officials and civil servants acquire and increase knowledge about relevant provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and about the CEDAW Committee's recommendations;*



- *to assist non-governmental organizations in their activities aimed to increase the level of women's political knowledge about women's equal rights with men in all citizenship-related issues;*
- *to make a wide use of the potential of mass media for coverage of women's equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and for raising awareness of public at large.*



PART III

Article 10

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of education

Problems:

- *Absence of gender-sensitive policies in the field of education.*
- *Existing risks of decreasing participation of girls in education system.*
- *Gender-based segregation in fields of specialization in universities.*
- *Weak leverage of women on the formulation of education policies.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

Noting that primary and secondary education in State educational institutions is free of charge, the Committee is concerned that, owing to a number of factors including significant poverty and social stereotypes concerning women's roles and responsibilities, there is a relatively high dropout rate especially of rural girls of ethnic minorities.

The Committee notes underrepresentation of female students at doctoral level in institutions of higher education.

The Committee is also concerned at the continuing concentration of women in traditional female subjects.

The Committee is further concerned at the low number of women in academia, as professors, senior lecturers and researchers, and at the decision-making levels in the area of education.



Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee urges the State party

- *to address the obstacles which hamper girls in continuing their education;*
- *to hold seminars and to undertake awareness-raising activities with a focus on helping parents to understand the important role of education for girls; and to implement special measures to allow girls and women who have dropped out of school to re-enter the education system in an age-appropriate classroom environment;*
- *to continue to review all school textbooks to eliminate gender-role stereotypes, and to implement programmes encouraging girls to enter non-traditional study courses;*
- *to adopt policies to increase the number of women holding positions in doctoral studies, at the highest levels of academia, as research specialists particularly in scientific fields and in decision-making positions at all levels of education.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

As a result of the education reform, secondary education became 12-year-long and three-tier, including elementary school (grades 1 through 4), general basic education (through grade 9) and senior school (grades 10-12). Secondary education in State educational institutions is of charge.

The overwhelming majority of school-age children regardless of their gender are able to enjoy their constitutional right to a basic general education. In 2012-2013 academic year, girls constituted 48.0% of students in government-run and non-governmental general-education schools⁵¹. The share of girls among elementary and middle school students was 47.0% and among senior school students 52.0%⁵². The Gender equality in education index⁵³ in 2012 was 1.06, in particular in elementary school it was 1.02, in basic school 1.02 and in senior school 1.21⁵⁴.

However, the optimization of the education system and the transition to the three-tier sys-

⁵¹ *Operation of educational institutions // Social situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012 and dynamic rows. Collection of statistical materials. Yerevan: RoA National Statistical Service, 2013, p. 29 (in Armenian) http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_3-4.pdf*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵³ The Gender equality in education index was used in this statistical publication for the first time. It reflects the ratio of the gross number of boys to the gross number of girls at a certain level of the education system.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*



tem of general education increased the risks of girls dropping out of senior schools, one of the reasons being the absence of those schools in many localities.

The existing dropout rate from senior schools will tend to grow for a number of reasons: education in senior school is not compulsory, the absence of boarding senior schools in rural areas and of reliable transportation between villages, considerable social differentiation and a high level of poverty of the population and involvement of adolescents in agricultural work. While the Armenian Government made a decision to retain the secondary general education schools in villages temporarily as a solution of the problem and thus to give rural children an opportunity to get full-fledged secondary education, nevertheless (even though the dropout rate of girls from senior schools somewhat decreased and their share among school dropouts is 34%), the problem of giving children in rural areas an opportunity to get secondary general education is not on the whole solved.

The findings of the study conducted in 2012 by the RoA National Statistical Service indicate that girls constituted 41.0% of those who dropped out of the senior school because their parents did not allow them to continue their education (the study did not identify the reasons why those parents had not allowed their children to continue their school education), 33.0% of those who left the school because of the family's bad socioeconomic situation and 35.0% of those who dropped out because they did not wish to continue their education⁵⁵. The studies to identify the percentage of children (including girls) who went on with their school education and who eventually graduated were not conducted.

The curricula and content of education are the same for girls and boys in secondary general-education schools. The gender component is missing from school curricula. A gender analysis of school curricula, textbooks and teachers' guidebooks has not become a standard practice.

The RoA Ministry of Education and Science did not carry out the recommendation made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women "to review all school textbooks to eliminate gender-role stereotypes" and "to implement programmes encouraging girls to enter non-traditional study courses."

The RoA Ministry of Education and Science did not built on the experience gained in 2005-2008, when the Center for Gender Studies of the Armenian Association of Women with University Education together with the RoA Ministry of Education and Science made efforts to institutionalize gender education in secondary and higher education. The syllabus, textbook and teacher's guidebook for teaching gender knowledge classes in senior high schools were produced as were State educational standards, syllabi and textbooks for a number of academic subjects taught in universities. Secondary school teachers and university instructors received

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 42.



appropriate training to teach gender classes and courses respectively. Impressive experience was gained in introducing gender education. In the years that followed and currently the scope of gender subjects taught in universities and classes held in high schools dwindled considerably.

Secondary schools do not provide vocational guidance and counseling. Most girls do not select occupations that are non-traditional for their gender, as a result finding a job later on becomes even more complicated. A gender approach in the moral instruction component in general-education schools is not taken consideration. It can be accounted for by the fact that gender issues of education and moral instruction are not properly addressed in the professional development courses of teaching staff.

In 2005, Armenia joined the Bologna Declaration and assumed an obligation to harmonize its tertiary and post-tertiary education with the requirements of the Declaration. In June 2012, Armenia took over the responsibility of hosting the Bologna Secretariat till 2015. Even though this circumstance places a responsibility on this country to make well-targeted and focused efforts to conduct a more effective reform of the higher and secondary vocational education systems at present underway in Armenia, nevertheless, the measures that have been taken do not meet the current challenges.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, all citizens have the right to free higher and professional education in state higher and other professional educational institutions on the basis of competition. Young women comprise 53.0% of the students admitted by higher education institutions in 2012-2013 academic year and 55.0% of the graduates⁵⁶. The Gender equality in education index was 1.07⁵⁷.

Higher education has become less accessible owing to a high level of poverty and limited availability of education. This is particularly true for young women because tuition fees are especially high in the departments for traditionally “male” professions that subsequently ensure higher incomes. There are no tuition fee waivers (when the Government commissions and pays for the education of several best performing students) in the departments that train for the most prestigious professions (such as, for example, the Law departments). The tuition fees that became higher in government-run universities in 2013 will limit opportunities for young people, particularly for young women from needy families, to get higher education.

The programs encouraging girls and women to enter study courses for professions that are non-traditional for their gender are not implemented in this country. There is still gender-based

⁵⁶ Higher professional education // *Social situation of the Republic of Armenian in 2012 and dynamic rows. Collection of statistical materials. Yerevan: RoA National Statistical Service, 2013, page 178 (in Armenian)* http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_11-12.pdf

⁵⁷ Ibid.



segregation in such majors as *Information technologies and information security* and *Informatics and computer engineering* (with young women constituting 28.0% of all students), *Agriculture and food production* (27.0%), *Electronic and radio engineering and communication* (14.0%), *Construction and architecture* (13.0%), *Energy, power machine building and electronic engineering* (7.0%), *Transportation systems* (3.0%) and *Military education* (2.0%).

Gender imbalance still exists in post-tertiary education. According to the 2012 data, women constituted 38.0% among post-graduate students, 29% among graduates and 49.0% of those who got their “Candidate of sciences” degrees. Women account for only 23.0% of doctoral students⁵⁸.

Women’s representation is significantly lower in research institutions, especially in doctoral studies. That leads subsequently to gender segregation in the positions in higher education institutions and research institutions. Not a single research institutions of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences is headed by a woman.

In 2011, women constituted 48.6% among teaching staff in government-run and 52.1% in non-governmental higher education institutions. As regards the teaching staff in vocational schools, women accounted for 75.7% in government-run and 77.31% in non-governmental institutions. At the same time, the percentage of women in top administrative positions in higher education institutions and vocational schools remains low. Women constitute 12.5% of presidents and vice-presidents, 17.3% of deans and 23.4% of department heads in government-run higher education institutions⁵⁹.

Low representation of women in the leadership of government-run higher education institutions and vocational schools results in their limited leverage concerning the formulation and implementation of education policies as a whole.

Women’s representation in the leadership of non-governmental higher education institutions is perceptibly higher: women constitute 52.0% of presidents and vice-presidents, 45.0% of deans and 76.0% of department heads⁶⁰. The higher percentage of women in top leadership positions in non-governmental higher education institutions can be accounted for by lower salaries of those officials as compared to those of their counterparts in government-run institutions.

The RoA Ministry of Education and Science does not have a unit tasked with carrying out a gender policy in the field of education, while the programs and projects to overcome gender stereotypes and to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the education system are virtually non-existent.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Women and Men in Armenia: 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan, 2012, p. 79.

⁶⁰ Ibid.



Recommendations

To the RoA Ministry of Education and Science:

- *to take concrete and targeted measures to decrease the rural girls' dropout rate from the system of secondary general education,*
- *to continue institutionalization of gender education that seeks to raise gender awareness of students of general-education schools and universities,*
- *to conduct gender analysis of syllabi and school textbooks with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes,*
- *to take measures to introduce special programs into a moral education component of general-education schools that would aim to change gender stereotypes concerning women's rights and role in the society and in the family,*
- *to design and introduce gender-sensitive indicators for all levels of the education system to ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys to get quality education,*
- *to draw up programs encouraging girls to choose occupations that are non-traditional and that are in demand on the labor market,*
- *to take measures to make the activities of the teaching staff of general-education schools aimed at parents more effective, especially in rural areas, and to target them in a more focused and large-scale fashion with educational and awareness-raising activities concerning the girls' rights and the role of women in public and political life of the country,*
- *to design and take measures together with the National Academy of Sciences to include gender issues in the research work plans,*
- *to design special measures to stimulate women's research activities in universities and research institutions, in particular, in doctoral studies,*
- *to take measures to prepare and publish popular science books on gender issues, including gender equality, for all categories of learners in the education system and for general public,*
- *to draw up and implement targeted lifelong education programs for women that would aim to expand their opportunities to combine employment and family responsibilities,*
- *to design and take measures to ensure gender-balanced representation of women and men in top-level positions in the education system and in the field of science.*



Article 11

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment

Problems:

- *Women's significantly low de facto average wages as compared to that of men.*
- *Horizontal and vertical gender segregation in employment and in the labor market.*
- *A significantly higher share of women among the officially registered unemployed.*
- *Part-time work of women, their concentration in lower-paying sectors of economy and greater involvement in low-income activities.*
- *Low representation of women in top management positions in economy and on boards of private companies.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁶¹

The Committee expresses serious concern about the persistence of both vertical and horizontal gender segregation within the labor market, and the lack of concrete gender-specific legislative measures to implement the general equality undertaking.

The Committee notes the high unemployment of women and the concentration of women in part-time work and lower-paying sectors, such as health care, education, agriculture and in the informal sector.

The Committee expresses particular concern at the persistence of the wage gap and lack of understanding of the concept of wage gap, as well as the low representation of women in top management positions and on boards of private companies as well as the lack of systematic effective measures to prevent sexual harassment against women in the workplace.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia:

The Committee urges the State party:

- *to adopt policies and concrete legislative measures to accelerate the eradication of employment discrimination against women and to work towards ensuring de facto equal*

⁶¹ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 32 & 33.*



opportunities at all levels for women in the labor market including effective measures against sexual harassment against women in the workplace;

- *to ensure that job evaluation systems based on gender-sensitive criteria be developed with the aim of closing the existing wage gap between women and men and implementing pay equity;*
- *to continue its efforts to raise salaries in female-dominated sectors of the State budget economy;*
- *to make greater use of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, by applying numerical goals with timetables or quotas in respect of women's access and retention in vocational training, including for non-traditional jobs, and the promotion of women into the upper levels of the public sector.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The RoA Constitution, the RoA Labor Code and the RoA Law *On State Labor Inspection* enshrine the principle of an equal pay for equal work and prohibit differentiation on the grounds of sex on the labor market and in the field of employment.

However, the average monthly net income of men significantly exceeds that of women virtually in all spheres regardless of type of economic activity or status. In 2012, the average monthly net income of women in this country comprised 59% of men's income⁶². While that indicator has shown a positive dynamic within the past ten years (because in 2003 the average salaries of women constituted 42% of men's salaries⁶³), nevertheless, the obvious vertical discrimination (i.e. unequal accessibility of career stages) as well as horizontal discrimination (i.e. discrimination within professions and sectors) still essentially exist for working women.

The gender wage gap in Armenia is a result of concentration of women in low-paid work places or sectors such as healthcare, education, science and culture. It is noteworthy that for quite a few years the changes in professional (horizontal) segregation have been negative for women. Women's employment and income have been progressively lagging behind those of men in those sectors of the economy where incomes are relatively high (such as finance and credit, mining industry, energy sector and housing and communal services). It seems that in

⁶² *Women and Men in Armenia, 2013. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2013, p. 135.

⁶³ *Women and Men in Armenia. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2005, p. 81.



almost all sectors of the economy the level of women's involvement is inversely proportional to the salary size in the sector.

The existing horizontal differentiation in employment can often be accounted for by gender-based preferences. In reality vertical segregation is more intolerable: in Armenia even in those sectors that have “a women's face” the average salaries of women is considerably lower than that of men despite the fact that women's level of educational attainment or professional qualifications are higher. This phenomenon clearly manifests itself in the healthcare, insurance, credit systems and in a number of other sectors, where institutions and their units are headed primarily by men. Thus, the total number of doctors in Armenia is 13,180. 8,770 (or 66.5%) of them are women. However, there are only 14 women (or 15%) among heads of 97 healthcare institutions. Considering the fact that the lower-level medical personnel (nurses, nurses' aides, hospital attendants, etc.) consists almost exclusively of women, it is obvious that gender differentiation of incomes in health sector on the whole is huge and reached inadmissible proportions.

As regards the type of economic activity, gender segregation is observed also depending on the form of ownership. The situation in health sector is quite typical for all sectors: only one of 15 privately-owned healthcare institutions is headed by woman. In the State-owned sector of economy where wages are lower than in the privately-owned sector the majority of top-level positions are held by men, even though more women than men are employed in it. The above-mentioned realities are but hidden discrimination in the field of employment and wages.

The analysis of employment structure of women and men in the Republic of Armenia demonstrates that the gender pay gap is bigger in lower-paid segments of the labor market where women predominate but is somewhat compensated by a high level of educational attainment of women thereby contributing to reduction of the difference in wages and salaries. In any event the existence of gender segregation in career advancement reflects the prevalent societal stereotypes in perception of social roles of men and women. Those stereotypes have an adverse impact on the structure of the economy, reduce the latter's potential, reproduce a gender imbalance and reinforce hidden discrimination.

The existing gender differentiation in employment is identified through the analysis of sex composition of economically active population by individual characteristics of the labor market such as employment status, duration of unemployment, education level, age, marital status, income level, etc.

As of 2012, the country's labor resources were estimated at 2,260,800 persons, including 1,256,100 (or 55.5%) women and 1,004,700 (or 44.5%) men. However, while 72.1% of men are economically active, only 55.2% of women are economically active. Women comprise 47% and men 52% of the total employed population⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2013. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2013, pp. 107-108.



The number of women among hired employees does not significantly differ from that of men (women account for 47% and men for 53%). However, among the self-employed and especially among employers the share of men is incomparably higher (over 80%). On the contrary, women constitute about two-thirds among family members who do not have paid jobs. The cost of women's unpaid household work is not assessed in monetary terms and is not reflected in the national accounting systems.

Time budget surveys with a focus on a gender perspective are crucial for accurate estimation of men's and women's real contribution to economic and public life of the country and were conducted in Armenia twice, *viz.* in 2004 and 2008. The findings of a comparative analysis almost do not differ and indicate that men spend three times more time on income-generating activities than women, while women spend five times more time than men on household chores and on care of family members. On the whole, men have 30% more free time than women. The analysis of the time budget is important from the perspective not only of the appraisal of women's household work but also of the justification for allocation of certain funds from the country's financial system for remuneration of that work, in particular, for pension provision for women.

The priority development of the private sector of the economy (in particular, small and medium-sized businesses), including the consideration of gender specifics of the sphere) is regarded as an effective solution for employment and social problems in the Republic of Armenia. The organizations that provide assistance to private businesses in Armenia operate for the most part without identifying specific needs of female entrepreneurs. As a result, while women considerably outnumber men in professional development courses provided by the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center of Armenia, the major portion of funds allocated through the financial assistance projects are given to men. A relatively low level of economic activities as well as of income of women in Armenia can be accounted for to a large extent by limited opportunities for many women to adequately combine income-generating activities, especially certain types of entrepreneurship (restaurant, leisure centers and hotel business) with family responsibilities. All of the above is yet another evidence of the *de facto* discrimination against female entrepreneurs in the field of small and medium-sized businesses.

According to the data of the RoA State Employment Service Agency, as at the beginning of 2013, the number of officially registered unemployed in the country was 69,400 (including 49,200, or 71% women), and the official level of unemployment stands at 6%⁶⁵. However, the data are far removed from reality and do not reflect a true scope of hidden unemployment.

⁶⁵ www.wmploymwnt.am



The findings of the sample survey of the workforce indicate that within the last ten years the level of real unemployment dwindled almost by half and as at 2012 it was 17.2%, with difference between unemployment levels of women and men being quite small (52% and 48% respectively). The problem is that as a result of irregular economic development in the past few years the number of unemployed women in this country increased by over 5,000, whereas the number of unemployed men decreased almost equally. This trend demonstrated weak protection of women from a negative impact of economic crises.

A gender analysis of unemployment reveals also the importance of age and marital status: while for young men and women aged 15-24 the likelihood of finding a job is almost the same, the risk of becoming unemployed and ending up in poverty is twice as high for women than men in age groups 40-44, 45-49 and 50-54.

In Armenia, men and women are equally represented among unmarried individuals who are employed full-time, whereas among married, divorced and widowed persons working part-time the share of women is 58%, 73% and 83% respectively. The share of women among those who became unemployed owing to family reasons is incomparably high (88%).

A high share of women (80%) among individuals who have a status of the unemployed for over a year also causes concern. Those women lose their qualifications as a result of a long period of unemployment and to be able to get a job they need not only professional training but also moral and psychological support.

Women face not only the problem of accessibility of work places but also discrimination in hiring on the Armenian labor market, when they are entirely dependent on the employer's preferences regardless of a high level of education and qualifications.

Employers tend to conclude short-term contracts with women even when there are no legal grounds for preferring them to longer-term contracts. Women are more often employed part-time or get temporary jobs. They are the first to be fired or laid off, mostly without a good reason.

When there is no alternative, people consciously agree to a shorter work day, low wages and exploitation, which is a usual occurrence in the system of healthcare and education. The workforce surplus enabled employers to make selection of specialists more rigorous, paying excessive attention to the rank of the university that gave the qualification, to knowledge of a foreign language and to computer skills as well as to age and, not infrequently, to appearance. It is an inadmissible practice that needs to be stopped with sanctions.

As research findings indicate, the common causes of women's low competitiveness and discrimination against them in the field of employment and on the labor market are the following: limited accessibility of funds and loans as well as of property and land for them, their virtual alienation from the privatization results, the "squeezing" women out of relatively prof-



itable branches of the economy, their low representation in the governing bodies of State- and privately-owned organizations and relatively weak real social and legal protection.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to plan the adoption of very specific legislative norms with a view to expediting the elimination of employment discrimination against women and to attaining de facto equal opportunities for women at all levels of the labor market.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to take measures, including the introduction of appropriate quotas in line with the principle of positive action, with a view to ensuring adequate presence of women at the top level of management in economy and of State-run organizations and in companies' boards of directors with the involvement of the State and communities;*
- *to draw up special programs of support to women's entrepreneurship, to devise socio-economic measures aimed to improve innovations policies and to priority development of the branches, which will be instrumental in effectively solving the problems of economic development taking into consideration the creation of such auxiliary productions that secure women's employment, including work from home and jobs requiring the use of information technologies;*
- *to devise measures securing de facto equal rights for women and men in getting bank loans and credits and to encourage funding institutions that give women soft loans or that provide services to profitable small and medium-sized enterprises headed by women;*
- *Within the framework of social partnerships with non-governmental organizations and media outlets – to devise and take certain measures aimed to expand consultations that seek to increase women's legal and economic knowledge and business-educational programs and to raise women's awareness about their economic rights with a view to eliminating gender-based discrimination in the field of employment and in allocation of resources.*



Article 12

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of health care

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Problems:

- *Limited access to adequate general health-care services for women, including reproductive health-care services.*
- *Low level of State funding of the health-care sector.*
- *Lack of awareness on the part of general public with respect to modern methods of family planning.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁶⁶

While noting the free access to health care, and the other various efforts made to improve reproductive health care for women, the Committee regrets that these plans and strategies have not been effective.

The Committee remains concerned about the insufficient access to adequate general health-care services as well as reproductive health-care services for women especially those living in rural and remote areas and that the rates of abortion have in fact risen, so that it still seems to be one of the most widespread methods of family planning within the State party.

The Committee is also concerned about the high rate of teenage pregnancies and regrets the lack of data in regard to number of deaths due to illegal abortions.

⁶⁶ Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 34.



Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁶⁷:

- *The Committee recommends that the State party continue to take measures to improve women's access to general health care, and to reproductive health-care services in particular.*
- *The Committee calls on the State party to increase its efforts to improve the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, to mobilize resources for that purpose and to monitor the actual access to those services by women.;*
- *It further recommends that family planning and reproductive health education be widely promoted and targeted at girls and boys, with special attention to the prevention of early pregnancies of underage girls including the control of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Government of the Republic of Armenia has been taking targeted measures to improve access to health-care services and to ensure equal right of women and men to health-care services as guaranteed by the RoA *Law on medical assistance and health services* adopted in 1996.

The health sector development policy priorities are reflected in the *Concept Paper on improving the quality of medical assistance and health services provided to the population* (2002) and in the *Strategy and program of primary health care of the RoA population for 2008-2013* approved by the Armenian Government.

Attaching special significance to issues of maternal and child health protection the Government adopted the *Strategy of maternal and child health protection for 2003-2015*, the *National program for improving reproductive health for 2007-2015*, the *National strategy of children's and adolescents' health and development* and the *Action Plan for the implementation of the National strategy of children's and adolescents' health and development in 2010-2015*, and the *Strategic program for protection of the rights of the child for 2013-2016*.

The National program for improving reproductive health has been implemented in this country since 2007.

⁶⁷ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 35.*



In March 2011, the Armenian Government approved the strategic document “National programs on three diseases that account for the highest mortality rates, viz. the circulatory system (cardiovascular system), malignant neoplasms and pancreatic diabetes.”

With a view to improving the access of women, especially rural women, to general health care certain efforts have been made in the country to further develop the network of health-care institutions. In the country there are 130 hospitals with 37.4 beds per 10,000 population. The number of medical institutions rendering out-patient and dispensary aid grew from 474 in 2008 to 513 in 2013. Within the same period of time the number of antenatal clinics, children’s polyclinics and number of institutions with antenatal clinics and children’s polyclinics increased from 429 to 513.

The number of beds for pregnant women and women in childbirth has also been on the rise in recent years and in early 2012 it was 13.6 per 10 000 women of the fertile age. Nevertheless, this indicator was somewhat lower (by 0.8 points) than in 2007.

Measures to improve the health-care system in the country’s regions have been taken within the framework of the public health sector modernization. 167 out-patient medical rooms and 7 hospitals in the regions underwent major repairs and were provided with modern equipment. At present, hospitals with specialized departments operate in all 10 regions of the country. They have modern equipment and human resources that are required for provision of quality health-care services.

As to the number of doctors per capita, Armenia holds a higher-than-average rank among the CIS countries. The number of doctors is 41.2 per 10,000 population.

Notwithstanding the measures that have been taken, there is still a considerable difference in the quality of medical services between the capital city and the country’s regions. The overwhelming majority (48%) of hospitals and clinics, especially high-tech, specialized ones are located in Yerevan, employing 71.8% of all doctors, including those with the highest qualifications, and 47.8% of all nurses. The number of doctors per residents of the capital (86 doctors per 10,000 population) is over than 4 times higher than that number per rural residents (in the regions there are on the average 17.7 doctors per 10,000 population)⁶⁸. At the same time there are about 250 vacancies in the regions, where there is a particularly acute need for narrow specialists such as anesthesiologists, pediatricians, cardiologists, neurologists, obstetrician-gynecologists and ambulance doctors. Therefore, it is only natural that regions’ residents strive to be diagnosed and get treatment in Yerevan.

The optimization and modernization of regional hospitals that aim to unburden hospitals in Yerevan by redirecting the flow of patients from the regions to hospitals and clinics in their

⁶⁸ *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012.



own regions have not produced proper results yet. The level of hospitalization in Yerevan in 2011 grew by 27.4% from 2006, while the increase in hospitals in the regions was more than twice smaller (merely 12.3%)⁶⁹.

Provision of health-care services in rural areas remains a major problem of the sector. Not all villages in Armenia have out-patient medical rooms. It is not a rare occurrence that one doctor is in charge of several villages, which are located at the distance of 10-15 kilometers from one another and which, not infrequently, do not have transportation connection between them thereby limiting opportunities, especially for women, to get health-care services. Even first-aid stations and pharmacies are non-existent in some villages. The situation is aggravated in wintertime because of impassable roads, especially in the country's high mountainous areas. An incident was registered of a woman giving birth to a baby in a car that got stuck in a road covered with deep snow on the way to maternity hospital.

Limited financial accessibility of health-care services remains a serious problem in Armenia. Women are more likely to face it because in health sector they bear higher expenses than men.

Women make use of health-care services more often than men owing to their biological features related to a reproductive function and to their greater longevity (average life expectancy is 77 years for women and 71 years for men), as health-care services-related needs are on the rise at advanced age. At the same time, women's incomes are as a rule lower than those of men and constitute on the average 63% of men's incomes in this country⁷⁰. Women more often than men are unemployed or employed only part-time.

The State funding of health-care sector in Armenia is extremely inadequate. In recent years it has been about 1.4% - 1.65% of GDP. Moreover, in the next 2 years further reduction in expenditure for the sector is planned – to 1.38% in 2014 and to 1.31% in 2015⁷¹.

The main causes of inadequate accessibility of public health sector are the existing practices of official and informal payments for health-care services at the time of their provision and the high cost of those services, even though 35% of the population are below the poverty line.

The system of co-payments, which had been introduced in 2011 to prevent the informal payments existing in the sector, to lower the level of shadow economy and to secure the compensation for the costs of provided health-care services without increasing budget allocations not only failed to solve the problem of the necessity of direct payments but also led to rising costs of health-care services and to less accessible health care for broader groups of the popu-

⁶⁹ *Evaluation of the operation of the public health system in the Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan: Armenian National Institute of Health, 2012 (in Armenian).

⁷⁰ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012.

⁷¹ 14 June 2014 RoA Government Decree *On approving medium-term expenditure for 2013-2015* (in Armenian).



lation. This conclusion is supported by findings of the studies⁷² that indicate that while in 2009 19.2% of those who needed medical assistance did not seek it, in 2012 the percentage grew to 35.5%. It is noteworthy that in the group of those with the lowest income 55% did not seek medical assistance, while in the group of those with the highest income 35% did not seek medical assistance.

The study to evaluate the social impact of the co-payments system⁷³ revealed that slightly less than 20% of the poorest and 13% of the richest patients made use of free health-care services. Among the patients who made co-payment for medical treatment are 24% of the poorest and 16% of the richest. Almost 40% of the poorest and poor patients had to pay in full for their medical treatment. It should be noted that on the average the co-payment amount exceeds more than twice the average per capita income. Women account for 58% of those who made use of health-care services and 60% of the recipients of free medical assistance.

The co-payment system contributed to partial reduction of prevalence of informal payments in the sector. Each fifth patient makes an informal payment of his or her own free will or not voluntarily for various services alongside official payments.

Medical insurance as a form of social protection of citizens is not well-established yet in Armenia despite numerous discussions of the necessity of its introduction. Within the past 10 years various versions of the draft law on medical insurance were produced; however, none of those have been brought to a logical conclusion.

Health system in Armenia is a “female” sector as 76% of all employed doctors and about 90% of middle-level health workers are women. “Women themselves are major contributors to health, through their roles as primary caregivers in the family and also as health-care providers in both the formal and informal health sectors. The backbone of the health system, women are nevertheless rarely represented in executive or management-level positions... and... are often unsupported, unrecognized and unremunerated.”⁷⁴

Women have virtually no opportunity to be directly involved in management of the sector. The RoA National Assembly’s *Standing Committee on Health Care, Maternity and Childhood* is headed by a man. The Minister of Health and three Deputy Ministers are men. Out of 5 Divisions in the Ministry of Health only two (*Maternal & Child Health Protection Division* and *Legal Division*) are headed by women. There are few women also in the leadership positions at a regional level: only in 2 regions (out of 10) Health Departments in Regional

⁷² *Evaluation of the operation of the public health system in the Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan: Armenian National Institute of Health, 2012 (in Armenian).

⁷³ *Evaluation of the social impact of the co-payments system. Analytical Report*. Yerevan: Economic Development & Research Center, 2013 (in Armenian).

⁷⁴ *Women and Health: Today’s evidence tomorrow’s agenda*. Geneva: WHO, 2009, p. xiv.



Governors' Offices are headed by women. There are only 3 women in Yerevan and 4 women in the regions among heads of big hospitals and medical centers... At the same time, women comprise about 40% of the heads of health-care institutions that provide first medical aid.

More limited access to general health-care services has made an impact on women's health status. The overall mortality rate grew from 8.57 per 100,000 population in 2010 to 9.13 in 2012.

The leading causes of death for both women and men are circulatory system diseases and malignant neoplasms. While mortality rate in the group of circulatory system diseases tends to decrease slightly, the malignant neoplasms-related mortality rate among women within the last 3 years grew from 143 to 146 per 100,000 population⁷⁵.

Women are most often afflicted with oncological diseases in the reproductive age: 63.7% of all patients with neoplasms are in the age group 20-40⁷⁶, with breast and cervical cancer being prevalent. There has been a negative dynamic regarding timely diagnosis of malignant neoplasms. While in 2003, oncological diseases were diagnosed at an early stage in case of 44% of patients, at the third stage in case of 26% and at the fourth stage in case of 31% of patients, in 2011, the diseases were diagnosed at the first and second stages in case of 42%, at the third stage in case of only 18% and at the fourth stage in case of 31% of patients⁷⁷. Despite the fact that in recent years the technical opportunities for mammographic screening has improved and that non-governmental organizations and health-care bodies have been making concerted efforts to raise public awareness as to breast cancer prevention, nevertheless, the 2012 data indicate that 85% of women never underwent mammographic screening. In the past 3 years only 4.8% of women underwent mammographic screening, with 60% of them on a paid basis at that⁷⁸. ***The issue of timely diagnosis and quality treatment of oncological diseases among women remains one of the major problems of public health care.***

Paying particularly close attention to maternal and child health protection, in July 2008 the Armenian Government approved the State certificate program of childbirth (additional 1,000,000 AMD were allocated from the State budget) and the Child health State certificate program (for children up to 7 years of age), which ensures full provision of medical assistance to them in hospitals for free. Active collaboration of Health Ministry with non-governmental organizations was instrumental in enhancing effective implementation of the projects since NGOs contributed to public awareness-raising efforts and to the monitoring of the projects' implementation.

⁷⁵ *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012.

⁷⁶ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012.

⁷⁷ *Evaluation of the operation of the public health system in the Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan: Armenian National Institute of Health, 2012 (in Armenian).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*



Maternal and infant mortality rate are important indicators of the situation with reproductive health. Those rates in Armenia are lower than in CIS countries but considerably higher than in the European Union countries. It should be noted that in recent years the positive dynamic of those rates declined dramatically. According to the data of the Armenian Ministry of Health, in 2012 the maternal mortality rate was 23.5 per 100,000 live births and the infant mortality rate was 10.7 per 1,000 live births.

The statistical data analysis⁷⁹ demonstrates that despite the measures, which have been taken, women's reproductive health has been deteriorating in recent years. Pregnancy- and childbirth-related complications occur more and more often. The number of miscarriages, abortions for medical reasons and preterm births has been on the rise. 43% of childbirth cases entail surgical intervention, with Caesarean section accounting for 22% of those.

The problem of female infertility is becoming more urgent. Its incidence is twice higher than 5 years ago. The women's health status affects not only women themselves but also health and development of the next generation. The number of prematurely born babies has been on the rise in this country. The morbidity rate of such children is considerably higher than that of full-term children and the share of those who are diagnosed with congenital malformations is 3 times higher than among full-term children. The number of children with congenital anomalies increased almost 5-fold within the last 10 years.

Abortion is an important factor that has negative repercussions for women's reproductive health. Even though from 2009 the abortion incidence rate has tended to decrease slightly (from 13.8 to 10.0 per 1,000 women of fertile age⁸⁰, it is still widely used as a method of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. For women of Armenia, contemporary hormonal contraceptives are not affordable because of their high costs: only 5 out of 1,000 women use them⁸¹.

Sex-selective abortions are also a grave problem for Armenia. According to the study conducted in 2011 by the UNFPA Armenia Country Office⁸², within the past 20 years in Armenia the accepted normal biological sex-at-birth ratio has been skewed.

The analysis of the statistical data indicates that while in case of the first-born child the sex ratio at birth is 1.04-1.07 (which is in line with the biologically set statistical average of 1.02-1.06), from the second child on the ratio tends to increase to 1.08-1.13 and in case of the third and fourth children the ratio is clearly high at 1.6 and 1.7 respectively.

⁷⁹ *Statistical yearbook. Data for 2012*. Yerevan: Republican Public Health Information-Analytical Center of the National Institute of Health of the RoA Ministry of Health.

⁸⁰ *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012.

⁸¹ *Statistical yearbook. Data for 2012*. Yerevan: Republican Public Health Information-Analytical Center of the National Institute of Health of the RoA Ministry of Health.

⁸² <http://unfpa.am/en/publications-sex-selective-abortions> Sex-selective_abortions_report_Eng.pdf



The HIV infection, which is spreading in Armenia, poses an increasingly serious threat to women. According to the data of the Armenian National AIDS Center, as of 1 November 2013 there were 1,563 officially registered HIV-infected persons, including 469 women. 206 of those were diagnosed with AIDS. HIV infection is spreading at a higher rate among women than among men: within the past 5 years the share of women in the total number of HIV-infected persons grew from 24% to 30%. With 228 registered cases, the largest annual number of newly identified HIV-infected persons was in 2012. Virtually all HIV-positive women (98.5%) were infected via sexual contacts. According to the estimates, there are about 3,500 HIV-infected persons in Armenia. The main vulnerable group is labor migrants. In 2012, they accounted for over 60% of all infected persons.

During the implementation of the *National Program for Improving Reproductive Health* the Ministry of Health carried out educational programs to impart knowledge to medical personnel of out-patient medical rooms, polyclinics and antenatal clinics on topics related to provision of effective perinatal medical assistance, intrauterine fetal evaluation, early diagnosis of fetal malformations and the latest approaches to prevention of pregnancy-related complications. Guidelines were drawn up and specialists trained for implementing informational-educational programs in the Family Planning Services.

Targeted measures to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and young persons are planned within the framework of the *National Program of HIV/AIDS Prevention* for 2013-2014.

Non-governmental organizations operating in the sector make a significant contribution to securing maternal and child health protection. The Armenian Maternal and Child Health Alliance, which was formed in 2010, brought together resources and efforts of 45 NGOs that implement informational and education programs with various social groups within the framework of their projects. Their research projects are instrumental in identifying the major problems of the sector. Furthermore, the Alliance makes a certain impact on policies in health sector due to coordinated actions of all NGOs. Thus, in close collaboration with the RoA National Assembly's *Standing Committee on Health Care, Maternity and Childhood* and the RoA Ministry of Health the Alliance was instrumental in lobbying for and getting the RoA *Law on encouraging breastfeeding and on distribution of baby food* passed in the second reading in 2013 and in submitting recommendations concerning alternative sources of funding public health care.

Non-governmental organizations are involved and take an active part also in the implementation and monitoring of the *National Program of HIV/AIDS Prevention*. Numerous NGOs in the sector work with all vulnerable, marginal at-risk groups and provide psychological help and support to people living with HIV.



At the same time, the study of reproductive health indicates that its improvement is predicated not so much on the state of public health system as on women's general health status, their well-being, social conditions, adequate nutrition, healthy lifestyle and sex education. The solution of those problems is possible only through concerted efforts of public administration bodies and civil society organizations.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to expedite the adoption of the RoA Law on medical insurance.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to make provisions in the RoA Law on the RoA State budget for a drastic increase of funding allocated to public health care bringing it to 3% of the GDP in 2015, with subsequent phased increase to 5% of the GDP, as recommended by the World Health Organization to ensure proper functioning of the sector;*
- *to increase funding allocated for strengthening and development of services provided by out-patient rooms and polyclinics and to ensure decent wages for medical personnel in primary health care.*

To the RoA Ministry of Health:

- *to take effective measures for a targeted use of State funding aimed to ensure accessibility of quality medical assistance for socially vulnerable groups of population;*
- *to formulate a policy of training doctors taking into consideration the real needs of the sector and the centralized management of the pool of human resources that seeks to redress an imbalance in availability of qualified medical personnel in urban and rural areas;*
- *to ensure effective implementation of the National program on malignant diseases, which account for the highest mortality rates, by introducing periodic preventive medical check-ups of women (within the framework of services commissioned and funded by the State) with a view to identifying and treating neoplasms at early stages;*
- *to further energize efforts together with non-governmental organizations to advocate a healthy lifestyle and to promote preventive health care, paying special attention to raising young persons' awareness with respect to family planning and demographic consequences of sex-selective abortions in Armenia.*



Article 13 Economic and Social Benefits

Problems:

- *Inadequate social security provision to low-income families.*
- *Women' limited access to financial credits.*

The Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia do not contain any comments or recommendations with regard to Article 13 of the Convention

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women recommends in Article 13:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) *The right to family benefits;*
- (b) *The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;*
- (c) *The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The right to family benefits

Provision of social assistance in Armenia is regulated by the RoA Law on State benefits that was adopted on 24 October 2005. Under the Law, there are the following kinds of State benefits:

- family benefit and one-off cash assistance for needy families,
- one-off childbirth cash benefit,
- child care benefit (for a child of up to 2 years of age),
- benefits for families of fallen national heroes of the Republic of Armenia and for holders of "Battle Cross" Order.



The Law does not contain norms that discriminate against women. Any adult family member can apply to social services agencies, provided other adult family members have given their consent.

The number of families receiving benefits and one-off cash assistance had been steadily declining from 2007 to 2011 from 136,917 to 96,358. Alongside the growth of the share of the poor from 2011 on, the number of families that are in need of State benefits increased in Armenia. As of 1 July 2013, 114,005 families (with 418,002 members), i.e. almost 14% of the country's population, were receiving benefits. Women constitute 57.5% of all recipients of the benefits⁸³.

The average size of a monthly benefit per family grew from 17,500 AMD in 2007 to 26,853 AMD in 2011⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the size of the cash assistance only partially solves the problem of raising the living standard of low-income families as it covers less than 50% of the value of the minimum consumer basket.

Regardless of its social and material status, any family in Armenia is entitled to a State support provided for every newly born child. In 2013, the one-off benefit for the firstborn or second child was 50,000 AMD (\$ 125) and for the third and subsequent children 430,000 AMD (\$ 1,000).

A parent who takes a parental leave to care for a child until the latter becomes 3-year-old, is entitled to a benefit of 18,000 AMD (\$ 45) per month. At present, this amount compensates slightly over a half of the minimum wages set in the country at 35,000 AMD. The benefit is paid not for the entire period of a parental leave but only till the child reaches the age of 2. The small size of the childcare benefit is a grossly inadequate contribution to a family budget. Single mothers are in a particularly difficult material situation as the Armenian legislation does not provide any additional privileges or guarantees to them.

Women traditionally take care of children and when they reach a pension age they find themselves in an unequal situation with men because only 2 years of the parental leave for each child is included into the length of service (and overall not more than 6 years) for calculating a pension amount. As a result, women's length of service by the pension age is shorter than that of men; accordingly, the pension size is smaller as it is calculated on the basis of the length of service. Thus, in 2012, an average size of a retirement pension in case the length of service is over 26 years is 33,214 AMD for women and 37,423 AMD for men.

The RoA *Law on benefits for temporary disability*, which was adopted in 2010, to some extent limited social guarantees for employed citizens. In contrast to the Law that was in effect

⁸³ *Socio-economic situation in the Republic of Armenia: January-December 2007 and January-July 2013*. Yerevan: Armenian National Statistical Service, 2007 and 2013 (in Armenian).

⁸⁴ Ibid.



prior to 2010, the first day of illness is not paid, the benefit is paid from the second day on, with the 2nd, 3rd and 4th days paid by the employer and from the 5th day on the benefit is paid from the State budget.

It was also intended to limit the maximum size of the benefit, *viz.* it was not to exceed the 5-fold amount of the minimum wages set in the country. It was only due to well-coordinated and consistent actions taken by women's non-governmental organizations (which proved the discriminatory nature of the proposed changes for women and their incompatibility with the provisions of the European Social Charter) that NGOs succeeded to ensure that benefits for pregnancy- and childbirth-related temporary disability are paid without any limitations to the amount of an average monthly wages from day one throughout the entire antenatal and post-natal maternity leave, a total of 140 days in case of normal delivery, 150 days in case of complicated labor and 180 days in case woman gives birth to two or more babies. In addition, if an average monthly income is below the officially set minimum wages, the amount of the maternity benefit is increased to that of the minimum wages and thus paid.

Rural women are in a difficult situation because the overwhelming majority of them work in their households and their work is not taken into consideration when pensions or benefits in case of temporary disability owing to illness or childbirth are granted. They do not qualify for childcare benefits.

Rural women are entitled only (as all other women are) to a one-off benefit granted every child born and to a family poverty benefit. There are no additional privileges for families with many children in Armenia.

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit

Notwithstanding the fact that women and men in Armenia have equal rights to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit⁸⁵, the practice shows that when it is necessary to register a loan against a guarantee, owing to high interest rates on financial credits, especially in the agricultural sector, women have more limited opportunities in enjoying those rights than men because their wages are lower in this country, constituting 63% of men's wages. It is not a rare occurrence that women are denied even the possibility of buying elementary household appliances on credit.

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life

⁸⁵ The RoA Law on consumer lending, 2008.



All citizens of the country enjoy equal rights related to rest, sports and participation in cultural and recreational programs and activities. However, as a result of the transition to a free-market economy all facilities intended for sports, recreation and sanatoria and spa treatment were privatized and can now be used only for a fee. In Yerevan and in health-resort areas of Armenia numerous elite guest houses and hotels as well as gyms, athletic grounds and swimming pools have been built and only small segments of population, including women, can afford user fees.

The per capita amount of services provided in the field of arts, entertainment and recreation increased in recent years from 6,662 AMD to 17,248 AMD, i.e. 2.6-fold⁸⁶, with the indices of physical volume of services in the field in 2012 grew by 163.3% compared to year 2011.

Within the reporting period the number of museums in Armenia grew from 96 to 99 and the number of visits increased more than 2.5-fold. 2 new theaters were opened during this time, a drama theater and Young spectators' theater. There are 28 theaters in the country and the number of visits increased by 54,000 per year.

By early 2013, there were 948 libraries in Armenia, i.e. 90 libraries fewer than in 2007 (when there were 1,038 libraries). There was virtually no change in the library stock, with 5,889 items per 1,000 population⁸⁷. The number of visits to libraries somewhat increased over the last 3 years. Every second resident visits library once a year, with women constituting 60% of all patrons⁸⁸.

At the same time, exorbitant prices for tickets for theater performances, concerts and other cultural events limit women's involvement in those areas of cultural life.

Recommendations

To the RoA Government:

- *to increase the size of State benefits for low-income families to the level of a real value of the minimum consumer basket;*
- *to increase the size of childcare benefits and to pay it during the entire period of the childcare leave;*
- *to introduce additional social benefits for families with many children and for single mothers;*
- *to take measures to expand social benefits for rural women working in their households;*

⁸⁶ *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia: 2013*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2013, p. 370.

⁸⁷ *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia: 2012*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012,

⁸⁸ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, p. 94.



- *to design special measures with a view to providing rural women with maternity and childcare benefits granted by the State;*
- *to include the work of rural women in households into calculation of the length of service for pensions;*
- *to take measures to broaden women's opportunities to enjoy the right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;*
- *to introduce, as a temporary measure, individual programs for providing women loans and credits on preferential terms;*
- *to expand the practice of holding "open doors" days in theaters, museums and mass cultural and sport events.*



Article 14

Elimination of discrimination against rural women

Problems:

- *Underrepresentation of women in decision-making in local self-government and in the leadership in cooperative societies.*
- *Substandard working and living conditions of rural women.*
- *Limited access to loans and resources.*
- *Lack of awareness with respect to labor rights.*
- *Limited access to health-care services and to secondary education.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee notes the lack of information and statistics about vulnerable groups of women, particularly rural women, ... who often suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, especially in regard to access to employment, health care, education and social benefits.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of vulnerable groups of women in all areas covered by the Convention, and information on specific programmes and achievements.

The Committee calls upon the State party to adopt gender specific policies and programmes that would cater to the specific needs of vulnerable groups of women.

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

In 2011, within the *European Neighbourhood* policy framework the Armenian Government adopted the National Indicative Programme for the period 2011-2013. The programme includes increased participation of women in rural development⁸⁹.

By his 19 October 2012 order the Minister of Labor & Social Issues approved the *Gender-*

⁸⁹ "Increased participation of all groups in rural development, including women." *Armenia. National Indicative Programme 2011-2013*. European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Directorate Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, Central Asian Republics, p. 20.



sensitive and disaggregated indicators guidebook. It contains gender-sensitive indicators that have to be taken into consideration in statistical records and in planning in order to assess the existing situation in agriculture. In particular, it is required to take into consideration the sex-disaggregated data on rural population, the number of employees in rural bodies of local self-government disaggregated by sex and position, the number of women-headed households, an average monthly per capita income depending on household head's sex, the share of women and men among those who are engaged in agriculture, average monthly wages of women and men in agriculture sector, an average monthly income of women and men in agriculture sector, etc.

The strategies and programs adopted by the Armenian Government with a view to developing rural areas and agriculture, viz. *Strategy of Sustainable Development of Rural Areas and Agriculture in the Republic of Armenia for 2010-2020*, *Concept Paper on Consolidation of Farms in the Republic of Armenia* and programs of socioeconomic development of regions are gender neutral.

In line with the 31 March 2011 RoA Government Decree № 349 the programs to subsidize interest rates on loans given to the agricultural sector have been implemented. On the whole, up to 53,800 loan units to the amount of 44.1 billion AMD were given from 1 April 2011 to 30 June 2013. About 15 per cent of those loans were given to women.

45% of the country's employed population, i.e. about 500,000 persons, are engaged in the agricultural sector, with women accounting for 56.2% of them⁹⁰. Rural women constitute 45.5% of all employed women in the country.

26% of households in rural areas are headed by women⁹¹. The average size of per capita monthly monetary income of those families was 19,980 AMD⁹² in 2012 and was considerably lower than that in households headed by men, where the income was 33,685 AMD⁹³.

As of July 2012 data, 340,000 farms operated in Armenia. In the agricultural sector, women's incomes amounted only to 58.3% of men's incomes. Despite the fact that rural women in Armenia have a high level of educational attainment, they often lack necessary agronomic and marketing knowledge for effective management of farms. They do not have relevant accounting skills. Not infrequently women do not have information about current reforms and agricultural innovations and are in need of State support and, more importantly, of gender-sensitive tax policies that are protective during the initial stages of women's entrepreneurial activities.

⁹⁰ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012. www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2012.pdf

⁹¹ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, p. 63. www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2012.pdf

⁹² It is roughly equal to USD 50 per month.

⁹³ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012. www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2012.pdf



As a result of the reorganization of the general education system there is a risk that the education level of rural women may go down. Not all villages have senior high schools. Since reliable transportation between villages is non-existent, it is not feasible for girls to study in senior high schools located in neighboring villages. That may prove an obstacle for rural girls to get not only secondary but also tertiary education. Considerable prevalence of poverty of the population is also an obstacle for rural girls to raise their level of educational attainment as students themselves or their parents cannot afford to pay tuition fees set by higher education institutions.

The professional development-related problems are not solved efficiently in rural areas. International organizations (Heifer International, Save the Children, WorldVision, OXFAM and some others) conduct seminars in some regions of the country to raise legal awareness of rural residents and implement projects aimed to provide agricultural machinery and other equipment to rural cooperative societies. OXFAM in collaboration with regional and community entities conducts “farmer field schools,” with active participation of women. However, throughout the country the programs for professional education of women have not been introduced. Neither mechanisms securing continuity in lifelong professional development of women with a view to enhancing their competitiveness on the labor market have been designed.

The range of agricultural services in Armenia is not particularly wide. Rural residents almost do not make use of services of chemical fertilizers delivery, agro services, and storage of agricultural produce in specially equipped cold storage boxes. The problem of building and reconstructing irrigation system is particularly daunting. It is impossible to solve those problems only with community budget funds. All that makes life more difficult for rural residents, especially for women because of their double burden of employment and homemaking.

The absence of paved roads, inadequate development of irrigation systems and remoteness of markets for selling produce considerably limit the opportunities for getting additional real incomes from producing and selling agricultural produce. Work in the agricultural sector is done mostly manually because of the absence of small-scale farm machinery and of the high cost of technical maintenance services. Women are often engaged in hard physical labor and work under the conditions that cause irreparable harm to their health.

Underdeveloped infrastructure makes rural women’s life even more difficult. Remoteness of villages from hospitals and inadequate public transportation limits rural women’s access to quality medical services. An average distance from rural households to a hospital is 12.0 kilometers, to pharmacy 8.1 kilometers, local self-government body – 0.7 kilometers, kindergarten 4.9 kilometers, secondary school 0.9 kilometers, markets for agricultural produce 17.3 kilometers and banks/financial services 12.9 kilometers⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ *Households Integrated Living Conditions Survey*. Armenian National Statistical Service, 2012. <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=374>



Rural residents, including women, for the most part do not make use of social insurance programs because those are non-existent or because they are not adequately informed. Women who work on their land plots do not get a maternity allowance and an allowance for taking care of a sick child as well as other social services and benefits.

Living conditions in villages are far from adequate. Only 17.8% of rural households have at the same time a kitchen, cold water, flush toilet and a bathroom⁹⁵. Limited accessibility of drinking water makes rural women’s life, particularly housekeeping more difficult.

Below is a table showing households’ access to safe drinking water for years 2004 and 2011 (per cent)⁹⁶

Main source of water	Total		Urban areas		Rural areas	
	2004	2011	2004	2011	2004	2011
Centralized water supply	88.9	97.5	96.5	99.5	74.0	93.7
under 1 hour	1.6	0.1	1.6	0.1	1.6	0.1
from 1 to 5 hours	39.5	18.6	40.9	16.4	36.0	23.3
from 6 to 12 hours	21.5	22.6	22.5	24.0	19.0	19.6
from 13 to 23 hours	4.5	5.5	5.2	5.3	2.8	5.8
24 hours	32.9	53.2	29.8	54.2	40.6	51.2
Have their own system of water supply	2.6	1.1	0.2	0.4	7.3	2.5
Water brought by water carrier truck	4.5	0.0	2.3	0.0	9.0	0.0
Other sources	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1

As the Table data indicate, there has been a positive dynamic in terms of households’ better access to drinking water. The 24-hour centralized water supply has become more accessible and the percentage of households using alternative systems of water supply has been declining. At the same time the centralized water supply does not fully meet yet the needs of the population.

Women are virtually not involved in the formulation and implementation of the development plans of their villages. Extremely low (8.6%) representation of women in bodies of local self-government is another obstacle to the attainment of equality between women and men. Out of 866 rural communities only 20 are headed by women. Women are not adequately involved in the formulation and implementation of the development plans of their villages because of their low representation in rural bodies of local self-government.

Agricultural cooperation in this country is still at its early stage. *On the farmers’ initiative*

⁹⁵ *Households Integrated Living Conditions Survey*. Armenian National Statistical Service, 2012.

⁹⁶ *Women and Men in Armenia, 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan: National Statistical Service, 2012, p. 43.



*109 agricultural cooperative societies were established for production of dairy products, fruits and vegetables as well as other kinds of agricultural produce*⁹⁷.

67 agricultural cooperative societies “Unions of Pasturelands Users” were set up in 6 regions of the country with financial support of the World Bank. Even though women play an important role in agricultural production, they are underrepresented in the administration of the cooperative societies.

The development of cooperation in Armenia is promoted by the projects of international organization, one of the policy components of which is introduction of gender equality principles. British organization OXFAM has been working along those lines in partnership with local governments and regional entities. *It was instrumental in getting agricultural cooperative societies and farmers’ schools established in Tavush and Vayots Dzor regions. Association of Small Farmers of Kapan has been implementing with its support the farms development project, where gender component occupies a prominent place. Association of Small Farmers of Kapan conducts training sessions on gender topics, draws up skills development and farming programs for women and promotes election of women to bodies of local self-government. In the country’s Vayots Dzor region first women’s cooperatives societies were established.*

A number of non-governmental organizations, including Armenian Committee of Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly, Young Women’s Association of Armenia, Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, Green Path non-governmental organization for support to agriculture, Federation of Agricultural Associations, Shen, Victory’s Young Farmers and Side by Side with Farmers, assist with the solution of pressing problems faced by farmers.

Federation of Agricultural Unions, National Union of Farmers, Meat producers Union, Union of Milk Producers and Union of Greenhouse Farms provide significant professional and information support to farmers. NGOs too contribute to dissemination of gender equality ideas within the framework of implemented projects.

Recommendations

To the RoA Government:

- *to take measures to broaden social guarantees for women working in the agricultural sector;*
- *to draw up and implement special programs of provision of microcredits and agricultural machinery to rural women on preferential terms;*
- *to make bodies of regional administration and local self-government more responsible*

⁹⁷ European Union Neighbourhood Policy. *Assessment of the agriculture and rural development sectors in the Eastern Partnership countries: Republic of Armenia*. Budapest: FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, 2012, p. 48 (in Armenian).



for drawing up and implementing programs aimed to develop transportation and social infrastructures in rural areas.

To the RoA Ministry of Agriculture:

- *to take gender component into consideration while promoting the development of agricultural cooperation;*
- *to make a gender analysis of laws and documents related to agriculture;*
- *to introduce gender approach more broadly into agricultural programs.*

To the RoA Ministry of Health:

- *to establish mobile out-patient services for provision of medical assistance in remote and hard-to-reach villages;*
- *to undertake activities aimed to raise legal awareness of rural women in the sphere of labor and health protection.*

To the RoA Ministry of Education and Science:

- *to retain secondary schools in those villages where reliable transportation between villages is non-existent;*
- *to consider the possibility of opening seasonal rural youth schools for boys and girls engaged in agricultural production so that they could complete their secondary education;*
- *to draw up and implement together with the Ministry of Agriculture special programs aimed to improve agricultural knowledge of rural youth;*
- *to introduce special subjects on basics of farming into rural general-education high schools.*

To the RoA Ministry of Transportation and Communications:

- *to take measures to improve roads and transportation between villages.*

To Non-Governmental Organizations:

- *to implement professional development and awareness-raising programs in the sphere of new farming technologies as well as leadership qualities development programs for women;*
- *to move from implementation of gender-neutral programs in agriculture to gender-sensitive programs and to integrate into all the programs implemented in rural areas the components that take into consideration specific interests of rural women and that aim to protect their rights.*

To Political Parties:

- *to take measures through local party offices aimed to develop leadership potential of rural women who are party members and to advance women to decision-making levels.*



Article 15

Women's equality with men before the law

Problems:

- *Considerable differences between the legislation, which guarantees equality between the sexes, and the real situation, which is the result of gender-neutral policies.*
- *Women's inadequate awareness of the legislation that guarantees women's equality with men before the law.*
- *The absence of a gender-specific approach in State policies and programs.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁹⁸

The Committee regrets the absence of an explicit and comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, both direct and indirect.

The Committee is further concerned that the principle of equality between women and men has not been expressly articulated in the State party's legislation.

The Committee expresses concern at the lack of express and comprehensive legal provisions prohibiting discrimination against women, and at the State party's preference for gender-neutral policies and programmes, which may lead to inadequate protection for women against direct as well as indirect discrimination, hinder the achievement of formal and substantive equality between women and men, and result in a fragmented approach to the recognition and enforcement of women's human rights.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia:

- *The Committee urges the State party to enact appropriate national legislation containing prohibition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 and article 2, subparagraph (b) of the Convention, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination;*
- *The Committee calls upon the State party to accelerate the adoption of the proposed law on gender equality and to embody the principle of equality of women and men in the proposed law on gender equality, in line with article 2 (a);*

⁹⁸ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 12 & 13.*



- *The Committee also encourages the State party to raise awareness with respect to the nature of indirect discrimination and the concept of substantive equality among Government officials, the judiciary and the public;*
- *The Committee recommends that the State party adopts a gender specific approach in its policies and programmes.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The principle of women's equality with men before the law is a fundamental provision of the Convention and is enshrined in the RoA Constitution (adopted in 2005 with amendments), the RoA Criminal Code (adopted in 2005), the RoA Family Code (adopted in 1998 with subsequent amendments) and in other pieces of legislation, which mostly contain the requirement to ban gender-based discrimination.

The RoA legislation did not contain an explicit and comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, both direct and indirect.

The application of the existing legislation did not ensure *adequate protection* of women against discrimination, particularly against indirect discrimination, and the *achievement* of formal and substantive equality between women and men.

The absence of explicit definitions of indirect discrimination and of substantive equality in legislation as well as in State policies and programs limited, *inter alia*, opportunities for women to be informed and to engage in protection of their own rights.

So far in this country there has not been a single precedent in court practices of using the provisions of the Convention with regard to the violation of equality of women and men before the law.

The RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which was adopted by the National Assembly in May 2013, guarantees women's equality with men before the law as well as regarding rights, duties and responsibilities, taking into consideration the exceptions made by the law. However, a low level of legal consciousness of a significant part of the population in that regard, lack of awareness with respect to relevant Articles of the Convention, inadequate, arbitrary or unprofessional media coverage of the provisions of the Law, biased interpretations of some wordings as sexual licentiousness created a climate of intolerance among some social groups against the Law. Currently a need to revise the Law has arisen.



Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to initiate discussions with a view to clarifying those provisions of the RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men that are interpreted in different ways and to justifying the making of appropriate amendments.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to devise and take measures to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against women in all spheres of public life and to secure women's substantive equality with men in terms of rights and opportunities;*
- *to apply the gender-specific approach in State policies and programs;*
- *to take measures aimed to use advocacy via media of the obligations assumed by the country to achieve equality between the sexes and to undertake legal educations of the population.*



Article 16

Elimination of discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family

Problems:

- *Minimum age of marriage and the removal of all the exception related to it.*
- *Discrimination against women that results from marriages that are not officially registered.*
- *Inadequate legal knowledge of some people regarding equality of women and men in matters relating to marriage and family relations.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia⁹⁹

The Committee reiterates the concern expressed in the Committee's previous concluding observations and in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's concluding observations that the different minimum legal age for marriage, set at 18 for men and 17 for women, constitutes discrimination against women.

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia:

The Committee urges the State party:

- *to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is raised for women to 18, and*
- *to remove any exceptions to this minimum age, in accordance with article 16 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 21.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

⁹⁹ *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ Forty-third session / 19 January-6 February 2009/, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 / para. 16.*



The RoA Family Code (adopted in 2003) reflected in general the Convention's provisions concerning women's equality with men in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, with the exception of a differentiated approach to the minimum age of marriage, which was set at 18 for men and 17 for women.

In April 2013, in line with Article 16 of the Convention and the Committee's General Recommendation No. 21, the RoA National Assembly amended the RoA Family Code, thereby setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both men and women. The CEDAW Committee also urged the State party to remove any exceptions to the minimum age of marriage. However, the above-mentioned amendment does not yet fully meet the requirements set in the Committee's recommendation because it lays down the following exceptions: "The person shall be able to get married also at the age of 17, if there is his or her parents', adoptive parents' or guardian's consent. The person shall be able also to get married at the age of 16, if there is his or her parents', adoptive parents' or guardian's consent and if his or her marriage partner is at least 18 years of age."¹⁰⁰

The institution of a marriage contract is not widespread in the value system prevalent in the Republic of Armenia and will not be widespread in the near future. The marriage contracts are still rare and almost all of them are concluded with foreign nationals.

The marriages that are not officially registered were traditionally quite widespread in Armenia. Most of those marriages essentially differ in their motives, nature and consequences from common-law relationships in Western countries. The main reasons for not registering *de facto* marriages in the Armenian reality are the following: 1) the stereotypical perceptions of family as *not a legal* institution, which are held by some segments of the public; 2) inadequate awareness of partners, especially women, with respect to the norms of the family law. As a result, the property and other rights of spouses, primarily women, are quite often violated during the unregistered family life and more so in the event of divorce.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to hold discussions on the interpretation of relevant provisions of the Convention and of the Committee's recommendations with a view to removing any exception to the minimum age of marriage from the legislation.*

¹⁰⁰ RoA Family Code, Article 1.



To the RoA Government:

- *to take necessary measures with a view to ensuring mandatory registration of marriages in official Registration logs.*

To the RoA Government and to non-governmental organizations:

- *to take measures to advocate via the general education system and the media the relevant provisions of the Convention and of the Committee's recommendations and to get media coverage of the family law norms with a view to increasing legal knowledge of the public on those matters.*



PART IV

Violence against Women

Problems:

- *Promoting intolerance of the general public against all forms of violence against women, in particular, domestic violence.*
- *Insufficient State measures to combat violence against women.*
- *Lack of legal and social protection of victims of violence.*

Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia, paragraphs 22 and 23

Paragraph 22. *The Committee reiterates its concern that a lack of understanding and acknowledgment of the fact that gender-based violence against women, and in particular domestic violence, continues to be a significant problem in the State party as expressed in its previous concluding observations (A/57/38). The Committee also regrets that the State party's report makes no mention of this phenomenon.*

The Committee is further concerned that there is no specific legislation addressing violence against women and that there is no dedicated governmental body or coordinating institution tasked with implementing measures to counter all forms of gender-based violence against women.

The Committee is also concerned about the lack of statistics provided on the incidence of various forms of violence against women, including the number of women murdered by their husbands, partners or ex-partners in cases of domestic violence, and on the availability of support services for victims.



Paragraph 23. The Committee urges the State party:

- *to give priority attention to eliminating all forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence, and to adopt comprehensive measures to address it;*
- *to enact, without delay, legislation specifically addressing domestic violence against women. Such legislation should ensure that violence against women and girls constitutes a criminal offence and a civil wrong; that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished;*
- *women and girls who are victims of violence should have access to immediate means of redress and protection and availability of a sufficient number of adequate shelters in all regions.*

Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

The Committee recommends

- *the implementation of training for the judiciary and public officials, in particular law enforcement personnel and health-service providers, ensuring that they are sensitized to all forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence, and can provide adequate support to victims;*
- *further public awareness-raising and zero-tolerance campaigns in regard to violence against women.*

Analysis of key problems within the context of meeting the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia

Confirming its commitment to the policy of prevention and elimination of gender-based violence and recognizing violence as one of the gross human rights violations, the Armenian Government has been taking measures to prevent violence as a discriminatory phenomenon that leads to social maladjustment. *The 2004-2010 Republic of Armenia National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society* included measures that were taken to eliminate violence against women.

In line with the future-oriented strategies and principles of the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* the Armenian Government implemented projects aimed to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination and to prevent such forms of violence as trafficking in people, to improve the legislative framework, which provides protection



to women victims of violence, and to improve the system for their psychological rehabilitation and support through consultations by social services.

The RoA *Law On Social Assistance*, which was adopted in 2005, spells out the types of violence and the mechanisms of State support for victims of violence. In recent years the National Statistical Service together with non-governmental organizations conducted four studies to collect data on incidence of violence against women both in the family and in the work place.

The Armenian Government acceded to the document adopted in 2006 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to conduct a campaign to combat violence against women. Within its framework the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues drew up and implemented an action plan that included a number of activities such as round table discussions, meetings with civil society organizations and relevant international organizations, dissemination of printed materials, booklets and posters and posting information on the internet.

Needs assessment, collection of statistical data and situation analysis were undertaken during various events. In May 2008, a conference was held to outline further measures to be taken by the Government and the NGO sector for the elimination of all forms of violence. Government entities and NGOs took part in the campaign launched by the Council of Europe and in the events staged within the framework of the year designated by the Council of Europe as the year to combat domestic violence.

The issues of violence prevention and of social support to victims of violence and their family members were included into the Armenian Government's Action Plan for years 2008-2012. A medium-term State program "Establishment of crisis centers for victims of violence" was approved for and implemented in 2009-2011. From 2008 on, the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues includes social protection of victims of violence as one of its functions. The RoA State budget has funds earmarked for provision of services to individuals subjected to violence. A gender education course (with a module that includes knowledge on issues of violence) was introduced in the curricula of the professional development for civil servants taught by the National Institute of the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues.

Armenia acceded to a number of international legal instruments that aim to combat trafficking in people and in 2007 the Council on Issues of trafficking was set up, which was headed by the RoA Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Territorial Administration. In 2010, the *Interagency Commission on Combating Gender-Based Violence* affiliated with the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues was established by the RoA Government's decree. The Commission periodically reviews issues related to elimination of violence. In 2011, the Armenian Government approved the *National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence*, which had been drawn up by the Commission and which outlined the general strategy and State policy priorities, and the *2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based*



Violence. The Action Plan for the program implementation is approved annually (e.g. the 2011 *National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence*).

Certain legislative steps have been taken to regulate the issues of violence and trafficking. In 2008, the RoA National Assembly ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The new Criminal Code includes Articles prescribing severer punishment for organizing illegal migration for labor and other forms of exploitation.

Despite measures taken by State entities and NGOs, the country's specific geopolitical and socioeconomic situation, unemployment, labor migration, economic dependence of women in families and unsolved household problems contributed to greater incidence of gender-based violence, first of all against women and girls who become victims of sexual harassment in the workplace and of forced labor exploitation.

The findings of the nationwide survey conducted in 2008-2009 by the RoA National Statistical Service together with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) indicate that 25% of surveyed women were subjected to psychological violence by their intimate partners, 8.9% to physical violence, 3.3% to sexual violence and 9.5% to physical or sexual violence. 61% of surveyed women were victims of controlling behavior.

The comparative analysis of the data on women subjected to any of the three forms of violence (psychological, physical or sexual) revealed that the percentage of women subjected to intimate partner violence was significantly lower in 20-24 and 25-34 age groups, while women in 35-44 and 45-59 age groups were more likely to be subjected to violence.

7.9% of 20-24-year-old women, 29.1% of 35-44-year-old women and 27.4% of 45-59-year-old women are subjected to psychological violence. 2.3% of women in 20-24 age group, 10.5% of women in 35-44 age group and 9.9% of women in 45-59 age group are subjected to physical violence.

5.7%, 2.3% and 2.6% of surveyed women are subjected to sexual violence in 20-24, 35-44 and 45-59 age groups respectively.

According to the police data, 766 incidents of violence were registered in 2012. 621 of them were against women and 145 against men. 15 instances of violence were against minors¹⁰¹.

In recent years civil society organizations have become more active in their efforts to eliminate violence against women. The crisis centers "Family Center," "Hope," "Center for Mothers and Children," "Women's Resource Center," "House Armenia," "Mothers'

¹⁰¹ The data were publicly presented by Ms Nelly Durian, Police Colonel, Deputy Head of the Third Division of the Main Directorate for Criminal Investigations.



Armenia” charity, Coalition “Against violence against women” and Tufenkian Fund’s “Women Support Center” that were set up in the city of Yerevan and Gyumri and in some regions (in the towns of Martuni, Eghegnadzor and Armavir) have been implementing projects aimed to protect victims of violence, setting up hotlines and helplines, shelters, providing medical, legal and social consultations and implementing informational, analytical or educational programs.

The hotline set up in Yerevan and in some regions of the country by the *Women’s Rights Center* NGO for women subjected to domestic violence receive help requests from 150 women monthly. An average age of women most often subjected to domestic violence is 26-31. 2,032 calls were made to the national hotline in 2011. 1,678 of them were about domestic violence: 1,042 were related to psychological, 612 to physical and 24 to sexual violence. 1,325 visits were registered in the Crisis Center in Yerevan. 288 visits were related to psychological, 160 to physical and 11 to sexual violence. The crisis centers operating in Tavush, Gegharkunik, Syunik and Lori regions of the country received 1,247 calls, with 806 of those related to domestic violence¹⁰².

Within one year, the **Fast Response Group**, which was established by the *Society without Violence* NGO, identified 20 instances of violence against women, including 14 instances of physical violence, with 7 instances resulting in victims’ deaths¹⁰³.

With the support from the national and regional authorities, non-governmental organization undertake certain activities to raise public awareness about issues of violence against women so as to create a climate of intolerance in the society against all forms of that violence.

Within the framework of the UNFPA *Combating Gender-based Violence in the South Caucasus* Project the *International Center for Human Development*, *Armenian Association of Women with University Education* and *Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia* implemented a 3-year program aimed to eradicate gender-based violence and to help the Government to fulfill the obligations assumed regarding the elimination of gender-based discrimination and the prevention of gender-based violence in this country.

The Project had 5 main components: *studies* of the issues of gender-based violence, *public awareness-raising* activities, *support* to improvement of legislation and policies, *establishment* of an effective national machinery and *promotion* and *coordination* of regional cooperation.

¹⁰² The data were presented at the 6 March 2012 press conference by Ms Diana Sargsian, public relations officer of Women’s Rights Center NGO.

¹⁰³ See: swv.am



The Project was also instrumental in conducting in all regions of the country the seminars and public awareness-raising meetings with various social groups: men and women, school teachers and university instructors, journalists, doctors as well as high school and university students on issues of gender-based discrimination and violence and on social consequences of domestic violence.

In recent years the issue of violence is actively discussed in the Armenian society, facts of domestic violence are made public by mass media more often and the issue is no longer a taboo and merely a problem to be dealt by the family.

With a view to drawing public attention to the domestic violence issue non-governmental organizations stage various events, organize photo exhibitions, distribute booklets and flyers and produced video clips “No to Domestic Violence!” “Strong Man does not Intimidate Woman,” and “Silence Zone.” Women’s NGOs take an active part on staging events on the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*. With the UN and other international organizations’ support the NGO sector together with government entities conducts annual information and educational campaign “*16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence*.”

Despite measures taken by the State and the efforts put forth by NGOs the problem of gender-based violence, in particular violence against women, is still acute for women in Armenia. At the same time the general public is still insufficiently aware of the gender-based violence issues and takes an inadequate stance towards victims of violence and trafficking. The society still underestimates the impact of violence and trafficking on all spheres of public life and on moral and value orientations of the Armenian society. The number of women engaged in prostitution is growing.

In June 2013, Coalition “Against violence against women” that is composed of 7 non-governmental organizations, staged a protest action near the Armenian Government building demanding that a law on domestic violence be adopted.

The Armenian legislation does not differentiate between types of violence on the grounds of gender. Until now the law on domestic violence has not been adopted that could provide guarantees for safety of women and children in families and in the society. The mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the existing normative legal instruments and preventive legal, political, administrative and cultural measures to protect women from any form of violence are lacking.

The realities of the present-day stage of development of the Armenian society demonstrate that measures, which have been taken in recent years to draw public attention to the existing problem of domestic violence and to strengthen inadmissibility of domestic violence for the public at large, are not sufficient effective yet. The opinions voiced in social networks and the



articles published in some media outlets in August-September 2013 attacking the adopted *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* and the proposed law on domestic violence and discrediting the ideology of gender equality provide compelling evidence of confrontation in the society.

The stereotypes of the role of women in the society and, especially, in the family are still very influential in the Armenian society. The claim that gender equality undermines national values and the traditional Armenian family is actively promoted and the opinion about inadmissibility of State interference into relations within the family is voiced.

The solution of the problems relating to the elimination of psychological, physical, economic and sexual violence and trafficking raises the necessity of the *improvement* of the legislative framework and of the *coordination* of efforts put forth by State entities and non-governmental organizations aimed to raise awareness of general public. At the same time it questions the advisability of the submission of the Draft *RoA Law on Domestic violence* (that was drafted by the RoA Ministry of Labor & Social Issues) to the RoA National Assembly for consideration.

Recommendations

To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to adopt special legislation to combat domestic violence, wherein violence against women and girls will be qualified as a criminal and civil offense subject to prosecution and punishment.*

To the RoA Government:

- *to submit the Draft RoA Law on Domestic violence to the RoA National Assembly for consideration;*
- *to increase State funding earmarked for expanding the network of shelters and rehabilitation centers and re-socialization of victims of violence;*
- *to exercise a stricter control over the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence and to plan annual reports on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan at the sessions of the Women's Council under the Prime Minister.*

To Interagency Commission on Combating Gender-Based Violence:

- *to hear periodically at the Commission's sessions the reports by Ministries and Agencies on the implementation of activities set out in the Action Plan.*



To Non-Governmental Organizations:

- *to put forth more energetic efforts aimed to raise public awareness and to create a climate of intolerance in the society against all forms of violence against women;*
- *to collaborate closer with mass media, law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary ensuring public awareness of instances of violence against women and children and to contribute to promoting the public feeling of being protected and of confidence that any act of violence against person will not go unpunished.*



CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

1. Some positive developments have been observed in the Republic of Armenia regarding the entire spectrum of issues related to improvement of women's status, protection of their rights and expansion of opportunities for them. In 2009-2012, the RoA Government took a number of steps to implement the recommendations made by the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia, to implement gender policies and to improve the gender situation in the country.

Due to the measures that have been taken the groundwork has been laid in the country for eliminating discrimination against women and achieving gender equality. Nevertheless, the Armenia's Government has not implemented properly some recommendations that had been made by the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* regarding the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia and that are related to some important articles of the Convention and to areas of concern.

The situation has remained almost unchanged concerning a number of issues.

Only insignificant progress has been made in terms of women's political participation and their representation in power and in economic and political decision-making. Gender inequality persists in the legislature and at the top level in the executive branch of government and in local self-government.

2. The Armenian Government's approval of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* in February 2010 and the adoption and implementation of the May 2011 Protocol Decree "On approving the 'Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015'" laid the significant groundwork for energizing the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations and for making their activities more goal-oriented and effective with a view to eliminating discrimination against women, attaining gender equality and justice, and main-



streaming gender into State programs and policies. Effective implementation of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* will contribute to the overcoming of the ‘democracy gap’ and to the consolidation of sustainable society, which is developing dynamically and firmly and which ensures a dignified life to all citizens, both men and women.

3. Much work has been done to approximate national legislation to the CEDAW Convention and other international legal instruments. In line with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in May 2013 the RoA National Assembly adopted the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which subsequently took effect.

The RoA Election Code was amended and the gender quota for the political party lists in the RoA parliamentary elections through a proportional representation system was raised from 15% to 20%. A 20% gender quota was also introduced for the political party lists in the Yerevan City Council elections.

However, there is a significant difference between the legal norms and their de facto implementation.

4. Consistent, regular and effective efforts of the RoA Government are needed as are the social partnerships between the Government and non-governmental organizations to overcome patriarchal stereotypes and to develop a new egalitarian democratic gender culture. Non-governmental organizations should take a pro-active role in promoting gender literacy and conducting public awareness-raising campaigns. They should consistently explain that *protection from discrimination* as a universal right enshrined in the CEDAW Convention and in the domestic legislation as well as the *gender equality principle* are universal values.

5. This Alternative Report is an attempt to assess not only the CEDAW Convention implementation process but also (proceeding from the CEDAW Committee recommendations) the situation with a number of key provisions of the Convention. The *analysis* of the examined data and materials as well as the *recommendations* provided on its basis are intended primarily for the RoA Government, civil society institutions and all concerned institutions and can be used for clarification of priorities and objectives, optimization of activities and for more efficient coordination and cooperation.

At the concluding stage of this undertaking the Report was discussed with leaders and activists of non-governmental organizations and with representatives of political parties.

The format of the Report presentation included discussion of the Report methodology and of the main problems that had been identified through the analysis of the implementation of the articles of the CEDAW Convention. The participants’ attention was called to the recommendations on how to overcome those problems.

Leaders of women’s NGOs and female representatives of political parties on the whole



approved the content of the Report and the conclusions and recommendations made therein. Recommendations were made during the discussion of the Report. Those recommendations were taken into account by the authors of the Report and included in the final text.

In particular, during the discussion a number of suggestions were made related to the *national machinery* for gender equality as a tool for eliminating discrimination against women, to the establishment of *institutional mechanisms* for protection of women's rights and to the *necessity* of setting up an office of the Ombudsman for women's rights in this country.

The participants also noted the necessity of amending the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* with a view to including tools and mechanisms for enjoyment of rights.

Special attention was paid to the necessity for the government entities to intensify their efforts aimed to clarify the term 'gender' and to enhance gender policy implementation.

The need to raise public awareness about labor rights and about access to education and quality healthcare was emphasized.

During the discussion of discriminatory practices in education and health sectors the participants from the country's regions stressed their severity in rural areas.

The discussants supported the view that the recommendations made in the Alternative Report should be taken into consideration in the State programs for the development of the education and health sectors since that would help curb the negative trends identified by the Report.

It was also suggested that the civic control mechanisms that had been proved efficient in many countries should be introduced in the practices of the Armenian NGOs.

Participants specifically emphasized the necessity to strengthen the sector of women's NGO and to support broader cooperation between mass media and other institutions of civil society for elimination of discriminatory practices.



Armenian Association of Women with University Education

Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE), a non-governmental, non-profit organization, was established on December 13, 1995.

AAWUE is a nationwide organization that incorporates branches in Yerevan and in the country's regions. The Association is an associated member of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW).

The mission of the Association is

- *to support democratic processes and civil society building in Armenia and the advancement of women's status in the society as well as more active participation of women in politics, government and decision-making;*
- *to develop a new, democratic culture aimed at achieving gender equality in the society, at eliminating gender stereotypes and at raising gender awareness as well as at promoting ideology of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women;*
- *to contribute to elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, to human rights protection and to lobbying for women's interests;*
- *to use the (yet largely untapped) potential of women for conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building;*
- *to promote integration of the Association and of other Armenian women's NGOs into the international women's movement.*

During the entire period of its operation the Association has focused its efforts on the implementation of information, educational and research projects that aimed at enhancing women's civic and political activism by way of raising the level of their political and legal knowledge and of giving them technologies of organization of civic and political activities during a democratic changes stage in the country's development. It has dealt with the protection of women's rights and interests, conducted monitoring of the implementation of the basic UN and OSCE documents on the improvement of women's situation, on their advancement to power and decision-making and on the attainment of a gender balance in the society.

Within the framework of its *Center for Democracy and Peace* the Association has been making consistent efforts to promote democratic values and mentality, has conducted surveys of public views on a political situation in the country and designed strategies for NGOs to enhance their leverage on the processes of democratic changes.

The Association has also focused on institutionalization of gender education in this country and undertaken a gender analysis of the domestic legislation and of political practices. Over



the years, more than 10,000 women and men refreshed and upgraded their knowledge through the *Women's Leadership School* and through educational programs.

Within the past 5 years about 4,639 college students and 3,650 high school students took gender courses designed and taught by the AAWUE members.

The Association is operating as an entity engaged in social lobbying, in human rights protection at national and international levels and in analytical and information activities. It also conducts educational and consulting activities.

AAWUE participated in the NGO Forum for ECE countries as a part of Beijing+5 review in January 2000 in Geneva and the special session of the UN General Assembly *Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century* from 5-9 June 2000.

In September 2000, AAWUE participated in the 2nd European Conference on *Gender Equality in Higher Education* in Zurich (Switzerland).

AAWUE participated in the 27th Triennial Conference of International Federation of University Women "Women and globalization" held in Ottawa, Canada, in August 2001.

In December 2004 the AAWUE representatives took part in the Preparatory meeting with the Beijing+10 process in Geneva and in February-March 2005 at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

AAWUE representatives participated in the 43rd session of the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* from 18-23 January 2009 in Geneva (Switzerland).

AAWUE representatives participated in the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW54) at the United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 12 March 2010 in New York

AAWUE participated in the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on *Promotion of Gender Balance and Participation of Women in Political and Public Life* held in Vienna on 6 - 7 May 2010.

AAWUE participated in the *European Partnership Civil Society Forum* which was held in German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on 18-19 November 2010.

AAWUE representatives participated in the 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW55) at the United Nations Headquarters from 22 February to 4 March 2011 in New York.

Activities of the Association

AAWUE implemented the following projects: Women and Development: Rights and Opportunities, Culture of Peace for Development, Woman and Society: Gender Equality in The Perspective of Democratic Development and Women's Initiatives in Support of Democracy and Civil Society, Support to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Millennium



Development Goals, Civil society initiatives in support of gender equality for democracy, Gender awareness: the prerequisite of parity democracy, Combating Gender Based Violence in the Armenia, Women's movement on at the Crossroads of Millennia: New Challenges and Strategies, Women's Political Participation and Civic Initiatives: Prospects for Achieving Gender Equality in Armenia, Promoting Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Armenia: Women in Local Democracy, Women's political leadership: Prospects for advancing gender equality and participatory democracy in Armenia, Rights protection and elimination of discrimination against women as a precondition for parity democracy.

The projects sought to develop a new democratic culture, to transfer legal knowledge, to enhance women's political and civic activism and to do advocacy promoting the culture of democracy and peace, tolerance and political and cultural dialogue.

In 1997-2014 AAWUE hosted 12 international conferences:

- *Women's Rights and Issues in the Transforming Society: Reality and Prospects,*
- *Women and Development: Rights and Opportunities,*
- *Woman and Society: Gender Equality in the Perspective of Democratic Development,*
- *Culture of Peace: Democracy and Dialogue of Cultures,*
- *Women in Armenia in the 21st century. Gender equality: women's civic and political participation,*
- *Dialogue among civilizations: democracy and peace,*
- *Women's movement in Armenia: priorities and development strategies,*
- *Consolidation of Democracy: Civil society in the globalization perspective*
- *Participatory Democracy: Civic initiatives and responsibility*
- *Transition period civil society and issues of democracy-building.*
- *Prospects for attaining Gender Equality in Armenia: Political & Legal aspects*
- *Civic movement in present-day Armenia: New challenges and prospects*

Women's Leadership School

In 2002 AAWUE established *Women's Leadership School* to provide knowledge and skills to and to develop a leadership potential of women that have an active participation in political and/or civic life. So far, 34 groups of leaders and activists from NGOs and political parties (1,215 women) successfully completed a 2-month's course of study.

AAWUE Centers

Center for Gender Studies and Information and Analytical Center of the Association were established in 1996, and *Center for Democracy and Peace*, in 2000. These centers



conduct research, implement educational projects and are used as an intellectual resource for other AAWUE activities.

Center for Gender Studies

The Association initiated teaching of 20 gender disciplines in 11 universities and conducting of gender classes in 30 high schools in Armenia. To that end three gender schools were conducted on personnel development and draft standards of gender education were designed.

Center for Democracy and Peace

Over 110 round table sessions with the participation of over 3,300 individuals were organized and conducted by the *Center for Democracy and Peace* in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Ijevan, Kapan, Dilijan and Goris in 2000-2014.

The exchange of ideas and opinions and the dialogue during the round table discussions, debates and dialogue sessions are instrumental in women's acquisition of skills of maintaining and asserting their viewpoints and stand and to use newly acquired skills for leading the women's groups, for confronting the authorities and public officials with the issues that are of concern for the society and women and for pursuing their resolution.

National Information and Analytical Center

In 1997-2013 the Center of the Association published

55 issues of the newsletter "*Women with University Education*" in Armenian, Russian and English;

In 1997-2014 the Center of the Association produced more than 92 publications on issues of democratic changes in the Armenian society, gender equality and gender studies, findings of sociological surveys and studies and of the monitoring of a gender situation in Armenia and of the implementation of Armenia's commitment to achieve gender equality in the society in transition. It also published the proceedings of international conferences and symposia and nationwide conferences of students and young scholars.

URL: www.aawue.am

E-mail: awue.armenia@gmail.com, jemma.hasratyan@gmail.com

Armenian Association of Women with University Education

**Alternative Report
on the implementation
of the Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women
in the Republic of Armenia
in 2009-2012**

Head of the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies
Dr. Jemma Hasratyan.

Editorial board: *Dr. Jemma Hasratyan (editor-in-chief), Dr. Vladimir Osipov, Dr. Lilit Zakaryan, Tamara Hovnatanyan, Gayane Armaghanova, Harutyun Marzpanyan and Gayane Meroyan*

English translation & editing: *Dr. Vladimir Osipov*
Computer layout: *Mr. Arthur Boyakhchyan*

ARMENIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN WITH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
22 Saryan Street, 12th floor, Yerevan, Armenia, 0002
Fax: (374.10) 53-68-02
E-mail: awue.armenia@gmail.com

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