



Open Society Foundations-Armenia



Armenian Association of Women  
with University Education

**MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
the Beijing Platform for Action,  
the Millennium Development Goals  
and the UN Convention on Political Rights of Women  
in the Republic of Armenia**

*REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THREE  
FUNDAMENTAL INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS  
AIMED AT ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY  
IN ALL SPHERES OF PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE*

Yerevan 2014

**The Monitoring  
of the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action,  
Millennium Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Political Rights of  
Women in the Republic of Armenia**

was conducted by the Armenian Association of Women with University Education  
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*Protecting the rights of and eliminating discrimination against women  
as a prerequisite for parity democracy*

with support from Open Society Foundations-Armenia

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**The review and assessment of the implementation of the recommendations  
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the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women  
in the Republic of Armenia  
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## Introduction

On the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 the United Nations launched a massive campaign Beijing+20, which aims to give new a impetus to the implementation of the principles and values declared at the conference and enshrined in the Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted there. In 1995, 189 UN Member States, including Armenia, made commitments to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women in line with those documents.

In the years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action the international community three times turned to the global assessment of the BPfA implementation. The achievements and obstacles were analyzed one, five, ten and fifteen years later and, finally, in 2015, the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the New York-based UN *Commission on the Status of Women* will review and assess the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and of the Outcome Document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000).

The Beijing+20 review will be held at a historic moment, when the global community at the turn of 2015 will step up efforts to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals, and will outline sustainable development goals for the post-2015 period. The very fact of including the issue of *ensuring equality between men and women and empowerment of women* into the Millennium Development Goals reaffirms commitment to the conceptual principles of the Beijing Platform for Action, which created the policy framework for gender equality and empowerment of women. Five years after the Millennium Summit, the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2005) stressed the need to integrate a gender perspective into all eight Millennium Development Goal. In March 2014, the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission confirmed the idea that gender equality and women's rights are a priority in the consideration of the entire package of sustainable development goals .

While significant progress has been made in the past two decades, no country can claim to have achieved equality between men and women. According to the Executive Director of the *UN Women* Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Beijing Platform for Action is an unfulfilled promise given to women and girls worldwide. In her May 2014 address on the occasion of the Beijing+20 Campaign launch, the Executive Director of the *UN Women* declared that “the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive global agreement on women's empowerment and gender equality. If only it had been implemented!” The slogan of the campaign ***Empowering women, Empowering humanity. Picture it!*** is a logical continuation of the slogan *Equality, Development and Peace* proclaimed in Beijing and reflects the principle of “equal rights and equal opportunities” enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action.

The main specific feature of the Beijing Platform for Action is that it has become not only a kind of guidelines for States to ensure gender equality but also a comprehensive strategic development program for the women's movement. At the time of drafting of the Beijing Platform it proved possible to bring together and align these two directions thereby ensuring high quality of this document that gave recommendations to Governments as well as to civil society in 12 critical areas of concern. Already at the time of drafting the Beijing Platform for Action it was obvious that political will *per se* is not sufficient for putting gender equality ideas into practice and that it is necessary to tap into the resources of all civil society institutions that are capable of making an impact on public opinion. First of all, that applies to women's organizations, which in line with the tradition, which was started since the Beijing Conference, were operating in parallel with official efforts during all post-Beijing processes. 20 years later the task of consensus-building is still topical. That is the reason why the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action takes place on two levels: on the official level it is done by Governments, while parallel to it the review takes place on a non-governmental level.

One of the main achievements of the Beijing Conference is that it has provided a powerful impetus for the growth of women's organizations around the world, including in Armenia. Although over the years not all the organizations that had been set up in the country proved viable, the Beijing Platform for Action became a "roadmap" for the development of many women's organizations in Armenia. Similarly, the recently established organizations in the country need today a better comprehension and new interpretation of this strategic document.

The analysis of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Armenia shows that in almost twenty years that passed since its adoption a number of achievements were registered that aimed at eliminating a gender imbalance in all spheres of socio-economic and socio-political life.

Those achievements include, first of all, the adoption by the RoA Government of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* in February 2010<sup>1</sup> and of the *RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these documents are conceptually and ideologically different from the previously approved Action Plans (*National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status and Enhancement of Their Role in the Society for the Period 1998-2000 in the Republic of Armenia* and *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in the Society for the Period 2004-2010*) because they reflect the latest international approaches to the attainment of gender equality, which are based on the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities, and create opportunities for mainstreaming gender into legisla-

1 [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf)

2 [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-strategic%20programm%202011-2015.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-strategic%20programm%202011-2015.pdf)

tive practices and into the overall context of public life and State policies. It is noteworthy that experts from women's organizations of the country were involved in drafting the RoA *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and the fact of such collaboration between NGOs and powers that be is also an achievement in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In the past twenty years foundations of gender statistics were laid in the country and the RoA legislation underwent significant changes in terms of protecting the rights of women. Provisions ensuring equality between men and women and prohibiting gender-based discrimination were included into the Criminal Code (2003), Family Code (2004) and Labor Code (2004). In 1999, gender quotas were introduced into the Electoral Code to secure women's rights to be elected. Over the past fifteen years the quotas for lists of the political parties running in elections have not only grown quantitatively from 5% to 20% but their wording have also been changed from the "quota for women" to the more correct "gender quota."

Ratification of legal instruments important from a women's rights perspective such as the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* (2007) and the *Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (2006) should also be noted among the achievements.

Ratification of the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* had a special significance for the country because it was a first step in implementing the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action in the area *Women in power and decision-making*. The problem of underrepresentation of women in decision-making is reflected also in the commitments made by the country within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

The RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which was adopted in May 2013, is important for implementing gender policies and addressing the imbalance of rights and opportunities<sup>3</sup>. The necessity of adoption of this law was listed in the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>4</sup>. With the passage of this law the national legislation for the first time included the concept of "gender discrimination" and the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus provided certain grounds for bridging the gap between the *de jure* existing rights and their *de facto* implementation.

The expert group that worked on this law was unprecedented for the legislative practice as it included experts from the Government, Parliament, research community and non-governmental sector. This was the achievement of women's organizations of the country since they had been consistently active in pushing for the implementation of the Beijing

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=4761>

<sup>4</sup> *Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=ARM&Lang=EN](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=ARM&Lang=EN)

Platform for Action, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the *Millennium Development Goals* and other international documents and in establishing cooperation with the Government and Parliament on the matter. The preparation of alternative reports to monitor and review the implementation of international documents in the field of gender equality is today one of the essential components of the work of women's non-governmental sector in the country.

It is due to the efforts of the country's women's organizations that issues of underrepresentation of women in decision-making, violence against women, discrimination against women in the labor market, etc. are raised. On the initiative of women's organizations media, political parties and other civil society representatives get involved in tackling those issues and lobbying for relevant legislative initiatives is undertaken. Ratification of the *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, the *Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, adoption of the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, amendments to the RoA Criminal Code to toughen penalties for sexual violence against minors, introduction of a gender quota into the Electoral Code and other legislative initiatives are the result of active lobbying activities on the part of country's women's organizations. However, the *Law on Domestic Violence* has not been adopted yet despite the efforts of the women's NGOs that deal with the problem and despite the fact that in 2011 the Government adopted the *National Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence* and the *2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence*<sup>5</sup>.

Presented as part of this review, the analysis of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Armenia shows that despite the achievements of the past twenty years the Government policy is not gender-sensitive. This is due not only to the masculine style of leadership and to the existing socio-cultural stereotypes that hinder the advancement of women but also to the complex political and economic realities. The economic blockade, the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the impact of the global crisis reflected in the sharp decline of the economic growth, in lower standards of living and in increasing levels of poverty, unemployment and emigration set the stage for deepening social and economic inequality, including gender inequality.

In 2012, according to the National Statistical Service data<sup>6</sup>, every third inhabitant of Armenia was poor (32.4%), with higher levels of poverty (33.4%) among women-headed households<sup>7</sup>, and when they have at least one child, the level of their poverty increases to 42.7%.

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5 [http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015\\_GBV\\_strategic\\_plan-Eng.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015_GBV_strategic_plan-Eng.pdf)

6 <http://www.armstat.am/am/?nid=82&id=1503>

7 The women-headed households account for 26.0% of all households and 33.0% among the poor [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2013a\\_2.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2013a_2.pdf)



Despite women's high educational potential, their role is quite limited in politics and economy as women have virtually no opportunity to influence decision-making and, in general, are not sufficiently engaged in the processes of governance and development. Women's representation in the legislature is lagging far behind the world averages. As a result of the 2012 parliamentary elections, women constitute 10.7% of MPs, while according to the latest data, the world average is 22.0%<sup>8</sup>. Over the entire period of democratic reforms not a single woman has ever run for the position of the Armenian President, Prime Minister or National Assembly Speaker.

In the Armenian Government, there are only 2 women out of 19 Ministers and 6 women out of 66 Deputy Ministers. In the country's territorial administration system there are no female Regional Governors. There are no women in elected positions of mayors in 49 cities and towns in the system of local government in Armenia. Only 2.2% of the country's 866 rural communities are headed by women, and women constitute only 8.6% of local Council members.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the Armenian Government made a commitment within the framework of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium Development Goal ("Promote gender equality and empower women") to make sure that by 2015 not less than 10.0% of local communities are headed by women and that women constitute not less than 25.0% of the National Assembly members, Regional Governors and Government Ministers and Deputy Ministers<sup>9</sup>.

Women's contribution to economic performance, growth and prosperity of the country is considerably below their potential. The proportion of women in the labor force is higher than that of men; however, in the total number of the employed, women make up 48.0% and men 52.0%<sup>10</sup>. Women do most of unpaid household work, which value is not calculated in monetary terms and which is not reflected in the system of national accounts. The measures taken by the Government to help women combine family responsibilities with career are minimal.

The gender situation in the labor market in Armenia is characterized by vertical and horizontal segregation of the labor market, which leads to a substantial gender pay gap. According to 2012 data, the average salary of women is about 65.0% of men's salary, and it is the highest percentage in the Central and Eastern Europe region and in the CIS<sup>11</sup>. Gender differences in pay are not always mitigated by a high education level of women

8 Data of the Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

9 *Millennium Development Goals: Nationalization and Progress. 2005 National Report. Armenia*. Yerevan, 2005. [http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report\\_arm.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report_arm.pdf)

10 *Women and Men in Armenia*. National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2013.

11 Global Wage Report 2012/13 Wages and equitable growth [http://columnru.global-Labour-university.org/2013/04/blog-post\\_30.html](http://columnru.global-Labour-university.org/2013/04/blog-post_30.html)

because of the hurdles that women face in their career growth; thus vertical segregation persists even in sectors with traditional predominance of female employment such as health, education, culture, social welfare and agriculture. Despite the fact that the Government considers intensive development of small and medium-sized businesses to be an effective way of solving unemployment as well as some other social problems, the representation of women in the field of private enterprise **does not exceed 10.0%**<sup>12</sup>.

In healthcare sector, the main problem is the expansion of fee-based services, which led to a decrease in quality of and accessibility to general health care, especially for women who incur more healthcare-related expenses than men. Of particular concern is a steady increase in morbidity and mortality of women, particularly of women of reproductive age, from oncological diseases because of a low level of prevention and early diagnosis of diseases. Despite measures taken to prevent the spread of HIV infection, the morbidity rate among women has been increasing from year to year, which is mainly due to labor migration of men. Another matter of serious concern is a problem of sex-selective abortions since because of them the sex ratio at birth (114 boys to 100 girls) differs significantly from the biologically determined norm (105/100). According to expert assessments<sup>13</sup>, this imbalance poses a serious demographic threat for the country since at present 1,500 girls, i.e. future mothers, are not born in this country each year.

In terms of access to education, a gender gap in the country is minimal. However, the virtual absence of gender education gives grounds to identify this field as problematic. In addition, other factors that cause concern are inadequate funding allocated to education, declining enrollment rates and the proportion of school dropouts from vulnerable social groups. While those have not so far had pronounced gender differences, those tendencies, however, pave the way for deterioration of the poverty situation in the country. Within the framework of Armenia's commitments regarding the Millennium Development Goals in the field of education<sup>14</sup> the Government of Armenia set a target to achieve by 2015 universal enrollment in basic school (99.4%) and 95.0% in high school. However, those targets have not been met. According to the latest data, enrollment rates are 94.8% in basic schools and 74.1% in high school respectively.

On the whole, as the analysis of the gender situation demonstrates, the de jure ban on discrimination as stated in the national legislation does not mean that de facto discrimination is non-existent. The latter manifests itself as the lack of opportunities to enjoy constitutionally secured rights and as inefficient use of women's potential in the country's devel-

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12 Gender policy in Armenia and the right of women Entrepreneurship

<http://employers.am/News.aspx?NewsId=39&lang=eng>

13 <http://www.unfpa.am/publications-sex-selective-abortions>

14 *Millennium Development Goals: Nationalization and Progress. 2005 National Report. Armenia.*

[http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report\\_arm.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report_arm.pdf)

opment processes. The principle of equal rights and equal opportunities is unambiguously stated in the documents on State gender policies. The relevant Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men was adopted. However, the implementation of the law is impeded by the absence of functional and effective national machinery that would ensure the implementation of governmental programs that seek to achieve gender equality.

In the 19 years that passed since the Beijing Conference, a number of institutional mechanisms were established on the initiative of the Armenian Government, including Division on Family, Women's and Children's Issues, which was established in the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues in 1999, Women's Council which was set up under the Prime Minister in 2000, and Gender policy implementation commissions that were instituted in the Yerevan City Hall and in the country's Regional Governors Offices in 2011. However, none of the existing structures is endowed with necessary powers or status to act as fully-fledged national machinery that would meet the requirements set by the Beijing Platform for Action. As a result, the process of mainstreaming gender into programs and policies is impeded as evidenced by gender insensitivity of almost all development programs adopted by the Government since 2011.

Despite the fact that the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan provides for the introduction of gender analysis of legislation, nevertheless, a gender analysis of proposed legislation has not yet become a standard practice and only few proposed bills are subjected to such analysis. The government officials tasked with designing development programs and laws have yet to master the methodology of mainstreaming gender components into legislation and political practices. Besides, gender statistics does not always contain the indicators and data that are necessary for gender analysis. There is also the problem of a lack of knowledge of the Beijing Platform for Action on the part of the government officials responsible for the implementation of gender policies.

The country has serious problems with advocacy of gender equality policies. This still remains a task primarily done by women's organizations. While the RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015 has set a number of goals and objectives aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices through gender education and public awareness-raising, the analysis of mass media shows that media policies are not gender-sensitive and journalists for the most part do not have sufficient knowledge to become active actors in advocating for gender policy and ideology of gender equality<sup>15</sup>.

The implementation of the objectives declared by the State in the field of gender equal-

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15 *The image of women in the representations of the Armenian media. Analytical monitoring report.* (The study was conducted by ProMedia-Gender NGOs with UNFPA support in 2011) <http://www.unfpa.am/publications-women-image-in-media>

ity depends on the extent to which the gender component will be integrated into economic, political and social spheres. That is why this review focuses on the analysis of achievements and obstacles as well as gives recommendations concerning eight of the twelve areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, viz. *Human rights of women, Women in power and decision-making, Women and the economy, Education and training of women, Women and health, Violence against women, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and Women and the media.*

The selection of these areas can be accounted for by the existence of conceptual and logically interrelated problems, on the solution of which depends successful implementation of State gender policies in Armenia that reflect the approaches of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and other international documents on gender equality.

## Human Rights of Women

The Beijing Platform for Action reaffirms that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for governments and the United Nations.

By designating the human rights of women as a critical area of concern the Beijing Platform for Action makes it incumbent on the governments to make consistent efforts to promote and defend those rights proceeding from the UN 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW Convention).

The Beijing Platform for Action introduced the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities that is called upon to bridge the gap between the declared rights and their effective implementation.

The synergic effect of the CEDAW Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action also affects the Millennium Declaration (2000) which stresses *the necessity of meeting the commitments regarding the progress of women that are enshrined in all earlier international documents*.

### I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

In line with the recommendations of the above-mentioned documents, during almost 20 years that passed since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action the Armenian Government adopted three programs that aimed at fulfilling the obligations taken to ensure gender equality.

In 1998, the Armenian Government adopted the “*National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women’s Status and Enhancement of Their Role in the Society for the Period 1998-2000 in the Republic of Armenia*.” The Action Plan stressed the protection of women’s rights in employment, health and education sectors. The groundwork for gender statistics in the Republic of Armenia was laid and the Women’s Council was established under the Armenian Prime Minister.

In April 2004, the Armenian Government approved the “*National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in the Society for the Period 2004-2010*.” The Action Plan was a certain step forward considering the measures contained therein for overcoming gender imbalance and protecting women’s rights in all spheres of socio-political and socioeconomic life.

Such important instruments from the perspective of securing enjoyment women’s rights

as the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women and the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention were ratified in 2007 and 2006 respectively.

Even though the effectiveness of both national Action Plans was quite low for a number of reasons and most provisions were not implemented, nevertheless, over that period the Armenian legislation underwent a number of changes aimed to improve protection of women's rights. The provisions mandating equality between women and men and prohibiting gender-based discrimination were introduced into the reformed Armenian Constitution (1995) and into the new Criminal (2003), Family (2004) and Labor (2004) Codes. In 1999, gender quotas were introduced into the Armenian Electoral Code with a view to ensuring women's enjoyment of the right to be elected. The quotas for the political party lists in proportional representation elections grew from 5% to 20% within the 15 years that followed and their name was changed from "quotas for women" to "gender quotas."

The main document reflecting Armenia's commitment to gender equality policies and to the international commitments made in that sphere became the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*<sup>16</sup> that was adopted by the Armenian Government in February 2010.

The Concept Paper reflects the present-day international approaches to the attainment of gender equality, which are grounded in the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities, and provides an opportunity for mainstreaming gender into legislative practices and into the overall context of public life and State policies.

On 20 May 2011, the Armenian Government issued a Protocol Decision N19 "On Approving the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015."<sup>17</sup> The Action Plan included gender mainstreaming of State policies and programmes.

The *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*<sup>18</sup>, which was passed by the National Assembly of Armenia in May 2013 and which took effect in June 2013, has great significance. The necessity of the adoption of the law was stressed by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>19</sup> following the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia. The Law introduced the concept of "gender-based discrimination" and codified the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, thereby laying the groundwork for bridging the gap between the rights that exist de-jure and their de-facto enjoyment.

16 *The Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia* (2010) [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf)

17 "The Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015." [http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015\\_Gender%20Policy\\_NAP-Eng.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015_Gender%20Policy_NAP-Eng.pdf)

18 <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=4761>

19 Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Armenia. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1 [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=ARM&Lang=EN](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=ARM&Lang=EN)



## II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Human Rights of Women*

The review and assessment of the protection of human rights of women that are presented in the *Human Rights of Women* section are focused on the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and include the following main actions:

- *Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*
- *Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice*
- *Achieve legal literacy*

### **Strategic Objective 1. Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

Republic of Armenia ratified all fundamental international legal instruments that secure legal equality between women and men, including *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* and Optional Protocol to the Convention, the International Labor Organization's Conventions, including *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, Equal Remuneration Convention*, etc., *UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, *UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education*, *UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime* and the Protocols Thereto, including Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, the Council of Europe *Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings* and the (UN) *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*.

Armenia ratified the European Social Charter (Revised) that guarantees equal rights and equal opportunities to women and men and signed the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.

The principle of equality between sexes is stated in the Armenian Constitution and reflected in the national legislation. In the 2005 amendments to the Armenian Constitution it was formulated as a ban on discrimination based on any grounds, including on the grounds of sex<sup>20</sup>.

In line with the recommendation of the Beijing Platform for Action that all States

<sup>20</sup> Article 14.1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

should undertake a review of all national laws, policies, practices and procedures to ensure that they meet international human rights obligations, the Republic of Armenia made some amendments to its domestic legislation.

After the adoption of the Armenian Constitution in 1995 the ban on discrimination based on any grounds, including on the grounds of sex, was set out in the country's amended Civil, Criminal, Labor, Family and Electoral Codes.

The national legislation mandates liability for discrimination on various grounds, including gender-based discrimination. In particular, under Article 143 ("Breach of citizens' legal equality") in the "Crimes against constitutional human rights and freedoms of citizens" Chapter of the RoA Criminal Code (adopted in 2003)<sup>21</sup>, such discriminatory actions shall be punishable by fines or imprisonment for up to 2 years and, in case of officials, by deprivation of the right to hold certain posts for up to 3 years.

The Family Code (adopted in 2004)<sup>22</sup> mandates equal relations between men and women in marriage. The Code stresses that the society and the State protect not only family and motherhood but also the rights of fatherhood to an equal extent. A gender approach is for the first time reflected in the norms that regulate adoption (the legislator explicitly uses the terms "adoption of a son" and "adoption of a daughter." The Code also contains an Article on maternity dispute.

The RoA Labor Code (adopted in 2004) affirms equality in labor relations<sup>23</sup> and equal pay for equal work of men and women. An important step forward in the context of promoting balanced division of work and family responsibilities of women and men is a provision in the Labor Code that enables other family members, including fathers, to take a parental leave to care for a child under 3 years of age. Pregnant women and employees raising a child under three years of age may be assigned to night work and overtime work as well as to work on weekends or holidays only by their consent. Another provision states that men shall be granted their annual leave at their request during the pregnancy and the maternity leave of their wives. Thus, the RoA Labor Code regards parenthood and not merely motherhood as a subject of legal relations in employment. That approach is consistent with the requirements of international documents on gender equality.

In line with the State obligation (enshrined in the Armenian Constitution) to protect and support family, motherhood and childhood<sup>24</sup> the country's legislation, in particular the Labor and Criminal Codes contain sufficiently broad measures to protect motherhood both in the field of employment for working women and in penal institutions for female convicts.

The RoA Labor and Criminal Codes provide privileges and special treatment to preg-

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21 RoA Criminal Code, Article 143 <http://www.genproc.am/am/66/chapter/16-20/>

22 RoA Family Code. <http://www.arlis.am/>

23 <http://www.arlis.am/>

24 RoA Constitution, Article 48.1



nant women, to women with small children and to mothers of many children. In particular, employers may not dismiss pregnant women and women with small children and may not refuse hiring women on those grounds<sup>25</sup>.

Under the RoA Criminal Code, pregnant women or women with children under 3 years of age, except women imprisoned for grave and particularly grave crimes for more than 5 years, can be exempted from punishment or the punishment can be postponed by the court for the period when the woman is exempted from work, due to pregnancy, child-birth and until the child reaches the age of 3. The legislation requires that pregnant women and women with children under 3 years of age should be provided better conditions of imprisonment.

The RoA Criminal Code includes a separate Chapter “Crimes against the interests of family and child.” It also has the Article “Child trafficking.”

In line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action on protection of women’s reproductive rights and health, Armenia adopted the *National Strategy, Program and Actions Timeframe on Reproductive Health Improvement for 2007-2015*. The Beijing Platform for Action recommendations on prevention of early pregnancies of girls are reflected in the *National Child and Adolescent Health and Development Strategy and Action Plan for 2009-2015*.

Since Armenia’s ratification of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* the RoA Government has submitted 6 periodic reports to the UN CEDAW Committee. In 2009-2013 the RoA Government took a number of measures aimed to implement the CEDAW Committee’s recommendations following the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Armenia.

The Government of Armenia’s *Gender Policy Concept Paper* sets out the main directions of gender policies, viz. attainment of balanced participation of men and women in power and decision-making, provision of equal opportunities for women’s economic independence and for development of their businesses and for career growth, creation of conditions for equal exercising of rights and responsibilities in family, freedom from gender-based violence, integration of a gender component into all spheres of life, including public administration. Within the framework of the Concept Paper, on 20 May 2011 the Armenian Government adopted Protocol Decision N19 “*On Approving the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*.” In conformity with the Protocol Decision, from 2011 on, the Armenian Government approves *Annual Action Plans for the implementation of the RoA gender policy* and publishes reports on earlier Action Plans.

In line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the CEDAW Committee following the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic

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25 Article 117 <http://www.arlis.am/>

reports of Armenia as well as of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper the Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* was adopted. The Law addresses the issue of achieving equality of opportunity for men and women in politics, public administration, labor and employment, entrepreneurship, health, education, etc.

The Law reflects a number of demands to eliminate discrimination against women. In particular, the Law:

- defines the concept of “gender-based discrimination” and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex;
- introduces the concept of direct and indirect discrimination, establishes a procedure for protecting citizens from discrimination on the grounds of sex and introduces legal responsibility for those officials and employers who committed acts of 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.

Even though in conformity with the main recommendations of the CEDAW Convention and of the Beijing Platform for Action the Armenian Government made a provision within the framework of *the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* requiring introduction of a gender impact assessment of Armenian legislation, yet the majority of laws are drafted and development programs drawn up without an impact assessment conducted in advance. The situation does not contribute to effective protection and securing of women’s rights stipulated by international human rights instruments.

### **Strategic Objective 2. Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice**

In recent years serious steps have been taken in the Republic of Armenia to bring domestic legislation in line with international obligations in the field of human rights of women and to implement the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities. However, national legislation has yet to meet fully the requirements of the international legal instru-

ments and does not have effective mechanisms for implementation of the gender policies declared by the country's Government. As a result, the de jure prohibition of discrimination does not mean the absence of de facto discrimination.

The main problem manifests itself at the lack of opportunities for realization of equal rights enshrined in the RoA Constitution. The problem is reflected in the *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which was adopted in 2013.

Even though a number of changes introduced by the RoA Government into the original draft produced by experts made it weaker in terms of mechanisms for securing gender equality (while the amendments proposed by NGOs after the first reading in the Parliament were rejected), nevertheless, the adoption of the Law was a milestone on the way to gender equality in the country.

Even though the country's 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 the Law met certain opposition from radical groups with conservative leanings. Those groups misinterpreted the concept of "gender" as advocacy for sex change and as support for sexual perversions and demanded that the Law be repealed.

In experts' estimation, the campaign had a certain political component<sup>26</sup> because it coincided with the period preceding the scheduled signing of a European Union Association Agreement by Armenia within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. At the same time the anti-gender campaign revealed the existence of gender stereotypes in the Armenian society that led to the fertile ground for discrediting gender equality ideas in the public opinion.

The *campaign* launched against the Law as well as the *attempts* to manipulate the public opinion with regard to "gender" and "gender equality" terms demonstrated the lack of awareness on the part not only of the general public but also of many members of the Armenian Parliament, government officials, politicians and public figures concerning the gender equality issue, goals of the State gender policies and obligations assumed by Armenia following the ratification of the international legal instruments. It turned out that some public officials in charge of gender policies implementation were not prepared to explain the State policies.

The situation with the Law demonstrated that the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the CEDAW Committee regarding the necessity of awareness-raising campaign targeting public officials, judiciary and general public and focusing on issues of discrimination against women and of attaining gender equality were not implemented. Thus, the groundwork was laid for spreading misinformation.

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<sup>26</sup> Gender equality issues at the frontline of the challenges faced by the Armenian nation's sovereignty (in Armenian). <http://ichd.org/?laid=2&com=module&module=static&id=924>

Women's NGOs and their leaders who were actively lobbying for the adoption of *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* and who were advocating the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and promoting its implementation in the society were targeted with criticisms, libel and threats of physical violence.

The situation was further aggravated by the fact that instead of launching a large-scale awareness-raising campaign about gender policies and the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*<sup>27</sup> the Armenian Government rushed to submit to the Armenian Parliament as a compromise<sup>28</sup> the proposal to remove definitions of gender from the text of the Law, thereby provoking a new round of demands, this time the demands that the Law be repealed.

The Women's Council under the RoA Prime Minister<sup>29</sup> (albeit with a considerable delay) issued a statement regarding the Law and gender terminology<sup>30</sup>. The statement was supported by representatives of international organizations and European entities in Armenia. Nevertheless, active opposition to the Law and debates about the term "gender" are still going on, even though not with earlier intensity. That contributes to maintenance of unfavorable climate that constrains the implementation of the Law and of gender policies.

The Beijing Platform for Action pays special attention to women's representation in judiciary because their participation in the functioning of judicial bodies can contribute to the emergence of the judicial system which is more responsible and which gives due consideration to women's interests and needs.

In the Armenian judiciary there are 48 women (or 22%) of 220 judges in courts of all instances; women account for 40% of attorneys. There are very few women in decision-making positions in the justice system: there is not a single woman in the Council of Court Chairpersons (which is made up of Chairpersons of courts of any instance) and there is only one woman among 9 Constitutional Court judges. Notwithstanding the requirement of Article 117 of the Judicial Code that gender balance should be taken into consideration when nominating judges to serve on the Justice Council<sup>31</sup>, there are only 2 women (or 15.4%) out of 13 members of the Council.

Even though women comprise 57% of employees in the RoA Ministry of Justice, they mostly hold low- and middle-level positions. There is not a single woman among Deputy Ministers and Advisers to the Justice Minister.

There has been some progress in recent years in terms of women's representation in the

27 <http://parliament.am/drafts.php?sel=showdraft&DraftID=6249&Reading=0>

28 "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."

29 <http://www.gov.am/en/councils/>

30 [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/5.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/5.pdf)

31 "If the number of judges of either sex is less than 25 percent of the total number of judges, then at least five places shall be safeguarded in the list to the candidates of that sex." Article 117.3 of the RoA Judicial Code.

police force. To a large extent that is happening due to the programs implemented with support from international organizations, in particular OSCE, which put forth a conditionality of equal involvement of men and women. In 2012, the RoA Police set up a special elite patrol unit that includes young women. The unit is meant to increase people's trust in law-enforcement agencies.

The justice system is one of the key factors in elimination of discriminatory norm in adequate realization of women's rights. However, courts, the judiciary and police are far from being always effective in terms of women's rights protection.

In the judicial and investigation practice the cases of discrimination against women are virtually non-existent. Sociological surveys<sup>32</sup> demonstrate that that can be accounted for by a low level of people's legal knowledge and lack of awareness on the part of women regarding discrimination. The only exception is cases of grave harm caused to health or of domestic violence victims' death. Even in those cases successful prosecution is not infrequently predicated on legal consultations and attorney services provided by women's and human rights NGOs.

Despite the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women many women are not sufficiently informed about the additional opportunities for protection of their rights that are provided by the Protocol.

The institution of the Adviser on women's right to the Human Rights Ombudsman is not made an adequate use of.

While it is common knowledge that the problem of a gap between the extensive rights enshrined in the Constitution and in the national legislation, on the one hand, and the real discriminatory practice, on the other, can be solved through temporary special measures, the Armenian State has not yet drawn a clear distinction between temporary special measures aimed to accelerate the achievement of a concrete goal for women of de facto equality, and other general social policies adopted and implemented to improve the situation of women and the girl child<sup>33</sup>.

Of the entire scope of temporary special measures used the world over, Armenia introduced only the quota principle through the Electoral Code for proportional representation elections, only in parliamentary and in the municipal elections in the capital city of Yerevan at that. The Electoral Code also contains certain provisions concerning women's representation in the Central and district election commissions.

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32 *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia. Report on the sociological study findings.* Yerevan, UNFPA, 2011.

33 *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](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20(English).pdf)

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. The mechanisms that would contribute to increasing women's participation in local elections and in public administration at a national and regional level have not been designed yet.

Despite the fact that the wording of the quota in the RoA Electoral Code is gender-sensitive, nevertheless the Article contains a discriminatory norm that rules out the application of the principle to the top 5 places on the list that provide the best chance of being elected<sup>34</sup>. The practical implementation of the quota in that wording during the 2012 parliamentary elections revealed its ineffectiveness. It was criticized in the Final Report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission<sup>35</sup>.

On the whole, the parliamentary, presidential as well as local elections held in 2012-2013 revealed that legislative changes undertook to implement gender policies did not yield the desired effect and that the situation with women's representation in decision-making does not meet democratic standards and challenges of modern life. The target of having women hold decision-making positions set by the Beijing Platform for Action has not been met.

By lobbying the adoption of laws protecting women's rights, submitting suggestions and comments regarding draft laws and organizing discussions with the participation of parliament members, non-governmental organization actively contribute to improving legislative activities.

A recently evolved practice of participation of representatives of human rights and women's NGOs in the discussions of draft laws in the standing committees of the Armenian Parliament and in parliamentary hearings has considerably expanded opportunities for civil society representatives to make an impact on legislative activities.

### **Strategic Objective 3. Achieve legal literacy**

The studies conducted in the country have revealed that most people, including women, are not adequately informed about their rights and about international documents that aim to protect those rights.

Domestic legislation on human rights, in particular the rights of women, and interna-

34 Article 108 of the RoA Electoral Code: "...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." [http://res.elections.am/images/doc/\\_ecode.pdf](http://res.elections.am/images/doc/_ecode.pdf)

35 "The high number of elected candidates who withdrew ... raises concern about the degree of respect for voters' choice." *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, 26 June 2012. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/91643>



tional documents on women's rights are not advocated in the country, also because the latter have not been translated into the national language.

The translation and dissemination of international documents have been undertaken primarily by representatives of international organizations in Armenia, i.e. by the UN, Council of Europe, European Union and OSCE. Human rights and women's NGOs have been contributing to those efforts with support from international organizations.

At the same time the country does not have the system of disseminating among general public the necessary knowledge about their constitutional rights and, in a broader sense, about the laws that aim to protect their civil, political, social and labor rights. The reality is such that not only the general public but also some Parliament members and civil servants at various levels do not have adequate knowledge of international legal instruments.

Making activists of many NGOs more gender sensitive still remains a problem since they do not take differentiated approaches to women's rights and are not adequately aware of the issue of gender equality.

The studies conducted in the country have identified a lack of awareness of discrimination and, as a consequence, the lack of precedents for legal actions brought because of alleged discrimination. Some studies<sup>36</sup> indicate that only 46.6% of the respondents admit the existence of discrimination against women, with the most visible for the respondents being discrimination in political life and in public administration and discrimination against women in work places comes third. At the same time 41.1% believe that there is no discrimination, while 12.5% did not have a definitive opinion on whether there is discrimination against women in Armenia. An insignificant difference between men's and women's responses to that question testifies that both sexes have the problem of the lack of awareness of discrimination against women to almost the same degree and that is a result of inadequate legal literacy of the population.

At the same time the comparison with the earlier studies<sup>37</sup> shows that within the past eight years there has been some positive dynamic in terms of a bigger percentage of the respondents recognizing the existence of discrimination against women. However, certain difficulties still persist in the perception of the term "discrimination." Thus, while 46.5% of the respondents admit the existence of discrimination, a bigger percentage (up to 60%) of the respondents recognizes the difference between the sexes in opportunities to realize their rights.

The propaganda attacks on the *RoALaw on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* were to a larger extent a result of the absence of the efforts to educate the public about the concepts introduced by the Law, thereby creating additional

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36 *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia. Report on the sociological study findings.* Yerevan, UNFPA, 2011.

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

difficulties with its implementation. At the same time the interest in the *RoALaw on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* provoked with evil intentions provided new opportunities to conduct a large-scale information and advocacy campaign to raise people's legal awareness of the principle of "equal rights and equal opportunities" as well as of the concepts of "direct and indirect gender discrimination" used in the Law.

The methods used within the framework of the anti-gender campaign that targeted the Law are essentially gross violations of the *RoALaw of the Republic of Armenia on 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 deny discrimination and violence against women and attacks are launched against women's rights.

That the Government and authorities of various levels do not organize information campaigns to promote the *RoALaw on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* will have negative repercussions for its further implementation.

Despite the fact that institutionalization of gender education was designated in the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* as a priority for the country's gender policies and the *RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* outlined a number of goals and objectives for advocating gender equality policies and for eliminating gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices through gender education the process has been unfolding slowly and involving an insignificant part of students. Activities aimed at raising gender awareness of the public at large are sporadic and not well-coordinated.

Imparting gender knowledge and shaping civic responsibility of school and university students have not yet become a priority in the education system despite the fact that experts from the NGO sector had developed State standards for gender education<sup>38</sup>. With support of the RoA Ministry of Education and Science, the Armenian Association of Women with University Education undertook institutionalization of gender education in 12 universities and of lessons of gender knowledge in the country's 32 schools. However, on the whole the education system does not aim to help school and university students to internalize norms and principles of gender equality and to make them more civically-minded and responsible persons.

The *RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* stressed also the necessity of improving gender knowledge of civil servants. In 2009, a gender module was included into the professional development system for civil servants and since then efforts have been made to give knowledge to civil servants. At the same time, gender education is not part of the professional development system for local governments and community employ-

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38 *Gender education in institutions of higher learning. Draft State educational standards*. Yerevan: Armenian Association of Women with University Education, 2005 (in Armenian).



ees. Neither do the curricula of the RoA Public Administration Academy include gender courses.

The gap in legal awareness of women are bridged to some extent by women's NGOs that implement information and educational projects aimed to improve women's knowledge of their rights, mechanisms for their protection and international legal instruments. NGOs publish and disseminate thematic brochures, booklets and memos. They also produce reference materials and manuals on protection of women's rights.

Non-governmental organizations provide legal education also within the framework of their activities aimed to enhance women's political leadership potential and to encourage their civic activism. The focus of the activities of the *Women's Leadership School* of the Armenian Association of Women with University Education, which has been operating since 2000, is on raising women's gender awareness and enhancing their political 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. Improving women's legal knowledge is a priority for the organizations that deal with issues of domestic violence.

Non-governmental organizations also gained some experience in conducting training seminars for civil servants and employees of various State entities.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* and the UN Millennium Declaration reveals that some steps have been taken in the Republic of Armenia in recent years to improve the legal framework and to harmonize it with the international human rights standards and with the principle of equal rights and equal opportunities and to meet the country's international commitments regarding respect for and protection of human rights of women.

At the same time there are still a number of serious problems that impede the implementation of the gender policies declared by the State within the framework of its international obligations:

- the country's legislation do not provide effective mechanisms for the implementation of gender equality policies;
- the overwhelming majority of laws and development programs are drafted without being subjected to a gender impact assessment;
- the implementation of the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* encounters certain problems;

- officials and representatives of all levels and branches of government are inadequately informed about the country's gender policies and about the commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action and other international legal instruments;
- the general public is not sufficiently informed about the content of the international legal instruments on women's rights as well as about the instruments for women's rights protection provided by the national legislation;
- the temporary special measures incorporated into the country's electoral legislation are not sufficient to redress a gender imbalance in decision-making;
- sociological surveys reveal a low level of legal knowledge of the general public and women's lack of awareness of discrimination.

## Recommendations

### To the Authorities:

- *to design and implement a system of measures aimed to improve knowledge of civil servants of all levels and of local government employees about the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Millennium Declaration;*
- *to mandate annual reports to be submitted by the officials tasked with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Millennium Declaration as well as the national documents on gender policies;*
- *to publish regularly national reports on the implementation of the international legal instruments ratified by the country as well as on the implementation of the recommendations issued by the UN, European Union, Council of Europe and OSCE and supported by Armenia;*
- *to establish a specialized expert group on conducting a gender impact assessment of laws at the time of their drafting and reviewing by the RoA Government and the RoA National Assembly;*
- *to draw up and carry out an Action Plan on advocacy and implementation of the RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men;*
- *to undertake the translation into Armenian and dissemination of basic international documents on human rights of women;*
- *to expand a gender component in the curricula of professional development courses for civil servants and local government employees;*

- *to take measures to enhance the process of introduction of gender education into institutions of secondary and higher education 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 in the society;*
- *to take vigorous measures – in collaboration with civil society institutions - to protect the society from all types of discrimination on the grounds of sex;*
- *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 about the “natural”mission of women.*

**To Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- *to exercise regular control over the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Millennium Declaration as well as of other international documents on protection of women's rights and on the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination;*
- *to conduct targeted information campaigns on the RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men;*
- *to design measures aimed to improve legal knowledge of women in the country's regions with a view to raising their awareness of the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Millennium Declaration;*
- *to expand social partnerships with government entities and with media outlets on the implementation of gender policies;*
- *to conduct on a regular basis the monitoring of the implementation of the RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015;*
- *to energize the operation of the Women's Leadership Schools and to expand courses on teaching women, particularly young women and girls, the rights protection technologies;*
- *to train media people on gender issues; to conduct – together with media outlets – campaigns to raise journalists' awareness of manifestation of gender discrimination;*
- *to support the establishment of accessible, free or affordable programs of legal assistance to women who seek restoration of their violated rights.*

## Women in Power and Decision-Making

The Beijing Platform for Action raised in an innovative way the issue of the necessity of women's participation in power and decision-making. The Beijing Platform for Action integrated the demands and recommendations contained in the most important UN documents in the field, viz. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* and the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

The necessity of women's participation in power and decision-making is regarded in the Beijing Platform for Action as a precondition for attaining a new quality in public administration and more effective functioning of democracy. Underrepresentation of women in power at various levels of public administration is regarded as a barrier to equality and social justice as well as to taking women's needs into consideration during the formulation of State policies. The Beijing Platform for Action stresses that the traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures, discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, the high cost of seeking and holding public office, and negative stereotyping of women's activism, including stereotyping through the media, continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life.

The Millennium Development Goal 3 (Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) underscores the importance of women's participation in decision-making. The Millennium Declaration stressed the necessity of meeting the obligations regarding the progress of women, as stated in all previous international documents.

The commitments made by Armenia within the framework of the Millennium Development Goal 3 include an increase in women's political representation by 2015 as measured by two targets: *the share of women among members of Parliament, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, Regional Governors was to reach at least 25% and among Heads of local communities at least 10%*<sup>39</sup>.

### I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

The changes that occurred in the country's socio-political system after Armenia had gained independence and the evolution of representative democracy were to secure broader and more meaningful participation of women in power at various level of public administration and in various spheres of the country's life. However, women's activism that manifested itself in 1988-1990 during the national-liberation movement and at the dawn of democratic changes in the society was not sustained.

39 [http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report\\_arm.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/UN%20RC%20Annual%20Reports,%20UNDAFs,%20MDGs/MDG%201st%20report_arm.pdf)

Even though the principle of equality between the sexes is enshrined in the Armenian Constitution, women found themselves pushed out from State policymaking. The process of pushing women from power, which is based on gender stereotypes and is a result of the socioeconomic and sociopolitical transformations, is visible in Armenia.

Within the framework of the international documents signed by Armenia, including the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, the country made commitments to increase women's representation in decision-making.

Among the main achievements are the ratification of the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* and an increase of a gender quota in the RoA Electoral Code from 5% on the political party lists in the 1999 parliamentary elections to 20% in the 2012 parliamentary elections.

A whole range of measures taken to ensure a gender balance in all spheres of the socio-political life there has led to some progress in Armenia in terms of an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in power: within the past 20 years the share of women among the Parliament members went up from 6.3% (after the 1995 elections) to 10.7% (after the 2012 elections)<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless, women's representation in the country's legislature is well below the global averages. Within the entire period of democratic reforms women have not a single time run for the RoA presidency and have never held the position of the Prime Minister or the Speaker of the Parliament. In the Armenian Government there are only 2 women among 19 Ministers and 6 women among 66 Deputy Ministers. In the system of territorial administration there are no female Regional Governors.

In the system of local self-government there is not a single woman among 49 mayors of Armenia's cities and towns. Women account for only 2.2% of Heads and 8.6% local Council members in 866 rural communities. Inadequately low representation of women in the legislature, in the decision-making positions in public administration and in local self-government limits their opportunities to make an impact on the fulfillment of the obligations assumed under the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

## **II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Women in Power and Decision-Making***

The review and assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Women in Power and Decision-Making* have been made in line with the following two strategic objectives:

<sup>40</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union data. See: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

- *Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making*
- *Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.*

### **Strategic Objective 1. Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making**

Certain measures have been taken in the country within the past 10 years to improve domestic legislation so as to include gender-sensitive norms and mechanisms with a view to increasing women's representation in decision-making. The "*National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in the Society for the Period 2004-2010*" stressed the necessity of introducing quotas to ensure women's representation in the judiciary.

The *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, which was adopted in 2010, specified the introduction of temporary special measures as a mechanism for advancing women to elective bodies of power. The *Concept Paper* outlined the top priority gender issues at a decision-making level in the public administration sphere and set goals and objectives as well as the main direction for future actions.

The enhancement of women's role in socio-political processes is stressed also by the *RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*. The Strategic Action Plan emphasizes, inter alia, the following top priority objectives:

- To ensure fulfillment of the obligations assumed by the country under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and other international documents;
- To take special measures to secure women's 30% representation in decision-making positions in legislative and executive branches of government;
- To introduce a system of indicators for assessment and monitoring of the dynamic of the gender situation in the country.

Guarantees for equal opportunities to participate in State governance are spelled out in the *RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which also outlines temporary special measures for redressing a gender imbalance. However, it does not indicate mechanisms for using them in the executive branch of government and in local governments as well as in the civil service.

A 20% gender quota for political party lists was introduced in 2012 into the *RoA Electoral Code* in the proportional representation elections to the *RoA National Assembly*.

*Article 108 of the Electoral Code states that starting from the second number of the electoral list of a political party or a bloc of parties that take part in the proportional rep-*



resentation elections to the RoA National Assembly “the number of representatives of each gender must not exceed the 80%.”

Some positive changes in the legislation notwithstanding, the analysis of the real situation demonstrates that the legislative measures, which were taken to secure women an equal access to power and decision-making, proved insufficient and did not lead to significant changes.

A 15 per cent quota introduced into the Electoral Code in 2007 resulted in an insignificant increase of women’s representation (from 5% to 9%). A further increase of the gender quota from 15% to 20% before the 2012 parliamentary elections led to an increase in women’s representation in the Parliament to 10.7%<sup>41</sup>.

One of the reasons of the quota’s inadequate efficiency and 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. The women who withdrew their candidacies were replaced with men; thereby the effect of the gender quota was weakened.

The analysis of the electoral processes revealed unequal opportunities for women as compared to men in the majoritarian (single-member district) elections. The examination of the dynamic of women’s participation in the majoritarian parliamentary elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007 revealed a decrease in the number of women running in the single-member district from 6.6% in 1999 to 3.7% in 2007. In 2007, not a single woman was elected to the Parliament in the majoritarian elections. Despite women’s greater activism in the 2012 elections out of 11 women who ran in the majoritarian elections only two were elected.

**Table. The dynamic of women’s and men’s representation in the RoA National Assembly from 1995 to 2012**

Year	%	
	Women	Men
1995	6.3	93.7
1999	3.1	96.9
2003	5.3	94.7
2007	9.1	90.9
2012	10.7	89.3

41 In the legislative branch, the current global average of women in national parliaments is 20 per cent. ... Only 33 countries out of 149 have national parliaments where women constitute 30 per cent or more of the members. *Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice*. 19 April 2013. UN Document A/HRC/23/50, p. 6.

At the same time, the 2012 parliamentary elections increased the number of women in leadership positions in the country's Parliament: women are represented in the positions of Deputy Speaker, heads of two out of 12 Standing Committees and of 2 out of 6 political party groups.

Thus, even though the number of female members of the RoA National Assembly has increased in the past 10 years, the rate of the increase of women's representation in the Parliament remain small and the country's Government commitment made within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure by year 2015 the 25% representation of women in the RoA National Assembly will not be met. Women are denied an opportunity to influence the content and the nature of the laws that are passed.

In 2014, in the political positions of Ministers in the executive branch of government there are only 2 women (or 10%) out of 19 Ministers. They hold the position of the RoA Minister of Culture and the RoA Minister of Diaspora<sup>42</sup>. Among 62 individuals holding the discretionary position of a Deputy Minister who have some influence on political decision-making there are only 7 women, i.e. 11.3%.

In 2009-2014, there were three Cabinets of Government members. The women's representation in them in the political and discretionary positions rose from 7% to 11%.

**Table. RoA Ministers and Deputy Ministers in 2008-2013<sup>43</sup>**

2009		2010		2011		2013	
women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
7%	93%	10%	90%	10%	90%	11%	89%

The share of women in the top-level positions in the civil service in the last five years grew from 10.4% (in 2007) to 14.0% (in 2013)<sup>44</sup>. There is not a single woman among the Advisors to the RoA President and to the RoA Prime Minister.

In 2012, women constituted 36.6% of the RoA President's staff and 42.2% of the RoA Prime Minister's staff<sup>45</sup>. However, as a rule, they hold the positions where they have no influence on decision-making.

At the level of regional administrations – in Regional Governors' Offices there are no women among 10 Regional Governors<sup>46</sup>; there are 2 women out of 22 Deputy Regional Governors and 2 women out of 10 Heads of Office.

Gender imbalance in elective bodies of local self-government remains: there is not a single woman in the elective position of a city/town mayor in 49 cities and towns of the

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

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

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

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

46 Only once woman held a position of a Regional Governor. She headed Shirak region of the country in 2007-2010.



country. Out of 866 rural communities only 19 (or merely 2.2%) are headed by women. It means that the country's commitment made within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure by 2015 at least 10% among Community Heads will not be met.

**As a result of the local government elections in 2012-2014, women account for only 8.6% of members of local Councils. Their representation in those elective bodies increased by merely 2.4% as compared to the 2008 elections.**

*As a result of their low representation in bodies of local self-government* women cannot influence effectively on such sectors in the life of cities, towns and villages as health care, education, provision of social services, utilities, water supply, construction of housing, and public transportation. Extremely low representation of women in bodies of local self-government deprives women of the opportunity of gaining political experience because the latter predetermines to a large extent their subsequent political career.

A gender situation in the judiciary is characterized by somewhat better representation of women among judges of courts of all instances: women constitute 22% of judges<sup>47</sup> and 40% of attorneys. There is only one woman among 9 judges of the Constitutional Court. However, at the level of decision-making in the judicial system there are very few women: there is not a single woman in the Courts Chairpersons Council.

One of the reasons of low representation of women in decision-making positions in public administration is a lack of measures that would encourage political parties to engage women in political activism and to enhance women's political leadership establish a pool of eligible women for nomination to elective and appointed positions in public administration, even though there no relevant recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action.

*While* there are 74 registered political parties in the country, where women constitute from 14% to 68% of the membership, there is a consistent gender imbalance in the leadership of most parties.

The programs of political parties do not include issues of enhancing women's political participation and of ensuring a gender balance in decision-making. None of the political parties, including those that in different years were a part of the ruling coalition and bore responsibility for the Government's policies and activities, has outlined their objectives in implementation of the State Gender Policy Concept Paper, in enhancing women's participation in public and political life, in advancing women to political decision-making and in achieving gender-balanced representation at all levels of power.

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<sup>47</sup> In the judicial branch, women account for only 27 per cent of judges worldwide. *Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice*. 19 April 2013. UN Document A/HRC/23/50, p. 7.

## **Strategic Objective 2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership**

The issue of the advancement of women to decision-making requires a comprehensive approach and implementation of measures spelled out in international documents. It also requires some actions to be taken by the authorities, political parties, NGOs and media.

The conducted sociological studies have revealed that besides the lack of political will and of appropriate measures to advance women to power, such factors as women's lack of financial resources, ruthlessness of competition in elections that women are not always ready for, gender stereotypes, negative public perceptions of women's political participation, women's lack of self-confidence and political experience and the lack of adequate media support also contribute to underrepresentation of women in decision-making.

Even though political parties can play a significant role in expanding opportunities for women's participation in decision-making and in public administration, the studies that have been conducted in recent years have revealed that women's representation in the parties governing bodies is insignificant. Political parties do not take special measures in their parties to ensure a gender balance in the political party leadership despite the fact that women account for over a half of membership in virtually all political parties.

The political parties' policies *remain imitational* from the perspective of the introduction of gender approaches into a political agenda. The organizational measures taken by political parties, in particular the establishment of women's councils or other women's groups, do not result in greater influence of women in political parties. The training of political party members does not include a gender component.

The country's women are involved in the non-governmental sector. According to the data of the National Statistical Service, the number of non-governmental organizations registered with 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). Even though the number of women's NGOs grew from 76 to 250, i.e. more than 3 times, from 2009 to 2012, nevertheless, women's organizations in the country constituted 6.5% of the total number of all NGOs.

With a view to expanding opportunities for women to take an active part in public and political life women's NGOs have been undertaking activities, organizing leadership schools and resource centers to build women's capacity for conducting election and other political campaigns, to develop governance skills and to enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence.

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 Public Council, which was established in 2008 under the RoA President, does not make efforts to stimulate women's activism in the public and political life of the country. The Public Council has not discussed even once the operation of women's organizations, issues of women's citizen participation in the country's development processes, protection of human rights of women and the right of women to adequate representation and participation in all spheres of public and political life of the country.

The Public Council has so far failed to review the issues of fulfilling the international obligations that Armenia had assumed on balanced representation in political decision-making, in the country's legislative and executive branches of government and in bodies of local self-government as institutions of local democracy.

In the situation of deliberate distortions of gender definitions and the discrediting of the *RoA Law on 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 to react promptly to ungrounded attacks on the Law and on leaders and activists of a number of women's NGOs. Neither did the Council second the Statement made by its Committee on Gender Issues & Demography, which gave its assessment of the group of individuals who deliberately were misleading the public opinion and qualifying the Law as a document that was undermining the national family values.

## Conclusions

Despite the fact that certain positive changes have taken place in the legislative framework of Armenia for the creation of necessary preconditions for active participation of women in power and in political decision-making, the State policies in this area is not yet gender-sensitive and is, in fact, imitational.

The absence of the national machinery for gender equality impedes *coordination* and *consolidation* of operation of various entities and *pursuance* of targeted policies on the attainment of gender equality. Information and advocacy activities to explain importance and necessity of women's participation in public and political life are lacking.

The governing bodies of political parties do not take necessary measures to increase women's representation in the parties' leadership and do not demonstrate interest in advancing women to power and political decision-making.

Values of tough masculine culture are prevalent in the society. They are promoted by mass media, thereby contributing to the reproduction of stereotypical views of the role of women in the society's life and in the family.

## Recommendations

### To the RoA National Assembly:

- *to make amendments to the RoA “Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” to strengthen mechanisms that ensure gender equality in all spheres public and political life of the society;*
- *to review the issue of amending the RoA Electoral 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 practical measures to boost effectiveness of implementation of State gender policies;*
- *to expedite the establishment of a national machinery for gender equality and to exercise an efficient control over the Ministries’ and regional bodies of public administration’s fulfillment of Armenia’s international obligations to advance women to power at the level of political decision-making;*
- *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 design professional growth programs for women that would enable effective career planning, including mentoring, professional training and professional development;*
- *to design and introduce special educational programs for journalists aimed to eliminate gender stereotypes and to support women’s political participation and leadership;*
- *to implement educational programs through all types of media with a view to raising gender awareness of the public;*
- *to encourage the conduct of PR media campaigns seeking to eliminate gender stereotypes and to create a positive image of women, including rural women and ethnic minorities women.*

### To Political Parties:

- *to remove all kinds of direct or indirect discriminatory barriers to enhancement of women’s participation;*
- *to include the issue of securing equality between women and men into political programs and into the agenda for practical activities;*

- *to design temporary special measures for increasing women's representation in the leadership of political parties;*
- *to undertake targeted and effective gender education of political parties' membership;*
- *to design and take a system of measures aimed to train future women leaders;*
- *to improve the forms of collaboration between women's councils of political parties and women's non-governmental organizations on advancement of women in all spheres of public and political life.*

**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.*

## Education and Training of Women

The Beijing Platform for Action points out that education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving such goals as equality, development and peace. It also stresses the necessity of ensuring equal, non-discriminatory rights in the field of education and training.

Education is a key to improving health and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Non-discriminatory education contributes to more equal relationships between women and men and more women become active agents of political and economic changes.

The Beijing Platform for Action further stresses the benefit from an ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond those acquired during youth and from an advanced study in science and technology that prepares women to take an active role in the technological and industrial development of their countries.

Special attention in the Beijing Platform for Action is paid to resources allocated to education, particularly for girls and women. The Platform notes that insufficient resource allocations have a long-term adverse effect on human development.

### I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

In the post-Beijing period, the laws regulating the education sector were adopted in Armenia, viz. the RoA *Law on Education* (in 1999), the RoA *Law on Preschool Education* (2005), the RoA *Law on General Education* (in 2009), the RoA *Law on Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education* (in 2005), RoA *Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education* (in 2004) and the RoA *Law on Education of Persons in Need of Special Education Conditions* (in 2005).

The Armenian Government carried out a reform of the education sector, making a transition to a 3-tier secondary education and to Bachelor and Master degrees in higher education.

The Armenian National Report on the implementation of the Millennium *Development Goals* focused on ***ensuring equal enrolment in basic education and equal access to professional education*** as priority objectives.

Having signed the Bologna Declaration in 2005, Armenia began taking measures aimed at achieving the goals set in the Declaration and in the documents of subsequent ministerial summits.

According to the 2001 Census, the literacy rate in Armenia was 99.5%<sup>48</sup>; however, by 2005 the literacy rate declined to 99.0%.

48 See: <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/84.pdf>, Table 3.1 “De Jure Population (urban and rural) by educational attainment, sex and age”.

The growing level of social vulnerability brought forth a threat of further decline in the population's level of educational attainment. A tendency of less involvement of children, including girls, in the system of basic education had emerged. The percentage of girls who did not finish the basic school decreased in 2004 to 28% of the total number of children<sup>49</sup>. According to the data of the National Statistical Service, in 2005 13.6% of girls in Lori region, 12.5% in Ararat region, 11.2% in Kotayk region, 9.0% in Aragatsotn region and 8.3% in Vayots dzor region did not attend a primary school<sup>50</sup>. The risk of emergence of women's illiteracy has increased.

## **II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Education and Training of Women***

The review presents the assessment of the implementation of the following 6 strategic objectives in the critical area of concern *Education and Training of Women*:

- *Ensure equal access to education*
- *Eradicate illiteracy among women*
- *Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education*
- *Develop non-discriminatory education and training*
- *Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms*
- *Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.*

### **Strategic Objective 1. Ensure equal access to education**

The right to equal access to education is codified in the Armenian Constitution and in a number of laws that regulate education sector. In Armenia's secondary schools the education programs and the academic disciplines are the same for both sexes. General basic education (grades 1 through 9) is mandatory. After finishing the basic school, citizens regardless of their sex can continue their education in the senior (high) school or in an institution that provides vocational education. Secondary education in government-run educational institution is provided for free. Higher education can be obtained for free on a competitive basis.

<sup>49</sup> Calculations based on the data in the statistical publication *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 26 (in Armenian).

<sup>50</sup> *Gender Analysis of the RoA Strategic Programme for Poverty Elimination*. Yerevan, 2006, p. 24.



In 2013, there were 1,435 schools in Armenia, of which 570 were in urban areas and 865 in rural areas<sup>51</sup>. Not all villages have secondary schools that provide 12-year education. Given bad roads and the absence of school buses, children's access to schools in neighboring communities is problematic. As a result, the principle of equal access to secondary education is compromised for children and adolescents and youths in rural areas. Since children are few in some villages schools there are multi-age classrooms (composite classes), where students of different ages take different courses of study in the same classroom.

Tuition fees in higher education institutions (as compared to an average wages in the country) and high interest rates for education loans limit access to education for youth from socially vulnerable families.

Even though Armenia acceded in 1993 to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which states that higher education shall be made equally accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education, the number of tuition waivers is limited. As a result, young men and women from vulnerable, low-income families and from rural areas have fewer chances to get access to higher education in Armenia than young men and women from urban areas and from better-off families.

The problem of accessibility of preschool education remains acute. In 2012, there were 683 preschool institutions in Armenia, which enrolled only 27.9% of children of a preschool age (36.6% in urban communities and 13.8% in rural communities)<sup>52</sup>. The lack of preschool institutions limits women's opportunities for professional growth and for active participation in public and political life.

The issue of ensuring women's full and equal participation in leadership and at the decision-making levels in the area of education, which was stressed in 2009 in the Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, has not been resolved yet. Women constitute only 13.0% of presidents and vice-presidents, 18.0% of deans and 25.0% of department heads in government-run higher education institutions<sup>53</sup>. In non-governmental higher education institutions women constitute 31.0% of presidents and vice-presidents, 55.0% of deans and 47.0% of department heads<sup>54</sup>. Women account for 38% of members of Scientific Councils of universities. Underrepresentation of women in the leadership of the government-run higher and vocational education institutions results in *less leverage that they have on the formulation of education policies*.

51 *Statistical Yearbook 2013*, p. 122.

52 "Operation of preschool institutions." *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012*. Collection of Statistical materials. Yerevan, 2013, p. 7 (in Armenian). [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_1-2.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_1-2.pdf)

53 *Women and Men in Armenia: 2012. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan, 2013, p. 78.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 79.



The RoA Ministry of Education and Science does not have a unit in charge of securing gender-sensitive policies and of designing measures for implementation of gender-balanced human resource policies and for elimination of gender stereotypes.

There is only one woman among four highest positions in the Ministry (the Minister and his three deputies). Women's representation is also low in the leadership of regional structures of the education system.

In this country, gender-sensitive education programs are not implemented that aim to remove barriers impeding school attendance, including “materially and physically accessible childcare services and education of parents with a view to encouraging those who perform the childcare duties and provide care to their brothers and sisters while those get school education to continue and complete their education.”

The girls who for one reason or another have dropped out of basic or senior (high) school have only limited opportunities for continuing their education. While institutions of higher learning have departments of distance education that give people an opportunity to get education at any age, such opportunities are non-existent for getting secondary education. Distance education in Armenia is still in its early stage of development.

There is no discrimination on the grounds of sex in access to education in Armenia; however, there is a social status- and poverty level-based problem of unequal access to all stages of education.

### **Strategic Objective 2. Eradicate illiteracy among women**

Education has traditionally been a priority in Armenia. Illiteracy was eradicated during the first years of the Soviet power. The level of educational attainment in the country is quite high: According to the 2011 Census data, only 0.3% (53% of them are women) of the population were illiterate<sup>55</sup>. Among citizens of 10 years of age and above 0.8% did not have primary education and 0.25% could not read and write. 0.8% among men and 0.5% among women did not have primary education.

Within the framework of the implementation of the MDGs the Armenian Government set the target of achieving universal education by ensuring a gross enrolment ratio of 99.4% in basic school and of 95.5% in (senior) high school by 2015. The target has not been met, while enrolment in (senior) high school declined significantly.

<sup>55</sup> *Social Situation and Poverty in Armenia*. Chapter 9. Education and Poverty, 2013, p. 17, [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2013a\\_4.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2013a_4.pdf)

**Table. Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education**

	2005	2009	2012
<b>Gross enrolment ratio in mandatory secondary education</b>	<b>89.2%</b>	<b>92.1%</b> <sup>56</sup>	<b>94.8%</b> <sup>57</sup>
<b>Gross enrolment ratio in (senior) high school</b>	-	<b>83.9%</b>	<b>74.1%</b>

According to the 2005 data, girls constituted 49.4% of students in general-education schools, while in 2012-2013 academic year there were 368,798 students, with girls accounting for 48.0% of students<sup>58</sup>. The share of girls among elementary and middle school students was about 47.0% and among senior (high) school students 52.0%. The *Gender equality in education index* was 1.06, in particular in elementary school it was 1.02, in basic school 1.02 and in senior (high) school 1.21<sup>59</sup>. Within the last 10 years the enrolment rate of girls in secondary education remained basically the same and corresponds to their share in all age groups.

At the same time, enrolment of children in senior (high) schools decreased considerably because of inadequate transportation services, poverty among the population and involvement of adolescents in agricultural work in rural areas. In 2007-2012, over 22,300 students dropped out of government-run and non-governmental schools<sup>60</sup>. The dropout rate is particularly high in Ararat, Armavir and Kotayk regions. After finishing the basic schools, boys do not go to senior (high) school more often than girls, which can be accounted for by the fact that boys get involved in the labor market and in the employment field earlier than girls.

According to RoA National Statistical Service data, in 2012 girls constituted 36.0% of dropouts from basic schools and 34.0% from senior (high) school. The reasons for dropping out are various: 70.0% of children noted that they did not want to continue their education<sup>61</sup>. Of them, 80% said so regarding the senior (high) school. In the senior (high) school girls constituted 35.0% among the respondents who said that they did not want to continue their education, including 41.0% whose reasons was that their parents did not allow them to continue their education<sup>62</sup>. At the same time, it was found out that among major reasons for students' dropping out of school were poverty and bad socioeconomic situation of their families.

56 "Operation of institutions of general education." Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012. Collection of Statistical materials. Yerevan, 2013, p. 1 (in Armenian). [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_3-4.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_3-4.pdf)

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., p. 29 [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_3-4.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_3-4.pdf)

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., p. 78.

61 The reasons why children do not want to continue their education were not studied.

62 Operation of institutions of general education." Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012. Collection of Statistical materials. Yerevan, 2013, p. 42 (in Armenian). [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_3-4.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_3-4.pdf)

One of the reasons why students drop out of senior (high) school is inadequate development of the social infrastructure (roads in poor shape, inadequate transportation services between villages, absence of school buses), which creates additional problems for children from poor families in terms of access to education. A relative high dropout rate is also in the communities of ethnic minorities (Yezidis and Molokans). The CEDAW Committee noted this fact in 2009 in its Concluding observations regarding Armenia's combined third and fourth periodic reports.

There is also a problem of access to education for children with disability. In general, secondary schools do not have sufficient conditions and a necessary resource base for disabled children. Even though the law has a provision about home schooling, the latter does not ensure adequate knowledge and not always enables persons with disability to continue their education. According to the UNICEF study published in 2013, 18.0% of children with disability did not attend school. Among children with disability because of muscoskeletal disorders or with intellectual disability the percentage of dropouts is 25.0%<sup>63</sup>. The concern about dropouts from the schools for children with disability is reflected also in the official report submitted by the Armenia's Ombudsman to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>64</sup>.

The Beijing Platform for Action stresses the necessity of ensuring functional literacy, as recommended in the *World Declaration on Education for All*, and of promoting "together with literacy, life skills and scientific and technological knowledge and work towards an expansion of the definition of literacy, taking into account current targets and benchmarks."

According to TIMSS (*Trends in Mathematics and Science Study*) data, in 2011, as compared to 2003, education in Armenia declined by almost all parameters<sup>65</sup>.

Even though the problem of elimination of women's illiteracy has been solved in Armenia, nevertheless the national MDG targets set by Armenia will hardly be met by 2015.

### **Strategic Objective 3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education**

Under the Armenian legislation, each citizen has the right to get education for free in government-run higher and other specialized educational institutions. About 10% of basic school graduates continue their education in technical and vocational education institutions<sup>66</sup>.

63 UNICEF. *Study of children's state in Armenia 2012*. Yerevan: UNICEF, 2013, p. 33 (in Russian).

64 See *Report of the Armenia's Ombudsman to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*. Yerevan, 2012, p. 6-7.

65 *Assessment of teacher professional development and educational content in the context of general education reforms in Armenia*. Yerevan: Barev NGO, 2013, p. 5.

66 *The 2011-2015 State Program on Education Development*, p. 7 (in Armenian).

The percentage of young women among students in the system of professional education is quite high. The *Gender equality in education* index in vocational education is 1.17<sup>67</sup>, in higher professional education it is 1.07<sup>68</sup>. According to the 2013 data, young women account 52.0% of students in government-run vocational education institution (vs. 68.0% in 2005)<sup>69</sup>, while in non-governmental vocational education institutions they constitute 69.0% of students (vs. 81.0% in 2005)<sup>70</sup>. Women comprise 52.0% of students in State and non-governmental higher education institutions<sup>71</sup>.

The problem of expanding access for girls and women in such fields of education and training as sciences, mathematics, technical sciences, environmental sciences, information technologies, high technologies and management is not acute since there exist legislative grounds for equal access. At the same time the targeted programs for diversification of professional technological training is non-existent in Armenia; therefore, gender-based segregation in many areas of specialization still exists.

**Table. Share of young women in the following areas of specialization in the system of professional training**

Area of specialization	Technical schools <sup>72</sup>	Vocational schools <sup>73</sup>	Higher education institutions <sup>74</sup>
Economics and management	49.8%	44.5%	
Extraction of minerals	1.9%		
Energy	0%		7.0%
Machine-building equipment and technologies	7.6%		
Radio-electronic equipment and telecommunication	17.4%		14.0%
Information science and computer engineering	43.3%		28.0%
Transportation	0%	11.0%	3.0%
Food production	37.6%		27.0%
Construction and municipal engineering	0.4%		13.0%
Agriculture	1.9%	15.0%	27.0%

67 *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012*. [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_9-10.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_9-10.pdf)

68 Ibid.

69 The data are from the RoA Statistical Yearbooks for 2003 and 2006 and from *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012. Collection of Statistical materials*.

70 The data are from the RoA Statistical Yearbooks for 2003 and 2006 and from *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012. Collection of Statistical materials*.

71 *Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2012*, p. 193 [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_11-12.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_11-12.pdf)

72 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013. Statistical Booklet*. Yerevan, 2013, p. 80.

73 Ibid, p. 81 data are not available for some areas of specialization.

74 Ibid, p. 84.

Young women comprised 55.0% of the graduates higher education institutions in 2012-2013 academic year<sup>75</sup>. In 2012, there were 463 women (42.0%) out of 1,104 students in post-tertiary studies leading to a “Candidate of Sciences” degree; 1,079 of those students (including 450 women, or 42.0%) got a tuition fee waiver. Their theses defended 203 students, including 22 women (19.0%). 51 persons, including 12 women (24.0%), were taking doctoral studies (leading to a “Doctor of Sciences” degree)<sup>76</sup>. 5,598 persons engaged in research and development; 2,630 of them (or 47.0%) were women. Women constituted 45.0% among Candidates of Sciences and 19.0% among Doctors of Sciences engaged in research and development<sup>77</sup>.

Growing impoverishment of the population has been making an adverse impact on women’s access to professional technical training. Students from poor and extremely poor families account for only 17.0% and 2.0% respectively of all students in institutions of higher education<sup>78</sup>. The main underlying cause of unequal opportunities for rural youth in admission to institutions of higher education as well as of unequal opportunities in getting free education and scholarships is lower quality of teaching in rural schools.

As tuition fees in government-run institutions of higher education were raised in 2013, a decline in enrollment is expected because of a high level of poverty and inaccessibility of student loans. This may to a large extent affect young women from the regions that are located far from big cities and that do not have institutions of higher education nearby.

The Beijing Platform for Action stresses the necessity of providing non-formal educational opportunities for girls and women in the educational system. The system of permanent education has not been established in Armenia at a State level. The system of post-tertiary professional development does not adequately meet the present-day needs. The programs of retraining young women who are coming back from maternity leave that would facilitate their re-entry on the labor market and to improve their competitiveness are not implemented.

The training programs for unemployed women that would expand their employment opportunities are limited. The programs for rural women on issues of promotion and marketing of agricultural produce are implemented inadequately. The activities undertaken in that field by NGOs and funded by international organizations are not well-coordinated.

The Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center (SME NDC),

75 “Higher professional education.” *Social situation of the Republic of Armenian in 2012. Collection of statistical materials*, 2013, p. 178 (in Armenian) [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_11-12.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_11-12.pdf)

76 Ibid.

77 “Research and development.” *Social situation of the Republic of Armenian in 2012. Collection of statistical materials*, 2013, p. 178 (in Armenian) [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_12\\_15-16.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_15-16.pdf)

78 “Poverty and social panorama of Armenia, 2013.” *Non-material poverty. Chapter 9. Education and Poverty* (in Armenian) [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty\\_2013a\\_4.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2013a_4.pdf)

which was set up in 2002, has since been helping women to acquire entrepreneurial skills<sup>79</sup>. The SME NDC has information-educational centers that teach fundamentals of entrepreneurship within the framework of the Eastern Partnership program. The 2012-2015 Strategy of State support to small and medium entrepreneurship included gender mainstreaming<sup>80</sup>.

The programs that target women's leadership and women's economic empowerment are also implemented in the country through the efforts of women's NGOs. Non-formal entrepreneurial learning is provided by Women's Resource Centers (that were established in Syunik region within the framework of the OSCE program) as well as by NGOs within the framework of the *Small Business Support* (SBS) and *Women in Business* (WiB) programs. They provide to beginner female entrepreneurs such services as coaching, etc. Armenian Association of Young Women has been implementing a program of entrepreneurial learning<sup>81</sup>.

Armenia does not have a clear, formalized State system for retraining the unemployed, including women. It is primarily women's NGOs that design educational programs and professional training programs for unemployed women that expand the latter's employment (including self-employment) opportunities and help them develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills. Women's NGOs started implementing projects on developing women's entrepreneurial skills, especially in the field of small and medium businesses and farming. Armenian Association of Women with University Education implements projects on women's leadership in Yerevan and in the country's regions.

#### **Strategic Objective 4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training**

The Gender Policy Concept Paper, which was adopted by the Armenian Government in 2010, outlines gender issues in education and gives recommendations how to resolve them. In 2011, the Government approved the *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*, which sets the goal of ensuring implementation of principal recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and of organizing training courses for women on leadership and for protection of their own rights.

In 2012, an academic subject *Technology* was introduced into the basic school (and is

79 <http://smednc.am/en>

80 <http://www.smednc.am/hy/publications.html>

81 The Report on progress in the Implementation of the EU Small Business Act for Europe contains assessment and gives recommendations on entrepreneurial learning and women's entrepreneurship, where importance of non-formal learning for teaching entrepreneurship to women is emphasized. *SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2012 Progress in the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe* [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/sme-policy-index-eastern-partner-countries-2012\\_9789264178847-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/sme-policy-index-eastern-partner-countries-2012_9789264178847-en)



now taught from 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade) to provide polytechnical, economic and environmental education, to develop entrepreneurial skills, work culture and culture of team work. The following topics are included in the standard of the subject: construction of buildings, cooking, sewing, machine-building and electrical engineering, entrepreneurship, professional orientation, family budget, etc.

The standard of the program of study has been designed to make sure that upon the completion of the course boys and girls would have necessary skills to meet their own household needs and to provide care to dependants. On the whole the standard takes into consideration the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action; however, so far an assessment of the course and of the methods of teaching it has not been done and it is not clear to what extent the teaching is gender-sensitive, if at all. The educational modules that would encourage principles of equality, cooperation and mutual respect are absent from teachers' professional development programs.

From 2006 on, with support from the RoA Ministry of Education and Science and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights the Armenian Association of Women with University Education was undertaking institutionalization of gender education in Armenia. Over a few years' period the Association's Center for Gender Studies helped introduce into and teach interdisciplinary and special gender courses in a number of academic disciplines in 12 universities in Yerevan, Vanadzor and Gyumri and gender knowledge sessions into 30 general-education schools in the country.

With support from Open Society Foundations-Armenia the *Conceptual framework of State policies in the field of gender education* was designed and *Draft State standards in gender education* in a number of academic disciplines were piloted.

To ensure an education process manuals, teacher and students guidebooks, and collections of scholarly and research materials were designed and published.

Teaching and learning sets *Gender & Economics*, *Gender & Law*, *Gender & Journalism* were recommended by the RoA Ministry of Education and Science as manuals for universities. A teaching and learning set "Sessions on Gender Knowledge" was designed for secondary schools. It includes a standard and a syllabus, manual and methodological recommendations. The set, too, was recommended for classes to be taken on a voluntary basis. However, the success in institutionalization of gender education was not supported with further concrete actions by the RoA Ministry of Education and Science. At present, gender courses are taught only in few universities in this country.

The RoA Ministry of Education and Science has not yet worked out recommendations on designing syllabi, textbooks and manuals for all levels of education that would be free from stereotypical views on the role of men and women in public and political life of the country.

Despite certain measures that have been taken by the RoA Ministry of Education and

Science, non-discriminatory approaches in the sphere of education and effective civic education of young generations are not worked out yet.

### **Strategic Objective 5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms**

The Government's National Program on the Millennium Development Goals set a target of State budgetary allocations for education needs to equal 4.0% of GDP by 2015. Actual allocations for education needs were 3.3% of the GDP in 2000, then went down to 2.8% in 2005, rose to 3.2% in 2009 and in 2010 and 2011 they were 3.5% and 3.2% respectively. The funding allocated for the needs of Education sector from the State budget had been steadily decreasing since 2009 and in 2012 they stood at 3.0%.

According to the Armenian Government's medium-term program for 2014-2016, no increase in funding for education is planned thereby putting into question the meeting of commitments made by the country regarding the Millennium Development Goals.

The distribution of the budgetary allocations within the education sector is presented in the Table below and indicates that the biggest part of the funding is allocated in line with the Beijing Platform for Action to basic education. The rest goes to extracurricular activities, further education and additional services<sup>82</sup>.

The resources allocated for carrying out reforms in education sector are not sufficient

Level of education	Redistribution of financial resources within the sector
Pre-school education and elementary school	21.0%
General secondary education	47.0%
Technical and vocational schools	5.3%
Higher education (including post-tertiary education)	7.4%

for meeting the society's demands in the field of education and training.

### **Strategic Objective 6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women**

In the present-day society, when a high dynamism of changes in the world leads to rapid obsolescence of knowledge gained in institutions of formal education, lifelong education and training acquires great significance. Lifelong, or permanent, education is a necessary

<sup>82</sup> [http://www.parliament.am/law\\_docs/211211HO285.pdf](http://www.parliament.am/law_docs/211211HO285.pdf)

prerequisite for increasing social status, improving quality of life, shaping a civic position and making a successful professional career.

Professional development of civil servants of all categories is done primarily at the expense of the State budget funds and contributed to their qualifying evaluation. From 2009 on, a gender knowledge module has been included in the curriculum of the professional development.

Activities on retraining and professional development of the education system employees are also undertaken in this country. 6,241 teachers have so far taken professional development courses with support from the World Bank's *Quality in Education and Compatibility* Program.

There are no programs that would be offered on a flexible schedule specifically for women and would provide them with professional training and retraining for lifelong learning or would facilitate for women a change of types of activities.

## Conclusions

The task of elimination of illiteracy, including women's illiteracy, has on the whole been fulfilled in Armenia.

A legislative framework necessary for achieving the educational targets set by the Beijing Platform for Action has been created in the country.

There is no gender-based discrimination in access to education.

The girls' share in the secondary education enrolment corresponds to their share in all relevant age groups of the population. Programs to develop women's entrepreneurial skills, especially in the sphere of small and medium business and farming, are being implemented.

Training programs are being devised for unemployed women that will expand employment opportunities for them.

Women have an opportunity to improve their knowledge and develop organizer's skills in the system of non-formal education set up by NGOs.

At the same time the funding allocated to education from the State budget is extremely insignificant and cannot meet the society's developmental needs.

The country does not have special programs for women that would help them increase their knowledge and would provide lifelong professional training and development that would facilitate a flexible change of the profession.

Women are not sufficiently engaged in research and development, in particular at the level of studies leading to PhD and Doctor of Science degrees. There are very few women among holders of the Doctor of Science degree.

An adequate awareness of the necessity to integrate gender knowledge into the educa-

tion system at all its levels is still lacking. The governing bodies in the education sphere have not worked out recommendations on introducing gender knowledge while drawing up syllabi, textbooks and manuals for general education schools and for gender disciplines in higher education.

The issues of developing an egalitarian gender culture are not taken into consideration in interactions with students and parents and insufficient efforts are made to eliminate gender stereotypes.

There is still hidden discrimination against women in access to governance in the education sphere.

## Recommendations

### To the RoA Government

- *to hold all State entities and bodies of local self-government more responsible for prevention of dropout from basic schools;*
- *to conduct monitoring of the accessibility of general secondary education to children in sparsely populated and distant areas, including availability of school or community transportation for children and safety of roads to schools in nearby villages;*
- *with a view to preventing the students from dropping out of basic schools - to provide subsidies to bodies of local self-government for leasing school buses and thereby providing transportation for schoolchildren for free;*
- *to review an option of establishing seasonal and evening schools and distance learning schools for rural youth who have not completed secondary education but now wish to continue their education;*
- *to design training programs for unemployed women that would improve their employment opportunities;*
- *to design special programs ensuring women's access to lifelong professional training.*

### To the RoA Ministry of Education and Science:

- *to take measures to hold teaching staff of schools more responsible for prevention of dropout from basic schools;*
- *to work closely with and to conduct campaigns with public media to impart educational knowledge to parents stressing significance and importance of education for their children's future;*
- *to conduct information campaigns in rural communities together with non-govern-*

- mental organizations to make sure that children attend basic schools;*
- *to undertake a gender analysis of sets of teaching and learning materials of secondary schools from the perspective of the necessity of developing an egalitarian democratic culture and shaping civic responsibility of young generations;*
  - *to mainstream gender and advocacy of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men into the sets of teaching and learning materials, syllabi, textbooks and manuals that are being designed;*
  - *to improve and strengthen efforts of imparting to basic school students an egalitarian democratic culture that is called upon to promote civic responsibility and discipline;*
  - *to continue the policy of institutionalization of gender education in the secondary education system and of gender disciplines in the higher education system;*
  - *to design programs of diversification of technical and vocation education with a view to decreasing gender segregation;*
  - *to stimulate inclusion of gender issues into research plans of Academy's institutes and in universities by providing research grants;*
  - *to recommend universities to include gender issues into research programs of Master- PhD- and Doctor of Sciences-level studies.*

**To Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- *to design and implement (together with educational authorities) educational programs on improving political, legal and economic knowledge of the general public with a view to promoting active citizenship and responsibility;*
- *to conduct large-scale information campaigns explaining the consequences of illiteracy for young generations, especially for girls;*
- *to make sure that children from marginal social groups get mandatory education;*
- *to conduct active information campaigns among ethnic minorities on importance of education for girls.*

## Women and the Economy

Noting the importance of using the economic potential of women for the country's development and the need to strengthen their economic independence, the Beijing Platform for Action stresses that "in countries that are undergoing fundamental political, economic and social transformation, the skills of women, if better utilized, could constitute a major contribution to the economic life of their respective countries. Their input should continue to be developed and supported and their potential further realized."<sup>83</sup>

Insufficient attention to gender analysis in the formulation of policies and development programs has meant that women's contributions and concerns remain too often ignored not only in economic structures, such as financial markets and institutions, labor markets, economic and social infrastructure, taxation and social security systems, but also in families and households. As a result, many policies and programmes may continue to contribute to inequalities between women and men. Where progress has been made in integrating gender perspectives, programme and policy effectiveness has also been enhanced.

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that to realize fully equality between women and men in their contribution to the economy, active efforts are required for equal recognition and appreciation of the influence that the work, experience, knowledge and values of both women and men have in society.

The Beijing Platform for Action recommends the Governments in addressing the economic potential and independence of women to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

*Goal 3 in the Millennium Development Goals ("Promote gender equality and empower women") is focused, inter alia, on economic empowerment of women.*

### I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

In the post-Beijing period certain steps have been taken in Armenia to approximate the country's legislation with international standards and international practices.

The RoA Constitution (1995), the RoA Labor Code (2004), the RoA *Law On State Labor Inspection* (2005) and the RoA *Law On Employment* (2013) state the principles of free choice of employment, equal pay for equal or equivalent work and the right to working conditions that meet the safety and hygiene requirements, and prohibit differentiation on the grounds of sex in the labor market and in employment.

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<sup>83</sup> *Beijing Platform for Action*, para. 159.



The RoA Labor Code and the RoA *Law On State Labor Inspection* regulate legal relations in the sphere of labor and employment taking into consideration a gender factor. Labor rights of working parents are stated in conformity with the European law. The RoA Labor Code regards parenthood but not motherhood as an object of legal relations in the sphere of labor.

The RoA *Law On State Labor Inspection* includes a *review* of cases of gender-based discrimination in hiring and *measures* to protect workers from violations of their rights.

Adopted in 2013, the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* is intended to ensure de facto equality of rights, duties and responsibilities of women and men, equality of opportunity and of results, including in the economic sphere.

The *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, which was approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in 2010, outlines the main objectives, priorities and implementation strategy of gender policies in the socio-economic sphere. The Concept Paper stresses that gender policies in the economic sphere aims at reducing socio-economic inequality, eliminating imbalances in the social status of women and men, providing equal opportunities and overcoming gender discrimination and segregation in the labor market and in employment.

Nevertheless, the legal framework and the policy implemented in the country are only partially in line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding the necessity of taking gender issues into consideration and mainstreaming gender into all economic development strategies and programs.

## **II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern Women and the Economy**

The target of ensuring gender equality in the economic sphere is designated as a separate critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action. The review presents the assessment of the implementation of the following strategic objectives:

- *Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources*
- *Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade*
- *Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women*
- *Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks*
- *Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination*
- *Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.*

### **Strategic objective 1. Promote women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources**

Within the framework of this strategic objective, the Beijing Platform for Action recommends that along with enactment and enforcement of legislation that guarantees the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and prohibits sex-based discrimination in the labor market the governments should devise mechanisms and take positive action to enable women to gain access to full and equal participation in the formulation of policies and definition of economic structures.

As of 2012, women in Armenia constituted 55.6% of the country’s labor force, while the share of men was 44.4%. However, only 55.2% of women are economically active in contrast to 72.1% of men. Women make up 49.0% of economically active population and 48.0% of the employed<sup>84</sup>.

The analysis of the composition of the economically active population by individual characteristics of the labor market (*viz.* employment status, duration of unemployment, education, age, marital status, income level, etc.) shows that there is gender differentiation in employment.

While the employment rate of women (53.3%) and men (59.6%) is not significantly different, among the self-employed and, in particular, employers the share of men is much higher (about 75.0%). Almost two thirds of unpaid family members are women<sup>85</sup>.

Women still make up the majority of officially registered unemployed: according to the data of the RoA *State Employment Service Agency*, as of 1 October 2013, there were 55,900 officially registered unemployed in the country, of which 41,400 (or 74.1%) were women<sup>86</sup>.

Gender analysis of unemployment reveals also the importance of age and marital status for a job search: while young men and women in the 15-24 age group have nearly the same chances of finding a job, women in the 40-54 age group are twice as likely to be unemployed and end up in poverty than men in the same age group. In addition, 35.0% of registered unemployed women were out of work for 1-3 years, and one in four for more than 3 years<sup>87</sup>. These women lose their qualification as a result of long-term unemployment and in order to get a job they need not only professional training but also moral and psychological assistance and rehabilitation.

In its “Gender Policy Implementation Strategy in *Socioeconomic Sector*” Section the

84 *Women and men in Armenia - 2013*. Statistical booklet. Yerevan: RoA National Statistical Service (NSS), 2013, pp. 107-108.

85 *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia – 2013*. Yerevan: RoA NSS Armenia, 2013, p. 59.

86 <http://employment.am/am/2013/report.html>

87 *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia – 2013*. Yerevan: RoA NSS Armenia, 2013, pp. 79-80.

*Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* set the objectives of promoting the creation of jobs and pay raise taking into consideration gender aspects of the branches of the economy with predominantly female employment and of creating new jobs for women in industrial sectors, especially in the light industry.

In line with the Plan the RoA Ministry of Economy in 2011-2013 helped private enterprises to create nearly 1,500 jobs for women in industries, thereby mitigating female unemployment to some extent.

However, studies show that on the labor market in Armenia women face not only the problem of accessibility jobs but also discrimination in hiring, when despite a high level of education and qualification they are totally dependent on employers' preferences. In violation of legal norms, in most cases only short-term employment contracts are concluded with women. Women are more likely to be employed part-time and have temporary employment. They are first to be fired or laid off, in most cases without a good reason. Since any other alternative is non-existent, women knowingly agree to a reduced pay rate, low wages and ruthless exploitation. These practices are widespread, particularly in health care and education systems. Surplus labor allows employers to use tougher criteria when selecting specialists, placing great emphasis on a rank of the university that a potential employee has graduated from and on knowledge of a foreign language as well as on computer skills, age and even appearance.

As a result, in all spheres, regardless of the nature or status of employment, the average net income of men is much greater than that of women. In 2012, the average net monthly income of women in the country was 59.0% of that of men, and the average monthly salary was 64.4% of men's salary<sup>88</sup>.

A comprehensive study of the living conditions of households that was conducted by the National Statistical Service of Armenia found that in 2012 the average wage per family member in women-headed households was only 45.8% of the same indicator in men-headed households (13,330 AMD and 29,116 AMD respectively)<sup>89</sup>.

In Armenia, the gender wage gap is a result of successive "squeezing" of women from sectors of the economy, where incomes are relatively high such as financial and credit, energy, housing and services sectors, to low-paying jobs and sectors such as health, education, science and culture.

In the field of employment, gender segregation is observed also depending on the form of ownership. The analysis of the distribution of employed women by sector of the economy shows that most of them (71.3%) are concentrated in the private sector. Meanwhile, the distribution of the employed in different sectors of the population by gender shows that women in this sector constitute only 44.9%.

<sup>88</sup> *Women and men in Armenia - 2013*. Statistical booklet. Yerevan: RoA NSS, 2013, pp. 134, 135.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p.64.

The share of women is largest in the municipal sector (65.4%) and is almost the same in the public and non-governmental sectors (59.5% and 58.5% respectively)<sup>90</sup>, where wages are much lower compared to the private sector.

However, even in the sectors, where women predominate numerically, the average salary for women is significantly lower than that of men despite the fact that women have a higher level of education or professional qualifications. This is a consequence also of the fact that most of leadership positions in all sectors of the economy, including those with the highest concentration of women, are held by men.

Low representation of women in senior positions in civil service is yet another manifestation of gender segregation in professional advancement: in 2012 women accounted for merely 14.0% of the total number of this category of employees<sup>91</sup>.

### **Strategic objective 2. Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade**

The Beijing Platform for Action recommends that Governments encourage and support self-employment of women and the start-up of small businesses as well as expand women's access to loans and capital on equal terms with men by strengthening institutions that are tasked with promoting women's entrepreneurship.

As a part of this strategic objective the challenges of the empowerment of rural women to generate income stand out. Stressing the key role of women in food security, the Beijing Platform for Action recommends promoting their equal access to land, property rights, production resources, capital, technologies, transportation, marketing and loan opportunities at local and community levels.

According to the data for 2012, the largest share of employed women in Armenia (44.0%) carries out economic activities in the field of agriculture. At the same time, women make up 57.0% of the population engaged in agriculture<sup>92</sup>.

Women head every fourth household in rural areas. They bear the brunt of maintaining households, working the land, harvesting and selling crop in a poorly developed social infrastructure and the lack of small-scale mechanization. The average size of the cash income per family member in these farms in 2012 was only 53.4% of the per family member income in a male-headed households<sup>93</sup>.

The main reason for this gap, along with the lack of favorable working conditions and the low level of mechanization of agricultural production, is insufficient agronomic knowl-

90 Ibid, p. 116.

91 *Women and men in Armenia - 2013*. Statistical booklet. Yerevan: RoA NSS, 2013, p. 153.

92 Statistical Yearbook 2013. Yerevan: The RoA NSS, 2013, pp. 61 and 65.

93 *Women and men in Armenia - 2013*. Statistical booklet. Yerevan: RoA NSS, 2013, p. 63.

edge and training of women, their lack of awareness about agricultural innovations and a lack of access to agricultural credits and loans.

The *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* set the objective of improving agricultural and rural infrastructures and of expanding women's opportunities for participation in socioeconomic development of rural communities.

In March 2011, the RoA Government approved the *Procedure for subsidizing interest rates of loans given to the agriculture sector*, according to which the country's commercial banks provide soft loans for agricultural activities. The share of concessional loans given to women within the framework of sustainable development program increased from 12.0% in 2011<sup>94</sup> to 18.0% in 2013<sup>95</sup>.

Women constitute almost a quarter of the membership in consumer cooperatives *Associations of community pastures users* that were established in 2011-2012 in 54 communities of the country with support from the World Bank. They have been trained in organizing cooperatives and in using modern technologies of pasture use. Women make up 18.0% of the board members in those cooperatives.

In 2012-2013, 54 grant programs, which aimed at the development of animal husbandry, vegetable growing, and processing of agricultural products, were implemented with active participation of women within the framework of the same project. Three of these programs were run by women.

Every fifth program in the framework of the project *Management of agricultural resources and the competitiveness of communities*, carried out in 2013 in country's all regions by the RoA Ministry of Agriculture with the World Bank support, was implemented on a farm run by a woman.

In the same year, in six regions 168 women farmers engaged in animal husbandry improved their knowledge at seminars organized by regional centers of support to agriculture.

The undertaken activities were instrumental in enhancing to some extent the economic activism of women and to create new jobs.

However, women are not fully involved yet in the soft loan programs, the imbalance persists in access of women and men to resources, mechanisms to ensure ongoing professional development of women view a view to improving their competitiveness in the labor market have not been established, and research is not conducted on problems of employment issues in rural areas that would focus on job creation and on the use of women's potential.

94 See .: [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-report.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender-report.pdf)

95 See .: [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/gender.pdf)

### **Strategic objective 3. Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women**

The RoA *Law On State support to small and medium-sized businesses*, which was adopted in 2000, stated the criteria for actors of small and medium entrepreneurship in line with European standards and outlined basic directions of State support to those enterprises.

Since 2001, the RoA Ministry of Economy has drawn up annual programs for the development of small and medium entrepreneurship and for State support to the sphere. The programs are implemented by Armenia's *Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center*. However, for many years the organizations providing support to private businesses mainly performed a general function, without identifying the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.

Following the approval of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and the adoption of the *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* (which set an objective of supporting women's business activities and stimulating loan projects that target women's economic initiatives, especially in rural areas) there has been a positive change in the situation.

In 2011, 15 women entrepreneurs took skills-building refresher courses conducted jointly with GIZ, and technical assistance on bookkeeping was provided to 70 women from small and medium-size businesses.

In 2011-2013, 220 women took vocational training courses within the framework of the program *Support to entrepreneurship of beginner business people* implemented by the RoA *Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center*.

Within the framework of the program *Business information and technical assistance to small and medium-size businesses* the Center and its branches provided brochures and booklets on changes in tax and customs legislation, gave practical tips on marketing, organization of production and management of enterprises to almost 15,000 women entrepreneurs (i.e. to 30.0% of the total number of entrepreneurs involved in the program).

A separate section in the *2012-2015 National Strategy for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises* devised in 2011 by the RoA Ministry of Economy is devoted to fostering women's entrepreneurship and sets the goal "to increase the proportion of women among entrepreneurs by providing women and men with equal opportunities to do business and by supporting the *role of women entrepreneurs*, which is new in this country, the *creation of jobs* for women and *economic growth*."<sup>96</sup>

Noting that heads and founders of 97% of the enterprises registered in 2010-2011 are men, the Strategy intends to reduce this figure to 80.0% in 2015, which means the creation

<sup>96</sup> See .: <http://smednc.am/hy/publications.html>



of 200-300 new businesses annually on the average that will be headed or founded by women. It is emphasized that if due to comprehensive support, which is provided in line with the government policies, on the average 20.0% of new enterprises operate for 3 or more years, in case of women's entrepreneurship the figure reaches 40.0%.

In March 2013, with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) the *Women's Entrepreneurship Development* program was launched. The program seeks to expand women's opportunities for participation in economic development processes.<sup>97</sup> The program, which is to be implemented in 2013-2017, consists of two components: provision of loans to women entrepreneurs and to micro, small and medium enterprises and provision of technical assistance through awareness-raising and skills-building.

A strategy for women's entrepreneurship development in Armenia is being devised within the framework of the program.

Since 2012, an annual *The best woman entrepreneur* contest has been held under the patronage of the RoA Prime Minister. The contest includes 6 nominations: *The best female employer*, *The best female innovator*, *The best female benefactor*, *The best name brand produced by female entrepreneur*, *The best young woman entrepreneur* and *The best beginner woman entrepreneur*.

Non-governmental organizations contribute to efforts aimed at economic empowerment of women and at provision of education and information services to them.

With support from international organizations, the *Women's Development Resource Center* Foundation, which operates in the town of Goris in Syunik region, implements programs aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurial initiatives and at providing opportunities for them to sell their products and to establish business contacts.

The *Handicraft Club*, which has been operating for about 4 years with support from OSCE, brings together 100 women from Goris and the region's rural communities who purchase necessary materials with the Foundation's support and makes souvenirs. 60 kinds of their products received a certificate confirming that they meet international standards and are sold not only on the local market but also in various countries of the world. On-line market places were also set up to sell via the internet the products manufactured by the Club.<sup>98</sup> Due to the program the formerly unemployed, socially vulnerable women with many children got an opportunity to have a regular income working at home, this income frequently being the only one in the family.

The efforts of State entities and non-governmental organizations made it possible to a certain extent to enhance women's economic activities and to stimulate their entrepreneurial activities. Those efforts were also instrumental in improving women's business knowledge and their social status and in decreasing the level of women's unemployment.

97 See: [http://www.mineconomy.am/uploads/ADB\\_INFO.pdf](http://www.mineconomy.am/uploads/ADB_INFO.pdf)

98 See: <http://www.syunikwrc.net/posts.php?city=?=goris&type=news&id=27>

However, the overall situation with women's access to economic resources continues to remain tense and inadequate to their needs. Despite the fact that women are more involved in vocational training courses offered by the RoA *Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center* and that the *Women's Entrepreneurship Development* program stipulates that 50.0% of loans should be given to micro, small and medium enterprises owned by women, nevertheless the greater part of funding provided through the programs still goes to men.

The remaining low level of economic activity and income of women in Armenia is largely due to the lack of opportunity for many women to fully combine income-generating activities with family responsibilities.

Access to markets, especially for women in remote and border-area rural communities is difficult also because of the poor state of roads and of the lack of affordable services for transportation of products.

Since 2004, the RoA *Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center* published 5 issues of the Reference book *Sphere of small and medium-size entrepreneurship in Armenia*. In 2013 it published a report titled *Basic indicators characterizing the small and medium-size entrepreneurship in Armenia in 2010-2012*,<sup>99</sup> which presents a detailed description of the structure of employees of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises by industries and types of companies. However, gender analysis of the composition of entrepreneurs and of employees in the sector is completely absent.

#### **Strategic Objective 4: Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men**

The Beijing Platform for Action recommends *giving* women and men equal opportunities, including through appropriate legislation, to harmonize work and family responsibilities, *promoting* the equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women and *developing* and *implementing* policies aimed at changing the attitudes that reinforce the division of labor by gender.

The RoA Government's *Gender Policy Concept Paper* states that the traditional division of roles between women and men is a major factor of growing gender inequality in the economic sphere.

Even though the RoA Labor Code (which was adopted in 2004) provides for the granting of leave to care for a child under three years of age not only to a working mother but also to a father, the practice in the country is not yet widespread, and if a woman after maternity leave prefers to work, child care is provided by a grandmother or a nanny.

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99 See: <http://smednc.am/hy/publications.html>

Although in the past decade in Armenia there has been a positive trend in the study of a gender dimension of employment and evaluation of domestic work, nevertheless, the consideration of unpaid work in the household for assessing a real contribution of men and women to the country's economic and public life and for ensuring equal distribution of responsibilities has not yet received monetary valuation and is not reflected in the national accounts.

The findings of a time budget study, which was conducted in 2004 by the National Statistical Service of Armenia with financial support of the Swedish International Development Agency, gave a concrete idea of the time spent by men and women in paid and unpaid work.<sup>100</sup>

A comparative analysis of the findings of the 2004 study and of the follow-up study of 2008<sup>101</sup> demonstrates that *disproportionate gender distribution* of time resources and *gender imbalance* in the society still exist in Armenia.

The studies revealed that daily on the average 33.0% of women and 60.0% of men are engaged in paid work, with an average duration of a working day for women is slightly over 5 hours and for men it is a little more than 8 hours.

The differences between men and women in involvement in unpaid work are significant. On the average, 96.0% of women and 53.0% of men are involved in unpaid work. Women spend on work about the house and on care for family members 5 hours and 12 minutes on the average, while men allocate on the average only 1 hour 03 minutes to that work. Thus, women spend on unpaid work five times more time and spend 6.6 times more time than men on care for children aged 0-9.

The comparison of the total time spent daily by women and men during the day on paid and unpaid work, shows that women work 1 hour more, with 78.0% of that time is spent on household, unpaid work.

Men spend daily three times more time on income-generating activities and they have almost 30.0% more free time than women.

However, the study identified differences in the men's and women's perceptions of income-generating work despite the fact that women, unlike men, better combine income-generating activities with unpaid work. Men regard income-generating activities as a priority.

For women, especially those with children under the age of five, income-generating activities are relegated to the background as priority is given to housework. Income-generating activities do not free women from housework to the same extent as men, as a result of which women do a bigger amount of work than men.

Woman's income-generating activities depend on her marital status and a stage in her life: as a result of pregnancy, childbirth and care for small children not infrequently exclude the woman from income-generating activities for several years, which leads to a partial loss of qualifications and subsequently has an adverse impact on the amount of pension.

100 <http://www.armstat.am/am/?nid=81&id=335>

101 <http://www.armstat.am/am/?nid=82&id=1102>

The time-use structure identified by the study reflects stereotypes existing in Armenian society regarding the distribution of gender roles in the family.

Women are primarily responsible for housework and care for family members; therefore, their income-generating activities depend entirely on the course of their lives. Men devote to income-generating activities almost the same amount of time throughout their lives till the retirement age.

The opportunities to combine income-generating activities with the personal life are also different for men and women as men have more opportunities than women, when necessary, to give free time to work. Housework poses an obstacle to women in that respect.

Therefore, the redistribution of housework between women and men both in terms of responsibilities and the share of time spent on it is an important prerequisite for ensuring equal opportunities for them to engage in income-generating activities.

Time budget analyses show that unpaid work is as productive as paid work and that it contributes to the well-being of households and population in general. The findings justify the necessity not only of the monetary valuation of women's housework but also of allocation of certain funds from the country's financial system for compensation of that work, in particular, for women's pensions.

## **Conclusions**

The review and assessment of the situation in the area of *Women and the Economy* identified gender imbalance that still exists in the country's economy. Despite the fact that more attention is paid in public policy and practice to the reduction of socioeconomic inequality between women and men and to the elimination of imbalances in their social statuses, nevertheless, ensuring equal opportunities for them to enjoy economic rights and the elimination of gender discrimination and segregation in the labor market and in the employment sphere remain pressing issues.

Common causes for low competitiveness and discrimination against women in the employment sphere and in the labor market are: lack of access to finance and credit, property ownership and land, and their virtual alienation from the results of the privatization conducted in the country after 1991, exclusion of women from relatively profitable sectors of the economy, and weak real social and legal protection.

The lack of sex-disaggregated statistics poses an obstacle to adequate identification of gender problems existing in the economic sphere, thereby diminishing the chances of finding effective ways and means for their solution.

Prevalent societal stereotypes in the perception of men's and women's social roles have an adverse impact on the structure of the economy, reduce the latter's potential, reproduce gender imbalances and strengthen hidden discrimination.

## Recommendations

### To the RoA Government:

- *Develop and implement measures that will in practice guarantee equal rights for women and men in obtaining bank loans and credits and encourage financial institutions that give women soft loans or provide services to for-profit small and medium-sized enterprises headed by women;*
- *Develop and implement social and economic measures aimed at improving the innovations introduction policy and at priority development of the sectors that will help to most effectively meet the challenges of economic development;*
- *Carry out the policy of special programs on fostering women's entrepreneurship and on creating subsidiary enterprises intended for the employment of women, including cottage industry and work from home with the use of information technologies.*

### To the RoA Ministry of Economy:

- *take measures to expand provision of advice and business and educational programs to women aimed at improving their economic and legal literacy and at raising women's awareness of their economic rights with a view to eliminating discriminatory practices in the employment sphere and in gender-based resource allocation;*
- *take measures, including the introduction of appropriate quotas on an affirmative action principle in order to ensure adequate representation of women in the upper echelons of regulation of the economy and in the boards in the companies with State participation.*

### To Non-Governmental Organizations:

- *make proactive and systematic efforts to attract resources of the NGO sector to the formulation of economic development strategies, particularly in rural areas at a community level;*
- *strengthen the drawing up and implementation of professional retraining programs for women, of teaching them new technologies, marketing, financial management and legal aspects of entrepreneurship;*
- *implement programs aimed at raising women's awareness of economic rights, specifically targeting women in remote rural areas;*
- *draw up and implement programs to increase the participation of women in production cooperatives and to foster the building of their organizational skills and the strengthening of the leadership potential.*

## Women and health

As regards the *Women and Health* area of concern, the Beijing Platform for Action affirmed the right of women to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health throughout their life on an equal basis with men. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life.

Considering health as a state of complete physical and mental well-being determined by the social, political and economic context of women's lives, as well as by biology, the Beijing Platform for Action identified strategic objectives and specific activities of governments to achieve them.

The Millennium Declaration, which is a global covenant of the international community on basic measures to ensure the security and stability of further development of the humankind, set specific goals for improving health of the population. Since long and healthy life is a key factor in human development, three out of eight Millennium Development Goals address health issues. Those are "Reduce child mortality," "Improve maternal health" and "Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases."

The programmatic documents of the 23<sup>rd</sup> UN General Assembly Special Session that review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including in health area, recognized that "the goals set and commitments made in the Platform for Action have not been fully achieved and implemented." The gap between and within rich and poor countries with respect to infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, as well as with respect to measures addressing the health of women and girls, given their special vulnerability regarding sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, remains unacceptable.

Cardio-vascular, pulmonary and degenerative diseases remain among the major causes of mortality and morbidity among women.

"The absence of a holistic approach to health and health care for women and girls ... has constrained progress."

The global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009 became one of the obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It led to a reduction in social spending in many countries, including Armenia. In 2010, the World Health Organization adopted the *Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health*, which outlined urgent measures on increasing funding, strengthening policy and improving services to provide appropriate services for women and children.



## I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

In the years following the Beijing Conference Armenia took certain measures to ensure gender equality in health area.

Adopted in 1996, the RoA *Law On Medical Assistance and Services* guarantees “the right of everyone to medical assistance and services regardless of ethnicity, race, sex, language, religion, age, health status, political or other opinion, social origin, property or other status.”

Initiated in 1996 in accordance with the approved Concept Paper and the Program of reform and development of healthcare for 1996-2000, the fundamental restructuring of the healthcare system was undertaken taking into account specific needs of women related to their reproductive function. When the sector was made to provide fee-based services, childbirth and provision of medical services to children were included in the package of free services guaranteed by the State. In the process of optimization the hospitals retained the departments that provided obstetric services.

The healthcare development policy, which aims at ensuring affordable quality health-care to all citizens, is reflected in the *Concept Paper for improving the quality of medical care provided to the population and the control* (2002) and in the *Strategies and programs for the RoA primary health in 2003-2008 and in 2008-2013* adopted by the RoA Government.

Paying particular attention to maternal and child health protection, Armenia adopted the RoA *Law On Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights* (2002), the *National Action Plan to improve reproductive health in 2007-2015*, the *Strategy for maternal and child health protection in 2003-2015*, the *National Strategy for children’s and adolescents’ health and development* (2009) and the *Action Plan for 2010-2015* and approved the *Strategic Program for protection of the rights of the child for 2013-2016*.

As a result of the measures taken, Armenia has made some progress in achieving the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals, viz. to reduce by 2015 by two thirds the under-five mortality rate and to reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.

According to the Ministry of Health, in recent years, a positive dynamic in maternal and child mortality indicators is particularly noticeable.

The maternal mortality ratio decreased from 52.5 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 19.2 in 2013. The average maternal mortality ratio was 23.2 pro mille in 2008-2010 and 19.2 pro mille in 2011-2013, i.e. it was reduced by 17%.

Infant mortality decreased over the same period from 18.5 to 9.8 per 1,000 live births<sup>102</sup>.

However, the lack of adequate State funding for health care and the expansion of fee-based services have led to a decrease in the quality and accessibility of primary health care

102 <http://www.moh.am/uploadfiles/jox.pdf>

and to increased morbidity and mortality of women from cardiovascular diseases and malignant diseases.

## **II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Women and Health***

The purpose of this review is to analyze the situation in the healthcare system of Armenia to propose recommendation on achieving the following strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action:

- *Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care*
- *Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health*
- *Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues*
- *Promote research and disseminate information on women's health*
- *Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.*

### **Strategic objective 1. Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care**

With a view to ensuring access to health services efforts are still underway to optimize the sector, to modernize and develop a network of healthcare institutions, in particular in the country's regions. Hospitals having many specialized departments operate in all 10 regions of the country. They have modern equipment and adequate human resources to provide quality medical assistance.

The country has 127 hospitals with 40.4 beds per 10,000 population, and 513 outpatient clinics. Over the past 3 years, the number of antenatal clinics, outpatient clinics for children and facilities providing ambulatory care and outpatient services to women and children has increased from 329 to 375. Provision of hospital beds for pregnant and parturient women at the beginning of 2013 was 15.9 per 10,000 women of childbearing age.

Armenia ranks above average by the number of doctors per capita in comparison with the CIS countries. The number of doctors is 42.7 per 10,000 population<sup>103</sup>.

Despite the introduction of the family doctor institution as a result of the implementation of the *Strategy for Primary Health Care for 2008-2012* in the rural regions of the coun-

103 Statistical Yearbook 2013, National Statistical Service of RA. <http://armstat.am/file/doc/99477323.pdf>

try, nevertheless, a significant difference between the level of health care in the capital and other regions of the country still remains.

48% of specialized high-tech hospitals and 71.8% of all doctors, including highly qualified ones, are concentrated in Yerevan. Not all villages are provided with facilities providing ambulatory care. Not infrequently, one family doctor serves a population of several small villages located at a distance of 10-15 km from each other. The absence of transportation between them limits women's ability to seek healthcare services, especially in winter time, because of impassable roads. In some villages there are not even first-aid medical posts and pharmacies.

A serious problem remains limited financial accessibility to health services, first of all for women because they incur higher healthcare-related costs than men. Women are more likely to use health services due to biological characteristics and due to the fact that they live longer (average life expectancy for women is 78 years and for men it is 72 years). In old age the need for health care increases, while the income of women in the country is 63 % of the income of men<sup>104</sup>, women are more likely not to work or to work part-time.

The high cost of health care relative to the population's average income level and the requirement to make a payment at the time of getting medical assistance is a major obstacle for enjoyment of the right to receive adequate medical care.

The introduction in 2011 of the co-payments system into emergency and gynecological departments of hospitals followed by the introduction of it into oncology services has led to higher prices and reduced their availability to general public. The results of studies<sup>105</sup> indicate that while 19.2% of those who needed it did not turn for medical assistance in 2009 because they could not afford it, their percentage grew to 35.2% in 2012, with 51.7% in the group with the lowest income and 23.6% in the group with the highest income not turning for medical assistance.

The study to assess the social impact of the co-payments<sup>106</sup> found that under the current system of budget funding within the framework of the system of services commissioned and paid for by the State the introduced system of co-payments does not ensure a principle of social justice. The survey results indicate that slightly less than 20% of the poorest and 13% of the richest patients benefited from free medical care. The poorest constitute 24.0% and the richest 16.0% of the patients who made a co-payment for Government-subsidized medical treatment. Almost 40.0% of the poorest and of the poor patients paid fully for their treatment, with the average size of co-payment exceeding more

104 *Women and Men in Armenia*. Statistical booklet. National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2012.

105 *Evaluation of the health care system in the Republic of Armenia*. 2012. National Institute of Health. RoA Ministry of Health (in Armenian)

106 *Social impact assessment of the co-payments system*. Analytical Report. 2013. Center for Economic Development and Research (in Armenian)

than twice the average per capita income. Women accounted for 58.0% of all healthcare users and 60.0% of the recipients of free medical care.

A reduced access to general health services has had a negative impact on a health status of the population. As compared to 2010, the mortality rate in 2012 increased from 8.57 to 9.13 per 100,000 population.

Leading causes of death for both women and men are circulatory diseases and malignant neoplasms. ***Women’s mortality from malignant neoplasms in the last three years has increased from 143 to 146 cases per 10,000 population***<sup>107</sup>.

Oncological diseases are most prevalent among women of reproductive age: 63.7% of all patients with malignant neoplasms are in the 20-40 age group<sup>108</sup> with prevalence of breast cancer and cervical cancer.

The situation with timely detection of malignant neoplasms has been deteriorating<sup>109</sup>.

Year	% Detection rate by stage of disease		
	I and II	III	IV
2003	44	26	30
2011	42	18	40

Over the period from 2003 to 2011 there was a 10% increase in the number of patients who had been diagnosed with malignant at stage IV.

Despite the fact that in recent years the technical capabilities of mammograms have improved and non-governmental organizations together with governmental bodies have made educational efforts for breast cancer prevention, however, according to the 2012 data, 85.0% of women have never undergone mammography screening. In the last 3 years only 4.8% of women underwent mammography screening, with 60.0% of them paying a fee<sup>110</sup>. ***The problem of timely detection and quality treatment of oncological diseases among women continues to be one of the most pressing public health problems.***

In March 2011, the Government of Armenia approved the strategic document *National Action Plans for the three diseases that are leading causes of death: circulatory system (cardiovascular system), malignant neoplasms and diabetes*, providing a whole range of preventive measures for at-risk groups to prevent and detect, in particular, cancer patients at early stages of diseases and to organize timely and effective treatment. It is also planned to modernize the Oncological Service, to equip it with modern medical-diagnostic equipment, and train relevant specialists, including specialists in using radioisotopes for medical treatment.

107 *Statistical Yearbook 2012*, RoA National Statistical Service.

108 *Women and Men in Armenia*. Statistical booklet. National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2012.

109 *Evaluation of the healthcare system of the Republic of Armenia*. 2012, National Institute of Health Care (in Armenian).

110 *Ibid*.

Traditionally, mothers and children receive special attention in Armenia. In order to provide affordable, really free delivery the Government approved in July 2008 the State Program of vouchers for free deliver (allocating an additional 1 million drams from the State budget for its implementation) and a certification program of children up to 7 years of age (providing free full-fledged medical assistance in hospitals). Effective implementation of these projects benefited from active cooperation between the RoA Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations that made a certain contribution to raising public awareness about the projects and to monitoring their implementation.

Maternal and infant mortality, which are important indicators of women's health status in Armenia, are below averages for the CIS countries but exceed the EU average almost twice.

Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births<sup>111</sup>

	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Maternal mortality</b>	8.9	13.8	18.8	19.2

Infant and child mortality rates per 10,000 live births (*ppm*)<sup>112</sup>

	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Mortality of children 0-1 years</b>	11.3	11.6	10.7	9.8
<b>Mortality of children 0-4 years</b>	13.5	13.7	12.1	11.1

Abortions remain an important factor that affects women's reproductive health. Even though from 2009 on there has been a trend of somewhat declining abortion incidence (from 13.8 to 12.0 per 1,000 women of childbearing age)<sup>113</sup>, abortions are still widely used as a method to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Only 20% of women use modern hormonal contraceptives<sup>114</sup>.

Sex-selective abortions are an urgent problem for Armenia. According to a study conducted by the Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2011<sup>115</sup>, over the past 20 years in this country the sex ratios at birth differs significantly from the biologically determined accepted norm.

The statistical data analysis shows that while in the case of the first child the male-to-

111 <http://www.moh.am/uploadfiles/jox.pdf>

112 Ibid.

113 Statistical Yearbook 2012. RoA National Statistical Service.

114 *Statistical Yearbook: Indicators*. National Information and Analytical Centre of the National Institute of Public Health of the RoA Ministry of Health, 2012 (in Armenian).

115 [http://www.unfpa.am/sites/default/files/Sex-selective\\_abortions\\_report\\_Arm.pdf](http://www.unfpa.am/sites/default/files/Sex-selective_abortions_report_Arm.pdf)

female sex ratio at birth is 1.04-1.07 (which corresponds to the established biologically determined average value (1.02-1.06), in the case of the second child the tendency of this coefficient to increase (1.08-1.13) is noticeable, whereas in the case of the third and fourth child the ratio is clearly very high at 1.6-1.7.

### **Strategic objective 2. *Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health***

The study of women's reproductive health indicates that its further improvement depends not so much on the state of the country's healthcare system as on the overall health status of women and on their well-being, on social conditions, nutritious food, healthy lifestyle and sex education. The solution of those problems is possible only through combining efforts of public authorities and civil society institutions for the implementation of both formal and informal educational programs.

In the course of the implementation of the *2007-2015 National Programme for improvement of reproductive health* the RoA Ministry of Health carried out projects to improve knowledge of health professionals in outpatient and ambulatory care facilities and in antenatal clinics on provision of effective perinatal care, early detection of malformations and modern approaches to prevent pregnancy complications. Methodological recommendations were given and specialists were trained to carry out information and educational programs in family planning services.

Educational programs are regularly aired on TV channels aiming to improve women's knowledge about their health, including reproductive health, about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, proper diet, exercise, and harmful addictions. Also aired are programs of sex education for young people and discussions of domestic violence issues are organized. Educational programs aim at helping women and young girls realize that they are responsible for their own health.

The country's Ministry of Health conducts periodic checkups of the population; from March 8 to April 7 each year it conducts a campaign of free counseling and treatment of women in the country's all outpatient and ambulatory care facilities. Mobile teams are set up composed of qualified specialists from leading hospitals of Yerevan equipped with portable diagnostic equipment. The teams conduct medical examinations and provide necessary assistance to the population in different regions of the country. In particular, they do mammography screening of women. Since 2005, compulsory medical examinations of 15-year-old girls are conducted.

At the same time it has been found that most women do not exhibit sufficiently responsible attitudes to their health, and have not yet developed a routine of undergoing medical examination for prevention purpose and of visiting an obstetrician-gynecologist.



**Strategic Objective 3: Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues**

HIV infection, which is spreading in Armenia, poses a growing threat to women of reproductive age. According to the National Center for AIDS Prevention<sup>116</sup>, as of May 1, 2014, there were 1,730 officially registered HIV-infected persons in Armenia, including 524 women and 36 children. 897 infected persons were diagnosed with AIDS. HIV-infection spreads at a higher rate among women than among men: over the past 5 years, the percentage of women in the total number of infected people has increased from 24.0% to 30.0%. The maximum number (371 cases) of new HIV infections per year was registered in 2013. 98.5% of women are infected through sexual contact. According to the estimates, there are about 3,700 HIV-positive persons in Armenia. The main vulnerable group is migrant workers who in 2012 accounted for more than 60.0% of those infected.

In the National Center for AIDS Prevention there are procedure rooms for anonymous testing. Almost all pregnant women are screened for HIV infection. As a result, from 2007 on there have been no cases of transmission of HIV-infected mothers to children.

The *2013-2016 National Programme for HIV/AIDS Prevention* and the priority list of measures for the Programme implementation include special measures to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS among women and youth.

As one of the at-risk groups in terms of spreading sexually transmitted infections, victims of violence and trafficking are included in the list of recipients of free medical assistance within the framework of the services commissioned by the State.

Non-governmental organizations are actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of the *National Programme for HIV/AIDS Prevention*. The NGOs in this sphere work with all vulnerable, marginal at-risk groups and provide psychological and legal assistance and support for care of HIV-positive people.

**Strategic Objective 4: Promote research and disseminate information on women's health**

The healthcare system has sufficient technical and human resources to conduct the research needed for making well-balanced, effective programs and policies in the field of women's health.

Alongside the provision of medical services, 17 specialized medical centers and institutions of the country undertake also research, with three centers focusing on reproductive health.

471 PhD and 179 Doctors of Medical Sciences work in this sphere. Over 20% of those engaged in research are young scientists. In 2013, a competition was held for the *Program*

<sup>116</sup> <http://www.armmaids.am/>

to promote young scientists' research. On 1 January 2014, young women constituted 58.2% of 5,492 students in medical universities.

Training of scientists is one of the priorities of Yerevan State Medical University and research institutions of in health sector. With limited public funding allocated to science (merely 0.25-0.3% of GDP) in the form of core funding programs aimed at preservation and development of scientific and technological infrastructure, the funding provided to Yerevan State Medical University increased from 110 million AMD in 2008 to 210 million AMD in 2013<sup>117</sup>.

However, given country's limited budget the public funding for research and development projects does not cover all the costs of carrying out the necessary research aimed at introducing systems for the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic and other criteria, which is essential for planning and designing development programs and for monitoring and evaluating of current policies.

Even though the gender component is analyzed to some extent, the databank gets sex- and age-disaggregated data on various diseases and the population's needs in medical research and treatment are identified, nevertheless the targeted programs to study problems associated with women's overall health and to identify their needs for healthcare services have not been conducted.

The Beijing Platform for Action puts forth the task "to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the health professions, including researchers and scientists."

Despite the fact that 76.0% of all physicians and 98.0% of nurses in Armenia's health-care system are women, they do not hold leadership positions and are virtually excluded from direct participation in the governance of the sector.

All four Deputy Ministers of Health are men; women head two of 5 Directorates of the Ministry, even though they account for 51.0% of the Ministry's employees. Only in 3 out of 10 country's regions women head Health Departments. Women make up about 40.0% of the directors of the facilities that provide primary health care, and among heads of major hospitals and medical centers there are only 2 women in Yerevan and 3 in the regions.

Health sector workers' salaries are extremely low, especially in the facilities providing outpatient and ambulatory care, where the vast majority of staff members are women.

Non-governmental organizations play an active role in solving the problems of health sector. They implement information, educational and research programs for various segments of the population, conduct monitoring to evaluate the results of the projects carried out in health sector and facilitate identification of pressing problems of the sector. Due to coordinated efforts of many organizations they make an impact on policies carried out in health sector.

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117 [http://www.ysmu.am/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=578&Itemid=623&lang=am](http://www.ysmu.am/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=578&Itemid=623&lang=am)

### **Strategic Objective 5: Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health**

Public funding for health care in Armenia in recent years has been in the range of 1.4-1.65% of GDP. Furthermore, the Government plans to reduce funding allocated to the sector over a 2-year period to 1.38% in 2014 and to 1.31% in 2015<sup>118</sup>. The allocations for healthcare declined in the structure of the Armenia's State budget from 6.5% in 2012 to 6.0% in 2013.

In 2011, the RoA Government made a decision to introduce the co-payments system to compensate for the underfunding of health sector by the State. The new system aimed to legalize informal payments existing in the sector, to reduce the share of the shadow economy and to provide health-care institutions with compensation equivalent to the real cost of the medical services that they provide.

The studies of social consequences of the introduction of the co-payments system<sup>119</sup> indicate that that this measure rather than solving the problem of informal payments resulted in less accessibility of health care for the population due to a sharp rise in the cost of medical services because now clients have to make "formal" payments for services at the time of their provision.

In March 2014, the Government approved the *Armenia Development Strategy for 2014-2025*, which plans further reform and development of health sector with a view to improving health outcomes through improving quality and accessibility of health services. It is planned to increase the funding allocated to the sector to 1.8% of the GDP in 2017 and to 2.7% by 2025.

Health insurance is a form of social protection of citizens. However, it is not widespread in Armenia despite numerous discussions of the need for its introduction.

## **Conclusions**

Certain results have been achieved in the provision of primary health care in rural areas due to the measures taken by the Armenian Government to introduce the institution of family doctor. Consistent and energetic efforts are made to expand and modernize medical facilities in the country's regions.

However, the problem of accessibility of general health care for women throughout their lives has not been solved. Measures taken by the Armenia Government to ensure

118 14 June 2012 RoA Government Decree *On Approval of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for 2013-2015*

119 *Social impact assessment of the co-co-payments system*. Analytical Report. 2013. Center for Economic Development and Research (in Armenian).

women's right to affordable quality health care have mainly aimed at improving availability and quality of services for specific needs of women related to their reproductive functions.

The programs that are being implemented to improve women's reproductive health, the educational programs to increase knowledge about reproductive health and measures for prevention of various diseases do not have a significant impact so as to improve reproductive health and reduce incidence of women's morbidity. Of particular concern is a steady increase in women's morbidity and mortality, especially of childbearing age, from oncological diseases associated with a low level of prevention and of timely diagnosis of diseases.

Despite measures taken to prevent the spread of HIV infection, the growth rate of morbidity among women increases every year, which is mainly related to labor migration of men.

Given a very low level of public funding for healthcare system, the introduction of co-payments is an attempt to shift the burden of financing State programs to the shoulders of the already hardly solvent population, which resulted in less accessible general health services for women and in deterioration of their overall health status.

## Recommendations

### To the RoA National Assembly:

- expedite the adoption of the RoA Law On Compulsory Medical Insurance

### To the RoA Government:

- develop mechanisms for more effective use of public funds allocated for ensuring accessibility medical services for vulnerable social groups, including women;
- increase funding for health sector in the RoA Law On State Budget, bringing it to 3.0% of GDP in 2015 followed by a gradual increase up to 5% of GDP, as the benchmark recommended by the World Health Organization to ensure the proper functioning of the sector;
- increase funding aimed at strengthening and development of outpatient and ambulatory services and at securing decent wages for medical personnel, including in the primary health care system;
- implement policies for medical staff training taking into account **real needs** of the sector and **centralized management** of human resources aimed at leveling the imbalance in the availability of skilled medical personnel in urban and rural areas;
- take measures to increase representation of women in senior positions in the sector at all levels of decision-making.

**To the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia:**

- *take measures to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Programs for combating malignant diseases by planning, within the framework of the services commissioned by the State, periodic medical examination of women with a view to preventing and identifying neoplasms at early stages and conduct periodic monitoring of the implementation the National Programs for combating malignant diseases;*
- *take measures to expand collection of sex-disaggregated data necessary for the development, planning, monitoring and evaluation of healthcare sector policies;*
- *expand educational programs for raising women's and girls' awareness that they are responsible for their own health;*
- *step up efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and prevention of reproductive health problem, paying special attention to raising awareness of young people about family planning and demographic consequences of sex-selective abortions;*
- *make (together with the NGO sector) a gender analysis of policies and programs undertaken to promote health and of research on women's health issues, identify socioeconomic causes underlying problems with women's health;*
- *pay particular attention to work with groups of high risk of spreading infection, including among potential labor migrants and their families;*
- *continue (jointly with NGOs) implementation of awareness-raising and educational programs on the situation with and problems of the spread of HIV/AIDS infection in Armenia and on its impact on women, to raise awareness of men and women, young people on measures to prevent the disease ;*
- *engage HIV-infected women and their families actively in decision-making relating to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.*

## Violence against Women

The Beijing Declaration affirms that the rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and freedoms, while the Platform for Action considers violence against women as a critical area of concern and the solution of the problem of violence as a prerequisite for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

The Beijing Platform for Action states that “Acts or threats of violence, whether occurring within the home or in the community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, instill fear and insecurity in women’s lives and ... limit their access to resources and basic activities.” Violence and cruelty have a devastating effect on the individual, family, society and the country and limit women’s ability to care for themselves and their children.

The program documents adopted during the post-Beijing process “Beijing+5”, “Beijing+10” and “Beijing+15” as well as the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2000, the 49<sup>th</sup> and the 54<sup>th</sup> sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2005 and 2010 respectively reaffirmed the approach that regards gender-based violence as an obstacle to the achievement of equality and progress and noted that the development of a comprehensive approach to eliminate violence in the family, society and the State is not only a necessity but also an attainable goal.

The UN *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* emphasizes that “States should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination. States should pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women.”

The Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2013 reaffirmed that “gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Elimination of violence against women and girls is an imperative in terms of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Violence threatens the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; eliminating violence and ensuring gender equality remain a priority in the drawing up of the post-2015 development agenda.

### I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

In the years following the Beijing Conference the Armenian Government undertook some action to eliminate violence as a discriminatory phenomenon that leads to social exclusion. The *National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women’s Status and*



*Enhancement of Their Role in the Society for the Period 1998-2000 in the Republic of Armenia* was adopted, which contained recommendations to combat violence against women. The problem of violence has been voiced and has become the subject of public discussions.

Combating violence against women has been identified in the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in the Society for the Period 2004-2010* as one of the State policy priorities. The RoA *Law on Social Assistance*, which was adopted in 2005, outlined specific mechanisms of support to persons who have been subjected to violence by the State.

Armenia is integrated into the international movement against violence. Campaigns *Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence* are held annually with active involvement of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations.

In 2006, the RoA Government acceded to the document for carrying out a campaign against gender-based violence adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Within the framework of that document the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs developed and implemented an Action Plan, which includes a series of activities such as conducting round tables, meetings with the NGO sector and interested international organizations, distribution of publications, booklets and posters and posting information on the Internet.

In May 2008, a conference was held to outline further measures to be taken by the country's Government and civil society to eliminate all forms of violence.

In 2008-2009, the RoA National Statistical Service conducted the first nationwide survey on domestic violence, the results of which laid the groundwork for taking comprehensive follow-up measures to combat this phenomenon.

In 2011, the RoA Government approved the *National Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence* (which set out the overall strategies and priority directions for State policies) and the *2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence*.

From 2002 on, Armenia doubled its efforts to combat trafficking. In 2003, the country ratified the UN *Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) and Protocols thereto – the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air* and the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*.

The Armenian Government set up an inter-agency committee and approved the *Concept Paper on prevention of illegal transportation of people from Armenia, human exploitation and trading* and implemented four National Action Plans arising out of it for the period from 2004 to 2015. The National Action Plans aimed at studying the situation with trafficking, at creating and improving the legislative framework, which is in line

with international norms and which includes victim assistance and penalties for trafficking in persons.

However, despite measures taken by the State, violence against women remains as does the low level of public awareness of gender-based violence. Stereotypical attitudes on the part of the society towards the victims of domestic violence and trafficking and the underestimation of the impact of violence and trafficking on all spheres of public life as well as on moral and values of the Armenian society still exist.

## **II. Review and assessment of the implementation of the strategic directions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the area of concern *Violence against Women***

The review and assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action on prevention of violence against women have addressed the following strategic objectives:

- *Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women*
- *Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures*
- *Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.*

### **Strategic Objective 1: Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women**

Activities of the Armenian Government on prevention and elimination of violence against women focused on three main objectives, *viz.* prevention of gender-based violence, protection and assistance to victims of violence and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women.

In 2010, an Inter-Agency Commission on combating gender-based violence was established in the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs by the Government decree. The Commission periodically reviews issues related to elimination of violence and ensures collection and sharing of information on the activities undertaken in the country.

The Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2008-2012 included issues of violence prevention and social support to victims of violence and their family members. The medium-term State program *Establishment of crisis centers for victims of violence* was implemented in 2009-2011.

From 2008 on, the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was also tasked with social protection of victims of violence. Funding is allocated from the RoA State Budget for provision of services to victims of violence.

The *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, which was approved by the RoA Government in 2010, sets prevention of trafficking and violence against women as one of the priorities.

Educational programs were conducted within the framework of the *National Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence* to increase social workers', doctors' and law-enforcement officials' knowledge and raise their awareness of gender-based violence.

In line with the forward-looking strategies and principles of the UN *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* the RoA Government implemented programs aimed to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination, prevent such form of violence as trafficking in persons, improve the legislative framework, which ensures protection to women victims of violence, and improve the system of social and psychological rehabilitation and consultative support provided to those victims by social services.

In 2008, a course in gender education was introduced into professional development programs taught to civil servants by the National Institute of the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Issues of violence are addressed within the framework of that module.

In 2011, the RoA Government approved the *National Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence* (which sets out the overall strategies and priority directions for State policies) and the *2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence*.

Measures have been taken to address through legislation 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*. Articles were included into the revised RoA Criminal Code that contain more severe punishment for organizing illegal and irregular migration for labor and other forms of exploitation

Non-governmental organizations made efforts to raise public awareness about the problems of violence against women and to shape the climate of non-tolerance to all manifestations of violence.

Within the framework of the UN Population Fund's Project *Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus* International Center for Human Development, Armenian Association of Women with University Education and Research Association of Medical Students of Armenia implemented a three-year program aimed at eliminating gender-based violence and meeting State obligations to eliminate gender discrimination and to prevent gender-based violence in the country.

The project (which included 5 main components: a study of gender violence issues, measures to raise public awareness, assistance to improve legislation and policy, the development of effective national machinery, and development and coordination of regional cooperation) made it possible to conduct seminars and meetings in all regions of the coun-

try to raise awareness of various population groups such as men and women, schoolteachers and university professors, doctors, journalists, and secondary school and university students on the issues of gender discrimination and gender-based violence and on social consequences of family violence.

Due to the implementation of the project the issue of violence has become an actively discussed topic in the Armenian society, the facts of domestic violence have been receiving increasing media attention and the subject is no longer a taboo and an exclusively family affair.

In order to attract public attention to domestic violence issue non-governmental organizations carry out various activities, organize photo exhibitions, distribute leaflets and flyers and produce video clips such as *No to Family Violence*, *A strong man does not intimidate a woman* and *The Zone of Silence*.

Women's NGOs are actively involved in conducting events on the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*. With the support from the UN and other international organizations, the NGO sector together with government agencies annually conducts awareness-raising campaign *Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence*.

Crisis centers, *Women's Rights Center*, *Family Center*, *Hope*, *Center for mothers and children*, *Women's Resource Centre* and *House Armenia* NGOs, *Mothers' Armenia* charity, *Coalition Against violence against women*, *Women's Support Center* of the Tufenkian Foundation implement programs to protect and assist victims of violence. These organizations operate hotlines, helplines and shelters. Victims are given legal, psychological, medical, counseling and rehabilitation services; information, analytical and educational projects are implemented.

The country's legislation does not differentiate between types of violence on the basis of gender. So far, the *Law On domestic violence* has not been adopted, even though it could provide guarantees for safety of women and children in the family and in the society.

The measures that have been taken in recent years to draw public attention to the existing problem of domestic violence and to make domestic violence unacceptable for the society are not efficient enough yet.

Posts in social networks and the articles circulated by some media outlets in August and September 2013 that sought to discredit gender ideology and that targeted the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* contained also opposition to the RoA draft *Law On domestic violence*. Patriarchal stereotypes about the role of women in the society and in the family are still quite influential in the society. An active propaganda campaign was launched to promote the idea that gender equality will lead to the destruction of national values and of the traditional Armenian family, thereby questioning the advisability of the adoption of the RoA *Law On domestic violence*.

The ability to eliminate psychological, physical, economic and domestic violence is

predicated on further improvement of the regulatory and legal framework as well as on coordination of efforts of Government agencies and non-governmental organizations aimed to raise awareness of the general public.

**Strategic Objective 2: *Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures***

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that implementation of effective policies to combat violence against women requires reliable information on the causes, forms and consequences of violence as well as on its prevalence. Systematic and quality collection of data provides the foundation for the development of specific programs to eliminate violence and evaluate effectiveness of the measures taken. The Platform for Action recommends promoting research and collecting data to obtain requisite information using the potential of research institutions, women's and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In recent years, Armenia has intensified studies of the situation with violence. 4 studies on domestic violence were carried out. In 2006, the United Nations Population Fund conducted research on Family<sup>120</sup>. In 2007, the **Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis** produced the study *Domestic Violence and Abuse of Women in Armenia*. In 2008, *Amnesty International* published findings of its study *Silence does not bring honor*.

Despite some differences in the results of those studies, they all discovered that 60% of the respondents believed that the problem of domestic violence against women does exist.

In recent years, the State Statistical Service of Armenia, with the participation of non-governmental organizations conducted four studies on violence against women in the family and at work.

The results of the survey conducted in 2008-2009 by the RoA National Statistical Service together with the United Nations Population Fund found that 25.0% of women experience psychological abuse by their partners, 8.9% - physical, 3.3% - sexual and 9.5% - physical or sexual abuse. The study found that 61.0% of women experience controlling behavior.

A comparative analysis by age group of women subjected to any of the three types of violence (*viz.* psychological, physical or sexual) revealed that women in age groups 35-44 and 45-59 are the most vulnerable to violence.

2.3% of women aged 20-24, 10.5% of women aged 35-44 and 9.9% of women aged 45-59 are subjected to physical violence.

7.9% of women aged 20-24, 29.1% of women aged 35-44 and 27.4% of women aged 45-59 are subjected to psychological abuse..

<sup>120</sup> [http://www.un.am/am/Publications\\_UNFPA](http://www.un.am/am/Publications_UNFPA)



5.7% of women aged 35-44 and 2.3% and 2.6% of women in the age groups 25-35 and 45-59 respectively are subjected to sexual violence.

28.0% of the respondents indicated poor upbringing of men to be the main cause of domestic violence against women, 27.0% believe morbid jealousy is the main cause and 14.0% impunity for perpetrators. ***It is noteworthy that 14.0% believe “wrong behavior” of women is the cause, while only 4.0% of the respondents pointed out family traditions as a cause of violence.*** In 35.0% of cases women put up with violence as they do not see any way out and do not take any measures to protect themselves.

Law-enforcement agencies also do registration of instances of violence. According to the police data, 766 cases of violence were registered in Armenia in 2012, of which 621 against women and 145 against men. Also registered were 15 cases of violence against minors<sup>121</sup>.

### ***Strategic Objective 3: Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking***

The fight against trafficking has intensified in the country since 2002. The Government set up an inter-agency committee and approved the *Concept Paper on prevention of illegal transportation of people from Armenia, human exploitation and trading*.

In line with the Concept Paper three National Action Plans on prevention of illegal transportation and trafficking of people for purposes of exploitation were drawn up and implemented in 2004-2006, 2007-2009 and 2010-2013.

In February 2013, the RoA Government approved the fourth, *2013-2015 National Action Plan on struggle against exploitation of people in the Republic of Armenia*.

In order to ensure effective struggle against human trafficking the Council on trafficking was set up in 2007. Chaired by the country's Vice-Prime Minister, the Council consists of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Economy, Finance, Education and Science, Labor and Social Affairs, Health, Sports and Youth Affairs, of the Attorney General, Director of the National Security Service under the Government of Armenia and the Head of the Police.

In 2007, structural reforms of the bodies of criminal prosecution were carried out to improve effectiveness of investigation and to further tighten control over criminal prosecution for human trafficking. The *Department for Crimes against the Individual* was established in the Office of the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Armenia.

A specialized unit was set up in the RoA Police Main Directorate to Combat Organized Crime. Investigation of criminal cases involving trafficking is done exclusively by the Office for investigation of particularly important cases of the Main Investigations Division of the RoA Police.

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121 Data announced by Police Colonel Ms Nelli Durian, Deputy Head of Third Division of the General Directorate for Criminal Investigations.



The country took measures to improve the criminal law framework for combating trafficking in persons. The amendments made to the RoA Criminal Code in the past four years, in particular the package of amendments adopted in 2011, were aimed at defining more precisely who can be considered victims of trafficking, at making penalties for human trafficking more severe in the form of imprisonment and seizure of property and exemption of victims of trafficking from criminal liability.

Armenia has acceded to or ratified all international and regional legal instruments for combating trafficking in human beings and has been actively becoming an integral part of the international struggle against this phenomenon.

In 2008, the RoA Government approved the Procedure for the operation of the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking, which regulates interaction between the Government and local authorities. According to the Referral Mechanism, provision of medical and psychological assistance, provision of asylum, further rehabilitation and social reintegration of trafficking victims is to be ensured by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in cooperation with non-governmental organizations that provide that kind of services and partly funded from the State budget.

Attaching great importance to trafficking prevention measures, the law-enforcement bodies together with NGOs have been making more efforts to raise public awareness, paying special attention to young people. Special courses were introduced for high school students.

The measures that have been taken resulted in better identification of trafficking victims. According to the RoA Prosecutor's Office, 13 trafficking cases were registered in 2010, 16 cases in 2011, and 19 cases in 2012. In most cases those were sex and labor trafficking victims who had been trafficked to the UAE, Turkey and Russia. In 8 out of 13 cases registered in 2013 the trafficking victims were women, including two minors, one of whom was forced into prostitution and the other into begging. Official figures do not reflect real prevalence of the phenomenon in the country, especially with the growth of labor migration. In addition, victims often conceal the fact of the crime and change their testimonies under pressure from criminal groups.

The NGO sector and trade unions in Armenia are actively involved in prevention of exploitation and trafficking. Non-governmental organizations *Hope and Help*, *Democracy Today*, *AMCOR-Armenia*, *People in Need*, *Armenian Relief Society*, *World Vision Armenia* and Association of audio and video journalists working in this field have done much work to raise awareness about the problem and provide necessary advice and information as well as medical, psychological, legal and financial assistance to trafficking victims.

Within the framework of the *Strategy of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia against trafficking and forced labor in 2009-2012* informational and educational seminars were held in all regions of the country for various groups of potential labor migrants and

legal advice centers were set up and are operated by volunteers. The centers are equipped with information materials on migrants' rights and mechanisms for their protection, risks of illegal migration, and precautions to take to avoid the risk of becoming victims of trafficking and forced labor.

The issue of identifying victims of trafficking and forced labor remains a significant problem. In most cases, the victims do not apply to law enforcement agencies in order to avoid the associated formal complexities.

The non-governmental organizations that enjoy public trust make a significant contribution to solving the problem of identifying and assisting victims of trafficking.

Armenia recognizes the existing problem and is making significant efforts to streamline operations to detect and identify trafficking victims, assist them, protect and support their social reintegration. In August 2013, the RoA Police Main Directorate to Combat Organized Crime drafted the RoA *Law on identification of and support to victims of trafficking and exploitation*.

Since 2012 Armenia has intensified investigation and prosecution of cases of trafficking, strict penalties have been imposed on perpetrators who were given prison terms with no suspended sentences. Due to Government's effective efforts Armenia moved to the first group countries and is considered one of the most successful countries in terms of the fight against international trafficking.

## Conclusions

Despite measures taken by public authorities and NGOs, the specifics of the geopolitical and socioeconomic situation of the country, unemployment, forced labor migration, pressing domestic problems and economic dependence of women in the family have contributed to growth of gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls who become victims of sexual harassment at work and of forced labor exploitation.

Some progress that has been observed in the country in recent years in terms of data collection, raising public awareness of the situation with violence against women and girls and victims of trafficking and prostitution, the measures, which have been taken so far, have not been sufficient yet to the formation of zero tolerance in the society towards those phenomena. Adequate legal and social protection is not provided to victims of violence and sufficient measures are not taken yet to address the root causes of trafficking and prostitution.

No measures have been taken to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the follow-up documents that require Governments to monitor the legal system and take necessary measures against all forms of violence against women and girls. The network of support services for victims is underdeveloped in the country.

Not all regions of the country are provided with shelters for victims of domestic violence, trafficking and prostitution. Legal and social protection of victims of violence is lacking.

In the country's legislation there are no specific measures to combat all forms of violence against women. The RoA Criminal Code does not contain specific penalties and prosecution for violence against women in the family. The *Law On domestic violence* has not been adopted.

## Recommendations

### To the RoA National Assembly:

- *adopt specific legislation to combat domestic violence, which would regard violence against women and girls as a criminal offense and a civil offense subject to prosecution and punishment.*

### To the RoA Government:

- *submit the Draft RoA Law On domestic violence to the National Assembly;*
- *increase the amount of public funds allocated to expand the network of shelters and rehabilitation centers and social reintegration of victims of violence;*
- *strengthen control the implementation of the 2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence.*

### To the Inter-Agency Commission on combating gender-based violence:

- *create a reliable database on prevalence of violence against women in this country comparable to conventional international data that reflect estimated prevalence of physical violence;*
- *hear systematically at the committee meetings the reports of ministries and agencies on the implementation of activities under the annual plans of action on implementation of the 2011-2015 Strategic Action Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence;*
- *conduct systematically studies on the situation with violence against women and girls and collection of statistical data in accordance with internationally accepted standards;*
- *consider increasing funding to centers that provide assistance and rehabilitation to victims of trafficking, violence and prostitution;*
- *intensify efforts to raise awareness of various segments of the population, including potential labor migrants about likely risks of becoming trafficking victims, engaging non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the media;*

- *tighten control over the activities of agencies that arrange employment outside the country for Armenian citizens;*
- *periodically examine the situation with trafficking using the expert potential of the NGO sector.*

**To Non-Governmental Organizations:**

- *intensify efforts to raise public awareness view a view to creating a climate of non-acceptance of all forms of violence against women and children;*
- *promote close cooperation with the media, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to ensure public awareness of violence against women and children;*
- *contribute to the formation in the public mind a sense of security and confidence that punishment for violence against person is inevitable;*
- *intensify efforts aimed at identifying trafficking victims and assisting their reintegration into the society.*

## **Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that in order to design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women there should be in the public administration system *functional and effective national machinery which is the central policy-coordinating unit inside government.*

The Millennium Declaration states that in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals States should make a commitment “To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights.”<sup>122</sup> None of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved, especially mainstreaming gender into all programmes and policies, without the expert potential, resources and national machineries.

Noting that the main task of the national machinery is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas the Beijing Platform for Action outlines the necessary conditions for its effective functioning:

- Location at the highest possible level in the Government, falling under the responsibility of a Cabinet minister;
- Institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring;
- Sufficient resources in terms of budget and professional capacity;
- Opportunity to influence development of all government policies.

The Platform for Action emphasizes that Governments should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

Noting that national machineries are diverse in form, the Beijing Platform for Action at the same time states that these mechanisms are frequently hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, and insufficient support from national political leadership.

### **I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014**

In the 19 years that passed since the Beijing Conference, a number of institutional mechanisms were established on the initiative of the Armenian Government, including:

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<sup>122</sup> *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. Approved by the Resolution 55/2 adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000.

- the Division on Family, Women's and Children's Issues, which was established in the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues in 1997;
- the Women's Council, which was established under the Prime Minister's Decree in 2000 an advisory body acting on a pro bono basis;
- by the Prime Minister's Decree in 2002 the functions of a Deputy Minister of Labor & Social Issues included also coordination of activities related to women's and gender issues;
- by the 9 June 2005 RoA Prime Minister's Protocol Decision N747 in each Ministry and Agency a Deputy Minister, in each region a Deputy Regional Governor and in the city of Yerevan a Deputy Mayor was appointed a focal point for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010.

All those measures notwithstanding, the Armenian National Report in connection with the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 28 February-11 March 2005) emphasizes: "All those entities address social, healthcare and employment-related issues. *However, they do not have sufficient resources and powers to solve women's problems and to formulate and implement effective policies aimed to ensure women's and men's equal rights and equal opportunities.* Thus, a necessity arises to establish a new entity or to endow the existing entity with new powers<sup>123</sup>."

From 2005 on, the Government has addressed this issue time and again by trying to resolve it and by setting up new institutional entities:

- In 2006, the existing Child Protection Departments in Regional Governors' Offices were renamed as "Departments for Children's, Family and Women's Issues."
- In 2011, the Gender policy implementation commissions were established by the Government Decree in the Yerevan City Hall and in the country's Regional Governors' Offices; the commissions are headed by the Deputy City Mayor and the Deputy Regional Governors respectively.

In line with the Recommendations of the *UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* on Armenia's third and fourth periodic reports, a position of an Ombudsman' Adviser on issues of ensuring gender equality was established in the Office of Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman).

While the steps that have been taken reflect the political will to establish the national machinery in Armenia, nevertheless, so far the national machinery in line with the requirements spelled out in the Beijing Platform for Action has not been set up.

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123 Republic of Armenia. *National Report*. 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. New York, 28 February-11 March 2005. Yerevan, 2005, pp. 6-7 (in Armenian).



## II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*

The issue of effective mechanisms promoting the advancement of women and operating at all levels has been designated by the Beijing Platform for Action as a critical area of concern, which includes the following strategic objectives:

- *Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies*
- *Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects*
- *Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation*

### Strategic Objective 1: Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies

Within the framework of this strategic objective, it is recommended that Governments ensure that responsibility for the advancement of women is vested in the highest possible level of government and *create a national machinery for the advancement of women at the highest possible level of government.*

The national machinery should have clearly defined mandates and authority, adequate resources and the ability and competence to influence policy and formulate legislation, perform policy analysis, undertake advocacy, communication, coordination and monitoring of implementation.

In its concluding observations on all four periodic reports of Armenia the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) pointed out the absence of the national machinery in the country and called the Government's attention to the necessity of establishing it.

The issue of creating national machinery in Armenia is also reflected in the *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men* adopted in May 2013 and in the *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* approved by the Government in May 2011.

Despite the steps taken from 2005 on to create in Armenia at all levels the institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the national machinery, nevertheless, *none of the existing structures possess the necessary powers or status to act as a full-fledged national machinery.*

In 2012, the Statute of the Women's Council affiliated with the RoA Prime Minister was amended to designate the Women's Council as national machinery. However, as to its orga-

nizational form, functions and composition the Women's Council does not comply with the requirements set for the national machinery.

***That the problem of establishing national machinery has not been solved yet can to a considerable degree be accounted for by the lack of adequate understanding of the significance and essence of the "national machinery" and by the failure to clearly distinguish between national machinery and institutional mechanisms.***

The absence of the *national machinery and the lack of institutional mechanisms* in the country reduce the effectiveness of efforts made by the RoA Government to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Most of the existing institutional mechanisms entrusted with certain responsibilities for the implementation of gender policies and the promotion of gender equality do not have a clear mandate and sufficient authority to monitor, coordinate and implement the policies, and those factors hinder their effective functioning.

As they are already overburdened with main functional responsibilities, Deputy Ministers and Governors as well as other officials responsible for effective functioning of institutional mechanisms do not take necessary steps to enhance the work of the commissions and address numerous gender issues and they perceive the work of commissions on gender policy as an additional and non-mandatory burden.

The heads and members of the commissions in the Regional Governors' Offices do not have a clear idea of their powers and responsibilities and about what measures should be taken for the implementation of gender policy in their regions and for achieving gender equality. The commissions do not have specific action plans for implementation of the *State Gender Policy Concept Paper*. Systematic and consistent work is substituted with one-off events; contacts with the civil society are a mere formality and the available intellectual resources of non-governmental organizations are not made an effective use of.

Owing to the absence of a well-defined system of *training* for the officials tasked with the implementation of gender policies and of *raising* their awareness about basic domestic and international documents in this field, there is a lack of professional competence, which also leads to inefficient functioning of the existing institutional mechanisms.

Even though the commissions, which have been set up in Ministries and in Regional Governors' Offices, are by default the institutional mechanisms for implementing gender policies and advancing gender equality, in practice, however, they have not become such and many of them are inactive.

***Due to the lack of the national machinery the coordination of the existing institutional mechanisms is ineffective, strategies for integrating a gender equality perspective into political practices are not implemented fully, while gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in power and decision-making in this country are on the rise and repre-***

*sentation of women in the legislature and in bodies of local democracy continues to remain low.*

Efficient functioning of the existing structures is impeded mainly by the following factors:

- low status of the existing mechanisms in the public administration system,
- lack of coordination and of a mechanism for shared decision-making and joint activities,
- the existing institutional mechanisms tend to limit themselves to social issues,
- the staff has an extremely big burden of other functional responsibilities,
- the existing institutional mechanisms staff's lack of knowledge about gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

### **Strategic Objective 2: Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects**

The Beijing Platform for Action recommends that Governments should seek to ensure that before policy decisions are taken, an analysis of their impact on women and men, respectively, is carried out; to promote national strategies and aims on equality between women and men in order to eliminate obstacles to the exercise of women's rights and eradicate all forms of discrimination against women; to work with members of legislative bodies to promote a gender perspective in all legislation and policies; to give all ministries the mandate to review policies and programmes from a gender perspective and establish an inter-ministerial coordination structure to carry out this mandate and to monitor progress.

The Platform recommends that national machinery should *facilitate* the formulation and implementation of government policies on equality between women and men, *develop* appropriate strategies and methodologies in order to ensure mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policy-making processes, promote and establish cooperative relationships with relevant branches of government, centers for women's studies and research, academic and educational institutions, the private sector, the media, non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations, *promote* the increased participation of women as active agents of the development process, which would result in an improvement in the quality of life for all, and *provide* training and advisory assistance to government agencies in order to integrate a gender perspective in their policies and programmes.

The *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which was adopted in May 2013, introduces the concept of 'gender discrimination', regulates the issue of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in politics, public administration, labor and employment, entrepreneurship, health and education, and includes provisions for protection from gender-based discrimination and for liability for acts of discrimination.

Over the past two decades after the Beijing Conference the RoA Government, individual Ministries and Departments designed and implemented programs aimed at improving the socio-economic status of women, ensuring their rights, protection of health and protection from violence and various forms of discrimination.

Two national programs were adopted for the advancement of women and enhancement of their role in the society in 1998-2000<sup>124</sup> and 2004-2010<sup>125</sup>.

In February 2010, the RoA Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*<sup>126</sup> and on 20 May 2011 it adopted the Protocol Decree N19 On approving the ‘*Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*’<sup>127</sup>, which entails gender mainstreaming of State programs and policies.

The country’s laws and political practices have become to a greater extent based on gender mainstreaming and more in line with recognized international legal norms and European standards.

Non-governmental organizations played an important role since they used their intellectual resources and civic activities to contribute to successful implementation of many innovative initiatives and projects that aimed at achieving gender equality. That applies to the introduction of gender analysis of legislation and gender education not only in secondary schools and universities but also in the system of professional development of civil servants.

However, gender issues are for the most part neglected by Ministries as the gender approach is only slowly being introduced into their policies and practices. At the time of drawing up development programs and annual budgets Ministries do not subject them to a gender analysis that would evaluate their impact on women and men. The need of taking a gender component into consideration in all activities of this sector is not seen as particularly important. The monitoring and evaluation of the functioning of entities under their jurisdiction are conducted without taking into account the degree to which the gender component has been integrated. Effective measures are not taken to ensure gender balance in the composition of leaders in the entities under their jurisdiction.

Nor do the Commissions set up in the Regional Governors’ Offices for the implementation of gender policies and the promotion of gender equality make an analysis of the gender situation in the region, even though it is on the basis of such an analysis that the activities aimed to ensure equality between women and men should be planned.

The lack of adequate understanding of the gender situation in the regions does not allow the Commissions to clearly define their objectives in the context of implementation of the national gender policy and to make a significant impact on improving the situation in the regions.

124 <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=6730>

125 <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=38293>

126 [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf)

127 [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf)

In 2011, one year after the Armenian Government approved the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, the Armenian Association of Women with University Education conducted a study in five regions of the country with the support of the German Development Agency GIZ. The study findings demonstrated that the gender component is not implemented in the regional development programs and is not taken into account when four-year socioeconomic development programs of urban and rural communities are drawn up.

Gender education is not adequately included in the professional development courses for employees from Ministries and Regional Governors' Offices, while recommendations given during those courses do not target the specific sectors, where civil servants who take these professional development courses operate. This, in turn, is a consequence of the fact that the country's Ministries did not fully revamp their activities aimed at introducing a gender equality perspective both into their operation and into the system of professional development for their employees. Seminars that are occasionally conducted by international experts do not address the local situation and therefore are not always effective.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation**

The Beijing Platform for Action recommends the national statistical services to ensure that statistics related to individuals is collected, compiled, analyzed and presented by sex and age and reflects problems, issues and questions related to women and men in society.

It also emphasizes that the necessity to take measures with a view to improving data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including their participation in the informal sector, developing a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment, including improving data collection on the unremunerated work, improving measurements that at present underestimate women's unemployment and underemployment in the labor market as well as improving concepts and methods of data collection on the measurement of poverty among women and men, including their access to resources.

Governments are encouraged to ensure the regular production of a statistical publication on gender that presents and interprets topical data on women and men in a form suitable for a wide range of non-technical users.

In Armenia, work on inclusion of gender indicators into statistical publications as well as on collection, storage and provision of sex-disaggregated data began in 1999. The National Statistical Service of Armenia has been presenting sex-disaggregated data on an increasing number of sectors. Statistical booklet *Women and Men in Armenia* is published annually. It contains data on women's representation in power at different levels, in health care, social security and social protection, in the family and the household, education and

science, culture, sport, employment and unemployment.

However, the culture of using sex-disaggregated data as a tool to analyze the situation and identify gender issues on the part of government agencies and non-governmental organizations and the media has not been developed yet in this country. Neither is these data taken into account fully when development strategies and programs are being formulated at national, regional and local levels. Gender statistics needs further development and upgrading as well as improvement of information sources and introduction of new gender indicators.

## **Conclusions**

The structures established in Armenia do not meet the criteria set up for national machinery and institutional mechanisms.

The existing structures do not fully develop and implement the gender policies of the state, do not coordinate activities of the regional commissions, which were established, and does not evaluate their efforts aimed at achieving gender equality and at mainstreaming gender into the country's political practices and legislation and are not engaged in proactive efforts to combat discrimination.

As a result of the absence of the national machinery Armenia does not meet to the fullest extent her commitments regarding achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concerning Armenia's four periodic reports and commitments under the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*.

The integration of gender component into domestic legislation and political practices is slow and incomplete.

The process of implementation of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper* and the *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015* is not sufficiently effective.

Women's representation in the legislature and at a decision-making level in the executive branch of government and in bodies of local democracy remains low.

Coordination of activities of the existing institutional mechanisms is far from being effective.

The lack of clearly defined mandate and functions of the existing institutional mechanisms results in substitution of truly functional institutional mechanisms with imitational ones.

The absence of the national machinery impedes conducting monitoring of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of a full-fledged gender impact analysis of the draft laws to be adopted and of the development programs drawn up by the Government.



## Recommendations

### To the Administration of the RoA President:

- *consider the establishment of a commission in the Public Council under the RoA President – the Commission on gender policy and the achievement of equality of rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of the country's social and political life.*

### To the RoA National Assembly:

- *consider the possibility of establishing a subcommittee on gender equality and a gender impact analysis of legislation in the parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Rights Protection and Public Affairs;*
- *amend the RoA Law On Human Rights Ombudsman to establish a position of a Deputy RoA Human Rights Ombudsman on gender equality (instead of an adviser on women's issues);*
- *when amendments are made to the RoA Law On Local Self-Government - to recommend the establishment of Committees on gender issues and integration of a gender dimension into four-year development programs of urban and rural self-government bodies.*

### To the RoA Government:

- *establish in the RoA Government the State Council on implementation of gender policy to be headed by the RoA Prime Minister; which would become an effective model of a central unit of the national machinery and a central entity for gender policy development and implementation and for coordination of operation of all institutional mechanisms;*
- *establish a position of an Adviser to the Prime Minister on gender policies and attainment of gender equality;*
- *establish a full-time position of a Secretary of the Commission in order to ensure effective functioning of the Commissions on gender policy (which were established in Regional Governors' Offices);*
- *recommend the establishment of Commissions on gender policy and attainment of gender equality in urban bodies of local self-government, assigning the Chief of staff of a City/Town Mayor's Office to the position of the Commission Chairman;*
- *develop and introduce special training programs aimed at building skills of gender analysis and gender mainstreaming into the training system for Government officials and community employees;*
- *establish the Center for Gender Studies in the National Academy of Sciences for the addressing and monitoring a set of issues associated with mainstreaming gender into legislation and political practice.*

## Women and the Media

Including the issue of representation of women's interests in the media as one of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action indicates the important role that the media plays in supporting and promoting the idea of gender equality.

The Beijing Platform for Action states that print and electronic media do not provide a balanced picture of women's contributions to society in a changing world, that violent and degrading media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society, while programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting.

The main mission that the Beijing Platform for Action assigns to the media entails *elimination* of stereotypical attitudes that hinder the advancement of women and *promotion* of ethical principles and policies that support gender equality, which is closely linked to a gender balance in the media and with women's ability to influence decision-making in the media.

That is why the *Women and the Media* area of concern is addressed from two perspectives:

- from the perspective of portrayal of women and of reflection of women's opinion in the media; at the same time the Beijing Platform points out the necessity of *changing* the practice of negative and degrading images of women in media communications and of providing a balanced portrayal of women in the media;
- from the perspective of participation of women in the media; at the same time the Beijing Platform draws attention to the fact that while the number of women working in the media increases, nevertheless, few of them reach the level of decision-making and have influence on policies in the field of media.

The Beijing Platform for Action also emphasizes that advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network and have an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behavior. Therefore, everywhere "the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women."

In 1996, the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women<sup>128</sup> built on the recommendations made by the Beijing Platform for Action in the area of women and the media. It proposed the member States' Governments, international community and non-governmental organizations to take additional measures for the solution of that problem, including through integration of a gender perspective into all strategies and programmes in that field.

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128 Agreed Conclusions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. *Resolution 40/9. Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical area of concern: Women and the media* (1996/2). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/agreedconclusions/Agreed%20conclusions%2040th%20session.pdf>

The Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize the following five areas of gender-sensitive media policy: *Respect for the human rights of women, including freedom of expression, and the media; self-regulation, voluntary guidelines and responsiveness to civil society; the important role of media education; creating an enabling environment and women and global communications.*

Within the context of the Millennium Development Goals, the role of the media is of particular importance in terms of providing an enabling environment for achieving the targets, including in the framework of Goal 3 (“Ensure gender equality and empowerment of women”). Global Forum on Media and Gender, which was held in Bangkok (Thailand) in December 2013, became one of the first global attempts to draw public attention to issues of gender equality and empowerment of women through media<sup>129</sup>.

The key outcome of the Forum was the establishment of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender, which will carry out systematic monitoring in the *Women and the Media* critical area of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>130</sup>. The Forum put forward a proposal for the inclusion of Gender and Media in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, in particular the goal related to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.

## I. Overview of the progress made in 1995-2014

During the twenty years that have passed since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action some changes have occurred in media policies that resulted in a more active coverage of a number of issues that were previously either among taboo topics or did not receive media attention. The matter concerns here the issues of violence against women and women’s political and economic participation. In the past five years, media has shown some interest in those issues. Some progress is noticeable also as regards non-stereotypical portrayal of women in media. In recent years, the image of a successful, self-sufficient woman is no longer a rarity in the media, although the representation of the image is still often accompanied by a reproduction of stereotypical attitudes.

The RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*, which was adopted in May 2013, was the first to introduce the concept of indirect discrimination and to list its forms, including the reproduction of gender stereotypes in the media. However, the practice of sexism in the media still exists, especially with regard to women

129 *Global Forum on Media and Gender* <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/global-forum-on-media-and-gender/homepage/>

130 FIRST GLOBAL FORUM ON MEDIA AND GENDER (GFMG); *Final Statement* [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/final\\_statement\\_gfmg.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/final_statement_gfmg.pdf)

politicians, whose activities are assessed through the prism of their being women rather than of their personal qualities, including leadership potential and managerial skills. There is no control over manifestations of sexism in the media, although the country's legislation includes prohibition and liability for discrimination on the grounds of sex.

The positive changes in media coverage of gender issues occurred to a large extent due to the activities of non-governmental organizations that managed over time to establish some contacts with the media, master skills of communication with journalists and stop avoiding contacts with them.

The ability of NGOs to influence public opinion has expanded dramatically with the emergence of Internet technologies and widespread social networks that have become a convenient platform for promotion of women's NGOs activities and initiatives. This was facilitated by a fast growth of the number of Internet users in the country. From 2008 to 2012, the number of Internet users in Armenia increased from 10.0% to 47.1%<sup>131</sup>.

In recent years, the policy of the international foundations that support media has also been changed. While in the past the gender issues were virtually non-existent in the practice of the majority of the journalism programs implemented with support from various international funds, now gender equality becomes a mandatory component of a growing number of programs designed to support the media. International foundations also provide support to the development of alternative media resources aimed at encouraging gender journalism, eliminating discriminatory practices and gender stereotypes and supporting women's leadership<sup>132</sup>.

Over the past five years, the number of local and international journalism competitions on gender issues coverage or portrayal of women has increased, thereby making a positive impact on enhancing media interest in the topic.

In line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action the role of the media in advancing gender equality was taken into account in all the documents adopted in the country in the post-Beijing period<sup>133</sup>. Close cooperation with media is among the main components of the *RoA Gender Policy Concept Paper*<sup>134</sup> and is further reflected in the *RoA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015*.<sup>135</sup> The Strategic Action Plan spells out a number of measures aimed both at encouraging the journalists who cover gender issues and at providing gender education to journalists, which until recently was provided only

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131 New Caucasus Internet Stats! Caucasus Barometer <http://www.katypearce.net/new-Caucasus-internet-stats/>

132 Among the gender journalism resources that have gained a firm foothold in the past five years the *Women and Politics* newspaper supplement and WomenNet.am <http://womennet.am/> information-analytical portal (initiatives of ProMedia-Gender NGO) should be mentioned.

133 *National Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Status and Enhancement of Their Role in the Society for the Period 1998-2000 in the Republic of Armenia* and *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in the Society for the Period 2004-2010* .

134 [http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/Gender-Concept-Paper\\_Engl\\_2010.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/Gender-Concept-Paper_Engl_2010.pdf)

135 [http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015\\_Gender%20Policy\\_NAP-Eng.pdf](http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/national/2011-2015_Gender%20Policy_NAP-Eng.pdf)

through the efforts of women's NGOs as non-formal education (seminars for journalists, leadership schools, etc.)<sup>136</sup>.

The media turns to international documents on gender only in connection with some newsworthy events and limits itself to news reports<sup>137</sup>. Media do not carry out specific programs or campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and other international documents. Only women's NGOs undertake activities to implement the recommendations on the promotion of international documents, including the Beijing Platform for Action; however, their efforts in this area are not sufficient<sup>138</sup>.

Lack of public awareness, gaps in gender education of journalists and the absence of gender policy in the media emerged during the anti-gender campaign launched in the country after the entry into force of the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. Representatives of the country's media community for the most part join in with the campaign to spread misinformation about the Law, twist gender terminology and discredit activities of women's NGOs. Those journalists who defended the ideas of gender equality and spoke in support of the Law were in the minority. The sensation caused by the anti-gender campaign, on the one hand, dramatically peaked media interest in gender issues and, on the other, increased a share of not quite adequate media coverage that was reinforcing myths and stereotypes.

This leads to a conclusion that despite some progress the gender journalism has not yet become a reality in this country and that the State gender policy is not adequately reflected in the media.

## **II. Review and Assessment of the implementation of the strategic objectives and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical area of concern *Women and the Media***

The review and assessment of the situation in the Women and the Media area of concern focused on two strategic objectives:

- *Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making*

136 Since 2000, Armenian Association of Women with University Education got gender courses introduced into 15 universities in Armenia; however, a course in gender issues and journalism was introduced only in one university and as an elective course in two more universities.

137 Monitoring Report. *Coverage by Armenia media of the activities of the UN Population Fund and of its mission's thematic sectors*. Pro-Media Gender NGO. Yerevan, 2010.

138 Media attention to the Millennium Development Goals, PACE Resolutions, Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the CEDAW Convention is triggered, as a rule, by anniversaries or activities related to their adoption or review in ten or fifteen years. See Monitoring Report. *Coverage by Armenia media of the activities of the UN Population Fund and of its mission's thematic sectors*.

*in and through the media and new technologies of communication.*

- *Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.*

According to these objectives, the assessment of any actions aimed at improving the status of women in the society and at redressing a gender imbalance is directly related to how adequately and interestedly these issues are covered by the media, how widely and professionally information on this topic is presented and to what extent women can influence the policy of the media.

**Strategic Objective 1. *Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication***

To assess progress in the pursuit of this objective it is necessary to consider three components:

- *presentation of women's views and interests in the media,*
- *women's access to the professional activity in the media and their possible influence on media policy,*
- *women's access to information technology.*

The gender monitoring of the media carried out in the country shows that the world represented in the media is largely male-centered: 86.0% of people that the Armenian media tell about are men, whereas in the overall information flow only 10% of the space (number of publications) are devoted to women.

News is also male-centered: there is one female newsmaker for every 6 male newsmakers in the media. The same applies to a number of photo-visual materials as the number of pictures of men exceeds the number of pictures of women 6 times. At the same time, women constitute 70% of authors of publications, i.e. the male world is constructed by women journalists<sup>139</sup>. However, female journalists more often than male journalists turn to women for comments. The male/female ratio of authors of publications depends not only on the number of women in the staff of the media outlet but also on the topics covered. For example, the study of media coverage of gender-based violence<sup>140</sup> discovered that 90% of authors of publications on this topic are women.

On the whole, the data of various monitoring exercises conducted in the country show that women are still underrepresented in the media, that their role is distorted and that cul-

139 <http://unfpa.am/publications-women-image-in-media>

140 <http://www.genderbasedviolence.am/am/content/show/83/-/-.html>



tural foundations of gender inequality and discrimination against women are often maintained and sometimes enhanced through media.

These findings reflect a general pattern similar to the world's media and are comparable to the results of the Global Media Monitoring (GMMP 2009/2010)<sup>141</sup>, according to which men constitute 76.0% of the people about whom other people hear or read in the global news and only 13.0% of all reports are devoted to women. Women account for less than 20.0% of all experts interviewed by media, while female reporters do 37.0% of all media reports<sup>142</sup>.

Women's expert opinions are virtually not reflected in the media, and this is the result of gender-imbalanced media policy that promotes the construction of the stereotypical perception of women as individuals who are incapable to demonstrate sociopolitical activism or in any way affect the decision-making sphere. According to the 2011 monitoring, it is men who make an expert opinion: there is only one female expert per 8 male experts. The analysis of the areas in which media seeks women's expert opinion reveals the picture that researchers actually expected: women are trusted to comment on issues of family and parenting, social services, education, health, culture, arts and show business.

The determining factor in terms of seeking an expert opinion is status of the expert; since women's status lower than is that of men in almost all spheres the expert opinion of women is not predominant even in traditional "female" areas. The presence of men or women in the upper levels of power dramatically increases the attention that media pays to them. Accordingly, the percentage of women in the Parliament and at the decision-making level in the executive branch of power correlates with their representation in the media. The results of earlier studies of representation of women's expert opinion in the media conducted in 2005<sup>143</sup> as well as the findings of the most recent monitoring conducted in 2014<sup>144</sup> show that representation of women's expert opinions in media is virtually not changed, remaining at the level of 14.0-16.0%.

The analysis of the topics related to gender issues reveals prevalence of information messages and not only in news agencies but also in the press. This suggests that reporters have not properly mastered the subject to be able to analyze it. The appearance of materials on gender theme is mainly due to newsworthy events staged for the most part by women's organizations. Representatives of women's organizations are the main experts who are approached by the media for comments on gender issues.

As evidenced by real life, the PR component of women's NGOs increases over time but

141 Global Media Monitoring started in 1995 on the eve of the Beijing World Conference on Women and is held every five years. GMMP 2009/2010. <http://www.whomakesthenews.org/>

142 This is according to the Global Media Monitoring report (GMMP 2009/2010) *Who makes the news?* <http://www.whomakesthenews.org/>

143 *Women's opinion in the media*. Materials of the monitoring of national newspapers in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Tbilisi: *Caucasus Coalition*, 2005 (in Russian).

144 *Men and Women in Armenian Media*. Report of the monitoring conducted in 2014 by Caucasus Institute with support from UNDP and EU.

the complete understanding between media and women's NGOs has not been achieved yet. Nevertheless, even critical articles about allegedly "commissioned" activities of women's organizations do not deny the existence of problems that those organizations deal with. However, attempts to belittle the importance of gender issues in our society are obvious; for example, the extent of violence against women in Armenia is questioned<sup>145</sup>.

A characteristic feature of the publications on gender topics is that their authors make almost no reference to international documents on gender equality, do not use the terminology used in those documents (gender policy, the policy of equal rights and opportunities, gender-based violence, women in decision-making, women's rights, discrimination) and avoid drawing analytical conclusions, especially if they involve breaking a stereotype. Nevertheless, they quite clearly present the problem through women's histories and through the people's lives.

In recent years, media began to clearly articulate issues of underrepresentation of women in politics and issues of rural women. It started addressing the issue of discrimination against women in the labor market and providing wide coverage of the issue of sex-selective abortion. While attempts to challenge gender stereotypes can be observed but the percentage of publications on these themes remains negligible in the entire information flow<sup>146</sup>. In most cases, reporters' interest in gender issues is unsystematic and depends on newsworthy information provided in the context of the activities of international and women's organizations or as part of any competition on this topic. As a rule, gender issues are not covered on an ongoing basis. Besides, debatable, analytical materials on the subject are also very few.

The analysis of TV productions reveals an increase in the number of TV shows that one way or another address gender issues<sup>147</sup> but the vast majority of them reproduce gender stereotypes often expressed by women themselves. This is especially characteristic of the discussions held over the past year as part of anti-gender campaign with activists of that movement.

According to surveys, 79.0% of respondents draw information from television and 17.0% from Internet publications, with the number of users of Internet information having increased from 6.0% in 2011 to 17.0% in 2013. 65.0% of viewers watch information programs followed by 35.0% who watch TV series. If we take into consideration the fact that the content of news is mostly male-oriented, while TV series, according to studies<sup>148</sup>, reproduce stereotypical attitudes, it turns out that viewers mainly get gender-unbalanced TV products.

In the past two or three years the online media has been emerging on a large scale; how-

145 See <http://www.genderbasedviolence.am/am/content/show/83/-html>

146 According to the 2010 data, the percentage of publications on gender issues did not exceed 2.0%; according to expert estimates, in 2013-2014 the number of publications on these topics has increased but precise quantitative studies on this topic have not been conducted.

147 *Men and Women in Armenian Media*. Report of the monitoring conducted in 2014 by Caucasus Institute with support from UNDP and EU.

148 Study *What images of women and which models the family do Armenian serials present to viewers?* Center for Regional Studies and Center for European Studies. Yerevan State University, 2012 (in Armenian).

ever, as the monitoring data show<sup>149</sup> a gender imbalance in the portrayal of women and men is more pronounced in online publications than in print media.

Access to the journalist profession in Armenia has no gender-based restrictions. In general, the field of journalism is much feminized: women constitute a majority among graduates of journalism departments but the proportion of women is significantly lower in the leadership position in media outlets than the proportion of women working in this field. According to expert estimates, women account for not more than 20.0% of heads of media outlets<sup>150</sup>. At the same time there has been positive dynamic of a growing number of women in the leadership of media outlets. The biggest proportion of women is among heads of online publications, while the smallest proportion is among heads of TV companies<sup>151</sup>. However, as the monitoring of the press shows, the women in the leadership of media outlets are far from being always committed to gender equality policies.

In the past two or three years in the country are intensively developing Internet blogs and citizen journalism and women's organizations have been using widely these new opportunities. The number of users of social networks has been growing at a very fast rate. Virtually the country's all women's organizations are currently present in social networks, which opens up new opportunities to attract public attention to their initiatives and new opportunities for expansion and establishment of women's networks. According to the *Region* research center<sup>152</sup>, about 70.0% of the population of Armenia registered themselves in social networks, with the number of Facebook users in Armenia growing quite actively at the rate of 20,000-30,000 per month and, according to the most recent data, having already reached 560,000. 19.0% of the country's population or almost one in five people in Armenia (or 42.0% of the country's total number of Internet users) make use of *Facebook* social network. 775,000 pages have been opened in *Odnoklassniki* social network and 310,000 accounts in *Vkontakte*.

According to the statistics published on the site socialbakers.com, 47.0% of social networks users in Armenia are men and 53.0% are women. According to the official data, while in 2009 there were 1.1 million mobile Internet users, their number grew to 1.7 million by 2011. The number of broadband Internet users increased from 70,000 in 2009 to 240,000 in 2011. It is noteworthy that the increase in the number of users is accompanied by a reduction in the prices for Internet access. The data evidence an expansion of opportunities, including for women, for access to information technologies.

149 See: <http://unfpa.am/publications-women-in-Image-Media>

150 The sex-disaggregated statistical data about this issue is non-existent in this country.

151 Besides the Public Television there are 15 private TV channels in the country: programs of 7 of them are broadcast nationwide, while programs of 9 are broadcast only in the capital city. In addition, there are 25 regional channels in the country's regions. At present the Public Radio and 22 private radio stations broadcast in the country. 72 different newspapers on the print media market, including 28 regional newspapers. The number of news sites in the country is 232 (Source: Study *The situation of media industry in Armenia* conducted by Yerevan Press Club with support from USAID: [http://www.ypc.am/media\\_research/ln/ru](http://www.ypc.am/media_research/ln/ru)).

152 *Facebook in Armenia: Users and applications*. Region Center, 2013.

However, the development of social networks strengthens also an anti-gender component in the information field. In Armenia this has resulted in the move from a passive attitude and ignoring gender to active counter-propaganda and rejection of gender equality. This trend visibly manifested itself in the anti-gender campaign launched in Armenia in mid-2013 regarding the RoA *Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men*. The campaign that had been launched in social networks was actively taken up by the media, which led, on the one hand, to the discrediting of the said law and, on the other, to a surge of interest in gender issues. This situation put women's organizations and gender equality advocates in a difficult situation of being forced to constantly refute the misinformation disseminated by the opponents and to constantly repel their attacks. The implementation of gender policies of the State is impeded against the background of imposed disputes with deliberate substitution of gender terminology.

These changes fit into the global trends, according to which new technologies are changing the nature of the information and media environment and are opening broader opportunities for freedom of expression and providing unprecedented individual opportunities for access, creation and sharing of information content across multiple platforms<sup>153</sup>. However, this does not mean that the information flows that are widely distributed in that manner are gender-sensitive and gender-balanced. In this context the gender education of journalists, promoting professional standards and self-regulation acquire an even greater importance.

### ***Strategic objective 2: Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media***

The media images of women can for the most part be divided into three main categories: successful women (contemporary women who have achieved success in some field, or historical figures); victims of violence and representatives of marginalized groups. At the same time, women account for merely 14.0% of all characters portrayed in the media<sup>154</sup>. However, the representation of even successful women often occurs within the stereotypical approaches that manifest themselves in questions such as “How do you manage to combine career with family?”, “Can you cook well?” etc.

According to the findings of the monitoring, in the most popular social and political publications female characters are most frequently presented in the context of politics (27%), culture (11%), sports (11%), show business (10%), socioeconomic life (7 %), civic

153 The study *Global trends in matters of freedom of expression and media development* <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227025e.pdf>

154 See: <http://unfpa.am/publications-women-in-Image-Media>

and human rights activities (6%), education and science (6%), accidents (5%) and private life (5%). The priority of female images in the context of politics can be accounted for by the fact that those are publications focused on politics. The majority of female characters are presented in the sphere of domestic politics and political parties, whereas foreign policy is seen as a prerogative of men and there are virtually no local women in it<sup>155</sup>.

According to the findings of the monitoring, in 11% of cases of the total number of female characters they appear as victims, with in over half of those publications they are victims of accidents, others are victims of domestic violence, and 12% were subjected to violence in public places<sup>156</sup>.

Not infrequently, concrete female characters serve as merely a background for raising social problems, especially poverty. It is through women that the problems of vulnerable groups are often articulated. Such presentation of the problem through a particular person is certainly preferable in terms of the impact on the reader; however, it presents women through a stereotypical perspective.

In the present-day society, people cannot avoid the influence of mass culture, which is transmitted through TV. Movies and TV series both inform and socialize as they present a whole range of models of behavior in different everyday situations: interaction, career, relationships within the family and at work. According to the results of the study conducted in 2011 by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) - Armenia, watching television is the main occupation during leisure time one third of the country's population, with 7-12 hours per day being devoted to that occupation and 80% of the population watching Armenian TV series.

On the initiative of a coalition of seven NGOs dealing with domestic violence a campaign was launched in the country in 2012 to demand that scenes of violence against women shown in TV series be limited. The initiators of the campaign sent a formal letter to the National Committee on TV and Radio, in which they demanded compliance with Article 22 of the RoA *Law on Television and Radio*, which prohibits broadcasting programs that spread and advocate violence and cruelty.

According to studies<sup>157</sup>, only one out of 64 female characters in the Armenian TV series was not subjected to some kind of violence or humiliation. In general, female characters presented on TV through the Armenian TV series contribute to the strengthening and reproduction of gender stereotypes. That cannot but cause concern given the fact that TV makes a major impact on public opinion.

Stereotypical attitudes are particularly abundant when presenting women in advertise-

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155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 *The image of women in Armenian TV series*. Center for Regional Studies and the Center for European Studies, Yerevan State University (in Armenian)



ment, even though the RoA *Law on Advertising* prohibits insulting expressions, comparisons and images on the basis of ethnicity, gender, race, etc. However, studies show that 50% of female characters in Armenian advertisements are of explicitly sexist nature because they represent woman as a commodity or sexual object<sup>158</sup>.

According to experts' estimations, the message that media formulates through female characters hinders the advancement of women and does not meet the principles laid down by the gender policy of the State.

## Conclusions

The review and assessment of the situation in the *Women and the Media* area show that the quantitative and qualitative representation of female characters in the media is a direct reflection of the gender imbalance characteristic of the socio-political order of the country. In its turn, the media for the most part does not show initiative in constructing non-stereotypical images of women, and, as a result, does not contribute to elimination of gender stereotypes, which in its turn hinders the advancement of women in the socio-political and socioeconomic life of the society.

There is not yet sufficient awareness of the need to combat manifestations of sexism in advertising and the media. The ideas containing discriminatory and offensive statements on the grounds of sex are still observed in journalistic practices. Moreover, with few exceptions, such manifestations of sexism in the media are not countered by the State or by a professional journalistic community, despite the de jure fixed principles of respect of honor and dignity of people regardless of gender, as contained in the gender policy of the State and in professional standards.

The findings of gender monitoring of media undertaken in the country over the past ten years<sup>159</sup> give grounds to speak about discrimination at the level of preferences, which is practiced by the media against women's expert opinion. The reasons are much deeper than just a personal preference of a journalist. They are hidden in the gender imbalance and patriarchal social order that exist in the society and can be overcome only through gender-sensitive policies of both media and the State.

However, the development of new technologies opens up new opportunities for women

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158 See: <http://www.osf.am/programs/policy-Fellowship-initiative/policy-briefs/?lang=am>

159 *Women's opinion in the media*. Materials of the monitoring of national newspapers in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Tbilisi: *Caucasus Coalition*, 2005 (in Russian). *The image of women as represented in the media*. Analytical report on the monitoring. *ProMedia-Gender* NGO / UNFPA Armenia Office. Yerevan, 2011) in Armenian), <http://unfpa.am/publications-women-in-Image-Media> ; *Men and Women in Armenian Media*. Report of the monitoring conducted in 2014 by Caucasus Institute with support from UNDP and EU.



to create and use alternative channels of communication to support their efforts to protect their rights and to combat stereotypes. A significant role is played by women's NGOs. It has a definite influence on the media, where the number of materials on protection of women's rights and elimination of gender stereotypes has been on the rise. However, their real effectiveness depends not only on the quantity but also the quality of the information supplied, which is determined by the gender competence of journalists, thereby highlighting the issue of gender education in journalism schools.

## Recommendations

### To the authorities:

- *take measures to increase the competence of the country's media community regarding the RoA Gender Policy Concept Paper and other documents adopted within the framework of gender policy of the State;*
- *develop and take measures to raise awareness of journalists about the international legal instruments ratified by Armenia and the international commitments in the field of gender equality;*
- *engage the media to the information and awareness-raising campaign about the aims and objectives of the RoA Law on Provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men;*
- *promote the formation of a gender policy for the media, expand the practice of encouraging the media to cover gender issues and to present women as creative individual and key participants of the development process who make their contribution to and benefit from it;*
- *conduct campaigns and actions aimed to eliminate discriminatory practices and sexist approaches in the media;*
- *support the establishment of partnership models of cooperation between the authorities, NGOs and the media with a view to advocating women's social and political activism and eliminating gender stereotypes;*
- *implement measures - in collaboration with civil society institutions - for protection of the public against all forms of gender-based discrimination;*
- *avoid negative practices that discredit the idea of gender equality, respond actively and in a timely manner to sexism in the media;*
- *promote research and the implementation of the Information Strategy aimed at creating a balanced, non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.*

**To the NGO sector:**

- *enhance cooperation with the media to explain goals and objectives of the gender policies of the State;*
- *use more actively new technologies and social networks capacity for presentations of their own activities and promotion of the idea of gender equality;*
- *respond actively and in a timely manner to sexism in the media, track manifestations of sexism and draw media's attention to them;*
- *conduct monitoring constantly in order to track trends in the media representation of gender issues and women's images;*
- *cooperate with the media on the issue of compiling a database of female experts in different fields;*
- *develop alternative informational resources aimed to support gender equality.*

**To the media:**

- *maintain and develop the network of women's media, including at the international level;*
- *promote large-scale information campaigns on women's rights and issues;*
- *prepare and disseminate materials on women leaders, managers and entrepreneurs for creating role models, especially for young women;*
- *counter manifestations of sexism in the media through professional unions and organizations.*

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> European Conference on *Gender Equality in Higher Education* in Zurich (Switzerland).

AAWUE participated in the 27<sup>th</sup> 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 within the Beijing+10 process in Geneva and in February-March 2005 at the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

AAWUE representatives participated in the 43<sup>rd</sup> 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 54<sup>th</sup> 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 55<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 (1215 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.

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Armenian Association of Women with University Education

**MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
the Beijing Platform for Action,  
the Millennium Development Goals  
and the UN Convention on Political Rights of Women  
in the Republic of Armenia**

**Assessment of the Implementation of  
Three International Documents on  
Achievement of Gender Equality**

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