

**Armenian Association of Women with University Education
Center for Gender Studies**

**Implementation
of the *Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*
in the Republic of Armenia
in 2002-2007
*Alternative Report***

Yerevan 2007



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has been drawn up by the experts
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Introduction

The UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, which was adopted on December 18, 1979, is a comprehensive document that reflects longstanding efforts on the part of the UN to systematize international legal norms for the protection of women's rights. As of today, it is virtually the only international legal instrument designed to combat gender inequality.

Armenia ratified the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (hereinafter the Convention or CEDAW) on June 9, 1993. It thereby assumed a vast array of obligations that entailed the implementation of comprehensive measures aimed at eliminating discrimination and ensuring full development and advancement of women in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country. The CEDAW is specific in that it makes it incumbent on a State Party to take all appropriate measures to change imbedded mental structures and to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women. Furthermore, accession to the Convention means that a State Party not only declares respect for equal rights of men and women but also takes on a responsibility to ensure equal opportunities for their enjoyment. Besides, the Convention is construed as an "affirmative action" program; hence, the State Party has agreed to the principle of granting preferential rights, which is outlined in the CEDAW. The main specific feature of the Convention is that it requires monitoring the State Parties' compliance with its provisions. The existence of the CEDAW Committee as an expert body coordinating the system of monitoring grounded in the Convention does undoubtedly enhance the latter's effectiveness in comparison with other documents that declare gender equality. The necessity of fulfilling the obligations under the Convention is reflected in virtually all subsequent international documents on gender equality, in particular in the Beijing Platform for Action and in the Millennium Development Goals. Armenia endorsed both documents.

In the period that followed the ratification of the Convention by Armenia the country submitted two reports to the CEDAW Committee, the initial report in 1996 and the second (periodic) one in 1999. The CEDAW Committee made its Concluding comments to the



Government of Armenia's second report in 2002. Thus, the next report by the Government covers the period from 2002 through 2007.

Within that reporting period, on May 23, 2006, the country's National Assembly ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention that had come into force in December 2000. The ratification affords individual women or groups of women an opportunity to submit claims of violations of rights enshrined in the Convention to the *Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, provided all domestic remedies have been exhausted.

According to prevalent practices, in the course of the preparation of their next periodic reports the governments are guided by the Concluding comments and recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee with respect to the previous reports. This approach has been taken in the process of drawing up the present alternative report. The Committee's comments of 2002 expressed concern about:

- underrepresentation of women in decision-making and political bodies and lack of temporary special measures aimed to increase women's participation in the political sphere;
- limited cooperation between the State party and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Convention;
- prevalence of violence against women and lack of specific provisions on domestic violence in current legislation;
- trafficking in women and girls and absence of a comprehensive policy to combat it;
- unaffordable health care services;
- persistence of gender stereotypes;
- higher level of women's unemployment than men's;
- discriminatory practices in the field of employment;
- lack of sex-disaggregated statistical data.

The above issues were given special attention in the course of the preparation of the present report. The CEDAW Committee also urged the Government to ensure wide dissemination in Armenia of the said concluding comments and of other international documents that aim at achieving gender equality.

However, the national reports as well as the Committee's concluding comments and recommendations have yet to become a subject for a public discussion. They have not merited consideration by the National Assembly and have not been given due attention by non-governmental organizations. The general public are not aware of them. Rare discussions were held, if at all, and those were limited either to the initiatives of a close circle of women's organizations that take an



interest in the issues or to the involvement of the same organizations in formalistic discussions staged by the Ministries and Agencies responsible for the preparation of the reports.

The present alternative report on the CEDAW implementation in Armenia has been drawn up by a group of experts from the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies within the framework of the *Gender knowledge as a prerequisite for the development of democratic culture and legal consciousness* Project implemented with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Warsaw). The report covers the period after the Government's second periodic report, i.e. years 2002-2007 (in some instances the dynamic of the issues is presented including earlier periods).

The Goals of the Report are:

- **independent assessment** of the country's implementation of the Convention in a number of key sectors and of the fulfillment of the obligations, and
- **identification of the problems** that impede the implementation of the Convention in the Republic of Armenia and **the setting forth of possible solutions** presented as recommendations for the Government and for other agencies concerned.

Expected Outcomes:

The preparation and open discussion of the alternative report will be instrumental in:

- *identifying a real situation of women in this country and of the defense of their rights,*
- *increasing responsibility of power structures whose competence includes both formulation and implementation of State policies on the advancement of women as well as preparation of the report for the CEDAW Committee,*
- *providing recommendations that will help avoiding biased interpretations of the existing situation and will be conducive to the rejection of stopgap measures in elimination of discrimination against women,*
- *drawing public attention to the control over the fulfillment of the country's obligations regarding the implementation of the Convention,*
- *supplying the country's non-governmental, primarily women's, organizations with data, facts and tools for the advancement of interests and for the protection of rights of women,*
- *promoting social partnerships between power structures and civil society institutions for the purposes of overcoming discriminatory practices and of the country's advancement towards parity democracy.*



Format and Methodology of the Report

Format

The preparation of the alternative report has been done on the basis of the reporting guidelines (established by the CEDAW Committee) and of the procedural and format guidelines for NGOs producing shadow and alternative reports to the CEDAW Committee (drawn up by women's groups)¹. The experts also studied carefully the experience of NCOs from other countries in the preparation of alternative reports. The format selected from the variety of the existing forms and approaches and modified taking into consideration the specifics of the Armenian situation is in line with the general guidelines for alternative reports. It incorporates three main components:

- *Introduction. The Country's Profile*
- *Executive Summary*
- *Article-by-article analysis of key issues with the identification of problem areas in each Article and with the provision of recommendation as to how discriminatory practices reviewed in the report can be eliminated.*

Methodology

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

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

While selecting the key issues, the experts' group took into consideration the CEDAW Committee's comments and recommendations regarding the previous reports submitted by the

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



Armenian Government. It also relied heavily on the findings of a number of studies conducted within the reporting period by Armenian Association of Women with University Education.

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

- *Legal foundations for gender equality in Armenia and real practices*
- *The issue of the establishment of a national machinery*
- *Opportunities for using positive discrimination*
- *The issue of elimination of gender stereotypes*
- *Trafficking in women*
- *Women's civic and political participation*
- *Discriminatory practices in education and health care*
- *Employment of women; discrimination on labor market and in employment*
- *Issues of rural women.*

The most detailed analysis is presented regarding two core issues. Those are **national machinery** (as a necessary and mandatory condition for exercising control over the implementation of the Convention and for mainstreaming gender into State policies) and **women's political participation** as an issue of women's underrepresentation in political power and in political decision-making. That underrepresentation minimizes women's opportunities for influencing State policies and results in the perpetration of discriminatory practices in all the fields of socio-political and socioeconomic life.

While preparing the report, the experts made use of the data and findings of a number of studies and sociological surveys that had been conducted within the reporting period (i.e. in 2002-2007) by the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies and the AAWUE Center of Democracy & Peace. The experts had been directly involved both in conducting those studies and surveys and in analyzing the findings. Those, *inter alia*, are:

- *Sociological surveys on the issues of civil society participation in parliamentary elections, gender stereotypes and electoral behavior², gender perspective of the democratization of the Armenian society³, a civil society factor in the democratization of elections⁴ and a gender equality dimension of political participation in transition society⁵.*

² *Electoral democracy: Is there an alternative to it in Armenia?* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2003.

³ *Democratization of the Armenian society: A gender perspective.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2004.

⁴ *Elections and democracy: A civil society factor.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2003.

⁵ *Political participation in transition society: A gender equality dimension.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.



- Studies: *Gender situation in Armenia: Consequences of the transformation processes and empowerment of women within the MDGs context*⁶ and *Monitoring of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*⁷.

The experts also used data of the National Statistical Service and of the Civil Service Council as well as the findings of a number of special studies and sociological surveys conducted within the same period of time by other Armenian NGOs and by international organizations. Those are, to mention but a few, *Violence Against Women in Armenia* (by the Center for Women's Rights)⁸, *Domestic Violence* (by Akunk Center for Ethnic & Sociological Studies)⁹, *Armenia NGO Sector Assessment* (by the NGO Strengthening Program/World Learning)¹⁰, *Citizens' Awareness and Participation in Armenia* (by IFES)¹¹, *Necessity and main areas of mainstreaming gender into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*¹² (by LSP), *Women's expert opinion in mass media: outcome of the monitoring of the press in 8 CIS countries* (by KavkAzia Coalition)¹³.

While making out this Report, the authors took into consideration the opinions expressed by the representatives of political parties and of women's non-governmental organizations.

At the final stage of the work the Report was discussed with the representatives of non-governmental organizations and of political parties. The comments and suggestions made were taken proper account of.

⁶ *Gender situation in Armenia: Consequences of the transformation processes and empowerment of women within the MDGs context*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2005.

⁷ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.

⁸ *Violence against women in Armenia*. Center for Women's Rights, Yerevan, 2001.

⁹ *Domestic violence*. Akunk Center for Ethnic & Sociological Studies, Yerevan, 2002.

¹⁰ *Armenia NGO Sector Assessment*. NGO Strengthening Program/World Learning, Yerevan, 2002.

¹¹ *Citizens' Awareness and Participation in Armenia*. IFES, Yerevan, 2004.

¹² *Necessity and main areas of mainstreaming gender into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*. LSP, Yerevan, 2005.

¹³ *Women's expert opinion in mass media: Outcome of the monitoring of the press in 8 CIS countries*. KavkAzia Coalition, Tbilisi, 2005.



The Country's Profile

Official name: Republic of Armenia

Territory: 29,740 square kilometers

Population: 3.2 million (Census of 2001), of whom 64.1% are urban and 35.9% rural dwellers

Ethnic composition: Armenians – 96%, ethnic minorities include Russians, Yezidis, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews and others

Capital: City of Yerevan

The socioeconomic and socio-political situations in the countries are determined by the transformation processes that got under way after Armenia had declared its independence in 1991. Transition to free market relations, liberal reforms and democratic changes were unfolding under extreme political and economic conditions brought forth by the unresolved Karabakh conflict and by the still continuing transportation blockade. Those resulted in impoverishment of the population, in plummeting birthrates, in brain drain, in an influx of refugees and in other negative phenomena. Unemployment and economic hardships aggravated by an acute fuel and energy crisis had a particularly adverse impact primarily on women.

The present-day development stage is characterized by the overcoming of the crisis, by a stabilized macroeconomic situation and by the transition from stabilization to development and to the creation of the conditions that are necessary to make the country competitive and to raise the living standards of the people. Within the past six years an annual GDP growth constituted 12.2% on the average, with 80% of the GDP produced by the private sector. While in 1999 a per capita GDP was 485 US dollars, in 2007 it rose to 2,100 US dollars. In 1999, 56% of the Armenian population were below the poverty line, whereas in 2005, in the aftermath of the measures taken within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted by the Armenian Government, the poverty level in this country went down to 39% and that of extreme poverty, to 7.2%. At the same time, a high level of social polarization in the country, a large share of shadow economy, national currency fluctuations and corruption pose a formidable obstacle in the way of the further development of Armenia. Minimum wages in the country amount to 20,000 AMD (around 50 US dollars) and an average pension is 12,000 AMD (30 US dollars), while a minimum basket of consumer goods per head is 30,000 AMD.

Recent years were marked by a number of important political and economic events that shaped the trajectory of the country's subsequent development. In 2001 Armenia joined the Council of Europe, in 2003 it obtained the WTO membership and in November 2006 it signed



the *Armenia-EU Action Plan* within the framework of the *New Neighborhood* European policy.

In line with the obligations to the Council of Europe, domestic legislation has been undergoing reforms so as to be harmonized with the European standards. A new Criminal Code was adopted in 2003 and a new Labor Code in 2004. Constitutional referendum was held in 2005. Those amendments expanded human rights significantly.

According to the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report, Armenia is ranked 80 in the world by *Human Development Index* (HDI). *Gender Development Index* (GDI) constitutes 99.6% of the HDI. While the gender situation in Armenia could on the whole be construed in that light as positive, it, nevertheless, does not reflect the harsh realities of life.

Executive Summary

The transition period with its daunting socioeconomic and political problems has had a particularly adverse impact on women. In the course of the liberal democratic reforms effected in Armenia the necessary and well-timed measures aimed to eliminate discriminatory practices and to create favorable conditions for the advancement of women were not taken. That resulted in a marked gender imbalance and in infringement of women's rights in the labor market, in politics and in decision-making. One of the social consequences of the dramatic change of the socioeconomic and political system was a shutdown of industrial enterprises on a mass scale. As a result of ensuing unemployment and, especially, poverty, which affected women much more than men, as well as an out-migration of the most active segment of the male workforce women found themselves facing the altered socioeconomic conditions.

The new realities require not only additional knowledge and skills but also special measures on the part of the State that would contribute to a better adaptation of women to free market economy and to their involvement in the process of running the State. The situation is further complicated by stereotypes that are quite pervasive and entrenched in this society and that impede greater civic and political activism of women.

Assessing a gender situation in Armenia, it should be noted that the functioning of civic and State institutions of the country cannot be called gender sensitive. Neither does it rule out discriminatory practices against women. Despite their great educational and civic potential, women have a rather limited role in politics, economy and public life. As a rule, women are for the most part insignificantly involved in socio-political processes. *Alienation* of women from power and decision-making and a *masculine style* of governance result in democratic deficit and go against the basic principles of representative democracy.



The main problem in the area of securing equal rights is still the **lack of equal opportunities for women**. The principle of equality between the sexes is enshrined in the Armenian Constitution and reflected in domestic legislation. In the amendments to the Armenian Constitutions made in 2005 that principle is formulated as a ban on discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex. As per the Armenian Constitution, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, among other international legal instruments ratified by the Republic of Armenia, has prevalence over the domestic legislation. However, the *de jure*-recognized constitutional rights do not rule out the *de facto* discriminatory practices. The discriminatory practices in real life are based on¹⁴:

- unequal situation of men and women in the economic field,
- traditional division of gender roles in the society and in family that is perpetuated and reinforced by all social institutions,
- unequal access of men and women to political offices and to decision-making positions in government.

The political will of the parliamentary majority has yet to emerge so that the Law *On guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities and on balanced participation of men and women* is initiated and passed.

On April 8, 2004, with a view to eliminating discriminatory practices and securing the fulfillment of the obligations contained in the international legal instruments, including CEDAW, ratified by the country the Government of Armenia adopted the ***National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010***. The formulation therein of the problems and of the strategies for their solution are in line with the recommendations provided by the international documents, without, however, outlining an entire package of the required measures as well as the logistical and financial resources for their implementation. Most of the activities included in the Action Plan are long-term; their implementation was to start no later than 2004 or 2005. Some activities, such as a control over the compliance with laws and sub-legislation, are recurrent, while some others were earmarked for immediate implementation or for implementation within a rather short period of time. However, absence of the national machinery as a unified coordinating body, weak organizational measures as well as lack of financial resources and of will on the part of the political elite for the implementation of the National Action Plan have been undermining the effectiveness of its outcomes. The non-inclusion of gender education into the system of training of the administrative personnel and among civil servants of all ranks casts doubt on their awareness

¹⁴ *Gender situation in Armenia*. AAWUE Center for Gender Studies, Yerevan, 2005



of the necessity to redress the existing gender imbalance. In the experts' estimation, the degree of willingness of the Armenian power structures to discharge their international obligations and to implement the **National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society** is limited at this stage to the recognition of the *positive role* that women have in the society and of the *necessity* to improve their status¹⁵.

The analysis of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations concerning the two national reports submitted so far demonstrates that in order to solve the problems highlighted therein the Armenian Government has to make sure that:

- *the measures taken are farsighted and long-term,*
- *institutions of civil society, viz. NGOs, political parties and mass media, are actively involved in the solution of those problems,*
- *an efficient national machinery for the advancement of women is established, State gender policies are formulated and anti-discrimination measures regarding women are taken.*

The implementation of the provisions of the CEDAW Convention is impeded primarily by the **absence of the national machinery**. The existence of the machinery would allow the *de facto* situation to be brought in line with that of the *de jure*. It is virtually impossible without the national machinery to effectively mainstream a gender perspective in legislation, State policies and national programs and projects¹⁶. It should be borne in mind that gender mainstreaming is an essential prerequisite for the elimination of discrimination against women and for the attainment of gender equality in the Armenian society. The establishment of the unified national machinery with a high status is necessary also for promoting the implementation of the National Action Plan on improving the status of women. That would be done, *inter alia*, via the provision of expert advice to main actors in charge of the Action Plan implementation, the conducting of monitoring and the creation of tools for tracking and evaluating the country's gender situation. The earlier attempts at establishing a national machinery failed to produce the desired results because of inadequately high level, lack of a clear mandate and of concrete functions backed with appropriate powers as well as with essential human and financial resources.

The most vivid manifestation of discrimination against women is **underrepresentation of women in decision-making in political and economic fields**. Within the period following the

¹⁵ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. Yerevan, 2006.

¹⁶ As required by the Beijing Platform for Action (para. 202).



submission of the previous report the process of de-feminization of power was not reversed. That process is driven by patriarchal-totalitarian traditions in the political culture, by gender stereotypes and by the outcomes of the socioeconomic and political transformations. The process of squeezing women out from the State policy formulation affected both elected offices and top offices in the executive branch of government. Thus, women's political status defined by a degree of possession of real leverage and power has not undergone changes with-in the past few years as women are still excluded from political decision-making.

In terms of women's involvement in decision-making the Republic of Armenia falls significantly short of the world standards. It is an evidence of absolutely inefficient use of human resources in the country's public administration system. This system is primarily male-oriented. It does not reflect an existing gender composition of the society and does not make it possible for women to exert influence on State policies. Besides, it hampers the processes of societal democratization and poses an obstacle for Armenia's full-fledged integration into the European and other international structures that abide by the principle of gender equality.

Even though an equal right for both men and women to occupy any positions in civil and municipal service is enshrined in the Armenian Constitution, in reality it proved insufficient for overcoming de facto inequality in the representation of men and women in leadership positions. Special legislation that would guarantee equal opportunities to both sexes has not been passed in the country. The National Action Plan on improving the status of women does not envision the utilization of special measures and technologies that proved successful in many developed countries and that aim at overcoming a gender imbalance in power. The amendment made to the electoral legislation to set a temporary 15% gender quota for women on political party lists in proportional representation elections merely reflects the existing realities and cannot make a considerable impact in terms of increasing the number of women in the legislative branch of government, i.e. in the Parliament.

There is no practice in this country to stage special campaigns that would target entrenched **gender stereotypes**, even though the latter pose a serious impediment to enhancing women's political and civic activism. The partnerships between NGOs, power structures and mass media for the purpose of affecting the public mind and eliminating gender stereotypes are virtually nonexistent. Their being a conduit for democratic culture notwithstanding, mass media do not evince interest in promoting ideas of gender equality and in doing away with practices that discriminate against women. That fact cannot help but give concern. The interests of the sector of women's NGOs are tangential, if at all, to those of mass media. The coverage of women's issues is not a priority for media. While some reporters do address gender issues, that



does not necessarily gain sympathy of editorial boards and publication of such materials encounters severe difficulties. Only women's NGOs deal with gender equality issues on a regular basis. However, public at large is not particularly informed or aware of those activities and efforts because those do not get into a spotlight.

The country's Government agencies do not have a standard practice of seeking out instances of discrimination with a view to neutralizing them promptly. Neither is control established for tracking the trends of women's representation in decision-making. From 1999 on, the National Statistical Service has been issuing quite regularly the *Women and Men in Armenia* publication with support from international foundations. At the same time the country does not have a unified system of collecting, processing and publishing sex-disaggregated statistical data and the **Gender empowerment measure** (GEM), widely used by the UN system, is not calculated in Armenia¹⁷. Of the existing international indexes that assess a gender situation in a given society, it is only **Gender-related development index** (GDI)¹⁸ that is calculated in this country. As of 2006, Armenia ranks 65th among 136 countries¹⁹. A time-use survey based on a random sample and conducted recently by the National Statistical Service is definitely a step forward as it enabled them to measure women's dual burden. Their results are particularly significant from the perspective of the opportunities for women to combine family duties with career growth and civic and/or political activism.

The Armenian Constitution and the laws that regulate labor relations do not contain provisions that could be regarded as discriminatory or as infringing on women's rights. However, the legislation and the Armenian Government's policy do not contain guarantees of equal opportunities for men and women on the labor market. The gender situation on the labor market is characterized by the manifestations of hidden discrimination against women, in particular by horizontal and vertical segregation in the field of employment. As evidenced by some studies²⁰, in its economic policy the Government does not design practical methods that would allow it to take gender issues into consideration in the formulation of the economic policy. The

¹⁷ **Gender empowerment measure** (GEM) is a composite index that captures gender inequality in three key areas: (a) political participation and decision making, (b) economic participation and decision making and (c) power over economic resources.

¹⁸ GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between women and men in three key areas.

¹⁹ Human Development Report 2006. *Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*. N.Y., UNDP, 2006, p. 364.

²⁰ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006, p. 63.



Government does not use the gender analysis method in the formulation of macro- and micro-economic policies and does not make analysis, coordination and application of strategies that seek to take into account comprehensively special needs and interests of employee and entrepreneur women. Neither does it establish systems of auxiliary services, including investment funds, for women-headed enterprises.

No sex-based discrimination is observed in the **enjoyment of the constitutional right to basic general, mandatory and free education**. The literacy level of the over 15-year-old population in the country is 99.5%. Women account for 58% among individuals that have higher education.

In 2005-2006 academic year, girls comprised 49.2% of the total number of students of State comprehensive schools. That is adequate to their share in the respective age groups. Within the reporting period the number of female students in junior colleges and in institutions of higher learning (IHLs) has been on the rise amounting in 2004-2005 to 52.2% in the government-run IHLs and to 67.8% in non-government ones. Young women make up 67.9% in the government-run and 81.4% in non-government junior colleges.

In a long-term perspective there is a risk that values of some indexes may go down owing to the reduction in the level of the compulsory basic education and to a growing share of paid educational services vs. the decreasing share of educational services provided for free. Dropping out of school is not a rare occurrence, especially in case of girls in elementary schools. The number of these dropouts is about 8% for the entire country and 11-13% in some regions. That will in the future lay the foundation for a growth of illiteracy rate and for the resulting poverty.

Given the absence of unified State policies on the provision of IHLs graduates with jobs and a mismatch between the number of the IHLs graduates and the existing absorption capacity of the labor market, there is a high risk that female graduates will be unemployed or will be unable to find a job adequate to their qualifications. While comprising about 80% of the education system employees, women are virtually not represented at the system administration level. Therefore, they are denied an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the formulation of educational policies and strategies.

The health care system reforms, which were carried out basically impromptu and which made the sector focus on the provision of paid services, brought about a drastic limitation of



health care services' accessibility to the greater part of the Armenian population and an increase in morbidity rates. The number of visits to health care institutions declined. The situation underwent a dramatic change in January 2006, when all out-patient clinics were made to provide services for free, thereby leading to a growing number of patients' visits. However, the scope of health services provided for free is limited and, on the whole, for the majority of women the quality health care services are still inaccessible owing to their high cost and to insolvency of the population. The main problems of the health sector include belated diagnostics of malignant neoplasms since women rarely go to a see a doctor, inadequate awareness of women of their health problems and of their reproductive rights and lack of preventive measures that aim at improving women's health.

Describing the CEDAW Convention implementation status in Armenia, it should be pointed out that despite rather broad women's rights enshrined in the country's legislation, in real life there is discrimination, which, however, not infrequently, is not seen as such due to entrenched stereotypical notions about a role of women in the society. The Armenian Government does not use effective methods of prevention of discrimination against women on the labor market and in employment as well as in decision-making in public administration. As a result, women's influence on social and economic processes as well as on State policies is still declining. Low representation of women in political decision-making is an outcome of discrimination against them in economic and socio-political fields.

As a part of a global community and having assumed obligations under several international legal instruments that seek to attain gender equality, Republic of Armenia has taken a number of steps to implement the strategies outlined therein. However, measures that have so far been taken to eliminate discriminatory practices against women and to introduce a gender component into a general context of public life and State policies have not yielded effective results. The situation remains inadequate to the processes of democratic changes and to challenges of modernity.

While making out this Report, the authors took into consideration the opinions expressed by the representatives of political parties and of women's non-governmental organizations.

At the final stage of the work the Report was discussed with the representatives of non-governmental organizations and of political parties. The comments and suggestions made were taken proper account of.



PART I

Article-by-article analysis of key issues

Article 1

Term “discrimination”

Problems:

- **Absence of the interpretation of the term “discrimination against women” that would be in line with the definition in the Convention**
- **Inadequate public awareness of the Convention**

While reflecting a number of the Convention’s provisions, the country’s legislation does not include the term “discrimination against women”. The Government in fact failed to implement the recommendation of the *Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* to ensure the wide dissemination in Armenia of the Committee’s concluding comments made in 1997 and 2002 concerning the initial and second (periodic) reports respectively²¹. The general public has not been informed about the additional opportunities afforded by the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention for the protection of their rights.

Public opinion polls’ results give evidence that broad segments of the society (including, not infrequently, civil servants) do not admit the existence of discrimination against women. As a rule, women themselves are not aware of discrimination. The sociological surveys of individuals that have a university-level education and that take an active civic stance²² demonstrate that this social group recognizes, albeit to a varying extent, that there is discrimination against

²¹ CEDAW A/ 52 / 38 / rev. 1 (1997), para. 68, CEDAW A/ 57 / 38 / part III (2002), para 69.

²² *Political participation in transition society: A gender equality dimension*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.



women. At the same time, knowledge of international legal instruments, including the CEDAW Convention, even in that group of respondents is as low as 1.8%.

In experts' estimation²³, the problem of lack of awareness is a result of insufficient legal culture of the society. Knowledge of laws, including international legal instruments, is imparted to citizens by women's and human rights non-governmental organizations. Those NGOs translate international legal instruments on women's rights into Armenian, disseminate them and implement educational projects that aim at achieving legal literacy of women.

39.7% and 36.0% of surveyed women and men respectively²⁴ believe that women have not yet become full-fledged citizens of the Armenian society. They see inequality:

- in the political field (40.0% of surveyed women and 42.0% of men),
- in family life (22.6% of women and 23.0% of men),
- in professional life (23.2% of women and 19.0% of men),
- in public life (7.5% of women and 8.5% of men).

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to take steps to raise awareness of public officials and civil servants of the CEDAW Convention's provisions and of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations,
- to design measures to raise people's legal literacy, including knowledge of the international legal instruments ratified by Armenia,
- to contribute to the preparation and publication of the materials that explain clearly the main provisions of the Convention,
- to take steps to advocate widely via mass media the international obligations on the attainment of gender equality,
- to support the operation of non-governmental organizations in the area of achieving women's legal literacy and in building skills to protect their rights;

To the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia:

- to hold public discussions about the Convention implementation issues within the framework of the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their*

²³ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.

²⁴ *Electoral democracy: Is there an alternative to it in Armenia?* (Findings of the sociological study). AAWUE, Yerevan, 2003, p. 122.



Role in Society in 2004-2010,

- to make it a routine procedure that the Armenian Government should report regularly on the implementation of the international Convention on women's rights and gender equality ratified by Armenia,

Article 2

State Parties' commitment to pursue a policy of eliminating discrimination against women

Problems:

- **Inadequacy of the steps taken by the State to eliminate practices that discriminate against women**
- **Wide discrepancy between the norms, which are incorporated in legislation and which guarantee the equality of men and women, and the implementation of those norms**
- **Absence of a gender analysis of legislation**

The principle of equality between the sexes is embodied in the Armenian Constitution and reflected in domestic legislation. In the amendments to the Armenian Constitutions made in 2005 that principle is formulated as a **ban on discrimination**, including discrimination on the basis of sex²⁵.

A broad spectrum of discriminatory actions, including those on the basis of sex, entails liability under Article 143 ("Violation of equal rights of citizens") of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (in the section "Crimes against human and citizen's rights and freedoms") as those are punishable by fines or by imprisonment for up to two years and in case of public officials by imprisonment from two to five years. However, the investigative and court practices have not had cases of discrimination against women and legal culture in this matter is yet to be developed.

As per the Armenian Constitution, similar to other international legal instruments ratified by Armenia, CEDAW has prevalence over the domestic legislation. However, in the court practices in this country there has so far been no precedent of recourse to the Convention's provisions for the protection of human rights.

According to the amendments made to the Armenian Constitution, alongside the right to effective means of legal defense of their rights and freedoms in court as well as in State bod-

²⁵ *Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.*, Article 14.1. Yerevan, 2005.



ies, the country's citizens have the right to get support from the Human Rights Ombudsman and to turn to the international bodies that deal with the defense of human rights and freedoms.

On May 23, 2006 the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention *on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. That opened up additional opportunities for the Armenian citizens for submitting to the CEDAW Committee the claims (complaints) of violations by the State party of their rights enshrined in the Convention.

In contrast to the domestic legislation that has been in recent years harmonized with the international standards, the policies pursued by this country as well as the existing practices and the procedures have not been revised so as to ensure compliance with the adequate international commitments in the field of women's human rights. Broad rights enshrined in legal norms are not matched by real practices. The imbalance between rights and opportunities is a main obstacle in the way of attaining equal rights. The analysis of the Armenian legislation demonstrates that even though the Armenian Constitution and laws declare equality between men and women, nevertheless, in real life situations the problem of elimination of discrimination against women has not been solved yet in terms of opportunities for the enjoyment of rights granted to women.

While declaring equality of rights for everyone regardless of sex, the amendments made to the Armenian Constitution in 2005 did not stress the important principle of securing equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, which is incorporated into constitutions of many countries.

In the experts' estimation, given the fact that the law on equal rights and equal opportunities is non-existent, gender analysis of the Armenian legislation could be used instead to ensure de facto equality of women and men²⁶. However, Armenian domestic legislation is drafted without a prior gender analysis and it reproduces gender stereotypes entrenched in the society. Therefore, complete recognition, compliance and efficient protection of women's rights enshrined in the international human rights treaties are not ensured.

The **institution of Ombudsman**, which is in operation in Armenia since 2004, has been doing quite some work on the protection of human rights. The Ombudsman's published reports contain statistical data about the number of citizens that turned to this new entity (the latter being quite new for Armenia) for the protection of their rights and provide a rather detailed analysis of the submitted claims broken down by sectors and by types of violations. However,

²⁶ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006, p. 93.



the published data are not broken down by gender and by age of the individuals that turned to the Ombudsman for help. Gender statistics is non-existent.

There is no institution in Armenia that would exercise control over the respect for and protection of women's human rights. No efforts are made to explain the provisions of the draft laws in the pipeline and the consequences for men and women when those laws are passed.

The Republic of Armenia has not yet ratified such an important international legal instrument for complete enjoyment by women of their rights as the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, despite the fact that the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010* required the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues to submit the said document for ratification in 2004.

Armenian non-governmental organizations contribute actively to the improvement of legislative activities in this country. They lobby for the adoption of laws that aim to protect women's rights, submit their recommendations and comments on the draft laws and organize discussions with members of Parliament in a round table or conference format. In recent years a practice emerged of inviting the representatives of the interested human rights and women's NGOs to the parliamentary hearings and discussions of the draft laws in the standing committees of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia thereby affording new opportunities for the civil society to get changes made in the content of the drafted laws.

Bridging gaps in legal literacy of general public, non-governmental organizations also provide legal support to women to some extent. *Sakharov* Armenian Fund for Human Rights Protection, Motherhood Fund of Armenia, Center for Women's Rights, Armenian Association of Women with University Education, Republican Women's Council, *Support to the Rule-of-Law State* NGO and a number of other human rights and women's NGOs make consistent efforts to achieve women's legal literacy and to provide legal counsel and advice for free. The practice shows that women turn to those organizations for legal advice primarily concerning family relations (dissolution of marriage, the granting of child support, etc.), recognition of ownership rights, labor relations and calculation of the pension amount.

Recommendations:

To the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia :

- to consider making amendments to the Ombudsman Law of the Republic of Armenia so as to have a position of Deputy Ombudsman on the issues of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men established,



- to consider the adoption of the Law on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women;

To the Armenian Government and to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia:

- to set up groups of experts to make sure gender analysis is made of the draft laws and to guarantee that equal rights and equal opportunities are reflected in the medium-term forward-looking development programs;

To the country's judicial bodies:

- to create precedents of using the CEDAW Convention's provisions in court practices during the examination of legal suits concerning sex-based discrimination.

Article 3

The system of measures to ensure the full advancement of women

Problem:

- **Absence of the national machinery that would act as an tool for the elimination of discrimination against women**

The national machinery has not been established yet in Armenia. It is an evidence of a lack of political will. In its Concluding Observations regarding the Initial Report submitted by the Republic of Armenia the CEDAW Committee “expressed and reiterated its gravest concern about the absence of a specific national machinery for the advancement of women and the elimination of discrimination against women” and therefore strongly urged the “Government of Armenia to establish a national machinery ...”²⁷.

The second (periodic) report to the CEDAW Committee, which covered the period from 1996 to 1999 and which was submitted in September 1999²⁸, made no mention of the establishment of the national machinery in Armenia. During her oral presentation of the Report at the 571st session of the CEDAW Committee that was held on August 7, 2002 the representative of Armenia addressed the CEDAW Committee's recommendation regarding the necessity of establishing a national machinery for the advancement of women and pointed out²⁹ the cre-

²⁷ CEDAW ?/52/38/rev.1, (para. 54 and. 61), 1997

²⁸ CEDAW/C/ARM/2 9 September 1999

²⁹ CEDAW/C/SR.571, p. 2. See also CEDAW Committee Press Release WOM/1353 (7 August 2002).



ation of the position of Deputy Minister for Women's Issues in the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues in May 2002³⁰.

However, neither that position, nor the *Division on Family, Women's and Children's Issues* (in the Ministry of Labor & Social Issues), which the Armenian Government tends to perceive currently as the national machinery, can be construed as such since they do not comply with the mandate and the criteria of the national machinery as stated both in the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation # 6³¹ and in the Beijing Platform for Action³².

In their July 2002 *CEDAW Assessment Tool Report-Armenia*, ABA/CELLI experts stressed, "Armenia has not established any kind of national machinery to monitor compliance with CEDAW ... and to oversee implementation of Armenia's obligations to combat discrimination and ensure equality."³³

The *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010* adopted by the Armenian Government also contends that a State body dealing with women's rights and endowed with appropriate powers is non-existent³⁴.

A certain degree of misunderstanding that is not a rare occurrence in this country regarding this can be accounted for by the fact that a clear distinction between national machinery and institutional mechanisms is not always perceived in Armenia. Neither taken separately, not in combination the institutional mechanisms existing in Armenia (besides the above-mentioned Department and the Deputy Minister that supervises it, there are Focal points for the implementation of the National Action Plan [Deputy Ministers and Deputy Regional Governors], Inter-Agency Commission on

³⁰ CEDAW A/57/38/ part III, para. 27, p. 150 (2002): "In May 2002 a decree of the Prime Minister had created the position of Deputy Minister for Women's Issues within the Ministry of Social Security. *The Deputy Minister* heads the Department of Women's Affairs, *coordinates all women-related activities of other ministries*, ensures collaboration with women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and *enforces compliance with the Convention*" (italicized by us – Authors).

³¹ According to the Recommendation, effective national machinery should: (a) Advise on the impact on women of all government policies; (b) Monitor the situation of women comprehensively; and (c) Help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination. See CEDAW Committee. *General Recommendation No. 6 "Effective National Machinery and Publicity"* (seventh session, 1988). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/index.html>

³² BPfA defines national machinery for the advancement of women as "the central policy-coordinating unit inside government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas." Beijing Platform for Action, para. 201. See also *Ibid.*, sub-para. (a) and (d).

³³ ABA/CELLI. *CEDAW ASSESSMENT TOOL REPORT ARMENIA*. Washington, DC, 2002, pp. 17-18, 89.

³⁴ *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010*. "Institutional reforms" section. Yerevan, 2004, p. 31 (in Armenian). See also: Republic of Armenia. *National Report*. 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. New York, 28 February-11 March 2005. Yerevan, 2005, p. 6. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm> ("Armenia", pp. 1-2, 11-12.); *The status of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality in the UNECE Region by country*. ECE/AC.28/2004/4/Add.2, p. 2 ? *National Machineries in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Progress and Challenges*." CPR 4. Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the BPfA, p. 7.



Gender Equality Issues, Children's Rights Departments in Regional Governors' Offices, Women's Council affiliated with the Prime Minister, Ombudsman's Office, Coalitions and Forums of women's NGOs, research and educational institutions set up by NGOs, etc.) do not meet the criteria for national machinery. None of those entities formulates or implements anti-discriminatory policies and a gender equality policy or coordinates the activities of the State bodies in this area.

As a result of the absence of the national machinery:

a) the fulfillment of the obligations under CEDAW and other Conventions and Covenants is held back;

b) the drafting of relevant laws is not initiated and international legal instruments are not submitted for ratification in due time;

c) effective implementation of the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society* is slowed down;

d) the strategy of mainstreaming gender into legislation and into political discourse is not carried out in full;

e) there is not adequate awareness of the necessity of ad hoc groups and of task forces and their establishment meets with logistical and organizational predicaments; gender dynamic is not tracked and the emergence of problematic situations is not given due consideration;

f) the expert potential of independent and government-run research centers, universities, NGOs, etc. is not effectively mobilized and tapped into;

g) coordination of operation of the existing institutional mechanisms is impeded;

h) gender inequality and sex-based discrimination in governance and decision-making as well as in women's representation in the legislative and executive branches of government are eliminated slowly.

At the same time the institutional mechanisms existing in Armenia encounter the following serious problems:

- Lack of political will necessary for a permanent solution of the problem of sex-based discrimination and for the attainment of gender equality;
- Lack of recognition of significance and importance of gender equality on the part of public officials in decision-making positions;
- Insufficiently clear mandate and functions of the existing institutional mechanisms;
- Marginalization of the institutions in the overall framework and layout of the State bodies; they are “ghettoized” in a social sphere and in the sphere of social security and a trend of their transfer to the central decision-making entities is not observed;
- Almost exclusive focus of the mechanisms only on such “women's issues” as motherhood, education, health care and social security of women, while due attention is not paid to their political and economic participation at the level of power and of control over the implementation of the decisions made;



- Substitution of institutional mechanisms with imitation mechanisms;
- Operation of a number of important structures (such as *Inter-Agency Commission on the Formulation of the National Action Plan for Improving the Status of Women*, the position of the *Adviser to the Prime Minister on Women's Issues* and *Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender Equality*) on a temporary basis;
- Frequent change of persons in charge, including in the leading Ministry³⁵;
- Inadequacy of financial and human resources, which leads to certain dependency on technical, financial and programmatic assistance of international donors;
- Lack of adequate potential and resources for conducting studies, monitoring and full-fledged gender analysis;
- Weak ties of the existing mechanisms with non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations:

In line with the recommendations of the international documents:

- to establish within the **Armenian Government** a national machinery that will become a key entity in formulating and implementing policies and strategy of the national conceptual framework for gender equality;
- to establish a National Council on Gender Policies affiliated with the **President of the Republic of Armenia**;
- to set up in the **National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia** a Commission on gender analysis of legislation and on control over the fulfillment of the international obligations assumed by Armenia;

To the Armenian Government:

- to enhance effectiveness of cooperation and communication among line Ministries and to expand powers of gender focal points;
- to prevent sex-based discrimination more efficiently with the use of special measures, affirmative action programs, policies, etc.;
- to incorporate representatives of the concerned non-governmental organizations into the national machinery to be established;
- to establish a joint civic and governmental National Commission on Gender Equality;
- to set up a research Center (which will have a status of an institute) on gender equality issues for working on and monitoring a vast array of issues related to gender mainstreaming of legislation and political practices.

³⁵ Within the past two and a half years 5 persons were appointed to and then dismissed from the position of the Deputy Minister in charge of women's issues.



Article 4

Temporary special measures

Problem:

- **Ineffectiveness and limited nature of temporary special measures taken in the country for redressing a gender imbalance in the legislative branch of government**

A. Electoral quotas. In its Concluding Comments to the second periodic Report submitted by the Armenian Government the CEDAW Committee recommended in 2002 to use quotas as a tool for correcting a gender imbalance in power. Out of a great variety of measures of positive discrimination only electoral quotas are used in this country. Provision of recommendations about the introduction of temporary quotas for ensuring women's representation in legislation is required by the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010*. The earlier 5% quota for women on political party lists that was provided as per the previous version of the Electoral Code could not help but be perceived as a discriminatory measure against women since it conflicted with the principles of representative democracy and with the recommendations of international organizations.

In November 2004, women leaders and activists of political parties and of women's non-governmental organizations initiated a motion on the introduction of a mandatory and balanced 25% gender quota that would make it possible to increase the number of female parliamentarians, as women are still an underrepresented group of the population. However, after consultations with the parliamentary majority a 15% quota was included in the country's Electoral Code (i.e. at least every 10th slot on a political party list was to be assigned to women). As a gender analysis of electoral processes shows, the quota merely reflected the already existing reality and was virtually unable to result in a significant increase of women's presence in the Parliament. According to the 2007 election data, the quota was instrumental in increasing the number of women on political party lists to 22.6% (as compared to 14.2% on the lists of political parties that ran for Parliament in 2003).

A number of sociological studies conducted in the country testify that the present-day gender composition of the Parliament does not reflect public views on the number of women that this society expects to be in the Parliament. Nevertheless, quotas as a tool for redressing a gender imbalance in the legislative branch of government are not perceived unequivocally by the political elite and by general public. Public opinion polls³⁶ have demonstrated that 37.8% of

³⁶ *Citizens' Awareness and Participation in Armenia*. IFES, Yerevan, 2004.



the surveyed men and 50.4% of the surveyed women support quotas. The expert opinions of both supporters and opponents of this measure do not go beyond usual arguments³⁷. The position held by the opponents boils down to the contentions that quotas are an unnatural, purely mechanistic measure that did not prove effective in the Soviet times, that the Parliament is not psychologically prepared yet for the adoption of significant quotas and that the introduction of the quotas can lead to serious conflicts inside the political parties. The position of quota supporters proceeds from the necessity of elimination of *stereotypes* entrenched in the public mind and of *detrimental political practices*. It is grounded in the belief that quotas are not a discriminatory but rather a compensatory measure that removes some obstacles, does not conflict with the principles of representative democracy and is of temporary nature. Besides, a quantitative breakthrough of women will in due time secure qualitative changes as well, as evidenced by the international practices.

On the whole, the studies demonstrate that opportunities for the use of special measures, in particular, of quotas for redressing a gender imbalance in decision-making are closely related to a number of factors. Those include issues of democracy within political parties, absence of the system of training for women that are political party activists, encouragement of women's leadership, elimination of public stereotypes and increase in women's self-confidence.

Recommendations:

To the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia :

- to review an issue of increasing the Electoral Code-required 15% quota of women's representation on political party lists to 25%;

To political parties:

- to take integrated measures on a gender-balanced nomination to strategic and leadership positions so as to attain a critical mass of women in power;
- to expand exchanges of experience with political parties of other countries that have a successful experience in achieving a gender balance and in using measures of positive discrimination;

³⁷ As evidenced by round table and focus groups discussions with the representatives of non-governmental organizations, political parties, public officials and members of Parliament that were held in the course of the "Gender representation in power and decision-making" study conducted within the framework of the *Monitoring of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals in the Republic of Armenia*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.



To the Armenian Government:

- review an issue of introducing positive measures that support women during the competitive selection and appointment for leadership positions in the executive branch;

To mass media:

- to launch a campaign explaining the necessity to use “positive discrimination” methods for the purpose of correcting a gender imbalance in the executive and legislative branches.

B. Special measures. In line with the CEDAW Committee’s recommendations in the Concluding Comments to the second periodic Report submitted by the Armenian Government, the prohibitive measures that aimed to protect motherhood have been substituted in the new Labor Code with recommendatory norms.

In the aftermath of the amendments to the Armenian Constitutions made in 2005, the principal tasks of the State are formulated as protection and patronage of family, motherhood and childhood (Article 48.1).

In the experts’ estimation, the country’s legislation, in particular the revised Labor (2004), Criminal (2003) and Family (2004) Codes incorporate quite a broad range of measures aimed at protecting motherhood both in the sphere of employment – for working women and in penal institutions – for women that serve their sentences. The Labor Code and the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia include special benefits and special treatment for pregnant women, for women with small children and for women that have many children. In particular, employers are forbidden to dismiss pregnant women and women with small children and to refuse to hire women on grounds of their being pregnant or having small children.

Pregnant women and employees that provide care to a child of under three years of age can be assigned to work in night shifts, overtime and/or on weekends and holidays only by consent. The Labor Code also enables other family members, including fathers, to make use of a child-rearing leave in case of children under three years of age. It is definitely a step forward within the context of promotion of harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia affords those pregnant women and women with children under 14 years of age who are convicted to up to 3 years in prison (except women sentenced to more than 5 years in prison for grave and extremely grave crimes) an opportunity of getting a temporary reprieve or exemption from serving the sentence within the period equal to the duration of a pregnancy and maternity leave as well as until the child becomes three-years’ old. The legislation also provides pregnant women and women that have a child (children) under three years of age with improved conditions for serving their sentences.



To the Armenian Government:

- raise people's awareness of the legislative amendments targeting protection of family, motherhood and children;

Article 5

Modifying social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women

Problems:

- **Prevalence of gender stereotypes in the Armenian society**
- **Lack of Government's measures aimed to eliminate gender stereotypes and manifestations of sexism**
- **Reproduction and perpetuation of a stereotyped portrayal of women in the media**

In 2002, in its Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee expressed its concern over the deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes in the family and society and recommended that the State party take measures to eliminate stereotypes via gender education.

Public opinion polls show that stereotypical attitudes and perceptions constitute a formidable obstacle in the way of women's advancement. However, affecting a public mind is a daunting problem because its solution encounters resistance of the inherited traditions and customs, changing or abolishing which is far from easy.

According to the findings of the sociological study *Electoral democracy: Is there an alternative to it in Armenia?*³⁸, 74.0% of the surveyed women and 56.5% of men believe that women should engage in politics, thereby rejecting, at least at the opinion level, the prejudice that politics is not for women. At the same time 28.8% of the male and 17.3% of the female respondents believe that women should not get into politics. In the experts' view, quite a high percentage of men and presence of women among those surveyed that supported the view cannot help but cause concern. When almost one third of the surveyed men with a university-level education cling to a stereotype, it is already a critical mass that can become a reference group, which makes a considerable impact on the formation of ideals, beliefs, attitudes and values as well as of patterns of conduct.

As evidenced by the findings of the sociological survey conducted in 2005³⁹, the respondents pointed at the traditional mentality of the society and then to the socioeconomic hard-

³⁸ *Electoral democracy: Is there an alternative to it in Armenia?* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2003.

³⁹ *Political participation in transition society: A gender equality dimension.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2006.



ships of the transition period as the most outstanding factors among those that impede the attainment of gender harmony in power. When trying to justify the alienation of women from politics, the respondents resort to a number of myths, which on close examination, turn out to be stereotypes that pose as new models of mentality. Among those are “Women do not wish to be nominated because they are wary of dirty methods of political struggle” or “There are no suitable female candidacies.”

The media monitoring of the presence of women’s expert opinions in print media revealed that Armenia occupies one of the lowest ranks among the 8 post-Soviet countries⁴⁰. Women’s expert opinions are virtually not reflected in the press. That fact supports the contention that gender policy in the media is non-existent. As a result, women are further stereotyped as unable to display socio-political activism and to make an impact on decision-making. There has in this country been no practice of combating sexism. The State does not react to sexism in commercials and in the media.

Until recently gender education was provided only in the system of non-formal education and only by local non-governmental organizations. Women’s organizations took upon themselves the function of *developing* women’s leadership potential, *shaping* women’s active civic stance, *imparting* organizational skills and *enhancing* statesmanship mentality, *eliminating* gender stereotypes still prevalent in the society and *changing* views on the role of women in the Armenian society. The **process of gender education institutionalization** initiated by the NGO sector is a distinctive feature of recent years. The Center for Gender Studies of Armenian Association of Women with University Education together with the Ministry of Education and Science have been carrying out the institutionalization of gender education **in 10 universities** in Yerevan, Vanadzor and Gyumri and **in 30 secondary schools** all over the country. *Conceptual framework for State policies in the field of gender education* and *Model State standards for gender education* have been designed, the existing syllabi of gender subjects have been improved and new ones drawn up and 20 interdisciplinary and special gender courses are taught. In order to facilitate teaching the textbooks, manuals and teachers’ guides and collections of scholarly papers have been produced and published. A similar set of materials for secondary schools *Lessons of Gender Knowledge* is being piloted. It includes a textbook, recommendations for teachers on teaching methods and gender education standard and a syllabus.

Within the last few years the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies implemented educational programs within the framework of projects *Gender awareness and gender sensitivi-*

⁴⁰ *Women’s opinions in the mirror of the media: Findings of the monitoring of print media in 8 CIS countries.* Kavkazia Coalition, Tbilisi, 2005.



ty: Prerequisites for parity democracy and Gender knowledge as a prerequisite for the development of democratic culture and legal consciousness. Implemented with support from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Warsaw), these programs demonstrate that gradually a positive attitude towards gender equality is emerging in the society and that students that took gender courses tend to internalize such democratic values as respect for women's civic stand and for their right to participate in sociopolitical life.

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to introduce gender education on a broader scale into secondary schools and universities with a view to developing egalitarian, democratic culture among young generations and of eliminating stereotypical views on women's place and role in the society;
- to support the activities of Centers for Gender Studies aimed to disseminate gender knowledge and to raise awareness of all segments of the population;
- in cooperation with women's NGOs, to start a practice of encouraging the media to provide coverage of gender issues, to stage contests for the best materials on the issue, to launch campaigns and public events to eliminate sexist approaches and other discriminatory practices in the media, in commercials and in other sources of information;
- to contribute to the emergence of models of partnership between NGOs, media and power structures for the elimination of gender stereotypes and for advocacy of women's socio-political activism and to contribute to the formulation of gender policies of mass media;
- in cooperation with the institutions of civil society, to take measures to protect the society from the manifestations of all kinds of sex-based discrimination and to prevent negative practices that discredit the idea of gender equality.

Article 6

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

Problems:

- **Inadequacy of measures taken to suppress trafficking**
- **Lack of solid data on trafficking and prostitution**



In its 2002 Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee paid special attention to the issues of domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking and urged the Armenian Government to formulate a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking.

In December 2002 the Armenian Government made a decision to establish an inter-ministerial Commission to combat trafficking in people. The Commission is composed of the representatives of a number of Ministries such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labor & Social Issues as well as of the representatives of the parliamentary Standing Committee on State & Legal Issues, of the Office of the Government, Department on Migration & Refugees, National Statistical Service, Office of the Prosecutor General, Customs Committee and *Zvartnots* Airport. The new Criminal Code, which was adopted in 2003, contains special articles that mete out more harsh punishment for this crime. Armenia acceded to a number of international legal instruments that seek to combat trafficking.

In recent years domestic non-governmental organizations and the media got actively involved in the efforts to combat trafficking. The major thrust of their activities is on preventive measures, including educating people, raising the level of legal literacy of potential victims, cooperating with law enforcement authorities, and providing legal assistance to individuals that ended up in slavery and in porno business through scam. Special efforts are made to reach out to young people and to shield children from trafficking. Nevertheless, these measures are not sufficient to root out that phenomenon.

A major problem consists in assessing the scope of the phenomenon. On the one hand, reliable data on prostitution and trafficking are not available. On the other hand, the abundance of *employment agencies* that promise to Armenian citizens permanent and well-paid jobs abroad, of matchmaking agencies and various internet sites that offer similar services suggests that the scope of this phenomenon can be much broader than the cases identified by the Armenian Police. According to the data provided by the Department to combat trafficking in drugs and persons, the Government investigated 32 trafficking cases in 2005 on the charges of pimping and trafficking (under Article 132 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia), resulting in 14 prosecutions and 17 convictions. Only 7 accused were sentenced to imprisonment. All the others got off with conditional sentences, correctional labor or fines. The US Department of State's Report *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons* published in June 2006 regards that number as too low and the penalties as insufficient and not commensurate with those for other equally grave crimes under Article 132 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia is placed in that Report in the *Tier 2 Watch List* category of countries, i.e. among the countries whose governments fail to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons. The Report



says, *inter alia*, “Armenia is a major source and, to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation largely to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Turkey.”

According to the data of the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia, 182 women were subjected in 2006 to sexual exploitation; treatment of 30 of those women is punishable under Article 132 of the Criminal Code (“trafficking”). 36 out of 182 women were exploited in Armenia, 10 in Turkey and 136 in the United Arab Emirates.

At present the inter-ministerial Commission to combat trafficking in people is drawing up a new National Action Plan.

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to step up, in cooperation with NGOs and the media, efforts to educate socio-economically vulnerable groups of the population that are potential victims of trafficking;

To the judicial bodies:

- To create precedents of applying the maximum penalty envisioned by the Criminal Code for trafficking and to provide wide media coverage of those cases.



PART II

Article 7

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

Problems:

- **Defeminization of power and underrepresentation of women in decision-making at all levels of the executive branch, in bodies of territorial administration and in local self-governments**
- **Non-competitiveness of women in parliamentary and local elections in the Republic of Armenia**
- **Women have limited leverage on the country's domestic and foreign policies**

Women in power. In its 2002 Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee stressed that it was concerned that women are underrepresented in decisionmaking and political bodies. The analysis of the most recent data on women's representation in decisionmaking testifies that discriminatory practices in that area have not been overcome yet.

In the **executive** branch, as regards the political positions⁴¹ that take part in political decisionmaking, women are represented today only in one position – that of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia.

Among the holders of 65 discretionary positions of Deputy Ministers that can make an impact on political decisionmaking there are only two women, or 3.0%. There are no women among advisers to the country's President or Prime Minister. 6 women are advisors to a Minister in 4 (out of 15) Ministries. There is only one woman among Regional Governors (out of 10) and only one position of a Deputy Governor (out of 17) is held by woman.

⁴¹ Under the Armenian legislation, the hierarchy in public administration is broken down into three categories of positions: political, discretionary and civil servants.



Very few top positions in the civil service are occupied by women. The analysis of sex-disaggregated data on civil servants of the Republic of Armenia has revealed preponderance of men among the holders of top (89.6% are men and 10.4% are women) and chief (65.1% are men and 34.9% are women) positions and, vice versa, women outnumber men by far among the leading and junior staff (men and women account for 39.3% and 60.7% respectively).

Gender imbalance in decisionmaking becomes manifest only when data are sex-disaggregated by individual groups of employees in the executive branch, i.e. in the Office of the Armenian President, in the Government and in the Ministries. National Statistical Service data, according to which women account for 46.5% of the personnel in the Office of the Armenian President, 53.9% of Office of the Prime Minister and a vast majority in a number of Ministries, do not reflect real underrepresentation of women at a decisionmaking level in those structures.

Table: Breakdown of civil servants by level of position and by sex

<i>Civil servants in power structures</i>	Men				Women			
	Top	Chief	Leading	Junior	Top	Chief	Leading	Junior
Office of the Armenian President	8	39	12	3	3	24	13	5
Office of the Prime Minister	11	48	11	0	3	27	26	3
Ministries	52	885	529	226	4	525	792	483

(As reported by the Civil Service Council, 2005)

In the Office of the Armenian President, of the 11 top-level civil service positions only three positions of the Division Head are occupied by women. In the Office of the Prime Minister, of the top 14 top positions only three positions of the Division Head. Other female employees in those Offices are civil servants of lower qualifications. Under the Law on Civil Service, their positions do not entail responsibility not only for political but also for professional decisions. A gender composition of staff in all Ministries basically follows this pattern.

The dynamics of women's representation in the legislative branch confirms the necessity to use urgent measures to secure a quantitative "breakthrough" in terms of their presence in the country's National Assembly.

**Table: Dynamics of men's and women's representation in the National Assembly**

Year	Percentage	
	Women	Men
1990	3.7%	96.3%
1995	6.3%	93.7%
1999	3.1%	96.9%
2003	5.3%	94.7%
2007	9.1%	90.9%

In the 2003 parliamentary elections only 6 women were elected to the Parliament through the proportional representation system. The analysis of the party lists of the 17 political parties and 4 blocs that ran in those elections gives us grounds to contend that women had but a slim chance for success even in the proportional representation system, which is regarded as favorable for women, since female nominees were for the most part placed at the bottom of the lists.

In the 2007 elections, when the 15% quota of women's presence on the political parties' lists (requiring that women should hold at least every tenth slot) had already taken effect, already twelve women got into the Parliament. On the whole, 22 political parties and one bloc that were running for the Parliament had 297 women out of 1,313 candidates on their lists, i.e. 22.6%. For comparison, in the 2003 parliamentary elections there were 162 women out of 1,143 candidates, i.e. 14.1%.

There were 27 women in the top ten positions on party lists in the 2003 elections and 37 women in 2007. Only 6 women were included in the top five positions on those lists in 2003, while in 2007, there were already 17 women in those positions, with only a half of the all the political parties running for the Parliament displaying such initiative. All things considered, the introduced quota had made a positive impact. However, it is an insufficient measure since women's representation in the most of the parliamentary caucuses turned out to be much lower than the 15% secured on the party lists.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections, woman was elected only in one out of 56 single member constituencies (majoritarian system) and in the 2007 elections, in none. Only 18 women were nominated through that system in 2003 (constituting 4.4% of all the candidates nominated through that system), and in 2007, only 5 women (3.7%). The study of the dynamics of women's participation in the parliamentary elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007 through the majoritarian system discovered a continued decrease in the number of women nominated



through the single member constituencies (a tenfold decrease in comparison with year 1999). Given a reduction in the number of such constituencies, in percentage terms it means a decline from 6.6% in 1999 to 3.7% in 2007.

The analysis of the opinions of the women-candidates that have an experience of running for the Parliament makes it possible to identify the following reasons why single member constituencies are “unpopular” for women:

- High degree of commercialization of elections
- Women’s lack of financial resources
- Tough competition in single member constituencies
- Wide use of “dirty” technologies
- Imperfections of the electoral legislation
- Lack of political experience
- Absence of support from women’s organizations

At the level of local governments and bodies of regional administration the gender breakdown of employees in regional administrations (i.e. in Offices of Regional Governors and in Yerevan City Hall⁴²) follows the same pattern that was identified in the civil service, viz. women occupy 8.3% of top-level positions and up to 62% of junior positions.

The analysis of the representation of men and women in elective offices in local governments reveals the same trends of gender imbalance. In none of the 47 cities and towns in this country does woman occupy an elective office of a mayor.

The studies of local elections show a low level of women’s participation, even though running for local government would help them obtain political experience that facilitates their subsequent political career. The dynamics of the number of women nominated and elected during the latest three local Councils elections (in 1999, 2002 and 2005) did not undergo marked changes fluctuating from 4.7% in 1999 to 6.2% in 2005.

The percentage of women heading local governments is even lower. The analysis shows that in most cases women head the most problematic communities and villages in borderline areas of the country. Women constituted 2.7% among the community heads after the 1999 elections, 1.96% after the 2002 elections (all of them in rural communities) and 2.1% after the 2005 elections (again exclusively in rural communities). During the 2005 local elections women for the first time ran for mayoralty in 5 towns of Armenia. Even though none of them was elected, the very fact of nomination of women for the position of a head of local government is positive. It should be noted that within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals the Armenian Government assumed

⁴² Until the constitutional amendments were made in October 2005 Yerevan had a status of *marz* (region)



an obligation to have 10% women among community heads by 2015. However, the dynamics observed so far calls the attainment of that goal into question.

In the country's **judiciary** women constitute 20% of the judges, i.e. practically every fifth judge is woman. Women comprise 36% among attorneys-at-law.

Only 8% of the prosecutors are women, with only one woman occupying a position of a prosecutor of a region. Women make up only 6% of employees in the prosecutors' offices and only 2% among investigators in those offices. 46% of staff in the Ministry of Justice are women but gender balance is maintained due to prevalence of women in middle and low ranks.

Women in political parties. According to the most recent data, there are around 80 registered political parties in the country. Of those, only five are headed by women. The women-headed parties do not play a prominent role in Armenian politics. Only one of them took part in the 2007 parliamentary elections.

In its Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee expressed its concern that level of **women's participation in political parties** is less than 20 per cent.

The analysis of women's membership and activism in political parties has brought to light a number of discernible trends. The situation has changed and women on the average comprise 38% of the membership of some high-profile political parties. Even though the membership of many of the country's political parties is gender balanced, the percentage of women in the leadership positions in those parties is not commensurate with their share of the party membership. Women are underrepresented in decision-making in political parties and do not make an impact on the development of democracy within parties.

Women's activism dramatically increases during election campaigns. However, the experience that they have accumulated does not affect positively the inclusion of women in political party lists during the elections. Gender issues are not reflected in the programs of the political parties, while women's issues are addressed only within the broader context of family, motherhood and childhood issues.

Women's unions that were formed in some political parties have yet to provide a favorable environment for women's successful political careers. Political parties have not yet set up a system for training and promoting women. Most political parties provide gender-neutral training to their memberships, i.e. without taking a gender component into consideration. The absence of the system for training women is a part of a serious problem for many political parties of a deficit of experienced and professionally competent cadre. As a result, some of their members, including women, that are appointed to political positions do not stay long in those positions.



Certain changes have taken place in the country as regards women's involvement and representation in the NGO sector. As evidenced by a number of sociological surveys⁴³, women's organizations constitute the most active segment of the civil society. The surveyed respondents indicated charitable organizations as the most efficient NGOs, with women's NGOs coming second, thus showing that they enjoy public popularity.

According to the data of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, since 1991 over 4,500 non-governmental organizations have been registered in Armenia. By experts' estimates, about 700 of those organizations operate actively or relatively actively. 60 of them are women's NGOs, with 30% of them operating in the country's regions. Considering that women constitute 51.8% of the Armenian population, only a very small percentage of the country's women are involved in the civic movement.

The study of the Armenian civil society has identified the following 4 major spheres of operation of women's organizations: *socio-political issues and protection of women's rights and interests, promotion of women's business and professional activities, provision of social services and charity and elimination of violence against women.*

The present-day stage of development of women's civic sector in Armenia is characterized by the expansion of geography and operation spheres of women's NGOs and by a higher level of integration into the international women's movement. Women's NGOs professionalism is on the rise due to, *inter alia*, of involvement the country's great research potential. At present women's NGOs have a research potential in the field of gender studies, provide legal and gender education and are engaged in designing and introducing gender courses into the Armenian systems of secondary and higher education. The organization of women's leadership schools and higher political courses for women leaders and activists of the civil society and political parties is a characteristic feature of recent years.

In its Concluding comments, the CEDAW Committee expressed its concern over the fact that the cooperation between the State party and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Convention had been limited. Within the reporting period many women's organizations gained experience of social partnerships with the authorities and strengthened their influence and significance. There are examples of partnerships with the Government in the implementation of social programs and there has been some progress in cooperation on the fulfillment of international obligations in the field of gender equality. However, given the non-existence of laws on social commission, lobbying and charity as well as other regulatory and normative legal Acts the social partnership between the authorities and NGOs has not yet emerged as an institution. The NGO sector cannot yet rely on State support for its development

⁴³ *Elections and democracy: A civil society factor.* AAWUE, Yerevan, 2003.



and implements the majority of its initiatives within the framework of international grant programs.

At this stage women's organizations have not yet taken shape institutionally as a women's movement. A critical mass of active women's NGOs has not yet emerged and their activities are not consolidated. A clear program of joint activities have not been charted yet and independence and autonomy of women's organizations from government structures and influential political, economic and other forces is not always secured.

Women's NGOs have not yet become a force that would wield leverage on social processes in Armenia. In many women's NGO leaders' estimation, a degree of their impact on the unfolding political processes and on the policies underlying current reforms is minimal. Some women's NGOs avoid raising and addressing political issues.

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to introduce positive measures that would support women in competitive selection and appointments to leadership positions in the executive branch,
- to exercise permanent control over and evaluation of the implementation of the measures for the advancement of women to power and decision-making in line with the National Action Plan and to examine regularly the gender breakdown of civil servants in all ranks,
- to create within the framework of the Civil Service Council a database of the pool of eligible female candidates and to introduce a gender component into the training system for administrative cadre through the Academy of Public Administration;

To the National Statistical Service:

- to expand the use of methods of gender statistics and of the international gender indices, in particular of the Gender Empowerment Measure, for conducting an on-going monitoring of the advancement of women;

To the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia:

- to increase the temporary quotas, which were introduced by Elections Law, to 25% so as to move closer to a gender balance in the legislative branch;

To political parties:

- to establish mechanisms for the advancement of women to governing bodies of political parties with a view to training a pool of future leaders.



PART III

Article 10

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of education

Problems:

- **Certain risks of girls' declining attendance in the system of comprehensive general secondary education**
- **Gender segregation by professional specialties in institutions of higher learning**
- **Inadequate women's involvement in the formulation and implementation of educational policies**

The Armenian Constitution guarantees basic general mandatory education for free. The overwhelming majority of school-age children regardless of their sex have an opportunity to enjoy that constitutional right. Thus, girls accounted for 49.4% and 49.2% of the total number of students in government-run comprehensive schools in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years respectively. In 2005-2006 academic year, girls made up 47.8% of the total number of elementary grade students and 48.8% among the students in 4th-8th grades. In 2005-2006, girls constituted 51.3% of the total number of students in senior high schools. The percentages correspond to the girls' shares in relevant age groups⁴⁴.

As evidenced by the 2001 Census data, literacy level in Armenia amounted to 99.5%⁴⁵. At the same time, in recent years the risk of children, including girls, dropping out of the comprehensive general secondary education system has been on the rise. This trend is observable starting with elementary grades, with numbers varying considerably from region to region. In Lori region 13.6%, in Ararat region 12.5%, in Kotayk region 11.2%, in Aragatsotn region 9.0%

⁴⁴ www.armstat.am 2006 Statistical Yearbook.

⁴⁵ See www.armstat.am, Table 3.1 "Permanent (urban and rural) residents broken down by education, sex and age."



and in Vayots dzor region 8.3% of girls from the relevant age group do not attend elementary school⁴⁶. That increases the potential risk of growth in illiteracy rate, aggravation of poverty and marginalization of women.

The data published by the National Statistical Service are not sufficient to track the dynamics of changes in the percentage of girls that drop out from the basic school as compared to dropout boys. However, as to the 2004 data, girls constituted 28.0% of those who did not finish basic school⁴⁷. Students that do not attend junior high school point at lack of desire to go to school (47.0%), bad socioeconomic conditions (3.0%) and parents' prohibition (2.5%) among other reasons for non-attendance⁴⁸. Other reasons may include the use of child labor on the privatized lands, a vast distance from their homes to schools owing to a reduction of the number of schools (particularly in rural areas) because of the optimization of the education system, etc.

As a result of the schools optimization program, since 2003-2004 academic year 72 schools in urban areas and 29 in rural areas were closed down. Thus, the number of comprehensive schools decreased by 6.8% (or by 11.9% in urban and 3.3% in rural areas). Given the fact that women comprise 83.0% of the teaching staff in secondary schools, it was women who took the brunt of the staff reductions.

According to the 2004 data, 104 government-run preschool institutions were not operated. In the system of preschool education almost 100.0% of the staff are women; therefore, the closure of an enormous number of preschool institutions resulted in loss of jobs by women, in reduction of the number of children attending those institutions and in loss of opportunity for women with young children to go to work⁴⁹.

The number of young women in further and higher education system has increased. Thus, while in 2002-2003 academic year young women made up 67.0% of the overall number of students in the government-run institutions of further education and 75.6% in non-governmental ones, in 2004-2005 the numbers were 67.9% and 81.4% respectively. Young women accounted for 49.7% of students in government-run institutions of higher learning (IHLs) and 67.1% in non-governmental IHLs in 2002-2003 academic year, and in 2004-2005 academic year 52.2% and 67.8% respectively⁵⁰.

Women comprise 58.0% among holders of university-level degrees in the country⁵¹. According to the data of the National Statistical Service, in 2005-2006 academic year young

⁴⁶ *Gender analysis of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper of the Republic of Armenia*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2006, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Calculated on the basis of data from the statistical publication *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia for 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Calculated on the basis of data from the statistical publication *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia for 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 11.

⁵⁰ *Statistical Yearbooks of the Republic of Armenia* of 2003 and 2006.

⁵¹ *Gender Situation in Armenia*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2005, p. 45.



women prevailed numerically in almost all departments in the government-run IHLs, with the exception of Law, Agriculture, Transportation & Communications and Industry & Construction, where women constitute 35.0%, 30.0%, 13.0% and 27.0% respectively. No programs are being implemented in Armenia that would encourage girls and women to select careers, which are non-traditional for their sex. Nonetheless, the level of gender segregation in the above departments in the government-run IHLs has slightly decreased in comparison with the previous reporting period. In non-governmental IHLs young women prevail numerically even in the departments that were traditionally regarded as men's. The situation can be accounted for by the fact that students in non-governmental IHLs are not granted deferment from military service. Thus, in the departments of Law and Industry & Construction in those IHLs young women account for 50.0% and 69.0% of the student body respectively⁵².

In the post-university system of education young women made up 34.3% of graduate students (*aspirantura*) in 2002 and 36.4% in 2004 and in post-graduate studies (*doktorantura*) 21.4% and 26.7% respectively. Women accounted for 34.0% of *Candidate of Sciences* degree holders in 2001 and for 40.4% in 2004 and for 17.0% and 16.6% for holders of Doctor of Sciences degree in 2001 and 2004 respectively⁵³.

In recent years the system of education has been undergoing reforms with a view to bringing it closer to international standards and joining the Bologna process. However, women do not take adequate part in planning and implementation of the educational policies. Not a single woman holds a top position in the Ministry of Education & Science. The positions of Minister and three Deputy Ministers are occupied by men. While women constitute 58.0% of the Ministry's staff, the positions they occupy do not enable them to have an impact on policies in education sector, even though that is grossly inadequate for the education system, since women outnumber men in it by far. There is only one woman among Presidents of the government-run universities. In the system of non-governmental higher education only 15 out of 77 IHLs are headed by women⁵⁴.

Recommendations:

To the Ministry of Education & Science:

- to design and carry out measures that would reduce dropout risks for girls in the system of complete secondary education;

⁵² Statistical publication *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia for 2005*. Yerevan, 2006.

⁵³ Calculated on the basis of data from the statistical publication *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia for 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 122.

⁵⁴ *Gender Situation in Armenia*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2005, p. 49.



- to conduct workshops for parents and to reach out to individual families to explain significance of education for the future of their children;
- to devise support program that will encourage girls and young women to select vocations and professions in technical and natural-science fields and to embark on careers in science;
- to continue efforts aimed at institutionalizing gender education that seeks to raise awareness and to change gender stereotypes regarding women's roles and responsibilities in families and in all spheres of public life.

Article 11

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment

Problems:

- **Horizontal and vertical segregation in the field of employment**
- **Limited opportunities for the career growth of women**

In its Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee expressed concern at the higher level of women's unemployment than men's in this country, at the absence of equal employment opportunities and at the lack of sex-disaggregated data relating to employment issues.

According to the data of the National Statistical Service, women account for 71.2% of the officially registered unemployed. The number of employment-seeking individuals officially registered by the State Employment Service as of end of August 2006 reached 110,700, of whom 98,900 individuals were unemployed. The demand/supply ratio on the labor market is 1:107, with the overwhelming majority of vacancies being for laborers. However, the Employment Service data cannot reflect latent unemployment, including that of women. According to the findings of the sample study of the workforce, the unemployment level in Armenia in 2003 comprised 31.2%.

The dynamics of the subsequent years demonstrates that despite some increase in employment and reduction of unemployment of women, in case of men the trend is more pronounced and more active. As to the statistical data, the level of official unemployment was 12.7% in 2005. As of October 1, 2005, the total number of individuals registered by the employment services throughout the country totaled 91,700; of those 64,600, or 70.4%, are women. Among the latter the overwhelming majority were urban women (94.5%). The number of jobless women that have had a status of the unemployed for over twelve months causes considerable concern.



Only 33,543 women were secured job placements by employment agencies within the period of 1998-2005. Women over 50 are in a particularly difficult situation in terms of getting and keeping a job. As a result of a long period of unemployment they lose qualification and in order to get a job they need not only adequate professional training but also, not infrequently, moral and psychological support and rehabilitation.

With a view to reducing the mismatch between demand and supply, in 1998-2005 the employment agencies organized professional training in accounting, organization of small businesses, farming, computer design and clerical work and treatment of gems and vocational training to produce office assistants, tailors, carpet weavers, salespersons, nurse-teachers for kindergartens and hairdressers. Only 2,541 women received that training, even though they constitute 95.0% among those who wish to get professional or vocational training. According to the statistical data, due to retraining, the level of women's employment slightly grew in 2005 as compared to 2004 (86.3% and 87.3% respectively), while the level of official unemployment went down from 13.7% to 12.7%.

As discovered by some studies⁵⁵, the problems that make women uncompetitive and discriminated against on the labor market include insufficient access of women to financial, credit and property institutions, ownership and land, their de facto exclusion from privatization and from relatively profitable sectors of economy as well as their lack of social and legal protection. As to the 2003 data, in the total number of the employed persons the status of employee had 48.0%, of self-employed 34.0% and of employer 16.0% of women, while among employed men the figures were 52.0%, 66.0% and 84.0% respectively.

The Armenian Constitution enshrines the principle of equal remuneration for equal work. The Law on labor remuneration (2001) prohibits discrimination in remuneration for work *de jure*. However, de facto, as a result of **vertical (unequal access to career hierarchies) and horizontal (by professions, occupations and sectors) segregation of the labor market** the monthly wages and salaries of working women comprised 53.0% of men's wages and salaries in 2006. It should be noted that actually that figure reflects positive dynamics as compared to 2003, when gender gap in remuneration was even higher and women's pay constituted merely 39.0% of men's.

Gender gap in remuneration of work is mostly, although not exclusively, an outcome of concentration of women in low-paid sectors that depend on State subsidies such as health care,

⁵⁵ *Gender situation in Armenia: Consequences of the transformation processes and empowerment of women within the MDGs context*. AAWUE, Yerevan, 2005. *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2006.



education and science. In better paid sectors, such as banking, where salaries are 3.3 times higher than the average salaries and wages in the economy as a whole, average monthly earnings of women constitute 47.0% of men's, i.e. less than a half. It is noteworthy that changes in professional segregation also take the direction that is unfavorable for women. Thus, an influx of men into the traditionally women-staffed service sector has been occurring in recent years because of growing wages in the sector, while, on the other hand, women are gradually being pushed out from the banking sphere with high-paid jobs. There are no (as in construction sector) or few (as in transportation or communications sectors or in power industry) opportunities for women. The share of women in industries is on the decline. Women's employment went down also in commerce, housing and communal services and in credit and insurance spheres, i.e. the number of women in a sector is in inverse proportion to the level of earnings in it. Women's labor in Armenia is used primarily in spheres with low pays, *viz.* in health care, education and public catering.

No less discernible is gender segregation based on form of ownership. In the government-owned sector, where salaries are lower, women outnumber men. The analysis of the structure of employment of men and women shows that gender differences in the remuneration are further aggravated by prevalence of women in low-paid segments of the labor market and mitigated by a high educational level that women have and that contributes to a reduction in a wage (salary) gap. Those differences are but hidden discrimination in employment and remuneration. The existing professional and career segregation reflects gender stereotypes of social roles of men and women, which are predominant in this society and which have an adverse impact on the structure of economy, lead to gender imbalance and reinforce hidden discrimination.

The main problem for women in Armenia is not so much access to jobs as **discrimination in hiring**, when education and qualification notwithstanding, women find themselves entirely dependent on employer's preferences. Women usually get short-term contracts and temporary jobs and do not work full day. They are first to be dismissed and laid off, in most cases without a sound reason. When they have no other option, employees agree to work part-time. In health care sector, as a result of the optimization quite a large percentage of female doctors work *de facto* a full day, even though officially they are registered as working part-time.

Even though the level of complexity of most jobs has remained virtually the same within the past ten years, employers, taking advantage of the situation on the labor market, make exceeding demands on the level of professional training of employees. The abundance of applicants vying for vacant jobs helped to make selection more rigorous. Employers started to pay more attention to the prestige of the IHL, to knowledge of a foreign language, to computer literacy, to age and (to no less extent) to good looks of a candidate.

Until recently women's **housework** was not measured or reflected in the national statistics.



The study of the structure of the time allocation is very important from the perspective of equal distribution of employment, of the assessment of the contribution that men and women make to the country's economic and public life and of equal distribution of family obligations and childcare responsibilities. The sociological surveys data show that 26.0% of women and 16.0% of men regard double burden as a main factor that impedes women's political and professional careers⁵⁶.

Lately some positive changes became visible in the study of gender aspects of employment and of housework assessment. In 2005, the National Statistical Service conducted a study of time budgeting in Armenia with the financial support from the Swedish Agency for International Development. The study presented a detailed picture of the time spent by men and women for paid and unpaid (house)work and discovered that, all things considered, women spend 5 times more time on housework than men. The study of the structure of men's and women's time allocation can be seen as a first step towards the implementation of the recommendations of international documents, including the CEDAW Convention, concerning promotion of balanced distribution of work responsibilities and family obligations of women and men. The conclusions reached by experts highlight the task of assessing women's household work in the total budget of time as well as the necessity of taking specific measures to take those assessments into account at a State level, in particular, in the pension provision for women.

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to design measures guaranteeing equal rights for women and men in getting bank loans and credits, to encourage those financial institutions that give low-interest loans to women or provide services to women-headed small enterprises or enterprises bringing little profit;
- to design special programs to stimulate women's entrepreneurship, to design socioeconomic measures aimed at improving investment policies and at priority development of the sectors that will be instrumental in assisting the most efficient solution of economic development problems taking into consideration the establishment of subsidiary production targeting women's employment, including work to be done at home, including work related to the use of information technologies;
- to design and take – in social partnership with NGOs – specific measures to expand services provision in raising economic and legal literacy, technical assistance and business-educational programs as well as women's awareness-raising of their economic rights with a

⁵⁶ *Political participation in transition society: A gender equality dimension.* AAWUE. Yerevan, 2006.



view to eliminating instances of sex-based discrimination in the field of employment and access to resources.

Article 12

Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of health care

Problems:

Inaccessibility of quality health care services for women, including in the field of reproductive health

- **Unawareness of contemporary family planning methods**
- **Declining birthrates and rising death rates**

In its Concluding comments in 2002 the CEDAW Committee was concerned about severe limitation of women's access to health care, the status of women's health, the increase in the rate of maternal mortality and the widespread use of abortion as a commonly used means of birth control.

The Armenian Government approved a primary health care strategy for 2003-2008. While formulating the policy of reforming and developing health care, the Government focused on the issues of mothers' and children's health care. Within the reporting period the Republic of Armenia Law *On reproductive health and reproductive human rights* (2002) was adopted and the following Government of Armenia's Decrees were issued: *On approving the mothers' and children's health care strategy for 2003-2015*, *On approving the procedure and terms and conditions for provision of gametes by reproductive donors by citizens that are not reproductive donors as well as for storage of the provided gametes and embryos* (2003) and *On approving the procedure and terms and conditions for induced abortions* (2004).

According to the Health Care Agency data on the use of the budgetary funding in 2004, out of the entire sum spent on the provision for free of the State-commissioned hospital health care only 42.0% of that amount went to cover the costs of treatment of women. Only 38.0% of the amount allocated for the provision for free of hospital health care to socially vulnerable and special groups of population was spent on women⁵⁷. Thus, aside from the Government spending on women's reproductive functions, women make use of health care service less frequently than men and less money is spent on their treatment.

⁵⁷ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2006.



The optimization of the health care system left intact all maternity hospitals and obstetrics departments in 13 rural Health centers. Obstetric-gynecologic assistance in Armenia is provided in 2 specialized national centers, 10 individual maternity hospitals, 44 obstetric-gynecologic stationary and outpatients' departments in district and town hospitals, 125 antenatal centers and rooms and 608 rural aid posts that provide medical and obstetric assistance⁵⁸. The medical staff/population ratio is still high in Armenia. According to the 2005 data, there were 38.2 doctors of every description and 57 middle-level medical personnel per 10,000 residents⁵⁹.

There are serious problems with health care provision in rural areas since not all villages are equipped with medical aid posts⁶⁰ and the overwhelming majority of the population cannot afford paying the transportation costs. Women do not go to see a doctor, in particular a gynecologist; as a result, women are not taken proper care of during pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that gynecologists and obstetricians work only in district centers and in urban medical institutions.

These problems are solved only in some regions where there are family doctors that are authorized to provide care and medical attention to women during pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period. However, the number of family doctors is still quite limited and does not meet the existing needs. There is a marked difference in the level of health care provision between Yerevan with its concentration of well-equipped leading clinics and other regions of the country.

Against the background of the falling morbidity rates in Armenia, the number of patients diagnosed for the first time is on the rise, with women constituting 19.0% in that group⁶¹. The mortality rate does not go down.

The State commissions provision of health services for free concerning reproductive functions and health care for mothers and children. Regardless of a social situation and status of a woman in childbirth, the childbirth is for free. However, the amount of 44,000 AMD (\$ 120-130) allocated by the State suffices at best to cover the costs in case of normal childbirth that does not call for additional medical intervention. As a result of rampant corruption in the health care system, widely spread "unofficial payments" that are extorted from women in childbirth put those women and their families in a predicament.

⁵⁸ *Monitoring of the implementation in the Republic of Armenia of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the Millennium Development Goals*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2006.

⁵⁹ www.armstat.am, 2006 Statistical Yearbook.

⁶⁰ *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 125.

⁶¹ www.armstat.am, 2006 Statistical Yearbook.



According to the National Statistical Service data, in 2004 the positive trend of a natural population growth continued and in comparison with year 2003 the birthrate grew by 19.7% due for the most part to a 4.8% increase in the number of births and a slight reduction in a death-rate.

Women's average life expectancy is 76 years and exceeds by six years that of men.

Maternal mortality is an important indicator of women's health status and of health care quality. According to the 2005 National Report on Women's Status, maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births in 2002-2005 was 25, being higher in rural areas than in urban ones. In far-away parts of the country women giving birth at home is not a rare occurrence. According to the 2004 data, physicians and middle-level medical staff assisted 269 such births, of which 75.0% without further hospitalization⁶².

Infant mortality rate (until one year of age) in 2005 was 12.3 per 1,000 live births. It was by 0.3 bigger than that in previous year.

In 2002-2004 the Government increased the share of the expenditure on outpatients' health services from 27.0% to 38.0% of the overall expenditure on health services through a decrease of the share of expenditure on hospital services from 57.0% to 48.0%. That made possible to broaden the scope of preventive measures and expand opportunities for examination and early recognition, paying special attention to children's health protection. More efforts are devoted to education on issues of "healthy pregnancy", "the right nutrition of pregnant women and women recently confined," "personal hygiene and hygiene of sex life," "preparation for breast-feeding," "post-natal care", etc.

Since 2005, free examination of women from at-risk groups was introduced within the framework of the services commissioned by the State. The "healthy motherhood" program initiated physical examination of 15-year-old girls given the fact that boys of pre-conscription age undergo a physical examination by medical board.

A special problem entailing serious threats to women's health is still posed by abortions, which are the most widespread method of terminating unwanted pregnancies. The number of 15-19-year-old women that terminate their first pregnancy through abortion causes concern as it evidences that family planning offices do not reach out to young unmarried women. The number of abortions per 1,000 of fertility age (15-49) grew from 9.2 in 2001 to 11.9 in 2005⁶³.

77 family planning offices were set up and educational and campaigning activities were launched within the framework of the *National Program to improve reproductive health* to

⁶² *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 133.

⁶³ www.armstat.am, 2006 Statistical Yearbook.



reduce a number abortions and to encourage the use of contemporary contraceptive means. However, the Program did not yield tangible results.

Within the framework of the implementation of the *National Program to improve reproductive health* antenatal clinics and family planning offices carry out educational activities on issues of safe motherhood, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), healthy lifestyles and responsible sexual behavior. Special rooms were set up for anonymous examination. All pregnant women, especially women from at-risk groups, undergo examination by consent to check if they have HIV-infection and that practice has already produced positive results.

The implementation of the program on the improvement of reproductive health also contributed to the reduction in the STD morbidity rate.

The growth of poverty and social tensions, more frequent migrations, emigration, changes in the value system and increase in crimes contributed to an upsurge in drug abuse and a spread of unsafe sexual behavior, thereby heightening the STD risk. As a result, the AIDS morbidity rate has been steadily on the rise. According to the data of the National Center for HIV/AIDS prevention, out of 436 HIV-infected Armenian citizens 331 (76.0%) are men and 105 (24.0%) are women. 102 HIV/AIDS-caused deaths (of which 71 were men and 18 women) were registered in Armenia from the arrival of the infection to this country in 1998 till February 27, 2007. However, according to the estimates based on special methodologies of research of the most vulnerable groups of the population, the number of HIV/AIDS-infected persons amounts in the country to 2,800.

According to the 2004 data, 85 individuals (including 7 women, or 8.2% of the total number) got into a job-related accident. Six women were in Yerevan and one in Armavir⁶⁴. According to the latest data of the State Labor Agency, 26 job-related accidents were registered in 2006. 59 employees got occupational diseases. Sex-disaggregated statistics is not available.

Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to take measures in cooperation with NGOs with a view to raising women's awareness about their health care rights, including reproductive rights, and to advocating a healthy lifestyle;
- to increase State budget appropriations for health care and to make them commensurate to the required quality health services taking into consideration a gender component; to design and implement programs on disease prevention;
- to design and implement family planning programs; to bring about a decrease in the use of abortion as a means of birth control.

⁶⁴ *Social situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2004*. Yerevan, 2005, p. 154.



Article 14

Elimination of discrimination against rural women

Problems:

Adverse working and household conditions of rural women

- **Limited access to loans and resources**
- **Unawareness about labor rights**
- **Lack of easy access to health-care services**

In its Concluding comments the CEDAW Committee drew the Armenian Government's attention to the absence of special programs aimed at the economic empowerment of rural women.

According to the 2003 data, women account for 43.4% of the employees in agriculture and forestry. The working conditions of rural women are extremely unfavorable. 50.0% of women work in the conditions that do not meet the minimum sanitary norms. Women constitute 31.0% of laborers engaged in work that is harmful to their health and 24.0% of laborers in the agricultural enterprises where working conditions do not meet the industrial safety requirements. Over 50% of rural women do hard⁶⁵ physical labor that does not agree with women's physiology. Agricultural work is almost entirely manual owing to the lack of small-scale mechanization and to high cost of technical maintenance.

Gender asymmetry in the field of agriculture manifests itself in the division of labor. It was primarily women who found themselves discriminated against at the time the land reform was carried out and in access to agricultural credits and loans.

In Armenia there is no easy access to free legal services, including legal literacy for rural women. Mobile centers of legal services are non-existent in close proximity to rural women's residencies.

There are very many rural women who are willing and capable to engage in the work regulated by new, market relations. Rural women that head households are a distinguishing characteristic of this period of time (they head 29.4% of all rural households)⁶⁶. However, a large number of those women lack necessary knowledge and training. They do not have information about the reforms that are currently being carried out and about agricultural innovations. They need State support and, most importantly, a gender-sensitive and encouraging tax policy when

⁶⁵ *Gender situation in Armenia*. AAWUE. Yerevan, 2005, p. 27.

⁶⁶ *Women and men in Armenia*. Statistical booklet. Yerevan, 2005, p. 48.



they are making first steps in entrepreneurship. Virtually no professional training programs are carried out for rural women and no mechanisms have been designed that would secure their continuous professional development so as to make them more competitive on the labor market.

A number of credit and grant programs were launched recently with a view to providing assistance to women-headed rural households, especially in the faraway and mountainous areas. The target programs, which are related to the agricultural sector or to its individual branches, aim to improve social and economic situation of rural population. Naturally enough, they include also such goals as raising living standards for women, creating favorable working conditions for them, reducing manual labor due to mechanization of agricultural production, creating new jobs, carrying out institutional reforms, etc.

The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia has in recent years initiated a creation of multi-functional structures in the agro-industrial sphere. Based on the principle of cooperation, these structures stimulate agricultural production and joint solution of the problems that have arisen in rural communities. At present about 80 such structures engaged in agriculture operate in the country. Women have active participation in them. There are around 50 credit associations that provide financial support to farmers by giving small grants and food loans and by leasing equipment. Women have become more actively involved in those credit associations.

In line with the projects that are outlined in the National Program and that aim at encouraging handicrafts in rural areas and at stimulating women's involvement in socioeconomic development of villages, the Ministry of Agriculture has been implementing women's employment and living standards-raising program through the revival of traditional crafts.

At the same time the State has not yet designed mechanisms that would provide guarantees and stimulate women's access to credits and microcredit programs and to land and real property ownership. The Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Governors' Offices and local governments do not take adequate measures to ensure equal distribution of resources for men and women in rural and faraway areas and do not implement advisory programs to raise women's awareness about the opportunities for access to markets and innovative technologies.

The collapse of infrastructure in villages resulted in the deterioration of living conditions, which had a particularly adverse impact on women by increasing their workload.

Those women that cultivate their own land parcels do not get maternity and birth allowances, sick child care allowance and other social guarantees.



Recommendations:

To the Armenian Government:

- to take measures to expand social guarantees for women that work in the field of agriculture, to design and implement special programs of providing microcredits and farming machinery to rural women on preferential terms,
- to increase responsibility of territorial administration bodies and local governments for drawing up and implementing projects aimed at developing transportation and social infrastructure in rural areas;

To the Ministry of Health:

- to establish mobile outpatients' aid posts for the provision of health care services to far-away villages and to villages that it is hard to get to,
- to raise rural women's awareness about their rights in labor and health protection.



Conclusion

1. There has been certain positive dynamics in the Republic of Armenia on the whole range of issues related to the advancement of women, to the protection of their rights and to their empowerment. Within the reporting period the Armenian Government took some measures to implement the CEDAW Committee's recommendations concerning the country's second periodic report. While some positive changes are indeed observed in a number of issues, the majority of the problems outlined in the recommendations has yet to get their final solution. The situation in some problems areas has not improved, whereas in the field of women's political participation and representation in power and in political, economic and other decision-making negative tendencies have emerged. Even though the top-level decision-makers display clear awareness of and articulate the idea that elimination of discrimination against women is a precondition for the implementation of the fundamental principle of genuine equality between men and women, nevertheless the political will to make that principle a reality is virtually non-existent.

2. The adoption and implementation of the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010* lays the groundwork for more strenuous efforts and for better targeted and more efficient actions of both governmental and non-governmental entities to eliminate discrimination against women and to attain gender equality and equity. The reduction of the democratic deficit and the emergence of a stable society, which is developing in a dynamical and sustainable fashion and which secures decent life for all citizens male or female, are predicated on efficient implementation of the Action Plan.

3. Much work has been done to harmonize domestic legislation with the CEDAW Convention and with other international legal instruments. However, even though in theory women enjoy equal rights (and a special provision banning discrimination has been incorporated into the Armenian Constitution), there is still a significant gap between legal norms and their *de facto* implementation in reality.



4. Therefore, consistent, systematic and effective efforts on the part of the Armenian Government are necessary as are social partnerships between the Government and NGOs for overcoming gender stereotypes and developing egalitarian democratic gender culture. NGOs should take on a pro-active role in staging campaigns to disseminate gender literacy and to raise gender awareness of the people. They should spare no effort to make people realize that protection against discrimination is a universal right enshrined in the Convention and in domestic legislation and that this right and the principle of gender equality are universal values.

5. The present alternative Report is not merely an attempt to evaluate the implementation of the CEDAW Convention but also a situation analysis through the lens of a number of the Committee's key recommendations. The analysis of the used data and materials and the recommendations provided by the authors and based on that analysis are intended, first of all, for the Armenian Government, civil society organizations and all parties concerned. They can be used for the clarification of priorities and tasks, for optimization of actions and for more effective coordination and collaboration.



NOTE I

At the final stage of the work the Report was discussed with the representatives of non-governmental organizations and of political parties.

Women activists of 9 political parties (Republican Party of Armenia, Prosperous Armenia Party, Country-of-Law Party, Heritage Party, People's Party of Armenia, National Unity, National Democratic Party of Armenia, Hnchiakian and National Democratic Union parties) and leaders and activists of 6 NGOs (Armenian Association of Women with University Education, representatives of its 9 branches, Republican Women's Council, NGO Center, ProMedia-Gender, Spiritual Armenia and Reform) took part in the discussion.

The launching of the Report was done in the format of presentation of the Report methodology and of the main issues identified in the course of the article-by-article analysis of the Convention. The participants' attention was called to the recommendations made by the authors as to how those issues could be resolved.

Leaders of women's NGOs and women representatives of political parties approved on the whole the text of the Report as well as the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. In the course of the discussion some suggestions were made, which were then taken into consideration by the authors and incorporated in the final text of the Report.

The authors regard it as their duty to present below the suggestions made by the discussants.

In the course of the discussion a number of suggestions were made concerning a necessity of establishing *national machinery* on gender equality as an instrument for elimination of discrimination against women and *institutional mechanisms* for the protection of women's rights, in particular of establishing in this country an institution of Ombudsman on women's rights. Also stressed was the necessity of adopting a law on the guarantees for equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. The members of the Parliament who were present at the discussion expressed their willingness to support such legislative initiatives.

Close attention was paid to the issue of the overcoming of sexism. The representatives of the political parties cited examples that evidenced the existence of sexist practices and technologies in the country's mass media and socio-political life. In that regard a suggestion was made, first, to pass legislation that would make perpetrators answerable for sexism and, sec-



ond, to introduce public control mechanisms that proved effective in other country's practices.

The age-related discrimination was underscored among the discriminatory practices in the field of employment. The discussants stressed the necessity to raise people's awareness about violations of the employment-related rights.

The measures taken by the State to combat trafficking in persons were considered insufficient. The necessity of a wider involvement of a NGO sector in those efforts was expressed.

A recommendation was made to contribute to strengthening women's civic sector and to expanding its contacts with mass media and with other civil society institutions in an effort to eliminate the discriminatory practices.

An issue of women's solidarity was raised in the context of collaboration with political parties with a view to eliminating discrimination, to exercising control over the implementation of the provisions of the UN Convention and to lobbying for necessary legislative initiatives. Also noted were issues of discrimination against women in political parties. The discussants saw the root causes of that situation in a deficit of democracy within political parties.

When discriminatory practices in education and health care sectors were discussed, the participants from the regions stressed that those issues are particularly acute in rural areas. A necessity was highlighted that the recommendations contained in the Alternative Report should be taken into consideration by the State Programs on education, health care and poverty reduction so as to eliminate the negative trends and practices identified by the authors of the Report.

The discussants voiced their dissatisfaction with the implementation of the *National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in 2004-2010* and pointed out the insufficient public awareness of the provisions of both the Avtion Plan and of the CEDAW.

A number of ideas voiced in the course of the discussion were not directly related to the provisions of the UN Convention. However, at the same time they reflected the discussants' interest in solving the gender problems that are standing in the way of the full-fledged development of the Armenian society.



NOTE II

Information about 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 35 branches in Yerevan and in the country's regions. The Association has an associated status with the United Nations Department of Public Information (UN DPI) and 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.

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 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 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women 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.***



In 1997-2005 AAWUE hosted 10 international conferences:

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

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, 23 groups of leaders and activists from NGOs and political parties (740 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 10 universities and conducting of gender classes in 35 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

72 round table sessions with the participation of over 2,000 individuals were organized and conducted by the *Center for Democracy and Peace* in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Ijevan, Kapan, Dilijan and Goris in 2000-2007.

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.

In 2002-2006 the Center conducted **five** sociological surveys to study the pre-election, election and post-election situation in the country, voters' expectations from presidential and parliamentary elections and the role of NGOs. The findings and analytical articles were published in *Elections & Democracy: Civil Society Factor* (2003), *Electoral Democracy: Is there an alternative to it in Armenia?* (2003) (Russian- and Armenian-language editions), *Democratization of the Armenian Society: Gender perspective* (in Russian) (2004) and *Democratization of the Armenian Society: Realities and Tendencies* (2004) (in Armenian), *Political participation in transition society: a gender equality dimension* (2006) (Armenian, Russian and English-language editions).

National Information and Analytical Center

In 1997-2007 the Center of the Association produced 81 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.



AAWUE Publications (1997-2007)

- 10 issues of the Proceedings of the international conferences held by the AAWUE
- 38 titles in the *Gender Studies* series (in Armenian, Russian and English)
- 49 issues of the newsletter “*Women with University Education*” in Armenian, Russian and English
- Manual *Planning for Change*
- *Platform for Action* of the Fourth World Conference in Beijing (in Armenian)
- Practical Guide *Gender and Development* by Cecilia Andersen (in Armenian)
- Guidebook *How to Make the Voices Heard in the Society* for Women and Women’s NGOs (in Armenian)
- Monograph *Women’s safety in the society, family and elsewhere*
- Proceedings of regional seminars *Parity Democracy. Women’s civic initiatives in the extremely conditions*
- *Women of Armenia - Year 2000. Review of Beijing Platform for Action - reality and perspectives (Results of the monitoring)* (in Armenian and in English)
- *The Society’s Choice is Peace for Development* (results of the sociological survey)
- Proceedings of seminars *Women’s Citizen Participation*
- Materials of the 1st nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender Culture of the Present-Day Armenian Society: traditions & innovations*
- Materials of the 2nd nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender equality as a precondition of parity democracy*
- Materials of the 3rd nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender equality as a prerequisite for democracy: rights and implementation opportunities*
- Materials of the 4th nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender equality as a present-day challenge*
- Materials of the 5th nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender harmony, democracy & progress*
- Materials of the 6th nationwide conference of undergraduates and young academics and researchers *Gender equality as an imperative of modernity*
- *Beijing in my life: 10 years later*
- *Conceptual basics of the State policies in the field of gender education. Draft State standards in gender education*
- *Gender situation in Armenia: consequences of the transformation processes and women’s empowerment within the context of the millennium development goals*
- *Gender education in the system of higher education: Draft State educational standards*
- *Political participation in the transition society: gender equality dimension*
- *Gender analysis of the poverty reduction strategy paper of the Republic of Armenia*
- *Monitoring of the implementation of UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Republic of Armenia*
- *Equal rights for women and men: Collection of international legal instruments, RoA laws and acts of legislation*
- *Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007. Alternative Report.*

Armenian Association of Women with University Education
Center for Gender Studies

**Implementation
of the *Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*
in the Republic of Armenia
in 2002-2007**

Alternative Report

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