**Submission to Pre-Sessional Working group of the 81st Session of the**

**UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

**For the Adoption of the List of Issues in Relation to the Seventh Periodic Report of the Republic of Armenia**

This written submission is prepared by the **CEDAW Task Force - Armenia** which includes group of NGOs and experts[[1]](#footnote-1):

1. Democracy Today NGO
2. [[Human Rights Research Center](https://www.spyur.am/en/companies/sinjar-yezidi-national-union/27092)](https://www.facebook.com/HRRCArmenia/)
3. [Disability-Inclusive Development NGO](https://www.spyur.am/en/companies/sinjar-yezidi-national-union/27092)
4. [“Sinjar" Yezidi National Union](https://www.spyur.am/en/companies/sinjar-yezidi-national-union/27092)
5. [[Armenian Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology](https://www.spyur.am/en/companies/sinjar-yezidi-national-union/27092)](https://www.facebook.com/armgeriatrics/)
6. Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women (CSVW)comprised of the following NGOs

1. Women's Rights Center

2. Women's Support Center

3. Women's Resource Center

4. Pink Armenia

5. Sexual Assault Crisis Center

6. Society without Violence

7. Real World, Real People

8. Agate Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities

9. Women's Rights House

10. Human Rights Power

11. Spitak Helsinki Group

CEDAW Task Force-Armenia welcomes the government efforts put in the Seventh periodic report submitted by Armenia. It stands out from previous ones by its comprehensive presentation of the cooperation between state and civil society work conducted in advancement of CEDAW implementation in Armenia. Specifically, the highlights of state-civil society cooperation in the field of gender education, awareness raising and fight against stereotypes are outstanding. However, there are issues of concern that we would like to bring to the attention of the CEDAW Committee.

**LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 9 is addressed in the State report (para 16), mentioning the draft Law “On ensuring legal equality”.

***Question:***

* When the law “On ensuring legal equality” will be adopted?

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL COMPLIANT MECHANISMS**

In the Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Armenia, the Committee provided recommendations to the state party to ensure gender sensitive human rights education (CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6, para 11 (c)). The State report (para 24-27) lists several programs of gender sensitive human rights education that have been provided to the legal professionals, health workers and educators.

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 11, State report (para 19) states “the Office of Public Defender provides free legal aid, inter alia, to the certain group of persons”. According to the Law on Advocacy, public defender is a [licensed] advocate (barrister) employed in the Office of Public Defender, who acts under an employment contract concluded with the Chairperson of the Chamber of Advocates, and is remunerated for their work from the State Budget.. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates, Ara Zohrabyan, has been in the front-lines fighting against the signing and ratification of the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Manipulation[[2]](#footnote-2) of the text of the Convention to the public has not only been shared in the personal social media platforms, like Facebook account (during office hours) of Mr. Zohrabyan, but also in the public discussions. Therefore, it creates **concerns** on the quality of the legal aid provided by the Public Defender Office to women subjected to domestic violence (DV), given the fact that funds of the Public Defender's Office are managed by the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates.

In the state report, is mentioned that the government adopted strategy “On approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of Armenia and the Action Plan deriving therefrom”. This document envisages vetting of judges and formation of the truth commission (RA Fact-finding commission) to explore past 1991-2018 gross human rights violations in Armenia.

***Questions:***

* What specific measures the government have undertaken to gender sensitive human rights education institutionalization?
* Number of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement representatives trained?
* Please provide statistical data or any monitoring and evolution measures taken by the government, to have a picture of the efficiency of public funds allocated and the support received by the women from the public defender office.
* Please clarify whether the government takes measures and what are these measures, to ensure the public office holders and /or those in power to manage public funds comply with the Armenia state commitments (CEDAW Article5).
* Whether gender sensitive indicators are implied in the government strategy of judicial reforms? If yes, what are these indicators and how they are going to be applied?
* Whether the vetting of judges have been implemented?
* What is the stage of formation of the Fact-finding commission, and whether it envisages review of human rights violations from the gender perspective?

**STEREOTYPES**

In 2013 when Armenia started public discussions on the law of gender equality, certain groups started hysteria over the term of “gender”. Since then, the term “gender” has been changed in all state documents, replacing it with the term “equality of rights, opportunities and responsibilities between men and women”. Although post-2018 government does not sponsor the gender hysteria, but till 2021, the government does not apply the term “gender” in any state document. The combination of “equality of rights, opportunities and responsibilities between men and women” does not reflect the multi-layered definition of the term “gender” and multidimensional societal relations it addresses.

Roles and norms attributed to men and women, especially the concept of an acceptable role for women and men, has a great influence on Armenian society. The state does not take sufficient measures to overcome existing stereotypes in society through education and the media. In particular, there are manifestations of sexism in public speeches as well as clearly hateful attitudes, even towards a woman killed by her partner[[3]](#footnote-3). These hateful attitudes are also expressed by persons holding public office[[4]](#footnote-4).

The anti-propaganda campaign in Armenia against the Istanbul Convention has also played a large role in reinforcing stereotypes. In particular, anti-gender movements tried to convince the public that the Convention would strike a blow to national traditions[[5]](#footnote-5).

The Armenian media continues to air soap operas that spread stereotypes and normalize violence against women. NGOs have raised this issue on several occasions, demanding government agencies take action against the enslavement of women in soap operas, television programs and advertisements[[6]](#footnote-6).

## *Questions:*

* What is the State strategy on promotion understanding of the concept of “gender”?
* What are the specific actions held by the state to eliminate gender stereotypes and violence against women in the media?
* What steps have been taken by the authorities to prevent sexism and hate speech against women?
* What measures have been taken against officials using discriminatory and sexist language against women in the public sphere?

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

**Femicide**

Between 2010 and 2019, at least 83 women were killed by a current or former intimate partner or spouse or other family member in Armenia, according to women’s rights organizations.[[7]](#footnote-7) The RA Criminal Code (CC) does not have special provisions on distinguishing femicide from other types of killing and, therefore, do not outline any specificity for qualifying the cases or the punishment as crimes with elements of DV.. Armenian courts do not find aggravating circumstances for an abuser’s liability and punishment in cases of femicide. Gender stereotypes and victim-blaming practices are often met in Armenian criminal and judicial systems while dealing with femicide cases.

**Domestic violence**

While some progress has been made, the DV Law[[8]](#footnote-8) has many gaps: It has the prevention and protection components, but the punitive component is absent. It also fails to highlight individual rights, instead placing emphasis on reconciliation and traditional values. DV is not criminalized both in Armenia’s old and new CCs. The concepts of “emotional suffering” and “financial exploitation” were introduced in the CC but not connected to domestic violence.

Moreover, while the Istanbul Convention was signed in 2017, it has yet to be ratified due to the existence of a strong opposition movement perpetuating the misconception that the Convention is an attack on traditional family values.

Following Armenia’s first lockdown during the COVID-19, member organizations of the CSVW registered a 50% increase in hotline calls. However, during this time, the government has not taken any measures to address the needs of victims of DV.

Women with disabilities, LBT women, victims of sexual exploitation, displaced women and girls, and others from marginalized groups in Armenia face an even greater risk of violence and far fewer resources, as they are excluded from policies and programs and face greater social stigma.

Finally, in the already dire context of the COVID-19, neighboring Azerbaijan initiated a devastating war that, at one point, led to an 8-fold increase in the daily number of COVID-19 cases in Armenia and left 90,000 mainly women, children, and elderly displaced across Armenia, further exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe. The pandemic and large-scale war risk exposing DV victims to greater marginalization and violence, as post-conflict communities often experience higher rates of violence and have fewer structures to cope with DV.

***Questions:***

* What measures has Armenia undertaken to combat femicide in Armenia?
* Is there any monitoring or evaluation carried out to measure how effective the implementation of restrictive and protective orders is in protecting survivors?
* What specific measures were taken to protect victims of DV during the COVID-19?
* When will Armenia ratify the Istanbul Convention and standardize its response according to international best practices?
* Please note the effectiveness of training courses for specialists dealing with DV in eliminating existing stereotypes towards women survivors of domestic violence.
* What actions have been taken to ensure that the manifestations of psychological violence are not considered less important by relevant professionals?

**Sexual Violence**

The DV law stipulates sexual violence as one of the forms of DV. Armenia’s CC[[9]](#footnote-9) provides inadequate and limited definitions of sexual violence crimes without classifying many of the coerced and non-consensual acts of a sexual character as crimes.

The problem with the definitions is that they fail to recognize many acts of sexual violence as crimes or leave them without an adequate punishment commensurate with the gravity of the crime. They do not include all forms of non-consensual sexual acts and rely on violence, threats of violence, and abuse of the victim’s “helpless state” as the constituent elements of rape, rather than on the lack of consent and a wide range of coercive circumstances. In addition, the lack of consent-based definitions of sexual violence crimes leave many coerced sexual acts unpunished.

Gender stereotyping, secondary victimization, victim-blaming and disbelief in survivors’ testimonies are serious problems when it comes to investigation and prosecution of sexual violence[[10]](#footnote-10). Such practices include intrusive interviewing of survivors, forced confrontation between survivors and accusers, and detrimental and inadequate forensic examinations that are routinely performed.

***Questions:***

* What steps does the state plan to take before the new CC enters into force to ensure that the definitions of sexual violence crimes are in compliance with CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention and cover all forms of sexual acts committed without the victim’s voluntary, genuine and willing consent?
* What measures has Armenia undertaken to tackle gender stereotyping, secondary victimization, victim-blaming, and violation of victims' privacy during investigation of sexual violence cases?
* Has the state put in place a gender-sensitive methodology for investigating and prosecuting sexual violence?
* Provide information on how Armenia ensures that all professionals (in healthcare, investigative and judiciary bodies) involved in addressing cases of sexual violence are well trained and gender sensitive?
* Is the state going to explicitly criminalize forced marriages in accordance with the Istanbul Convention?

**TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION OF PROSTITUTION**

It is worth to mention that the last RA National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2020-2022 (para 71) set up qualitative and quantitative indicators to follow up its implementation. Anti-trafficking Working Group (WG) consisted from representatives of various state and non-state actors took active role in its development. Since then it was an annual report prepared. However, there was not any meeting of the WG held to up-date on the progress and challenges as well as to discuss grounds for cooperation and joint actions as there are many interrelated actions planned in NAP specifically related to prevention and awareness raising.

Liabilities for trafficking of human beings reflected in RA CC are described in para 76 of the state report. However, there is no information about number of court decisions made in this regard.

In Concluding observations for the 5th and 6th report the Committee recommended to “suspend imposing administrative fines on women in prostitution and reinforce preventive measures to discourage the demand for prostitution”. However, this stipulation reflected in the article 1791 of the RA Administrative Code is still active.[[11]](#footnote-11)

***Questions:***

* What are the specific activities reflected in the AT-NAP aimed to address root causes of trafficking in persons in particular women and girls, and exploitation of prostitution?
* Whether the evaluation of previous AT-NAPs was conducted and if yes, how the recommendations were utilized?
* Please provide disaggregated data on how many investigations were initiated during the reporting period on trafficking. How many of them reached the court and what is the number of court decisions in favor of trafficked victims were made, if any?
* How many professionals (judges, prosecutors, investigators) received special knowledge on human trafficking and gender-sensitive approach towards victims mentioned in para 78,79 of the State Report? The proportion of trained professionals who were assigned to work with trafficking cases?
* What are the reasons for keeping administrative fines on women in prostitution? Please provide data on how many women paid this fines?

**PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE**

In Armenia, women have a powerful potential from a professional and educational perspective. They make up the majority of persons with higher education[[12]](#footnote-12)․ However, their participation in political decision making, local self-government, top levels of territorial and public administration, and party leadership is far from satisfactory. Not only does it fall short of the 40/60[[13]](#footnote-13) proportion (now 50/50) needed to secure a critical mass, but the number of men in leadership positions holding legislative, executive, and judicial powers in local self-government political and public units exceeds that of women by 2.8 times at a time when women make up 57% of specialists with higher qualifications.32

Recent amendments made to the Electoral Code of the RA now require the participation of at least 30% of women in the newly elected parliament (para 85). However, where the quota does not exist, such as in government and local self-government, decrease in the number of women is observed especially as a result of the consolidation of the communities, as men tend to overtake positions for these larger communities[[14]](#footnote-14).

## *Questions։*

* What steps is the state taking to increase women's role in local government?
* In addition to adopting a quota, is the government implementing other measures that can increase women's participation in politics?
* Do women in political and social activities receive adequate protection from the state when they are targeted by hate speech or threats?
* What measures does the state take to develop and implement policies increasing girls' leadership and women's advancement?

**EDUCATION**

One of the five priorities of the “Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 in the RA” is the “full and effective participation of women and men and expansion of equal opportunities in education and science”. One of the key goals of this priority is the formation of a gender sensitive environment at all levels of education. This includes balanced representations of gender in school textbooks and engagement to ensure equal rights and opportunities of women and men in all educational spheres, including education standards, textbooks, manuals, teacher, and school staff training programs, etc.

The law on Secondary Education stipulates universal inclusion as a state policy. Persons with disabilities are involved in vocational and higher education but the state does not provide disaggregated data on students with disabilities involved at different levels of education.

In 2020 the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture Sports (MoESCS) reviewed the state standards of general education and subject-related programs for elementary, middle, and high schools. The monitoring and review of the draft documents of these state standards revealed that even though some topics on women’s and men’s equality are addressed, generally the topics of gender equality, gender stereotypes, and gender-based violence are mostly not discussed.

***Questions:***

* Please describe whether the MoESCS had consultations with organizations specialized in gender matters for professional opinions while developing the state general educational standards to ensure the integration of a gender component.
* Whether the evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of the school education materials addressing issues of human rights, equality of women and men, elimination of violence, was conducted? If Yes, what were the results and what actions were taken for follow up?
* Is there any statistical data on what percentage of women included in different levels of education has a disability and what percentage of people with disabilities receiving education are women?

**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND LABOR RIGHTS**

The Armenian Government’s 2019-2023 Gender Strategy[[15]](#footnote-15) outlines five main pillars, the second of which is overcoming gender discrimination in the social and economic areas and enhancing women’s economic opportunities. However, the protection of labor rights and protection of employees–especially the protection of women in the workplace from bullying, discrimination and exploitation–are not carried out well by the state. The only way remains to go to court on individual claims, which is hardly effective as there is a lack of public trust and a number of barriers, including financial burden and time commitment.

***Questions:***

* What policies have been developed to ensure gender equality in the labor market (equal salaries, equal conditions, etc.)?
* Is the state taking steps to establish a pre-trial court for persons faced with labor rights violations?
* What are the control mechanisms over the public and private sectors in cases of labor rights violations?
* What is the state undertaking to empower women and promote their financial independence?
* What steps has the state taken to promote the entry of people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh into the labor market?

**List of jobs and professions under Government Decision No. 2308-N of 29 December 2005**

In Concluding observations[[16]](#footnote-16) the Committee recommended to “abolish the list of jobs and professions considered dangerous for women, minors and people with limited capabilities for work, contained in decision No. 2308-N”[[17]](#footnote-17). This recommendation, however, is misleading.

This Government decision contains list of factors and jobs, which are considered heavy or harmful for persons under the age of 18, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of one. It is **not** the list “considered dangerous for women, minors and people with limited capabilities” as it is mentioned in the recommendation. The aim of the list fully resonates the requirement of Article 15 (2)d of CEDAW convention.

However, Government decision No 2308-N is not in full compliance with international best practice[[18]](#footnote-18) as it does not contain user-friendly guidelines for assessment of risks for pregnant and breastfeeding women and the requirement to remove the hazard and avoid or reduce the risk is not in place.

***Question****:*

* What steps have been taken by the state to revise Government Decision No 2308-N and to adopt legislation to ensure effective risk-based assessment of working conditions of pregnant and breastfeeding women?

**Equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women.**

None of the actions, mentioned in para 117 of the State Report in fact addresses the issue of equal distribution of domestic and family responsibilities between men and women. The issue of equal distribution is neither addressed under the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation.

Priority 2 of National Gender Strategy, among the other things, provides for a goal to *reduce socio-economic inequality between men and women, including the creation of favorable conditions for combining work and family responsibilities [for women].* The formulation of the mentioned priority, however is problematic, since the expected outcome of the policy seems to reproduce the prejudice/assumption that combining work and family responsibilities is a challenge for women specifically. While the overview of the situation on the ground shows that this assumption is factually correct[[19]](#footnote-19), yet it seems to ignore the fact that a root cause of the problem is the insufficient contribution of men to household related activities, which has to do with stereotypical perception of the role of men and women in family care and needs to be addressed from that perspective.

The abovementioned issue needs to be addressed through targeted awareness-raising and promotional campaigns. It could also be essential for Armenia to adopt a National Policy addressing specific needs of workers with family responsibilities with a special attention to the issue of overcoming gender-based discrimination based on family responsibilities and, in this context, the full realization of women's labor rights. Adoption of such a policy is advised under international best practices.[[20]](#footnote-20)

***Questions****:*

* What special measures have been undertaken by the Government to overcome the stereotype that family responsibilities are a challenge for women specifically and to promote involvement of men in equal share of family and domestic responsibilities?
* When is the State planning to ratify ILO Convention C156?

**Women in informal economy: women domestic workers**

In Armenia domestic workers predominantly work in informal sector, 2/3 of all domestic workers in Armenia are women[[21]](#footnote-21). The key international standard for domestic workers- ILO Convention C189- requires special attention to the issues of formalization of domestic workers’ employments and taking into consideration gender perspective of the issue.

Domestic workers in Armenia, however, are not targeted by any state policy, they are not defined in Labor code, requirements of which are not friendly for registration of employment relations with domestic workers.

***Questions****:*

* What legislative and/or awareness-raising steps has the Government undertaken to bring domestic workers from informal sector to formal employment?
* When is the State planning to ratify ILO Convention C189?

**HEALTHCARE**

Though abortions are legal in Armenia, the state inhibited women’s right to seek abortions by **requiring a three-day waiting period** after requesting an abortion from a doctor and defining several preconditions for termination of pregnancy. Among these preconditions is the requirement that women receive counselling free-of-charge by a doctor concerning the possible negative effects of pregnancy termination.

During **the COVID-19 pandemic, access to abortion** has been particularly challenging. Women face a lack of access to transportation to reach abortion services especially in rural communities.

According to state report 100-120 abortion rate in 2016 has been reduced to 100-110 ratio. Though the restriction banning **sex-selective abortion** may be well-intended, it has the potential to violate women’s rights to life, health, and bodily integrity.

Armenia indicated that during 2016-2018, the average annual consumption of contraceptives in 93 medical institutions across Armenia was 200,000 condoms, 2,500 IUDs, and 2,000 packs of birth control pills. However, many women still do not have information about **family planning services**. According to the research[[22]](#footnote-22) of Women in Armenia, 55% of respondents do not use any type of family planning method.

***Questions:***

* Does Armenia organize periodic and mandatory trainings for health workers on reproductive health and rights-based, patient-centered approaches, paying particular attention to reaching women facing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression including LBT women, women with disabilities and women with HIV?
* What special measures has the state introduced to make abortion services accessible and affordable for marginalized groups of women especially during the COVID-19?
* Can you provide any information on how the retrogressive measures (mandatory 3-day waiting period and mandatory counselling regarding negative consequences of abortion) introduced in the Law on Reproductive Health has affected women’s access to abortion services?
* How does the state guarantee that the legislative ban on sex-selective abortions doesn’t violate women’s right to abortion?
* What policies have Armenia adopted to make contraceptive access more available and accessible for marginalized groups of women? How does the state reach the most vulnerable?

**REALIZATION OF RIGHTS OF DIFFERENT GROUPS OF WOMEN**

**Women with Disabilities**

Women with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers to accessing healthcare services; these include physical barriers, the lack of accessible information and communication, inaccessible training or treatment equipment, and healthcare professionals who lack knowledge about the social model of disability. There are no sign language interpreters in medical institutions, and women must therefore find a corresponding specialist, which is an expensive service in Armenia. This also violates their right of privacy in receiving health consultation services. Moreover, deaf and blind persons and persons with intellectual disabilities have no access to alternative formats for healthcare-related information.

As the novel Coronavirus started spreading in Armenia at the beginning of 2020, worries were expressed about the possible implications of virus transmission in institutions (orphanages, long-term care facilities, mental health hospitals), services to persons with disabilities were being strained, and people were experiencing increased difficulties in accessing general health care. Almost all-day care centers were closed and home care services were partially provided. The Government implemented several support programs, but none of them directly addressed persons with disabilities and their needs.

Women with disabilities confront challenges including a lack of legal capacity and access to sexual and reproductive health services. There is no research or data available that is disaggregated by sex and disability to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on women with disabilities.

***Questions:***

* What measures have been taken to protect the life, health and safety of persons with disabilities including those from rural areas and institutional facilities (nursing homes and mental health hospitals) during COVID-19 outbreak? Does the Government collect data on the number of hospitalizations and deaths of persons with disabilities from COVID-19?
* Please mention if direct consultations with organizations representing women with disabilities were facilitated and if any steps were taken to assist women with disabilities during the pandemic, and make sure their thoughts, interests, and proposals are included in the state responses?
* What steps have been taken to ensure the accessibility of emergency calls during the pandemic for women with hearing and intellectual disabilities?
* Please describe what mechanisms have been set up for the collection of dis-aggregated data on violence against women and girls with disabilities and indicate the time-frame of implementation and evaluation of those mechanisms.
* Please indicate the specific measures implemented to protect women and girls with disabilities, particularly those with mental and psycho-social disabilities, from gender-based violence, harassment and abuse in private (family) and institutional settings.
* Please indicate if trainings for health personnel have been organized on the social model of disability and communication skills with women with different types of disabilities.
* What steps have been taken to improve the accessibility of healthcare facilities and equipment, as well as medical personnel (gynecologists and obstetricians) for women and girls with disabilities?
* Please mention if any measures are in place to provide interpretation to persons with hearing disabilities, deaf and deaf-blind persons in medical institutions.
* What services are available to mothers with disabilities who are on parental leave, and do they receive differentiated support for childcare? Do they receive services of a personal assistant? What steps are planned to include these services in the midterm expenses and annual action plans? [[23]](#footnote-23)

Women asylum-seekers and returnee Armenian migrant women

There are people with disabilities and health issues among migrants returning to Armenia many of which have left their treatment incomplete. There are special housing programs for people with disabilities in Armenia. However, Government and communities do not have enough resources social housing. People with different degrees of disabilities receive the same amount in social benefits, although the expenses conditioned by their disability are different, e.g. physical accessibility of buildings, accommodated bathrooms, a separate room and so on, which require additional funds.

In addition, over 28,000 people displaced because of the Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) war continue living in Armenia. Some of them live with host families and some are renting.

**Questions:**

Do people with disabilities receive additional or differentiated financial assistance for rent? During the reporting period, what percentage of beneficiaries of getting rent reimbursement had a disability and how many of them were women?

Have there been specific measures taken for relocation and support of people with disabilities from Nagorno-Karabakh?

What percentage of them were placed in institutions and what percentage of them were assisted in renting an apartment?

* What was the percentage of men and women in these two categories?

**Older Women**

Mistreatment (abuse, neglect, exploitation) of older people in their own houses and in

facilities for continuing care (such as nursing homes, residential care, hospitals and day care

facilities) is a matter of concern. The impact that physical and psychological violence have on the health of an older person is exacerbated by the ageing process and diseases of old age. It is more difficult for the elderly to leave an abusive relationship or to make correct decisions because of the physical and cognitive impairments (dementias, Alzheimer's disease, geriatric syndromes etc.) that usually come with old age. In some cases, kinship obligations and the use of the extended family network to resolve difficulties may also lessen the ability of older people, particularly women, to escape from dangerous situations. Often, the abuser may be the abused person’s only source of companionship (children, caregiver, spouse etc.).

Para 226 and 227 of the State Report indicate medical services, specifically provision of dental care (2016-2017) and surgical treatment of cataract (2017-2018) available for older women free of charge. However, there is no information on number of women served and their geographical distribution.

1. Please provide data on registered cases of abuse of elderly women. Are there any services available to assist older women to escape abusive relationships, get rehabilitation and protection?
2. Please provide data on how many older women and from which regions of Armenia were served in the frames of free of charge dental care and cataract treatment programs.
3. How many older women and from which geographical locations have access to mobile clinic services operating in the frames of “Bringing Sight to Armenian Eyes" project (para227).

**LBTI women**

The State Report did not provide any information concerning the situation of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and the steps undertaken by the state to combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2017 the draft of the anti-discrimination law was presented for public discussion. However, sexual orientation and gender identity were missing from the list of protected characteristics. Though calls for violence were criminalized, law-enforcement bodies fail to effectively implement the article.

***Question:***

* What are the steps that the state plans to undertake to ensure implementation of the law to provide for effective remedies for LBTI women, without comprehensive and legally certain legislative regulations?

**Women living with HIV and injection drug users (IDU)**

IDU women and women living with HIV/AIDS face discrimination and other human rights violations in Armenia. The Committee’s concluding observations[[24]](#footnote-24) note the disproportionately high HIV-infection rate among Armenian migrant workers and their partners and reports of discrimination by health personnel against women living with HIV/AIDS[[25]](#footnote-25). It crucial to address issues of institutionalized discrimination faced by these marginalized groups, specifically addressing State practices that hinder access to medical and social services, as well as contribute to social and economic vulnerability.

***Questions:***

* Why are the issues and problems facing IDU women not addressed in the State Report?
* What steps has the state taken to comprehensively study the existence/absence of discrimination against people living with HIV in the health system?
* What clear steps has the state taken to abolish the existing discriminatory regulations at care institutions, according to which people living with HIV are not provided with services?
* When will the state decriminalize regulations regarding the criminalization of HIV transmission?

**Attacks on women human rights defenders**

Women’s groups have been under attack with an on-going anti-gender campaign launched by far-right groups. Despite many positive developments after 2018, hate speech and violence from extremist and nationalist groups continue to go unpunished in an environment of impunity by law enforcement bodies.

All criminal cases launched were later suspended with no one held accountable for their actions.

**Questions:**

* What steps has Armenia undertaken to protect women human rights defenders from attacks and hate speech?
* How, if at all, has the state responded to threats against human rights defenders?

**WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

Armenia is working on its second National Action Plan on WPS for 2021 -2022, establishing inclusive format, inviting civil society and experts to collaboration in developing this second NAP. The NAP successfully addresses promotion of women in security sector, while issues related to political participation of women, enhancing women’s role in peace negotiation are not balanced.

In the State Report, the government did not present comprehensive information on implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 33 (b). Since the beginning of the conflict with the Azerbaijan, women from both sides were deprived from participation in the negotiations and conflict resolution.

***Questions:***

* What’s the strategy of government of post-2020 war justice driven process development and women participation in it?
* Have there been done assessment on implementation of the first 2019-2021 NAP, if so who has conducted it: independent body or civil society actors? If so were the findings of the assessment made public and considered in the development of second NAP.
* Has there been provided earmarked finding on implementation of NAP on WPS? If so, what percent of planned activities it covers?
* How in practice new security dimensions of displaced women from Nagorno-Karabakh and women living at the new borders in Syunik and Ghegarkunik regions that in result of peace agreement signed after 44 days’ war with Azerbaijan found themselves in new geopolitical situations and face threats are addressed in the new NAP?
* How the WPS NAP will ensure harmonization between other gender equality-related strategies, which is important basis for the success, resource management and effectiveness?
* What activities are planned to make implementation of NAP transparent and visual? Are the special indicators developed to assess the success?
* Are the mechanisms to bring the voices of vulnerable women from border communities and displaced women were developed?

1. **Maria Abrahamyan** – Specialist working on human rights and transitional justice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. # Manipulations regarding Istanbul Convention, <https://fip.am/en/7547> The Istanbul Convention: A Peril or Prospect for Armenia?, <https://armenianweekly.com/2020/01/31/the-istanbul-convention-a-peril-or-prospect-for-armenia/>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/announcement-on-the-pc-members-hatred-post-against-women/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://womennet.am/en/atelutyan-chosq-krknaki-standart/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Policy-Brief_ENG_.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/we-demand-the-necessary-measures-be-taken-to-prevent-violence-in-the-media-field/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Femicide_Report_ENG.pdf?be05b6>

   <https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/femicide2018en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a6b2e274.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=152333> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.saccarmenia.org/files/uploads/ReportEng.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=73129 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.un.am/up/library/Armenia%20Country%20Gender%20Equality%20Brief.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. UN CEDAW Recommendaon R(2003) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Public-perception-research.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/333649> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ILO Convention C183, EU Directive 89/391/EEC [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See, for instance, <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_am.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ILO Convention C 156 and EU Directive 2019/1158. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <https://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=212> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5b96/5d24fa1cf27fec3d51ef1d61414b715e5e79.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The Law on Social Support stipulated the concept of social patronage and Government Decision N 631-N allows providing these services to those who cannot carry out their obligations or protect their rights independently. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., para.26 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)