



Implementation of UN Convention on all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Period 2002 - 2007

This report is cooperative effort of two leading NGO's in Armenia, that have long history of working in the area of women's rights – "Democracy Today" and "All Armenian Union of Women".

Members of the organization considered their obligation to prepare this report with their own resources, without support of any donor agency. The report presents developments from 2002-2007, including events in 2008.

The areas presented in the report are main directions of work of the NGO's: strengthening role of women in Armenian society, conditions of rural women, trafficking in women, women's employment and participation of women in political life.

The resented report aims at presenting the answers and situation related to the areas of concern raised by CEDAW committee in their recommendations.

Articles covered in report are the following:

- Article 1&2.
- Article 3.
- Article 6.
- Article 7.
- Article 9.
- Article 11.
- Articles 14.

Article 1&2: Definition of discrimination

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;*
- (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;*
- (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;*
- (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;*
- (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;*
- (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;*
- (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*

Areas of concern:

- The convention is not incorporated into Armenian legislation. Virtually no legislation exists explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the bases of gender.
- While Armenian national legislation affirms the idea of equality of rights for everyone it does not proactively promote equality of rights between men and women.
- “Custom” and “Tradition” are often used to justify the behavior which constitutes de facto discrimination.

De jure compliance:

Despite general equality clauses of articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution of RA are frequently cited as proof of its intention to guarantee equality between men and women, the legislation do not have any clause that gives the definition given in the article 1 of the convention.

Analysis of the legislation currently in force demonstrates that normative provisions explicitly contradicting internationally accepted norms are not that common or significant. The national legislation of the RA does not contain any provisions explicitly discriminating against the rights of women. Neither does it contain articles that straightforwardly guarantee equal rights and

opportunities for women. There are several gaps in the law such as provisions, which fail to define gender discrimination, domestic violence, spousal abuse, etc., and to provide meaningful enforcement mechanism for antidiscrimination legislation.

The convention is ratified as a binding law in Armenia and its definitions and structures should be applied in Armenian courts. However it is not incorporated into domestic legislation, which is one of the reasons why it is not being practiced. None of the provisions of the convention or other domestic laws been directly invoked in the domestic courts to gain equal rights for women. The law on women's rights has not been adopted yet, and it is currently in the stage of discussion.

De facto compliance:

Armenia's de facto compliance is more problematic. While laws exist on the books, they are rarely implemented or enforced. Therefore there is a disconnect between the State's vision of equality between men and women and what exists in the day-to-day life.

In the legal framework there is no discrimination against women, however, people do not live in that framework. There are several reasons for lack of implementation of laws.

Widely spread corruption directly affects Armenians' quality of and access to education, health care, employment, politics and other facets of public and private life.

The trust in government, so as in judicial and legal systems is very low among most people.

The rigid gender stereotypes, which characterize Armenian norms, fill the vacuum created by the legal system's lack of relevance. This leads to de facto discrimination in many aspects of life.

Reliance on conservative customs and traditions also leads many women to believe that the discrimination, which they face is a "normal" way and is an acceptable human condition.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Areas of concern:

No national machinery exists to oversee implementation of Armenia's obligations to combat discrimination and ensure equality.

De jure compliance:

The department of women's, family and children's issues fails to be a national machinery for ensuring gender equality as it is mentioned to be in the State's report.

The official webpage of the department of women's, family and children's issues does not contain any information about functions or programs run by it regarding gender issues. The department's functions cover only adoption issues and other social matters.

The Armenian government approved the National Program to Improve the Status of Women and to Enhance Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia for the Period 2004-2010 No. 645-N.

This program includes measures to be taken for improving the status of women in public and political spheres, socio-economic issues of women, education, and trafficking.

It consists of 57 measures, which should be implemented by different ministries, agencies and NGO's.

The Program specifies that only 4 of 57 measures of the Program are financed by the State budget, 20 do not need financial recourses and others are the programs which international organizations are implementing. The coordinator of this Program is the minister of Labor and Social issues.

Article 6.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

Areas of concern:

- Irrespective of numerous positive measures developed by the government during recent years, the shift in approach is still necessary: from state security to human security;
- Irrespective of created coordination mechanisms, there is no coordination between International agencies on implemented programs;
- Policies and programs lack victim centered approach;
- There have not been incentives created for victims to report on their experience;
- Irrespective of numerous excellent programs, there is no sustainability and long-term commitment;
- Irrespective of numerous programs implemented on sensitization of communities towards victims, still there are gender discriminations: women are always easily treated as prostitutes, men the ones that society has to feel sorry, as they have been cheated. However, tendency to change is noticed.

In 2003, Armenia ratified the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its 2 supplementing Protocols to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and Against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, as well as an Optional Protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Armenia also ratified Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in March 2008. A new Article 132 entitled "Trafficking in Persons" was introduced in the Criminal Code effective August 1, 2003. Further amendments in domestic legislation include a revised version of Article 132 enacted in 2006 to provide a more clear and comprehensive definition of trafficking offenses, render more adequate wording of the term "trafficking" in Armenian and set forth more stringent punishment of offenders.

Armenia is mainly is a source and transit country for women and girls trafficked primarily for sexual, and to a lesser extent, labor exploitation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey. There were also reports of men being trafficked to Russia for forced labor in the construction sector. There were reports on Armenian trafficking victims registered in western European countries. In 2008, internal trafficking cases were also registered.

Since the ratification of the UN Convention in 2003, Armenian government was obligated to take actions towards its implementation. Anti-Trafficking Inter-Agency Commission was created to develop the first National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking for 2004-2006. In spite of some notable achievements of the Commission, there were certain gaps in the implementation of the first National Plan of Action. In view of the fact that the National Plan of Action was approved after the enactment of the state budget for the year, no request for funding its implementation was submitted and no such funding was received. Therefore, most of the activities under the Plan were implemented with financial support of non-governmental and international organizations. Since the Commission did not have a mandate to coordinate national anti-trafficking responses, its decisions were not binding, while insufficiently high level of representation of government ministries in the Commission hindered the implementation of the Plan. The first National Plan of Action mainly addressed issues of combating sexual exploitation and did not cover those related to forced labor. There were considerable drawbacks in the implementation of the victim protection component of the Plan. One of the major challenges was the lack of a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking, as well as government support to temporary shelters that accommodate such victims.

In view of the gaps in the implementation of the National Plan of Action for 2004 – 2006, the Interagency Commission with support of international organizations developed National Plan of Action for 2007 – 2009. Because the second NAP were finalized and approved in 2007 there were no budget allocated for activities in 2007, as well as in 2008. Still implementation of the Action plan was based on the support of external donors.

On December 6 2007, the prime minister signed a decree establishing a new ministerial-level Council on Trafficking chaired by the deputy prime minister. The council has a broad mandate of implementing, coordinating and monitoring the government's anti-trafficking efforts. The members of the earlier interagency commission became members of a working group designed to support the work of the new council.

In 2008 Armenia was placed on Tier 2 Watch List for a fourth consecutive year because its efforts to increase compliance with the minimum standards were assessed based on its commitments to undertake future actions over the coming year, particularly in the areas of improving victim protection and assistance. While the government elevated anti-trafficking responsibilities to the Ministerial level, adopted a new National Action Plan, and drafted a National Referral Mechanism, it has yet to show tangible progress in identifying and protecting victims or in tackling trafficking complicity of government officials.

Under the constant pressure of international community as well as lobbying of international and local organizations active in Armenia, amount of 54 000 USD was allocated for assistance to victims of trafficking through shelter. Because funds allocated by the State are not enough to fully cover expenses necessary to address even primary needs of trafficked victims it was agreed

to develop co-funding model with additional funding from NGO (UMCOR). It is really considerable step of Armenian Government in enhancing its effort in victim protection. The other positive point is that co-funding allows having State/NGO model of shelter when NGO through agreement of cooperation with the state provided with funding for running the shelter, and keeps flexibility and independence in organizing proper assistance to trafficked victims.

The modification of Armenia's legislation in accordance with international instruments on trafficking in human beings is an ongoing effort. Over the past five years, there were some positive developments in the area of criminalization of trafficking, but other areas, equally important for addressing this complex issue, such as witness protection and social assistance to victims, victim compensation fund have not been appropriately addressed. From a systemic point of view, lower normative acts such as decrees and regulations specifying the implementation of laws are notably missing. As a result, there is a gap between the laws and their implementation.

Trafficking as a separate criminal offence has been anticipated by article 132 of the RA Criminal Code, which entered into the force on August 1, 2003. According to this article trafficking is characterized as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

The same Criminal Code provides criminal responsibility for the exploitation of the prostitution of others directly or indirectly connected with trafficking, as well as for the organization of prostitution by articles 261 and 262 accordingly.

Till then the committed crimes with features of trafficking have been qualified as pimping (by article 226 of the Criminal Code adopted in 1961).

On June 9, 2004 and June 1, 2006 the mentioned articles of the RA Criminal Code have been amended in accordance with the current legal requirements. Meanwhile, in the Criminal Code have been supplemented with article 132¹, which provides criminal responsibility for the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and servitude. Thus, current legislation provides criminal responsibility for the following actions:

- Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation – article 132.
- Exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and servitude – article 132¹.
- Exploitation of the prostitution of others – article 261.
- Promotion of prostitution (establishment of brothel, its management or maintenance or utilization of public institution as brothel or provision of apartment of others for prostitution or financial benefit to promote prostitution by other means) - article 262.

The new law made trafficking in persons punishable by imprisonment for three to 15 years, depending on whether there were aggravating factors such as the death of victims or involvement of a minor.

Perhaps the area in which Armenian law has adapted least to the reality of trafficking is in victim assistance and protection. The current version of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) restricts protection only to victims; a witness involved in the criminal proceeding, and their close relatives, but does not extend protection to other persons participating in the criminal proceeding. Currently the Criminal Procedure Code requires that authorities respond initially to threats against victims or witnesses with an official warning, a measure that does little to put an end to such threats while eroding the security of the victims or witnesses themselves.¹

The police also stated that victims of trafficking are often ready to give testimony as they are not afraid of revenge from traffickers and that as a result, protection of victims has not been prioritized as there was no need for it.²

There are still do not existing legal mechanisms to provide financial restitution to trafficked victims. There were several cases to obtain compensation through initiation of the civil suit, but no any victim received it.

In 2005, serious allegations of corruption emerged against an investigator in the anti-trafficking unit. The General Prosecutor's Office did not investigate the allegations until February 2006. According to the US State Department, a cursory investigation conducted by the General Prosecutor's Office task force found no evidence of wrongdoing. In August 2006, a group of alleged trafficking victims, assisted by an NGO, brought new allegations of corruption and complicity against the same investigator and another official. A few days after the allegations were brought to the government's attention, tax inspectors launched an investigation into the NGO's finances. The Prosecutor General's Office created a task force that included members of anti-trafficking NGO's to investigate the officials, who remained in charge of the original case during the internal investigation. The internal investigation commission found no evidence of wrongdoing. However, the investigators were transferred out of the anti-trafficking unit, and one was demoted from senior investigator to investigator.³

The prostitution is not subject to criminal liability in Armenia. The Administrative Code only calls for a fine in the amount of 500-1000 Armenian Drams (about \$2.5) for engagement in prostitution, and 2000 Armenian Drams (about \$5) for repeated involvement in prostitution. According to Major-General Hovhannes Hounanyan, Deputy Chief of the RA Police, the amount of these fines is too small, and the RA Police is working on a draft law to introduce amendments into the RA Administrative Code to make the administrative measures against persons engaged in prostitution much stronger. "The fine must be at least 5.000 Armenian Drams (\$12)", mentioned the Major-General.⁴

In the context of combating forced labor and exploitation, the new Labor Code was amended to include new articles prohibiting forced labor, violence against workers, employment of children fewer than 14 years of age, as well as articles that ensure public oversight over employers.

¹ Trafficking in Human Beings in the RoA. An Assessment of current responses. OSCE, 2007.

² Ibid.

³ US State Department 2006 Human Rights Report.

⁴ Published in: "Novoe Vremya" newspaper (<http://www.nv.am>), #1382, August 3, 2006 (Unofficial translation)

As for social assistance to victims of exploitation: the Law on Social Assistance was adopted in 2005 and came into force in January 2006. It indicates which services and benefits vulnerable groups of society are entitled to. According to the Law, vulnerable individuals or families can get the following social services: consultation, reintegration assistance, financial assistance, legal assistance, etc. Regardless the fact that this law includes articles through application of which victims of trafficking could be assisted; there are no relevant mechanisms as well as sufficient budget allocated for this.

Trafficking cases registered in Armenia are mainly those of trafficking for sexual exploitation. This kind of trafficking is often understood not as a condition similar to slavery but it is mixed up with prostitution.

According to US Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices, the majority of identified victims were aware that they were being recruited to work in the sex industry in other countries; however, they were unaware of the traffickers' intent or the true exploitive circumstances of the conditions in destination countries. Once in the country of destination, victims were deprived of their travel documents, locked in hotel rooms, and told that they must "repay" their expenses. This initial consent, unfortunately contributed to an overall lack of identification of trafficking by authorities.⁵

Judges did not prosecute victims in trafficking cases for violating laws but often denied them counsel and subjected them to humiliating treatment during trials.⁶ The service providers assume that there are many victims who prefer to return home anonymously and never seek any remedies through the judicial system.⁷

Upon their return to the country, many trafficking victims feared societal stigma and discrimination, and were reluctant to help locate and prosecute their traffickers. Government officials did not require victims to provide such assistance, but they worked with victims who were willing to do so. NGO's working with victims reported that the judges' treatment of victims has improved over previous years.⁸

There is an assumption that the number of trafficked persons about whom little or nothing is known is much bigger than the number of those who have been identified as victims and have shared information about their experiences.

There is still no credible data as to the real extent of the problem. According to data provided by NGO's providing assistance to victims of trafficking since October 2003 until March 2007, 92 victims of trafficking were identified, out of them 87 agreed to receive various types of assistance (medical, psychological, legal, sheltering, social, financial, professional orientation and vocational training, assistance in employment). 80% of VoTs were exploited sexually and 20% were trafficked for the purpose of labor exploitation. 44% of victims are of 18-24 age, 25% are of 25-30 age. 68% of victims were from regions of Armenia. The majority 62% of victims have only secondary education. VoTs were mostly recruited not by agencies or companies but by

⁵ Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2006.

⁶ Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2007.

⁷ Trafficking in Human Beings in the RoA. An Assessment of current responses. OSCE, 2007.

⁸ Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2007. Released by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

friends (61%). An explanation for this, is extreme poverty among those who fall prey to recruiters as well as their social and family status, whereby, in order to apply to travel or labor recruitment agencies, need to pay for services for which they have no money and, hence, friend and neighbors as “close people to them” propose to pay for all expenses and put the victim in debt bondage.⁹

There are still different statistics provided by the government and NGO’s. Unlike to situation in other countries fighting against trafficking where the data about numbers of trafficked victims provided by the NGO’s are higher than reported by the government in Armenia the situation is vice versa: data on victims assisted by NGO’s is less than the numbers of victims participated in court proceedings provided by the General Prosecutors Office. In 2006, 39 criminal cases were instigated with charges pressed against 46 persons, 121 victims of trafficking were identified, of which 42 in Armenia and 70 elsewhere.¹⁰ The number of victims identified by NGO’s for the same period is 30, and majority of them were not involved in court process due to their refusal to cooperate with law enforcement.

Since 2003, needs of trafficked victims addressed through drop-in center running by “Democracy Today” NGO, short-term shelter (where victims stay from 10 days till one month) running by “Hope and Help” NGO and the long-term shelter (depending on case victims stay could be even longer than a year) run by UMCOR-Armenia. Reintegration of victims back to society includes social and financial assistance as well as organizing of vocational skills trainings. Assistance to victims is provided upon the consent of victim to accept the proposed services. There are two toll free hotlines operated by NGO’s (UMCOR and Hope & Help) existing in Armenia. These hotlines are not only a good recourse to spread information on trafficking issues, but also to identify victims of trafficking as well as support them during reintegration process.

Until the end of 2008, the abovementioned NGOs assisted victims only through external funding. Regardless the fact that Armenian government did not provided any funds for victim assistance, it was quite effective collaboration with service providing NGO’s especially in area of identification and referral of trafficked victims for the assistance, and support of reintegration process through involvement of relevant state social and employment agencies.

Identification of trafficked victims is done mainly by law enforcement agencies, NGO’s, social workers, and specialized hotlines. It is worth to mention, that during last five years code of conduct between police and NGO’s has been developed on cooperation in victim identification, referral, and organizing harmless participation of trafficked victims in investigation process. If trafficked victim does not agree to provide her testimonies to police, NGO’s are not forced to convince them to do it and keep confidential all personal data.

There were reports that traffickers encouraged women to become recruiters, promising them that they could keep a percentage of their recruits' earnings. Those at particular risk for being

⁹ Victims of Trafficking in Armenia. Booklet compiling data gathered by providers of victims assistance. October 2003 – March 2007. “Democracy Today” NGO, “Hope and Help” NGO, UNDP.

¹² National Report On Implementation of a National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in 2004 – 2006

trafficked were women engaged in prostitution, orphans who had outgrown their institutions, the homeless, and those in difficult financial situations. Trafficking victims who came largely from impoverished communities were at greatly increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, and there were some reported incidents of physical violence against persons who were trafficked.¹¹

The Ministry of Labor and Social Issues reported that several projects prepared and implemented by the state authorities aimed at assisting young people leaving orphanages and presenting one of the most vulnerable groups of THB. In 2003, the Ministry initiated a program for providing housing for care-leavers, and their integration in the society. However, graduates of the orphanages especially young girls are still at very high risk of being trafficked. There were several cases of trafficking of graduates from orphanages and special schools reported by assisting NGO's (UMCOR and "Democracy Today") during last five years.

"Democracy Today" NGO, UMCOR – Armenian branch, and "Armenian Relief Society" NGO are actively implementing projects aimed at decreasing vulnerability among pre-graduates and graduates of orphanages and boarding schools.

In 2008, three cases of trafficking of minors were registered. It is a new challenge for Armenian government to develop programs aimed at prevention trafficking and sexual exploitation in minors, proper identification, and provision of comprehensive assistance to children victims, as well as develop special protection mechanisms.

"Lindex" company in Sweden has fundraised through its branches funds to assist victims of trafficking. In cooperation with "Democracy Today" underage girls from orphanages have been provided intensive training by "Armenian Fashion council" on many practical skills: clothing design, jewelry making, designing silk clothing batik and all of them have been provided with jobs.

Another important prevention project organized by "Democracy Today" was related to strengthening leadership skills and self-confidence of women and assistance and provision of small start grants to open and sustain small businesses and community revolving funds. In result, 150 women have started and sustained their small businesses.

Article 7.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

¹¹ Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007.

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Areas of Concern:

- The State is not taking proactive steps to ensure real equality of opportunity for women to be elected to public office.
- There is little cultivation of women to take on leadership positions in politics and in government work (including decision-making and policy-making).
- There are deep concerns about Democracy and Human Rights in general in Armenia after presidential elections 2008 and March 1 incidents.

De jure Compliance

While there is nothing in the laws or constitution of Armenia, which limits the rights of women to participate in the political life of the country, there is only one incentive, 15 –percent quota for women to be in candidates’ list of political parties.

De facto Compliance

Women in Armenia are underrepresented in formulation and implementation of government policy.

According to NSS of Armenia, only 25.6% of employed population in public administration is women.¹² And mostly the women are represented in mid-level management, but not decision making positions.

There are 2 female Deputy Ministers in the government, 2 women serving at the Ministerial level. There are two female ambassadors in the Armenian diplomatic corps. The most of the local authorities and regional councils are also headed by men and have limited female participation and representation.

Only 12 of 131 members of the National Assembly are women.

There are very few women holding positions in public offices like tax authorities, customs office, police, and attorney office, as these organs are the most corrupted ones.

The state does not take any measures to ensure gender balance in public administration.

Under the Armenian Constitution, women and men have equal rights to vote and to be elected to and hold public office. However, there are a variety of social and practical factors which limit the actual ability of women to be elected in Armenian society. These include entrenched stereotypes of women’s roles; socialization of girls/women against political participation; lack of access to campaign finance, publicity and political connections; limited opportunity for leadership/political skills development; and a general disdain among the Armenian population for the elections process as a whole.

¹² “Women and men in Armenia” publication of NSS of Armenia 2008

Ironically, women in Armenia are active politically via NGO's and social movements. And during the last presidential elections in 2008 women were actively involved in campaign and after election processes.

Here are several cases where politically active women were harassed during the campaign and elections.

In October 23rd when opposition activists were arrested for making announcement about the meeting with the people Gohar Veziryan a journalist of "Chorord Ishxhanutyun" newspaper was bitten by police officer on the street and it was fixed by cameras.

In 19th of February on the election's day, many cases of violence against active women occurred there.

In one case documented by Human Rights Watch¹³, assailants grabbed a Ter-Petrosian, leader of opposition and candidate for presidency, proxy, (a candidate's authorized representative) at a polling station in Yerevan, forced her into a car and drove her to a remote area. There, they beat her in the head and face, threatened to rape her and attack her family, and abandoned her. She eventually made her way to a police station where she filed a complaint. She is still suffering from headaches and other medical repercussions of the attack.

Also, journalists were attacked. Lusine Barsegian of the newspaper "Haikakan Zhamankak" was beaten, and had her camera and voice recorder stolen, when she attempted to document what she believed to be intimidation of voters at a polling station in Yerevan's Erebuni district.

A member of parliament from the opposition Heritage Party, domestic election observer Zaruhi Postandjian was attacked at the polling station after they tried to raise alleged election violations with polling station officials.

Three large, athletic men approached to Larissa Tarosian, a proxy for Ter-Petrosian and two of them dragged her out of the polling station. Tarosian struggled to free herself, but was dragged across the yard and shoved into a car. The three men drove Tarosian to a deserted area outside the town. After taking her out of the car, one man beat her on the head and face.

In March 1st Grizelda Petrosyan social activist and her daughter were beaten in the street by the police officers

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.

2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

¹³ Armenia: Violence at polling stations, Human Rights Watch 2008

Articles 1, 2, 6 and 11 of Armenian Law on Citizenship determine the circle of relationship in relation to the citizenship of women, married to local, foreigner and citizenship of her child. So according to Article 1 “Any person has the right to acquire RA citizenship in accordance with the procedure set forth in the law.”; Article 6, (parts 2 and 3), “Marriage of an RA citizen with a foreign country’s citizen shall not result in change of the citizen’s citizenship by itself... Change of citizenship on the part of one of the spouses shall not result in change of citizenship of the other spouse.”; Article 11 (parts 2, 3, 4), “A child shall get RA citizenship if at the moment of his birth one of his parents was a RA citizen and the other is unknown or is a person without a citizenship...Citizenship of a child shall be determined by written agreement of the parents in case at the moment of the child’s birth one of the parents was an RA citizen and the other was a foreign citizen.... In case the parents fail to reach an agreement, the child shall get RA citizenship if he was born in the RA or if he becomes a person without citizenship due to failure of acquiring RA citizenship, or if his parents permanently reside in the RA.”

Numerous training programs have been implemented by Democracy Today and manual published for juvenile police, religious leaders, teachers, social workers, and police.

With regards to children’s nationality, the citizenship of the child is determined by the parents’ citizenship. Where both parents are citizens of the same country, the child acquires their citizenship. In the event that the parents are of different nationalities, the child acquires the citizenship of the country in which they live. Minors – even newborn children - can receive their passports if the parents of the child intend to take the child abroad. It is not obligatory Men and women have equal rights in determining the citizenship of their minor child. Adopted in December Decision of passport and visa section of police department of Armenia have facilitated the acceptance of passport by minors. No longer are signatures of both parents required for the child to be taken abroad. One parent unanimously can decide and the signature only of one parent is sufficient to issue passport to a minor.

The Law on Nationality is fairly well applied and is not implemented in any overtly discriminatory way. The legislation stipulates the right of free choice of citizenship.

It is important to mention here that the Law on Nationality has been streamlined to provide easier access for refugees from the Nagorno Karabagh war to apply for Armenian citizenship. Between 1988 and 1992, because of interethnic clashes, about four hundred thousand ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan were forced out and found refuge in Armenia.

As described above, it appears that women and men have equal rights in determining the nationality of their children. The Republic of Armenia acceded to the UN Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 1994.

New Law on dual Citizenship, which entered into force in November 2007, does not have discriminatory articles.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and

women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;*
- (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;*
- (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;*
- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;*
- (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;*
- (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.*

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

- (a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;*
- (b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;*
- (c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;*
- (d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.*

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

There has been much criticism towards Labor Code that has been adopted by Armenia just after Independence. New Labor Code that has entered into force in 2005 in general meets human rights standards and has special articles related to equality between women and men. Recent laws that have been developed in Armenia are more democratic and human rights oriented and gender sensitive. It is explained by many factors: better knowledge on human rights and women's rights, correspondence to International norms and obligations taken by Armenia. It is very positive trend. From the other side economic crisis, limited employment opportunities, process of return to a limitation of democratic freedoms and culturally imbedded stereotypes against women and absence of mechanisms and monitoring systems to monitor the implementation leave these laws be just wishes on paper.

As it was said above the Code does not contain any article that has discriminatory nature. Article 3, 178, 221 speak on equal opportunities in employment between women and men, equal remuneration for equal job, sexual harassment of employees and beneficiaries.

a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

The labor rights of citizens of Armenia are protected by the Constitution and Republic of Armenia law. Under the Constitution, every person has the right to choose his or her profession, to receive a just wage and to have safe working conditions, and the State is obliged to undertake

measures to promote employment and improve working conditions. The right to work is declared right, not supported by actions and opportunities and there are very few jobs available, this is true especially for women. Unemployment is very high and many families rely on remittances from their family members migrated to Russia or other countries for labor. Absence of opportunities has created situation that women in many situations tolerate discrimination, unsafe and unfair work conditions, and harassment in order not to lose the work. In many situation work conditions are unsafe and women are not protected. Not always contracts are signed, and even if signed not always observed.

Due to the lack of alternative employment options, workers accept bad – even intolerable – work situations. Employers are able to make demands that employees must accept at risk losing their job. Sometimes they have to work unregulated hours and without vacations. Irrespective of the fact that 2005 Labor Inspectorate has been created, but still much work needs to be done to make that institution a strong monitoring body. Another important issue that women are working mostly in shadow, unregulated economy, which does not entitle them to social or health benefits and because of unregulated nature creates unprotectedness and vulnerability to abuse.

Constitution of Armenia prohibits forced labor, though cases of labor trafficking have been resisted both inside country and transnational. Cases of forced labor are mostly related to man working in constructional work, fewer cases of underage children involved in begging and hard work.

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

Labor code does not contain article related to discrimination in choice of employment and opportunities provided to men and women. The principle of equal treatment is laid down as a fundamental right in Article 14.1 of the Armenian Constitution. According to this text, “everyone is equal before the law. Any discrimination based on any grounds such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other belief, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances is prohibited.” Article 178 of the LC grants equal pay for equal work for men and women.

The freedom to choose a profession is guaranteed, as well as the right to working conditions that are in compliance with safety and hygiene requirements (Art. 32 of the Constitution. Unfortunately, the freedom of choice is also limited to very few jobs available, due to high unemployment rate.

Through according to official statistics /ARKA, January 17, 2007/, in 2007 the unemployment rate in Armenia reduced from 7.2% in the beginning of the year to 6.7% at the end of the year, As of December 31 2007 about 100000 people attended consultation at the regional centers of the agency. 89300 of them were registered as job seekers, including 75000 that receive status of unemployed. Women constitute 73.6% of the unemployed and men – 26.4%, she said.

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

In accordance with Article 39 of the Constitution of Armenia, “all citizens have the right to free superior and professional education in State superior and other professional educational institutions on the basis of competition as prescribed by law. In cases and in conformity with the procedure prescribed by law, the State provides financial and other assistance to institutions as well as their students conducting superior and other professional education programs”. This is true in reality , though due to increasing payment for tuition, limited opportunities to get state paid education , due to limited scholarships, provided by some businesses or donor agencies impossibility of students and their families to pay their tuition, as well as no or very limited availability of part time jobs for youth , this right has very limited application. There are some special courses organized by state labor agencies and some NGO’s but the real opportunity of getting long term jobs are very limited. Another obstacle of getting employment even when there is demand is bad working conditions. According to state sources there is demand in teachers, doctors in rural areas, which are traditionally female occupations, but due to bad working conditions and low payment women do not take the jobs. In many cases especially in rural areas event when there is demand and are women who have special education, there are no budgetary allocations to fulfill the demand. This is very true in rural areas. It is already for five years “Democracy Today” have been providing special trainings for women in rural areas at the end providing them with small seed grants to start their businesses with long term follow up mechanism to assist in implementing their business, providing them with additional knowledge, networking, markets. In result 150 women have developed their businesses employing in total around 600 people.

Another issue that should be stressed is a sense that there is rampant discrimination among employers based on age. Often, employment advertisements will specify age and appearance. Another observation as women have monopolized certain professions and specialties, often they are not viewed as “appropriate” to work in other non-traditional spheres. Cultural stereotypes continue to play a strong role in defining appropriate professional roles.

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

As it was mentioned above there is no gender discrimination connected to remuneration. According to Constitution of Armenia “each individual has the right to fair remuneration and the amount should not be less than the minimum wage set by law (Article 32) As mentioned above, wage issues are dealt with in separate enactments such as the Employment Wages Act, 2001, the Act on Remuneration of Civil Servants, 2002, and the Minimum Wage Act, 2004. Chapter 20 deals with financial guarantees and compensations. The rate of minimum, monthly and hourly pay is established by law of the Republic of Armenia (Article 179 of the LC), and the wage indexation (Article 182 of the LC). Particular wage conditions are provided for overtime work or night work, work carried out in hazardous conditions, during public holidays and rest days, idle time and part-time work (Articles 183 to 189 of the LC). It is important to mention that women are often accepting low paid jobs, emergency jobs in many cases even lower that the education and professional capacities they have due to inherent sense of emergency assistance to the family she lives with. There is another cultural presumption men are perceived as the core breadwinners of the family and therefore there is a cultural belief that men “deserve” to earn more money than women so that they can support their families. Women’s wages are considered to be “extra.” However, with the dire economic situation the salaries of both husband and wife in the family hardly cover both ends meet.

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

A worker retains the right to social security whether it is in old age, for disability, loss of main wage earner, unemployment and other cases prescribed by the law (Art. 37 of the Constitution of Armenia. Article 33 of the Constitution provides that “everyone has the right to rest. The law defines the maximum working hours, holidays, as well as the minimum length of annual leave.” In areas of or shadow employment in which quite substantive women are working this law is violated. Women work as cleaners, baby sitters without any leaves, as they are not hired according to the contract but just by oral agreement.

Article 83 of the LC defines the **contract of employment** as an agreement between an employee and an employer, according to which the employee undertakes to perform work of a certain profession, qualification or to perform specific duties in accordance with the work regulations established at the workplace. The employer undertakes to provide the employee with the work specified in the contract of employment, to pay him/her the agreed wages and to ensure working conditions as set out in labor legislation of the Republic of Armenia, other legal acts, collective agreements and the agreement between the parties. This provision of the labor code is new provision.

Articles 158 to 170 of the Labor Code are devoted to paid leave regulation. There are three types of annual paid leave – minimum, extended and additional. The minimum annual paid leave in Armenia is 28 days (Article 159 of the LC). Extended and additional paid annual leave of up to 35 days (or up to 48 days in some exceptional cases) are granted to workers performing work in hazardous conditions, or in conditions of intellectual or emotional stress. A list of professions and positions where extended or additional paid leave is mandated is established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (Articles 160 and 161 of the Labor Code).

Financial compensation instead of the annual paid leave is not authorized (Article 170 of the LC), exception made for the termination of employment.

There are no provisions for social benefits for people (men or women) working in non-monetized sectors of the economy.

Workplace safety is guaranteed through a declarative statement in the Constitution which states that, “Every citizen is entitled to... working conditions which meet sanitary and safety requirements.”

The system of social security in Armenia stipulates equal opportunities for men and women to access different types of subsidies and pensions. However, there is significant concern about the size of pensions and subsidies for all citizens and their inability to provide a meaningful social safety net.

According to state statistic service by January 1, 2007 the number of people, who are 65 years old and above that age is 12.7% of the total population of the Republic of Armenia (3.2 mln.) or 408 100 people, and people above 80 compile only 1.2% (37300 people) of the total population. Women form 51.7% of the total population of the Republic, although in the age Group of people above working age (65 years old and above) women compile 61%. In 2007 the average pension

level in the Republic of Armenia is 12600 AMD. After 1996, the same age of retirement for men and women was established – 63 years old, instead of 60 years old for men and 55 - for women. For both men and women age gradation was introduced, according to which each year retirement age rises for 6 months. Age gradation for men finished in 2001, and for women it is continuing and will work until 2011. In 2007 women have the retirement right when they become 61 years old. As for elderly people, the legislation provides no Provision for elderly and old aged citizens. In accordance with the RA Law “About Social Protection in Case of Employment and Unemployment of the Population” unemployed people of long term service and with privileged conditions receiving pension who seek for a job got the right of vocational training and additional education. In the state annual programs regulating employment designed for people seeking for a job, there are no divisions of programs designed especially for women and men, both men and women if they wish can participate in all programs without any gender discrimination. Statistics show that the majority of people involved in the afore-mentioned programs are women. Tension of the labor market and high level of unemployment in the Republic of Armenia still do not allow to implement projects promoting employment of old aged people. However, in comparison with the soviet period, working age was prolonged, especially for women. In accordance with the RA Law “About Civil Service” the retirement age for civil servants of the Republic of Armenia is 65.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

Article 35 of the Armenian Constitution provides that “dismissal for reasons connected with maternity is prohibited. Every female employee during pregnancy and childbirth has the right to paid maternity leave and parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.” In accordance with Article 18 of the Constitution of Armenia, everyone is entitled to effective legal remedies to protect his/her rights and freedoms before judicial as well as other public bodies. Article 19 of the Constitution adds that everyone has a right to restore his/her violated rights, and to reveal the grounds of the charge against him/her in a fair public hearing under the equal protection of the law and fulfilling all the demands of justice by an independent and impartial court within a reasonable time. In recent years, there have been very few cases of application of women applying to court for violation of her maternity and in general labor rights. This is because of many reasons: not always women know the benefits provided to them under the law, absence of confidence with courts system (though in recent years there have been some victories and women were able to restore their rights, but in reality after court decision psychological conditions were so tense that women preferred not to return to that employer.)

Article 117 of the LC guarantees that contracts of employment for pregnant women and women with children in their care cannot be terminated in the following circumstances:

- In the case of pregnant women - from the day in which the employer receives a medical certificate confirming pregnancy to the end of the month following the pregnancy leave;
- In the case of women with children aged less than one year in their care, except for cases specified by the LC, such as bankruptcy of the employer.

In accordance with Article 172 of the LC, women are entitled to pre- and postnatal leave while retaining whole remuneration:

- 140 days (70 days of pregnancy, 70 days after the delivery);
- 155 days (70 days of pregnancy, 85 days after the delivery) in case of complicated delivery;
- 180 days (70 days of pregnancy, 110 days after the delivery) in the event of twins, triplets etc.

At the request of the employee, leave for childcare is granted until the child reaches the age of three. This may also be taken by the father of the child, stepmother, stepfather, or any relative who is in charge of the child (Article 173 of the LC). This provision is new in Labor Code with previous providing leave only to mothers. Many young women in order not to lose their jobs and develop in their career return to work early, leaving child either on care of some family members or hair nanny for the child. In the cities, this tendency is prevalent. Pregnant women and women caring for children less than one year of age can be sent on business trips only with upon their consent (Article 209 of the LC). Some limitations are introduced in order to protect pregnant women and women caring for children younger than one year old. In particular, it is prohibited to employ such workers in hazardous conditions and the like, as detailed in list by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (Article 258 of the LC). The provisions of law are very favorable to women. In reality situation is quite different. Many employers prefer to hire young men or young women if they are unmarried rather than young married women. High unemployment and risk of losing jobs, absence of confidence in administrative that review labor disputes makes many women, even well familiar with their rights neglect the early job call and early return and other violation of their rights. In accordance with Article 18 of the Constitution of Armenia, everyone is entitled to effective legal remedies to protect his/her rights and freedoms before judicial as well as other public bodies. Article 19 of the Constitution adds that everyone has a right to restore his/her violated rights, and to reveal the grounds of the charge against him/her in a fair public hearing under the equal protection of the law and fulfilling all the demands of justice by an independent and impartial court within a reasonable time. As has been noted elsewhere, the Armenian courts are not generally held in high regard among the general population as a place to enforce rights or to resolve disputes. This is particularly true as regards labor disputes. As it was mentioned above employees are not encouraged to apply to court to protect their rights. In fact, the lack of whistle-blower protections or protection from retaliatory measures by employers (including transfer, demotion or termination) creates a serious disincentive for workers to report infractions of labor laws or to appeal to the court system to enforce their rights. In addition, there is no administrative body to which a worker may appeal to protect or enforce their rights vis-à-vis their employer.

Although a safe workplace is mandated under Article 29 of the Constitution, there is no governmental oversight mechanism to monitor health and safety concerns in the workplace. There is no system of inspections or central institution that sets and enforces safe labor standards. As one expert stated, “From whom should the employee demand “humane” working conditions? The employee is helpless and the employer is not interested. Nobody is demanding that the employer meet [and adhere to] these requirements, so why should he take on the additional expenses to create normal working conditions for his employees?”

Sexual harassment, while considered to be a key workplace safety and health issue under CEDAW, is vastly under-researched in Armenia. While there is a belief that the incidence of

sexual harassment is high, there is no hard data on the subject. There is no explicit prohibition against sexual harassment in Armenian law, although there is a provision in the criminal code which penalizes coerced sexual intercourse with the “person on whom a woman relies materially.” Anecdotal data indicates that quid pro quo harassment is widespread, particularly for young women workers.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling and services in family planning;

(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

(e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

(f) To participate in all community activities;

(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Areas of Concern:

- Enhanced poverty of women in rural areas due to economic crisis and unemployment and limited opportunities for livelihood in rural areas;
- Inaccessibility of health care facilities de facto;
- Limited access to education;
- No programs to value domestic labor to ensure an equitable provision of social benefits, including pension funds and health care coverage;
- Low living standards in rural areas additionally overburdens women’s work;
- Strengthening gender stereotypes limiting women’s participation in many areas of rural life, including political and development efforts, civic participation.

Complex transitional difficulties that had strong impact on population in urban areas had been much stronger impact on population in rural areas. Isolation between regions, poverty created

strong difference between the level of life in the capital, some medium size cities and rural areas. Irrespective of the recognition of this situation by the Government and attempts to develop policies and programs addressing the problems of rural areas, no special attitude has been developed for people living in rural areas and situation is deplorable. Not only programmatic addresses are required but also special legislative approaches are necessary. Especially deplorable is situation of women: erosion of social services, unemployment, absence of consideration of domestic work, which is predominant and extremely hard in rural mountainous areas of Armenia, imbalanced privatization of land and other economic resources migration of husbands for seasonal employment, strong social stereotypes, and limited knowledge on their rights puts women in rural areas in Armenia. In many situations even if the program adopted there is big gap between their real

The National Statistical Service provides with data on population in rural areas which of as of 1 January 2007, the rural was 1,156,900, or 35.9% of the total population, making more than 60%. Of Armenia's 929 communities, 870 are rural. This demonstrates necessity of special policies. Poverty level as it was mentioned above is much lower around 2-3 % that in urban area. Approximately 34 per cent of the population is unemployed and 90 per cent live below the poverty line of US \$1 per day. Especially vulnerable are communities with predominant refugee population, who make up 54% of the total number of refugees. Being mostly urban population they had very hard time in adapting and coping with conditions in rural areas.

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.

Armenian villages are typically characterized by patriarchal social systems and conservative social values.

However, changes have been observed in young rural families, when young couple had the opportunity to live separately and do not copy the stereotypes of behavior of their parents. This is emerging process, though not many young families can afford that. Many villages consist of two or three extended families living together.

It is quite important to mention that irrespective of the fact that informal norms and relations generally govern the social structure of rural communities in Armenia and public opinion, reprimand or positive encouragement are practically the only meaningful mechanisms of social control, economic factors and stratification of communities plays important role on gender relationship in family and community. Research conducted by "Democracy Today" in 20 remote rural communities in Armenia demonstrated that there exists gender balance and men and women play equal role and roles are interchangeable when families are very poor and they cope with survival strategy. The division starts with families that are economically better off.

The economic situation and migration of husbands have changed the traditional division of roles in the family in rural communities. Women, who would never imagine themselves as breadwinners, now are sole providers of family budget. Of course the mentality is still traditional. Most rural women cannot imagine themselves in the role of the breadwinner for the

family, since they believe that providing for the family is exclusively the man's work. Even in cases where the family's main income is provided by the woman, the man is still considered the head of the household. The pronounced polarization of work, man doing hard physical work and woman doing all household work, which in rural communities is much harder still exists and household work has never been monetized.

During one of the training on gender roles when women were asked to value the work they are doing at home at their household, they were not able to translate it into monetary value as they themselves always accepted that this part of free work is part of her feminine obligation.

With migration of man even the portion of work that was considered male in rural areas, such as working in the field, taking animals to pasture and construction work in the household have been put on the shoulders of women, making condition of her life extremely hard. Through the years there have been many situations when man could not help their familiars' due to illegal status in the country of work, economic crisis or starting second family.

This is putting women in even harder situation. Consideration of household work as part of economy and provision of social guaranties and pensions is important measure that Government should take into consideration.

Even if women have interest in community life, her capacities are limited only to family life as with the absence of communal services; support systems and financial stability women are not able to participate.

Women are generally politically passive in rural areas. A woman's vote is often decided by her husband, and in one case, a woman said, "I know a case when the wife voted for a candidate that her husband didn't like. A big fight ensued as a result."

The situation is aggravated by such factors as the remoteness of the village from the Yerevan political arena, the influence of clans, and the closed nature of the political elite. Even if rural women were to succeed in overcoming the socio-cultural barriers within the community, it would be extremely difficult for them to overcome the influence of the exclusive system of political elites which is characterized by the influence of clans and political deal-making among powerful patrons. In order to rise to the top, it is considered necessary to have strong and influential patrons, which women generally do not have.

From 870 communities only in 23 of them women have been elected as mayors. Number of women members of village council is significantly bigger and amounts 34%. Staff of village councils is mostly women. Women are mayors in the hardest villages in Armenia with destroyed after earthquake infrastructure, of border with Azerbaijan whew much destruction has been done in the result of war, or refugee populated villages.

One of the programs that "Democracy Today have been conducting since 2004 is assistance to women to be elected as mayors. Though intensive training and community sensitization the organization succeeded in supporting 15 women be elected as mayors. To strengthen success women's shadow cabinets have been created in 20 villages. Consisting from ten professional women these groups have been provided with necessary to run modern village knowledge as well as small grant to start community project. Currently there have been established coalitions

of rural women uniting more than 700 women from all communities of Armenia, that rises political, social and all the issues important to women in rural communities.

Irrespective increased interest and knowledge of women in political and management of their communities the roles are taken by man, not only because of stereotypes, but because of factors that are far from being political.