



AN ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION IN ARMENIA

The analysis has been conducted within the framework of the program
Modern Parliament for a Modern Armenia

Yerevan 2020

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The goal of the program Modern Parliament for a Modern Armenia is to strengthen Armenia's legislature so that it can perform its key functions of development of laws, oversight and representativeness. The goal is also to support the Parliament so that the public administration system utilizes new tools and mechanisms promoting improvement of work quality, transparency and inclusiveness, as well as development of gender-sensitive policies. The program is jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, the RA National Assembly, the OxYGen Foundation, and the International Center for Human Development with support from the United Kingdom's Good Governance Fund and the Government of Sweden.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NA	National Assembly
ILO	International Labor Organization
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RA	Republic of Armenia
SSA	Statistical Service of Armenia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations Organization
UN SC	United Nations Security Council
HDI	Human Development Index
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
WEF	World Economic Forum
UNHDI	United Nations Human Development Index
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
PSI	Preschool institution
RA MoESCS	RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport
RA MLSA	RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
HILCS	Households’ Integrated Living Conditions Survey
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
SME DSC	Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship Development Support Center /SME DSC/, currently, “Investment Support Center” Foundation /ISCF/
ADB	Asian Development Bank
YSU	Yerevan State University
VET	Vocational Education and Training
IT	Information Technologies
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UN SC	United Nations Security Council
NAP	National Action Plan
NK/NKR	Nagorno Karabagh/Nagorno Karabagh Republic
ICSE	ILO International Classification of Status in Employment
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 marks 25 years since the day when, in 1995, more than 17 thousand official delegates from 189 countries, including from Armenia, came together at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.¹

The discussions were proceeding at two parallel platforms: the official-level conference was held in Beijing and, at the same time, the forum of non-governmental organizations with participation of 30 thousand activists was taking place in Huairou located in the outskirts of Beijing.

The one hundred eighty-nine states participating in the Beijing Conference made commitments to the unanimously adopted **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**.

Up to date, the Platform for Action has been considered the most comprehensive and fundamental agreement in the area of expansion of women's rights and opportunities and attainment of gender equality. The volume of the document and its highly orderly structure are impressive in themselves: twelve critical areas of concern and, within each one's framework, situational analysis, outline of strategic objectives and actions to be taken addressed to governments, civil society and other responsible bodies.²

In fact, it is the Beijing Platform for Action that put into circulation the formula of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, which aimed at eliminating the gap existing between women's declaratory rights and the actual effective exercise of those rights.

Within the framework of the post-Beijing developments, the formula of equal rights and equal opportunities has been endorsed in all future programmatic documents and supplemented with the concept of equality of outcome.

The main feature of the Beijing Platform for Action is that right from the start it was possible to ensure the crosscutting and unity of opinions of states and civil society and, thanks to that, the high quality of the document.

Already at the development stage of the Plan it was obvious that only political will was not enough to bring to life the idea of gender equality. It was necessary to engage all civil society institutions that could influence public opinion. Therefore, the recommendations on the twelve critical areas of concern are aimed at both the state and civil society structures.

¹ In 1995, there were 26 women from Armenia participating in the Beijing Conference: 8 members of the official delegation and 18 representatives of non-governmental organizations. By the way, His Holiness Karekin I Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians was among those unique clergymen who sent, during those days, his message to the participants in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

² Unfortunately, the Armenian translation of the document is available only in a brief unofficially translated version.

The Beijing Platform of Action is not only a fundamental guide for the states to ensure gender equality, but also a comprehensive strategy for development of women's movement. In the entire world, including Armenia, the Beijing Platform for Action has become a powerful stimulus for growth of women's organizations.

And although not all of the more than 50 women's organizations created in Armenia since 1995 has been able to develop over the time, the Beijing Platform for Action has served as a roadmap for development of many women's organizations, which is continuing in the republic through making sense of that strategic document and its novel interpretation by newly-created non-governmental organizations.

Today, within the framework of the Beijing +25 process initiated to implement these commitments, Armenia has a more than active role since in 2020-2021 it is chairing the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which is an oversight body for issues related to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Today too, 25 years later, in line with the tradition developed at the Beijing Conference, the observation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is carried out at two levels: at the official level through national reports presented by governments and parallel to that through alternative reports submitted by non-governmental organizations.

This paper, being an analysis of the implementation of *the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* in Armenia, is a version of alternative reporting, which reflects on the three out of the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action of pivotal significance for Armenia: *Education and Training of Women*, *Women and Armed Conflict*, and *Women and the Economy*.

PART 1.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN: *EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN*

The strategic objectives formulated for *the critical area of concern on Education and Training of Women* in the Beijing Platform for Action are as follows:

1. Ensure equal access to education,
2. Eradicate illiteracy among women,
3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education,
4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training,
5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms,
6. Promote life-long education and training for girls and women.

Below presented is a general evaluation of achievements of the state policies aimed at ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the area of education and training and of systemic issues over the past five years. Presented are also recommendations on improving the effectiveness of the NA and Government's actions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION

CONCLUSIONS

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past five years, no major achievements have been recorded in the area of education and training, however, there have been some positive changes.

The most significant change is that since 2015 secondary education has become mandatory (before that the main education was mandatory). It was stipulated through April 8, 2015 addition to *the RA Law on Education*, according to which, the twelve-year-long secondary education or technical vocational education and training in the Republic of Armenia became mandatory for students under the age of 19.

Another positive shift is the fact that the RA Government has finally acknowledged and voiced that there are children in the republic who are not studying and are left out of school. The March 6, 2020 addition to *the RA Law on General Education* assigned to the RA Government the responsibility for defining the order and procedure for detection and referral of children left out of the mandatory education.³

More emphasis is placed on the necessity of inclusive education. Planned is the organization of the educational process in schools by credits and remotely.

Although small, but nevertheless an achievement is the fact that children's enrolment in preschool institutions expanded in 2018 reaching 34% as compared to 29% in 2014.

Gender segregation in some areas of education has reduced. Over the past ten years, the percentage of girls studying mathematical sciences, chemistry and arts has increased. The number of women admitted to and graduated from PhD programs has doubled.

Thanks to the efforts of gender experts some educational and methodological packages and textbooks of the general education school have undergone gender expertise. The standard, syllabus, eight-grade textbook and teacher's manual of the subject of *Civics* in the general education school have undergone expert review from the perspective of identifying and excluding gender stereotypes and materials associated with gender inequality. Recommendations have been developed and submitted. To create criteria for gender expertise of the educational literature, a gender expert review has been conducted of the main and alternative textbooks for the following subjects taught at primary school: primer, native language, mathematics, me and the environment, technology, physical education, fine arts, and music.

³ <http://parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=6984&lang=arm>

Topics related to gender stereotypes, equality and tolerance, and gender policies have been incorporated into the training programs for deputy principals, form-masters, social pedagogues, and psychologists of general education schools.

Work aimed at involving girls into STEM⁴ education has been activated. As a result of the program on *Implementation of STEM Education and Robotics Development in Schools*, according to the 2019 data, all RA marzes are operating engineering laboratories and robotics clubs. The program aims at contributing to enhancement of skills of girls and women and development of STEM knowledge, as well as at easing their entry into the labor market.

Women's involvement in information technologies (IT) in Armenia is considered not low, 37%, however, there is a potential for growth if more purposeful work is carried out in this direction.

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION

Legal regulations

In the Republic of Armenia, the educational system includes preschool education, twelve-year secondary education (primary education -4 years, main education -5 years, high school -3 years), higher education (with 6th and 7th levels of the National Qualifications Framework, NQF), and post-graduate education (NQF 8th level: Master's and PhD Degrees). According to the RA legislation, secondary education is mandatory and free, everyone has the right to receive free professional education on a competitive basis.

In the republic, *Conceptual Framework for Gender Policies*⁵ was endorsed in 2010 and the *RA Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men* was approved in 2013. The framework and the law provide for prohibition of discrimination and equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in all areas of public life.

The field of education is regulated by a number of laws: *On Education* (1999), *On Preschool Education* (2005), *On General Education*, *On Technical Vocational Education and Training* (2005), and *On Higher and Post-Graduate Professional Education* (2004). The laws regulating the field of education provide for students' equal opportunities, accessibility, continuity, and succession.

⁴ STEM – Science, technology, engineering and mathematics; STEM is an educational program based on the idea of educating students in four special subjects: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through an interdisciplinary and practical approach.

⁵ https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorh/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf, page 16

In 2015, the **2011-2015 Strategic Program on Gender Policies in the Republic of Armenia** approved by the RA Government came to its completion. The program's subsection on *Strategies of Implementation of Gender Policies in the Area of Education* envisaged:

- To incorporate a gender component in the state policies on education and science,
- To create an educational and methodological basis for teaching the fundamentals of gender knowledge,
- To introduce a component for conveyance of gender knowledge (module) in training courses for pedagogical specialists,
- To introduce criteria for conduct of gender expertise of educational literature,
- To promote conduct of scholarly gender research.

The monitoring of the program implementation demonstrated that *although the strategic program envisioned incorporation of a gender component in the state policies on education and science and some work had been carried out in that direction, Armenia's international obligations were not directly reflected in the strategic program and no systematized work had been carried out in that direction.*⁶

No program was adopted in the republic for 2015-2018 gender policies, which has significantly impeded the progress in this direction. Later, by its September 19, 2019 Decree, the RA Government endorsed the **2019-2023 Strategy on Implementation of Gender Policies in the Republic of Armenia**. Strategic priority 3 is *Expansion of of Women's and Men's Full and Effective Participation and Equal Opportunities in the Areas of Education and Science*, the implementation of which is expected to achieve the following:

- 1) Prevention of formation of gender discrimination among students,
- 2) High-level of awareness of human rights, democracy and gender equality among students of general education, technical vocational education and training, as well as higher professional educational institutions,
- 3) High-level of awareness of healthy lifestyle and gender roles among students of general education schools, development of the necessary life skills among students,

⁶ Report on Assessment of the Implementation of 2011-2015 Gender Policy Strategic Plan and 2011-2015 National Action Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence, Yerevan, UNDP http://un.am/up/library/Assesment_2011-2015_Gender%20Policy_arm.pdf

- 5) Raised awareness of gender equality topics and development of gender sensitivity among the leadership and teachers of educational institutions,
- 6) Formation of gender sensitivity towards the process of universal inclusiveness,
- 7) Implementation of effective policies towards gender discrimination manifestations identified in the areas of education and science,
- 8) Transformation of gender stereotypes regarding professions and exclusion of discriminatory manifestations in selection of professions.

It is significant that the strategy ascribes importance to detection of children not attending school for different social reasons (including those having disability, belonging to national minorities and girls living in rural areas) and their enrolment in school.

Thus, the RA legislation and legal documents provide for prohibition of sex-based discrimination, mandatory secondary education irrespective of sex, enrolment in vocational and higher education institutions on a competitive basis and the right to post-graduate education on a competitive basis.

Ensuring equal access to education

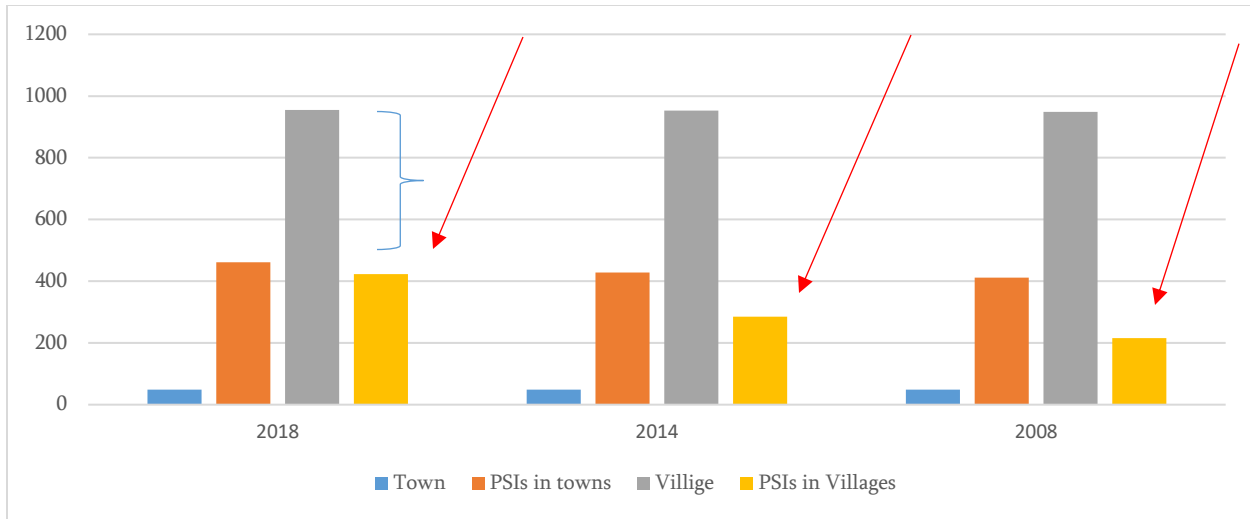
At the legislative level, there is no discrimination in the area of education, however, under the circumstances of latent discrimination, existence of gender stereotypes on the place and role of women and men in the family and society and in the context of person's or family's socio-economic status and affiliation with national minorities, there are differences from the perspective of opportunities, motivation to receive education, choice of professional orientation and professional growth.

General education

Preschool education. In 2018, the RA had 884 community-based, departmental and non-state preschool institutions (PSI), 686 of which were kindergartens, 67 – nursery-kindergartens, and 131 – school-kindergartens.⁷

Diagram 1. PSIs in towns and villages

⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 20



Children's enrolment in PSIs stood at 31.6% (33.6% in case of girls), 36.5% in towns and 22.6% in villages.⁸ Three- to five-year-old children's enrolment in PSIs made up 59.9%, six-year-olds – 33.2%, and one and a half to three-year-olds – 6.6%.⁹ That is to say, there is low availability of nursery-kindergartens.

Table 1. Children's enrolment in preschool institutions by marzes, 2018

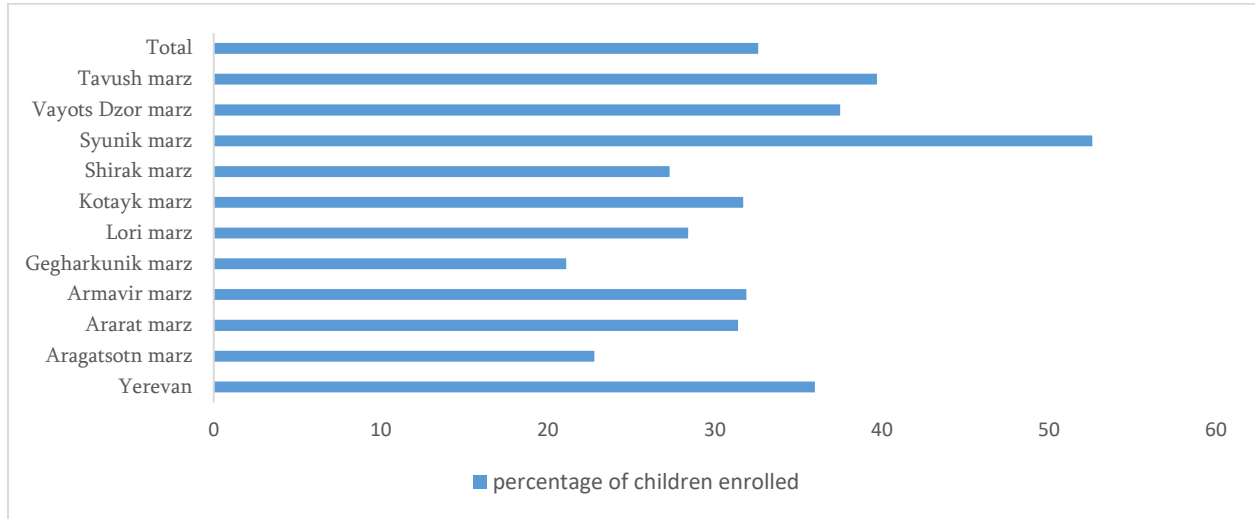
	PSI number	Girls	Boys
Yerevan	220	16207	16805
Aragatsotn Marz	30	1219	1220
Ararat Marz	78	3251	3491
Armavir Marz	103	3186	3339
Gegharkunik Marz	47	1813	2004
Lori Marz	94	2494	2655
Kotaik Marz	53	3157	3484
Shirak Marz	114	2613	2842
Syunik Marz	50	2184	2349
Vayots Dzor Marz	31	636	731
Tavush Marz	64	1637	1757
Total	884	38397	40677

⁸ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_1.pdf, page 4

⁹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_1.pdf, page 7

As one can see from the table, children’s enrolment level greatly differs from marz to marz.

Diagram 2. Children’s enrolment in PSIs by marzes, 2018



The above diagram clearly shows the difference between the marzes. The highest indicator was recorded in Syunik, where children’s enrolment was 53.3%, and the lowest in Gegharkunik, 21.9%.¹⁰ Forty-nine per cent of children attending preschool institutions in 2018 were girls.¹¹

Table 2. Children’s enrolment in preschool institutions by marzes (percentage), with comparison between 2014 and 2018

	2014		2018	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
Yerevan	36.8	37.6	36.0	37.1
Aragatsotn Marz	19.3	20.3	22.8	24.6
Ararat Marz	27.2	28.0	31.4	32.3
Armavir Marz	20.3	21.8	31.9	33.4
Gegharkunik Marz	16.4	18.6	21.1	21.9
Lori Marz	22.7	23.3	28.4	28.9
Kotaik Marz	27.9	27.9	31.7	31.8
Shirak Marz	21.6	23.1	27.3	27.9

¹⁰ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_1.pdf, page 25

¹¹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_1.pdf, page 2

Syunik Marz	42.1	45.2	52.6	53.3
Vayots Dzor Marz	25.3	27.8	37.5	36.5
Tavush Marz	33.5	34.6	39.7	41.2
Total	28.7	29.9	32.6	33.6

As compared with 2014, there is improvement in almost all the marzes. The increase in enrolment is especially high in Armavir, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor marzes. The state is carrying out some work to increase the number of preschool institutions. Within the framework of the credit program on *Improvement of Education*, in 2017, the state established 23 preschool institutions in the RA Aragatsotn, Syunik, Ararat, and Gegharkunik marzes with 18 created in rural and 5 in urban communities, which allows the enrolment of 1 200 children. However, the situation in this area is not satisfactory yet. In 2019, the cooperation between the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport and UNICEF resulted in review of state educational standards for preschool education. Alternative cost-effective models of preschool education were developed. According to the 2020 data, more than 171 thousand children, or 70% of children, do not attend kindergartens in Armenia.¹²

According to the results of the integrated living conditions survey of households, the gross enrolment index in preschool institutions makes up 33% in non-poor households, and respectively 28% and 0% in poor (excluding extremely poor) and extremely poor households.¹³ The main reasons for non-enrolment in kindergartens are the following: non-working mother (39.5%), absence of a kindergarten in a given location (11.3%), the expensiveness of enrolment and the closed status of preschool institutions (2.1%).¹⁴ According to the 2018 research data, 59.9% of rural households have responded that the preschool institution is located at a distance of one kilometer. For 5.4%¹⁵ of households, the kindergarten is located at a distance of more than ten kilometres and in these conditions, especially because of lack of public transportation or inaffordability, it is very difficult for poor families to enrol in it. UNICEF's new report on *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education* notes that those

¹²

<http://womennet.am/%d5%af%d5%a1%d5%bc%d5%a1%d5%be%d5%a1%d6%80%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%b5%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b6%d5%a8-%d5%ad%d5%b8%d5%bd%d5%bf%d5%a1%d5%b6%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%b4-%d5%a7-%d5%af%d5%a1%d5%a6%d5%b4%d5%a1%d5%af%d5%a5/>

¹³ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 28

¹⁴ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 29

¹⁵ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 30

countries where the majority of children do not receive preschool education lose the opportunity to make a profitable investment, which deepens the inequality in society.¹⁶

Thus, although the legislation provides for the right of the child to receive preschool education, the enrolment of children in preschool institutions is very low. The differences by sex are not major and, as a rule, correspond to the proportion of respective age groups. However, there are major differences by marzes and from the perspective of rural-urban breakdown and the social conditions of the family. A larger number of rural children are deprived of the opportunity to attend a preschool institution. There is also a difference between different locations in terms of kindergarten housing conditions and resources. At present, no data are available on the extent to which the situation has changed due to the community consolidation. If the kindergartens existing in a consolidated community are to service children from all community locations, a problem might arise for children from poor families because of a great distance between the residence and the kindergarten and lack of transportation.

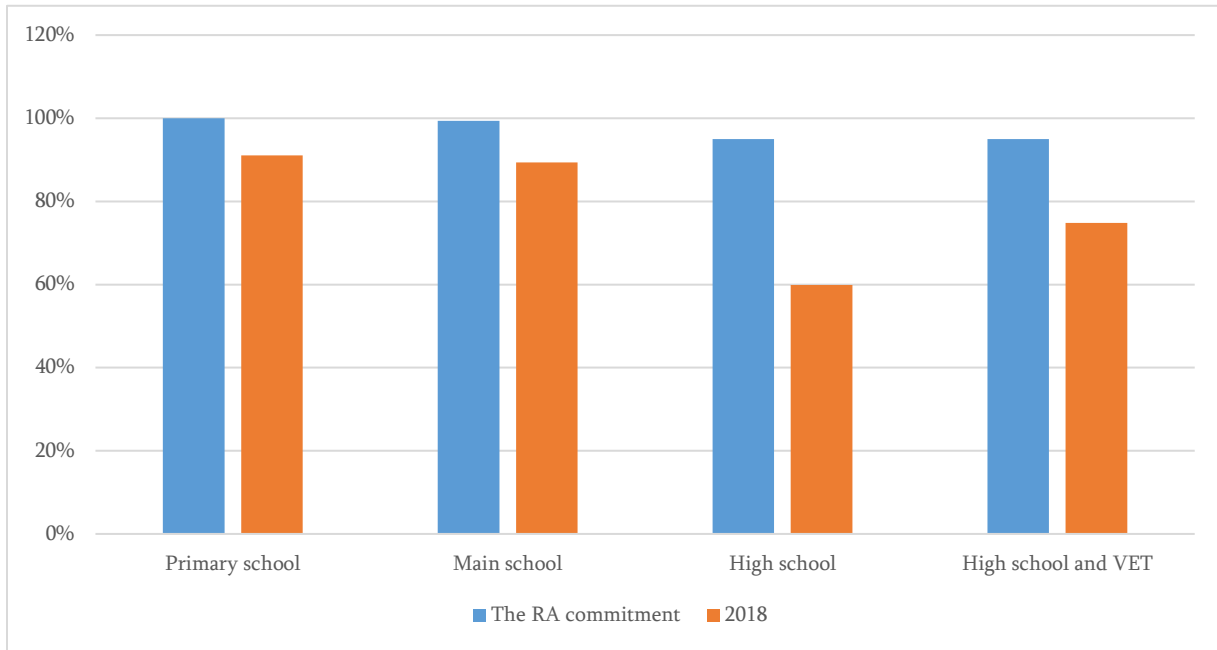
Secondary education. Within the context of the UN Millennium Development Goals, the Government of Armenia, in line with its commitments associated with the area of education, had set a task to achieve a universal enrolment of children in the main school, 99.4%, and the high school, 95%, by 2015, however, the set goals have not been achieved. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the gross enrolment index of children in schools was 83.0% with 91.1% in the primary school, 89.4% in the main school, and 59.9% in the high school.¹⁷

¹⁶ A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education, global report, UNICEF
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A%20World%20Ready%20to%20Learn_MAIN%20REPORT%20%28embargoed%20until%209%20APRIL%29.pdf

¹⁶

¹⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_2.pdf, page 6

Diagram 3. Degree of correspondence to the RA commitment for 2015 set in line with the Millennium Goals, 2018, (percentages)



Girls make up 47% of students in the primary school, 47% in the main school, and 51% in the high school.¹⁸ At that, in 2014, 80.2% of girls were enrolled in the high school and in 2018 – 65.7% (boys’ enrolment was 54.8%).¹⁹

The reduction in the gross enrolment index of students in the high school is explained by the drop in the latter’s rating, as a result of which 15.9% of students continue their education at technical vocational education and training institutions²⁰, which incorporate a mandatory component of the general education program. In 2018, the enrolment of girls in general education schools was 91.4% as compared to 93.5% in 2014 (there are major differences between marzes: the highest percentage is in Kotaik, 98.5%, and the lowest percentage in Gegharkunik, 85%).²¹

Diagram 4. The gross enrolment index of students in state and non-state general education schools according to sex, the RA marzes, and the city of Yerevan, 2018

¹⁸ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_2.pdf, page 10

¹⁹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_2.pdf, page 84

²⁰ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2018_a_4.pdf, page 24

²¹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_2.pdf, page 83

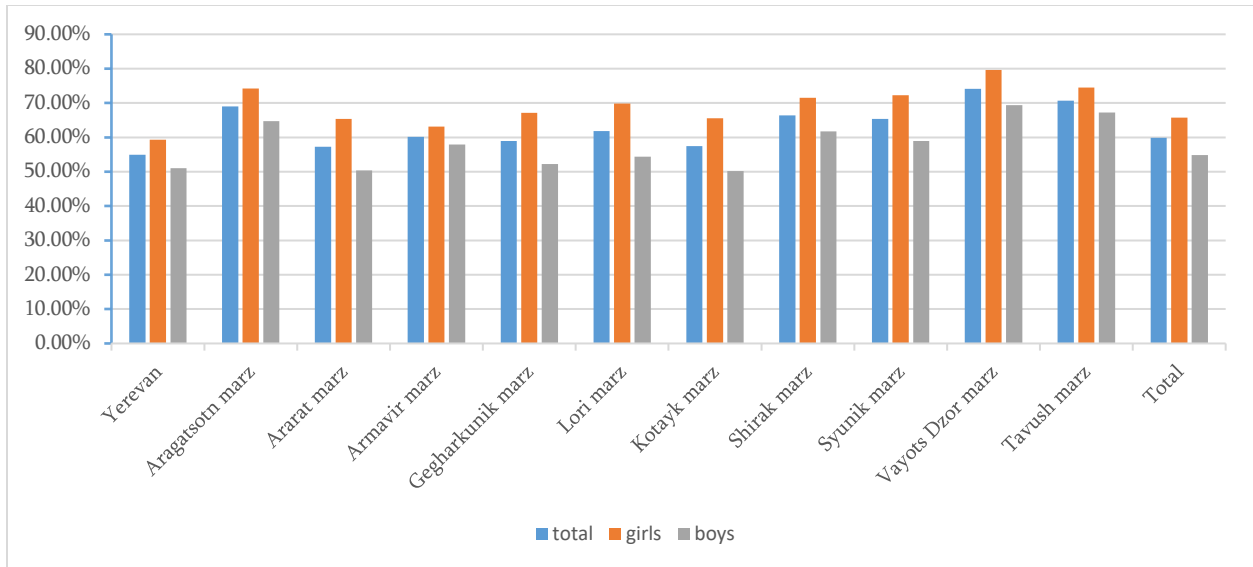
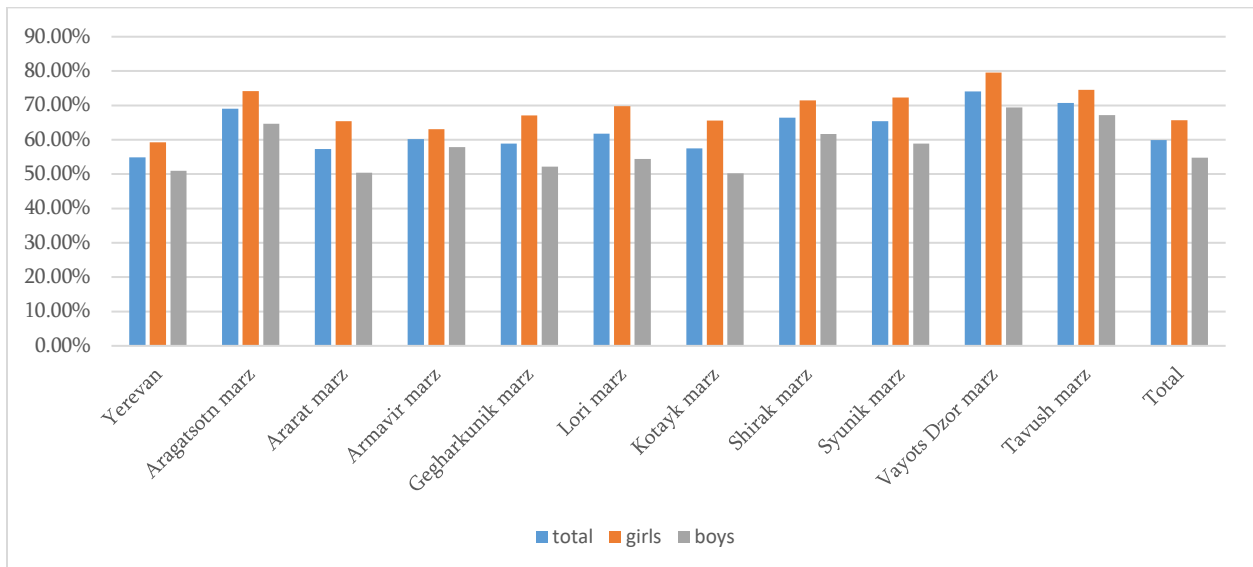


Diagram 4 shows that, in all the marzes, children’s enrolment in general education schools, as compared to the commitments made by the Republic of Armenia, is low, though there are differences between marzes. In all the marzes, due to the earlier entry into the labor market, more boys than girls are left out of school. The indicator for non-attendance of school is higher in the high school, which is presented in Diagram 5.

Diagram 5. The gross enrolment index of students in state and non-state general education high schools according to sex, the RA marzes, and the city of Yerevan, 2018



According to the HILCS results, children’s gross enrolment in primary school (1-4 grades) does not differ much by the level of poverty. In the conditions of secondary education, the dropout of students from high school is highest because of the poverty. The gross

enrolment in high school is 74% in case of non-poor households, 67% in case of poor households (excluding extremely poor), and 52% in case of extremely poor households.²²

There is inequality between rural and urban schools in terms of education quality, which can render village children incompetent in pursuit of higher education. Due to a small number of children in rural schools, there is wide prevalence of 'mixed-grade classes,' which cannot yield the same result as the regular educational process. Rural schools have lack of teachers, which leaves its impact on the quality of education too. In 2019, the Decree of the RA Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport endorsed the experimental procedure for distance learning in the RA general education institutions in the 2019-2020 academic year, which should help reduce teacher shortages in rural schools through distance learning. In 2020, due to the spread of coronavirus and in the conditions of the state of emergency, the transition to distance learning in the republic accelerated, although the difference in accessibility of resources for rural and urban children manifested itself once again.

The reasons for dropout of women and girls from the field of general education

Reasons for the dropout of children from school are different. During 2018, 7.8% of 15- to 17- year-old children did not attend any educational institution.²³ According to the official data, at the start of the 2018-2019 academic year, the number of students left out of general education schools was 367 with 151 of them (41%) being girls. In comparison with 2013 (1070 children²⁴), this indicator significantly dropped. Forty-two girls were left out of school due to bad socio-economic conditions, 78 girls did not attend school due to their parents' prohibition (the reasons for prohibition are not clear), 9 girls because of incapacity, and 22 because of death.²⁵ With secondary education being mandatory, the dropout of students from higher grades can, as noted above, be explained by high poverty rates²⁶ and low probability for costs compensation after the entry into the labor market in the conditions of non-satisfactory quality of education.

An important consideration with respect to this issue is the large distance to schools in the conditions of bad inter-village roads. There are villages that do not have secondary schools.

²² https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 32

²³ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 32

²⁴ http://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_12_3-4.pdf, 2013

²⁵ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_2.pdf, page 20

²⁶ Presently developed are draft decrees on *Endorsing the Procedure for Detection and Referral of Children Left Out of Mandatory Education* and on *Approving the Criteria and Toolkits for Creation of New-Generation Textbooks and Auxiliary Educational Literature*. Developed and submitted to the RA Government is also the RA Government's draft decree on *Approving the Program on Introduction of Alternative Cost-Effective Models of Preschool Education*. However, their effectiveness can be evaluated only in two-three years.

According to the data of the 2018 survey, 74.8% of rural households have responded that the secondary school is located at a distance of up to one kilometer. At the same time, 2.5% of households have responded that it is located at a distance of four and more kilometres and 0.1% have responded that the nearest school is situated at a distance of more than ten kilometres.²⁷ The research results demonstrate that, taking into account Armenia's mountainous terrain and the cut-off of villages from one another, the road to school becomes a serious ordeal. This road is often not safe not only for climatic reasons (impassibility of the roads during the winter months), but also in terms of physical safety. Both girls and boys are disadvantaged by the absence of schools, but it adversely affects especially girls since it is them that their parents, often for safety considerations, forbid to go on foot from their villages to school at another village. The social infrastructure of rural residences is highly vulnerable also from the perspective of ensuring the diversity of education for children. Missing are music, sports, art, mathematics schools, as well as those with other orientation. Due to the non-availability of proper transportation, rural children do not have access to such schools in towns. According to the conducted interviews, girls are especially disadvantaged as the long distance to educational facilities becomes a bigger obstacle for them. In case of boys, there are, as a rule, no obstacles to free movement due to safety considerations.

Children with disability also have problems with access to education. Secondary schools generally do not have additional conditions and the necessary resource base for children with disability, although some work is being carried out in that direction. The home-based education envisioned by law does not provide full knowledge. In 2017, universal inclusive education was introduced in the RA Lori and Tavush marzes. The authorities continue to implement their commitment to have full inclusive education by 2025. Inclusive education implies joint learning of children with and without disability at community schools. However, according to research, the dynamics of growth of inclusive schools demonstrates that the process is moving forward very slowly.²⁸ Moreover, in the opinion of specialists, Armenia has an integrated education model rather than inclusive education.²⁹ In the 2017-2018 academic year, there was inclusive education in 201 of the republic's general education schools, where approximately 6 223 children with special educational needs (EPSEN children) were studying. And in the 2018-2019 academic year, there was inclusive education in 136 of the republic's general education schools, where approximately 3 330 children with special

²⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 33

²⁸ <https://ampop.am/inclusive-education-in-armenia/>

²⁹ http://www.osf.am/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Inclusive-education-report_ARM-without-tools.pdf

educational needs were studying.³⁰ Stereotypes in this respect are preserved and persist; however, more disadvantaged by them are girl children. Interviews conducted during some research show that “due to the society’s non-tolerant attitude, parents often conceal their disabled children from their milieu and limit their interactions, with their reasoning being that it is shameful.”³¹

Girls drop out from schools especially in national minority communities (Yezidis and Molokans). In 2009, the CEDAW Committee invited the attention of Armenia’s Government to this fact in its Concluding Observations on Armenia’s third and fourth periodic reports.³² Due to lack of relevant statistics, it is difficult to assess the percentage of girls’ dropout and early marriages. Some actions are taken in different marzes, where national minorities make up larger numbers. For example, in 2018-2019, *the Development Center of Armavir* NGO implemented the programs on *Promotion of the Right to Education for Yezidi Women/Girls* and on *Protection of the Right to Education of Yezidi Girls and Women in Armavir and Aragatsotn Marzes through Awareness Raising of the Population and Capacity Building of Teachers*³³ with financial support from the Embassies of the USA and Canada in Armenia. In the RA marzes, NGOs have periodically organized seminars and discussions on the problems related to the dropout of Yezidi students, and in particular, of Yezidi girls from general education institutions. Participating in these events have been representatives of the Department for Education, Culture, and Sport of Armavir Regional Administration. However, these activities are episodic and are not well coordinated. One can say that regarding this issue the State is conducting a highly cautious policy since in many cases national minorities might perceive the said state policies as national discrimination, considering them dangerous for preservation of their national customs. As a result, women and girls are disadvantaged. In addition, there are also problems with the quality of education in rural schools of national minorities.

As of 2019, the republic had not yet implemented the commitments undertaken by it in the realm of general education for 2015. The reasons why children are left out of education vary: the family’s position, social insecurity and children’s engagement in agricultural and household work, their disability, migration, poor progress in studies and lack of motivation. This dropout has different consequences for women and men. In case of girls, the dangers of early marriage, not continuing their education later, and economic dependence on their

³⁰ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151915>

³¹ Gender Aspects of Access to Education, 2014, page 24

³² <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=52dd05e94>

³³ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151508>, page

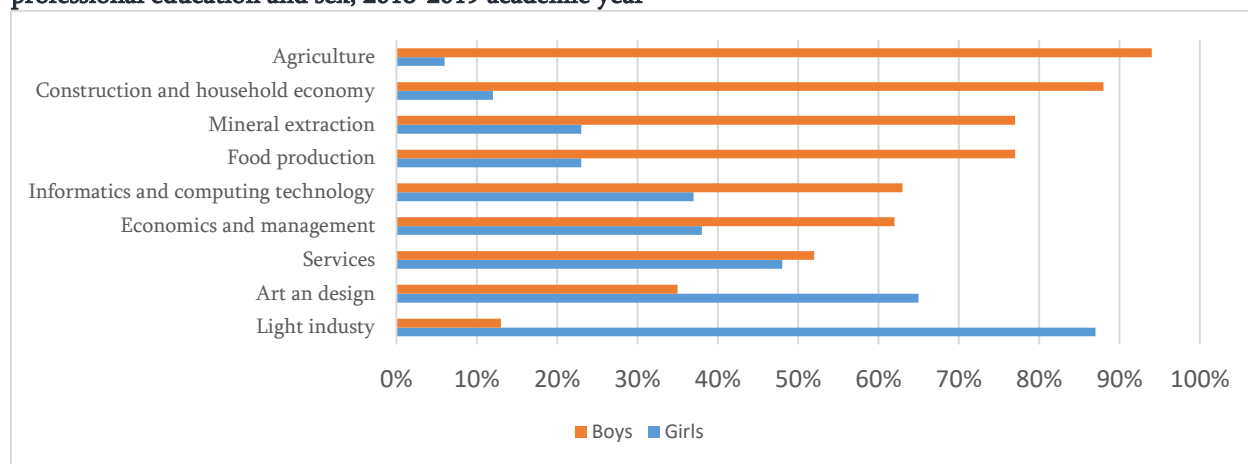
husbands and other relatives are increasing. Because of the dropout of children, the country loses the opportunity of fully utilizing the potential of its citizens.

Professional education

Primary vocational education. In the 2018-2019 academic year, 46 state educational institutions implementing primary vocational (craftsmanship) program were operating in the republic. The number of students was 6 723 with 27.1% of them being women. Ninety-nine point two per cent of students were enrolled in the free education system, and 0.8% in the paid system. The gross enrolment index of students was 6.7% (3.9% for women and 9.2% for men), and gender equality index³⁴ was 0.42.³⁵ The low level of girls' enrolment in primary vocational educational institutions can be explained, on the one hand, by a not very high rating of these institutions (usually children with poorer progress in studies get enrolled in primary vocational institutions) and, on the other hand, by lack of professions considered "feminine" in society. In addition, in case of younger age girls, their parents prefer that they study at their community school rather than go to another community, even if it is for educational purposes. There are no such obstacles in case of boys.

There are major differences between girls and boys in terms of choice of professions. As one can see from Diagram 6 provided below, the number of girls is comparatively higher in the areas of light industry (87%) and art and design (65%).

Diagram 6. Students of primary vocational (craftsmanship) educational institutions according to the area of professional education and sex, 2018-2019 academic year



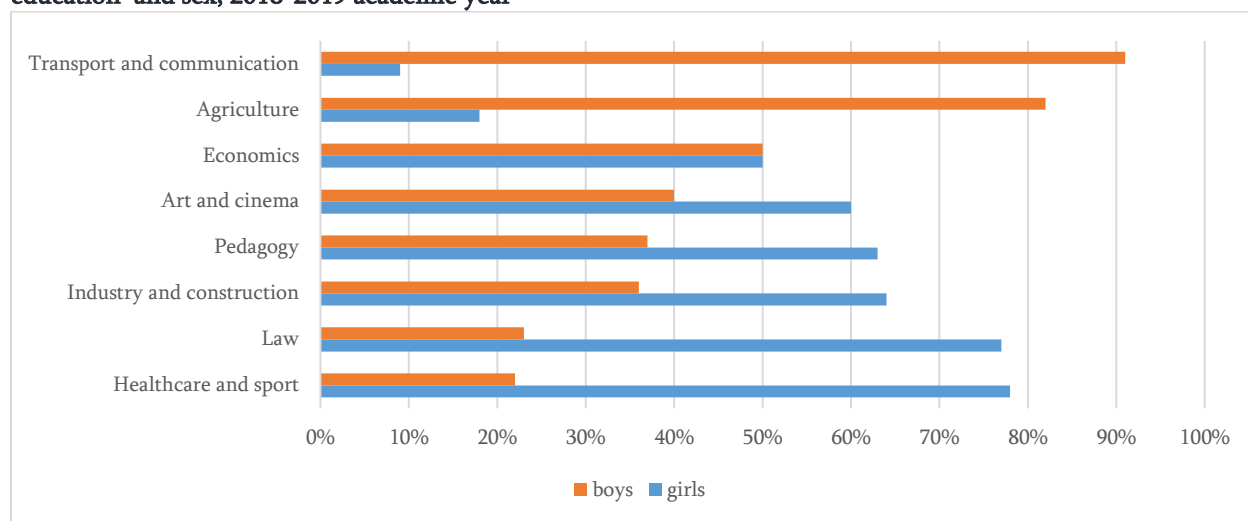
³⁴ Gender equality index is the coefficient of ratio of women's gross enrolment index to men's gross enrolment index.

³⁵ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_4.pdf, page 1

The number of girls is lower in all other areas: services (48%), economics and management (38%), informatics and computing technology (37%), food production (23%), mineral extraction (23%), construction and household economy (12%), and agriculture (6%). There are no girls at all in the following professional areas: transportation means, reproduction and processing of forest resources, radio-electronic equipment and telecommunications, machine-building equipment and technology, and power engineering.³⁶ The labor market demand for these professions is higher.

Secondary vocational education. In the 2018-2019 academic year, at 93 state and non-state secondary vocational institutions of the republic, the gross enrolment index of students was 11.7% (13.1% for women and 10.4% for men) and gender equality index was 1.26.³⁷

Diagram 7. Students of secondary vocational educational institutions according to the area of professional education and sex, 2018-2019 academic year



As one can see from Diagram 7, there is a large number of girls in the following areas: healthcare and sport (78%), law (77%), industry and construction (65%), pedagogy (63%), art and cinema (60%), and economics (50%). Girls have incomparably lower percentage of enrolment in the areas of agriculture (18%) and transport and communication (9%).³⁸ In comparison with 2009, the number of girls increased in the area of law (it was 47.6% in 2009 and 77% in 2019) and decreased in the area of pedagogy (81.7% in 2009 dropped to 63% in 2019). Changes in all other professional areas are insignificant.

Higher education. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the republic's 56 state and non-state higher education institutions and twelve branches offered, **at the first level** of higher

³⁶ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_4.pdf, page 12

³⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_5.pdf, page 1

³⁸ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_5.pdf, page 14

education, professional education through Bachelor’s Degree programs. The gross enrolment index of students was 52.2% (56.6% for women and 48.2% for men) and the gender equality index (the coefficient of ratio of women’s gross enrolment index to men’s gross enrolment index) was 1.17.³⁹

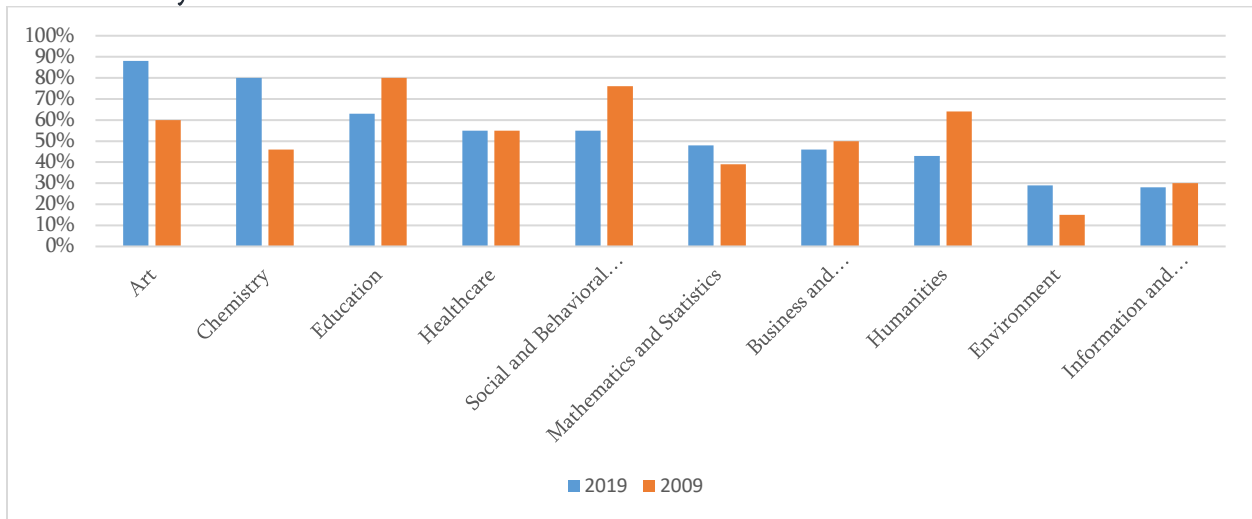
In the 2028-2019 academic year, the republic’s 32 state and non-state higher education institutions, nine branches, and four scientific organizations offered, **at the second level** of higher education, professional education through Master’s Degree programs. The gross enrolment index of students in these organizations was 14.1% (19.4% for women and 8.9% for men) and the gender equality index (the coefficient of ratio of women’s gross enrolment index to men’s gross enrolment index) was 2.18.⁴⁰

The gross enrolment of non-poor households in higher education institutions was 39%, of poor (excluding extremely poor) households – 26%, and of extremely poor households – 0%.⁴¹

As is the case at the preceding levels, striking are not gender differences, but social status differences related to poverty.

There are gender differences in terms of choice of professions.

Diagram 8. The percentage of women and girls in the overall number of students at higher education institutions according to some areas of professional education with comparison between 2008-2009 and 2018-2019 academic years



³⁹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf, page 1

⁴⁰ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf, page 22

⁴¹ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_4.pdf, page 32

The diagram shows that over the past ten years, the percentage of girls enrolled in the areas of mathematical sciences, chemistry and art has increased. The difference between the names of professional fields in statistical booklets did not allow to compare the data for all professions. However, based on the data of the 2018-2019 academic year, it is possible to say that girls made up the majority in the areas of philology (96%), art (88%), biology (87%), chemistry, and journalism and information sciences (80%). The number of girls decreased in the area of education (63%) and remained the same in the areas of healthcare (55%) and social and behavioural sciences (55%). However, there are fewer girls in such professional areas as mathematics and statistics (48%), business and administration (46%), humanities (43%), law (40%), environment (29%), information and communication technologies (28%), veterinary medicine (22%), security services (16%), industry and technology (24%), architecture and construction (21%), engineering (6%), and agricultural sciences (0%).⁴²

Thus, although the level of enrolment of women in the area of higher education is higher than that of men, gender segregation according to professions still persists and, as in the past, women are left out of highly-paid and profitable sectors.

Gender mainstreaming of professional orientation. Expansion of women's access to technical vocational education and training (TVET), education in the area of science and technology and continuing education.

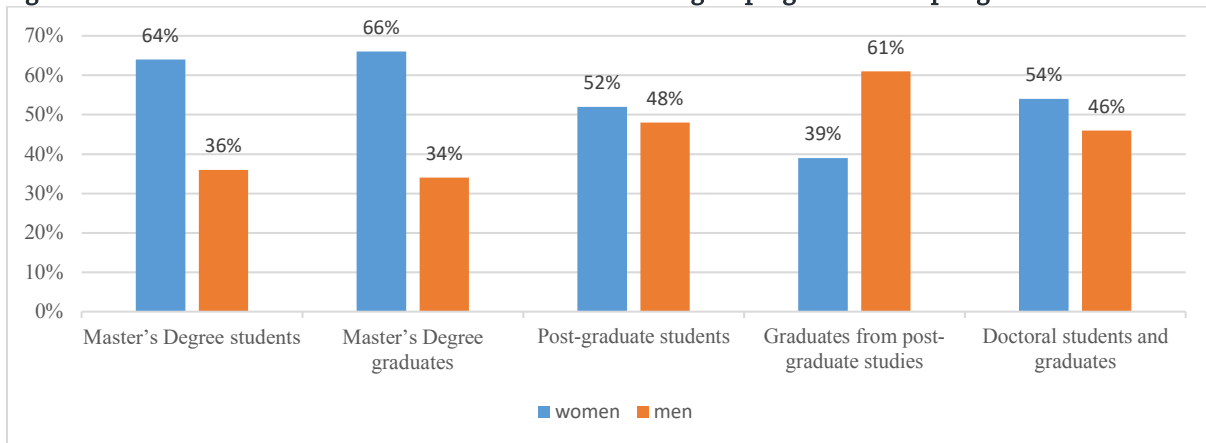
Professional orientation. Professional orientation is offered in the main school, high school, and TVET institutions. Form-masters in schools and career centers at TVETs offer professional orientation sessions. The support manual on *Educative Work at School: Professional Orientation Issues* includes advice to form-masters, including on overcoming sex-based stereotypes and developing motivation of girls and boys for those professions that are not traditional for their sex. However, no evaluation of these professional orientation sessions has been carried out and they largely depend on the beliefs of pedagogues and on the existence of gender stereotypes among them. For this reason, professional gender mainstreaming is not effective and segregation by professions persists.

Continuity of education. According to the 2018 data, the percentage of women in Master's Degree programs and post-graduate education was higher than that of men. Sixty-three point

⁴² https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf, page 2

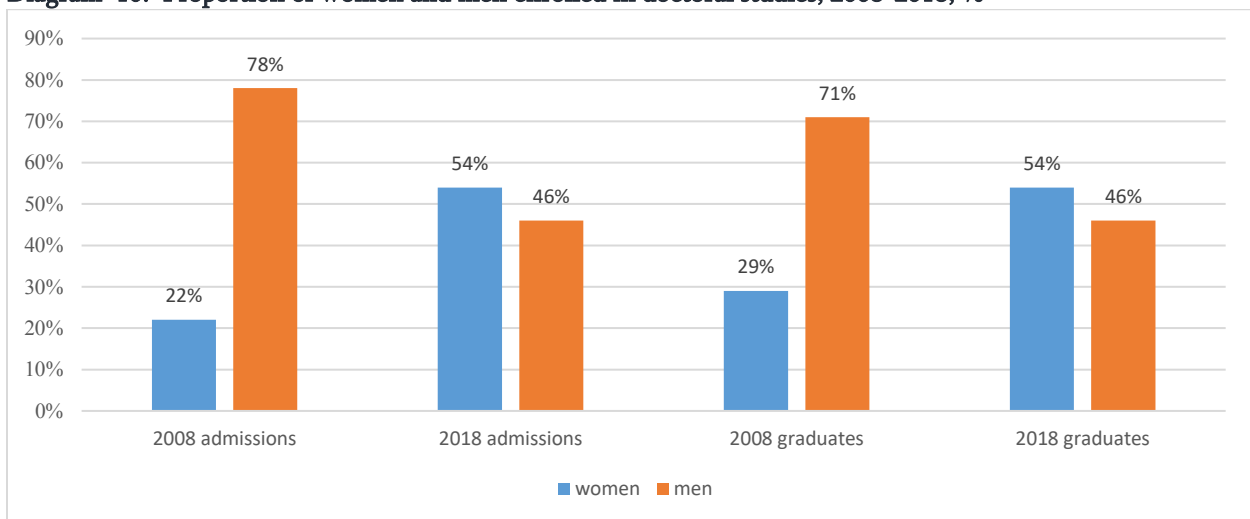
seven per cent of those admitted to Master’s Degree programs were women and 66.2% of them graduated. The same indicators in the area of post-graduate studies were respectively 52.4% and 38.8%, and in the area of doctoral studies – 54.5% (both those admitted and graduates).⁴³

Diagram 9. Distribution of women and men in the Master’s Degree programs and at postgraduate levels %



The diagram clearly shows that women dominate among those admitted to Master’s Degree programs and post-graduate studies, however, starting from the level of post-graduate studies men prevail in graduating from the studies. The main reason for the difference in the number of women admitted to post-graduate studies and those who graduated from these studies is the double workload in the family.

Diagram 10. Proportion of women and men enrolled in doctoral studies, 2008-2018, %

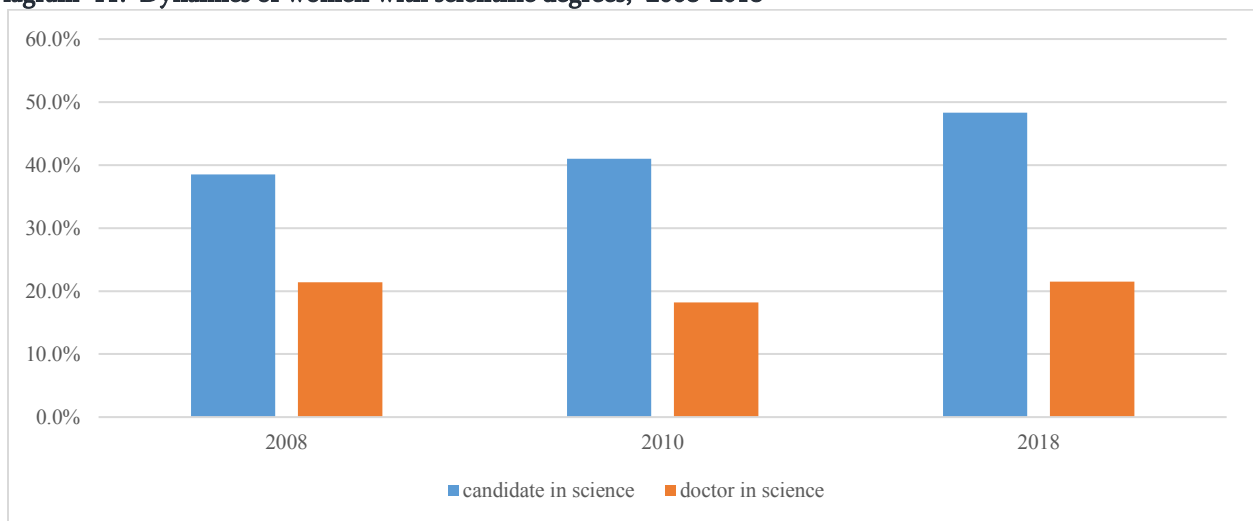


⁴³ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf, page 53

Over the recent years, the number of women admitted to and graduated from doctoral studies has doubled. However, this does not mean at all that after graduation they defend their doctoral dissertation. As in the past, women largely focus on “feminine” fields in science.

Gender aspects of scientific and technical work. There is a gender gap among research specialists conducting scientific and technical work and having a scientific degree. Although women make up 48.3% among candidates of science, in case of doctors of science, the number drastically drops to 21.5%.⁴⁴

Diagram 11. Dynamics of women with scientific degrees, 2008-2018⁴⁵



In Armenia, a system of continuing education is not developed at the state level. The system of postgraduate training of cadres does not match the needs. Although envisioned, training programs for young women returning from maternity leave are not implemented yet to ease their return to the labor market and to expand opportunities for their competitiveness. At present, the institution of nannies is being introduced aimed at easing women’s entry into the labor market, however, the program is new, and the results are not manifest yet. At its June 8, 2018 session, the RA Government endorsed the *Procedure for Implementation of the Support Program on Organization of Child Care Parallel to Work for Job-Seeking Persons on Child Care Leave for Children under the Age of Three in the event of their Return to Work before the Child Turns Two Years Old*. Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship

⁴⁴ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf, page 54

⁴⁵ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf

Development Support Center (SME DSC) in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is implementing the program on *Development of Women's Entrepreneurship* through organizing training courses and mentoring programs.⁴⁶ The RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has come up with a program in support of young mothers in the labor market, which provides to women under the age of 30 and without professional education an opportunity to participate in six-month training courses and start working.

Women's NGOs contribute to women's advancement more, through their continuous programs. They periodically organize leadership schools and seminars on gender topics. However, in the recent years, due to the change in the direction of grant programs, the number of such activities has decreased.

Inclusion of a component targeting gender equality in programs of all educational levels, development and introduction of textbooks and study materials free of gender stereotypes and with subject-matter instilling intolerance towards gender-based violence.

Gender-sensitive approaches are not integrated in the general education school, which has a major role in development of the citizen's world outlook. Studies of the educational content and textbooks show that they remain male-dominated and do not promote formation of a gender-sensitive world outlook.⁴⁷

Although, for the purpose of creating an educational and methodological base for teaching the fundamentals of gender knowledge, gender equality and exclusion of sex discrimination in society have been prioritized among the minimum requirements for social subjects in the state standard for general education, they have not been introduced in the school yet.

The standard, syllabus, eight-grade textbook and teacher's manual of the subject "Civics" of the general education school have been subjected to expert review from the perspective of revealing and excluding materials related to gender stereotypes and gender inequality, and recommendations have been developed and presented. To create criteria for conduct of gender expertise of the educational literature, a group of experts have carried out gender expertise of the main and alternative textbooks for the following subjects of the primary school: primer, native language, mathematics, me and the environment, technology, physical education, fine arts, and music.

⁴⁶ <https://smednc.am/media/2019/10/09/f1f65c5523ced8f229c7775abbb715f9e52e14f8.pdf>

⁴⁷ Report on Assessment of the Implementation of 2011-2015 Gender Policy Strategic Plan and 2011-2015 National Action Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, 2015

All textbook characters from history, mythology, fairy tales and stories are exclusively male. However, there is no improvement in this direction yet. The authors describe the republic exclusively through portrayal of male characters, ignoring even contemporary female characters: sports champions and others. (Me and the Environment, 4), picture 4.⁴⁸ More than 94% of characters in history textbooks and 80% in the Armenian literature are male.⁴⁹

The number of male characters in the high school textbook on the Armenian history exceeds female characters by approximately 30 times. Female characters make up just 3% of all characters.

Pictures portraying men exceed pictures portraying women by seven times. As a rule, pictures portraying men are associated with power, strength and domination. As a result, only the image of an active, conquering, protective, and creative man is instilled in the consciousness of students. Perceptions are developed that women have not made any contributions to culture. Women are mentioned only in those cases when they appear with functions typical of the man, the defender of the homeland.

Gender courses are taught only at the State Institute of Physical Culture, some YSU departments and at a number of other higher education institutions through the efforts of interested lecturers. The country has experienced regress in this area since in 2005-2006 gender courses were taught at 12 higher education institutions and 32 schools, *Fundamentals of the State Policy Conceptual Framework in the Area of Gender Education* were developed, and *Draft State Standards of Gender Education* were tested. To facilitate teaching, educational and methodological manuals, as well as collections of scientific materials and research were developed and published. The RA Ministry of Education and Science recommended *Gender and Economics* and *Gender and Journalism* educational manuals for higher education institutions. The methodological set on *Lessons on Gender Knowledge* was created for the general education school.⁵⁰

No planned and systematized work is being carried out with respect to scholarly research on gender topics either. The thematic research list of the RA National Academy of Sciences does not include gender research. However, the Center for Gender and Leadership Studies continues to operate at YSU.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, page 23

⁴⁹ Osipov, Sargizova, 2015

⁵⁰ The Process of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals, and the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia, Association of Women with University Education, 2014, page 73 <http://aawue.am/change/uploads/2014/07/PEKIN-FINAL-1.pdf>

As a result, the educational system does not target the promotion of students' perceptions of gender equality norms and principles and the overcoming of gender stereotypes. Moreover, it contributes to constant reproduction of these stereotypes.

Conduct of training courses on gender sensitivity for teachers and other specialists working in the area of education

In the republic, there is an ongoing process for training of principals and teachers of general education schools and of principals and deputy principals of VET (Vocational Education and Training) institutions. The National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education and Science developed a training package on the topic of *Legal Equality of Women and Men*, which will serve as a basis for training programs organized for specialists in the area of education. Topics related to gender stereotypes, equality and tolerance, and gender policy have been included in the training programs for deputy principals, form-masters, social pedagogues, and psychologists of general education schools. However, no study and no evaluation of effectiveness has been carried out in that direction yet.

Providing for safe and inclusive conditions for use of information technologies by women and girls, creation of opportunities ensuring capacity building and skills development in the digital and other promising areas, and especially in the STEM area.

In 2015, it became clear⁵¹ that, as compared to 2003, the results shown by Armenia's pupils in competitions, and specifically on such subjects as mathematics and science, had worsened and were lagging behind the international average (set at 500 points). In 2015, the results of 21% of Armenia's eight-grade pupils were lower than the minimum results level set by TIMSS in 2015, whereas only 5% and 2% of pupils from respectively the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan failed to attain that level.⁵² The TIMSS results demonstrate that the success of children in all countries depends on the socio-economic status of parents and schools. This decline in results caused concern in the country and some work unfolded in that direction. Before that no serious concern had manifested in that direction since in international competitions Armenian gifted children usually won medals for such subjects as mathematics,

⁵¹ The 2019 results are not published yet.

⁵² Social Justice in the Education System of Armenia, page5.

physics, chemistry, informatics, astronomy, biology, and geography.⁵³ However, it is one thing to have talented kids and it is another to have a high enough average school level.

On March 30, 2015, the RA Ministry of Education and Science and three major companies representing the ICT area – Vivacell MTS, Sysnopsys Armenia, and Unicomp – signed a memorandum of understanding, according to which, a new program was launched in five general education high schools through introduction of the following subjects: Information Technologies, Fundamentals of Telecommunications, and Microelectronics.⁵⁴

As a result of the program on *Development of Robotics and STEM Education in Schools*, as of 2019, there are 284 engineering laboratories and robotics clubs operating in all marzes of the Republic of Armenia. The program engages 7 500 students. By the RA Government Decree, around 835 million RA drams was allocated to the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises, the program implementing agency, to establish 284 more engineering laboratories.⁵⁵ Gender-sensitive approach was to be applied during the implementation stage of the program. The program is to enhance the skills and STEM knowledge of girls and women, as well as to ease their entry in the labor market. At present, the majority of specialists working in the ICT area are men (63%). Currently, there are around 500 information technology startups and companies operating in Armenia.

STEM jobs are concentrated in the following areas: information and communication technologies, construction, mining, research institutes, and power supply. The employers of the area, for example, Synopsis, provide partnership support to some higher education institutions with STEM orientation and assist with research programs, easing students' entry into the labor market. The same is done by some mining companies.

The number of non-formal and extracurricular STEM programs is gradually increasing: they are primarily provided by *Tumo* Centers for Creative Technologies in Yerevan and a number of regional centers.⁵⁶

Women's involvement in the IT area of Armenia is considered not low, 30%, however, it has the potential for growth if barriers existing in this area are removed. According to some research, the factors impeding equal opportunities and output results of women and men in the STEM area include unequal accessibility (unequal opportunities for receiving quality

⁵³ 2015 annual report by the RA Ministry of Education and Science.

⁵⁴ 2015 annual report by the RA Ministry of Education and Science.

⁵⁵ 2019 report by the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, <http://escs.am/am/news/5899>

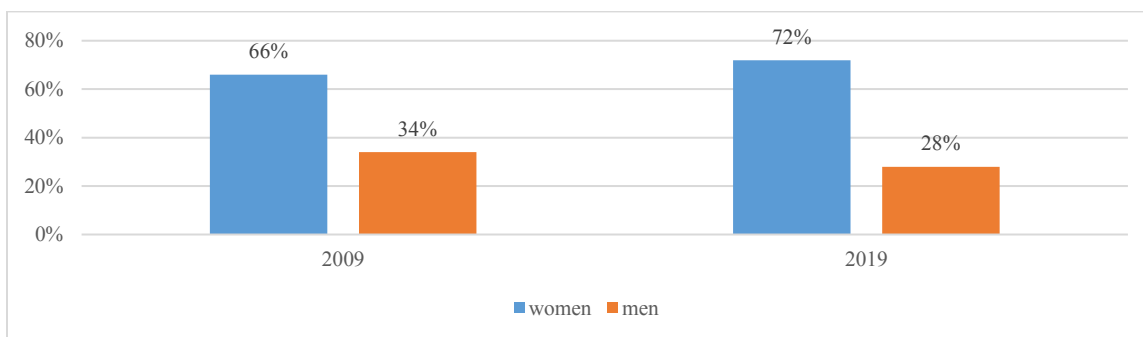
⁵⁶ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/512861495789491335/pdf/ACS21924-ARMENIA-PUBLIC-ArmeniaGenderandSTEMFINALArmenian.pdf>, page 44

education in rural areas, high tuition fees in private high schools with STEM orientation, the quality of which is higher), information asymmetry (not a very high rating of STEM specialization and career in Armenia), institutional shortcomings (boys admitted to the free system of higher education get deferment from compulsory military service, and, as a result, boys receiving scholarships make up the majority of those in the STEM areas). In addition, gender stereotypes leave their negative impact too. Vertical segregation existing in the area of management of organizations plays a negative role too (in the STEM organizations, men dominate in pursuit of technical and professional career, women generally occupy medium-level positions; women earn less than men). The country pays lip service to the importance of STEM, however, no large-scale information is disseminated on women success stories in these areas.⁵⁷ There are no state support programs, which will allow to reconcile family duties with work in the area (flexible work schedules, support programs for young mothers working in the area, etc.).

The majority of employees in the area of education are women and this has led to a situation when in 2020, with introduction of a state of emergency in the context of fight against coronavirus, the necessity of conducting training on on-line platforms in educational institutions compelled the employees to undergo training on a short-term basis and develop command of new teaching technologies.

Increasing women’s participation in decision-making in the area of education. In the area of education, approximately 80% of employees are women, however, they make up a minority at all levels of decision-making in the area. Women also make up the majority of staff at the RA Ministry of Education and Science, however, they occupy only the low and medium-level sections of the gender pyramid.

Diagram 12. Staff of the Ministry of Education and Science, 2009-2019



⁵⁷ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/512861495789491335/pdf/ACS21924-ARMENIA-PUBLIC-ArmeniaGenderandSTEMFINALArmenian.pdf>, page 41

There is an improvement of the situation in 2020. Thus, within the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, two of the five deputies of the Minister in the area of education are women. Deputy Head of the Department for Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education and heads of two divisions are women. One of the two division heads of the Department for Primary (Craftsmanship) and Secondary Vocational Education is a woman, and Deputy Head of the Department for General Education and heads of its two divisions are women.

The diagrams presented below show the proportion of women and men among Rectors and Vice Rectors, Deans and Heads of Chairs at state higher education institutions (in absolute numbers)⁵⁸

Diagram 13. The gender composition of Rectors and Vice Rectors for Education and Science at state higher education institutions

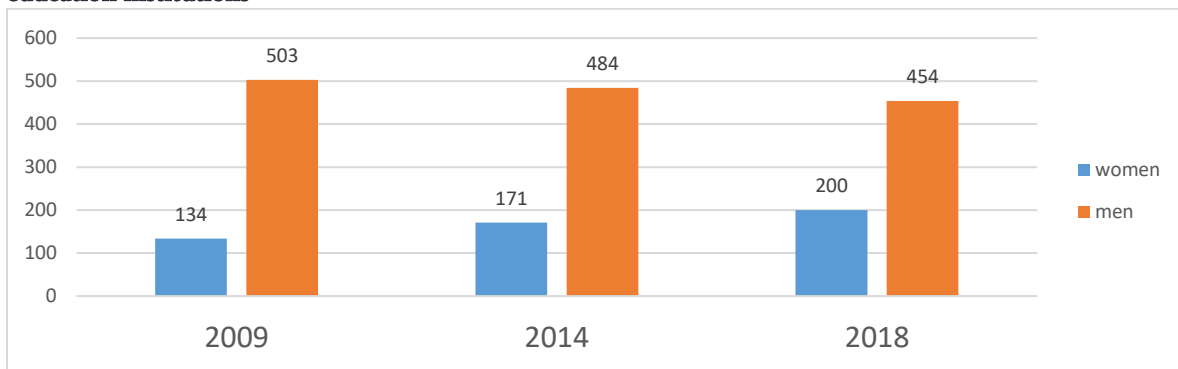


Diagram 14. The gender composition of Deans at state higher education institutions

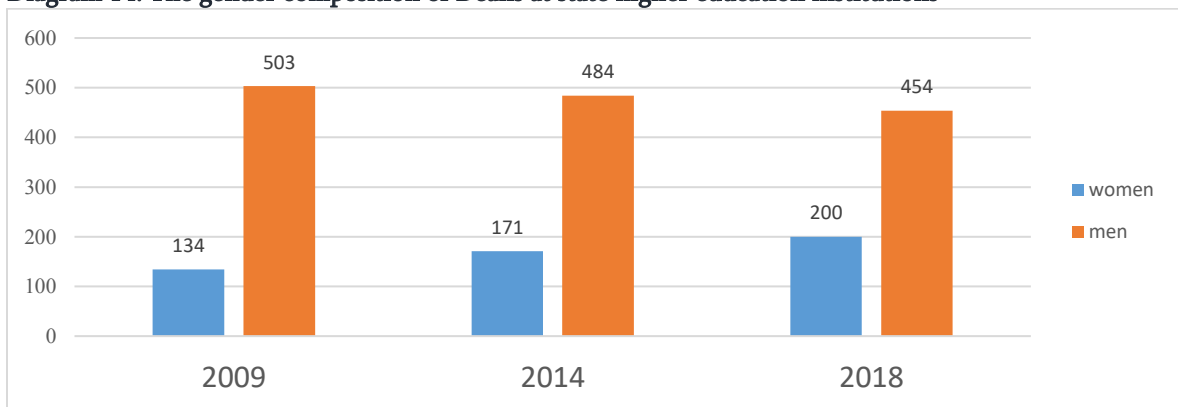
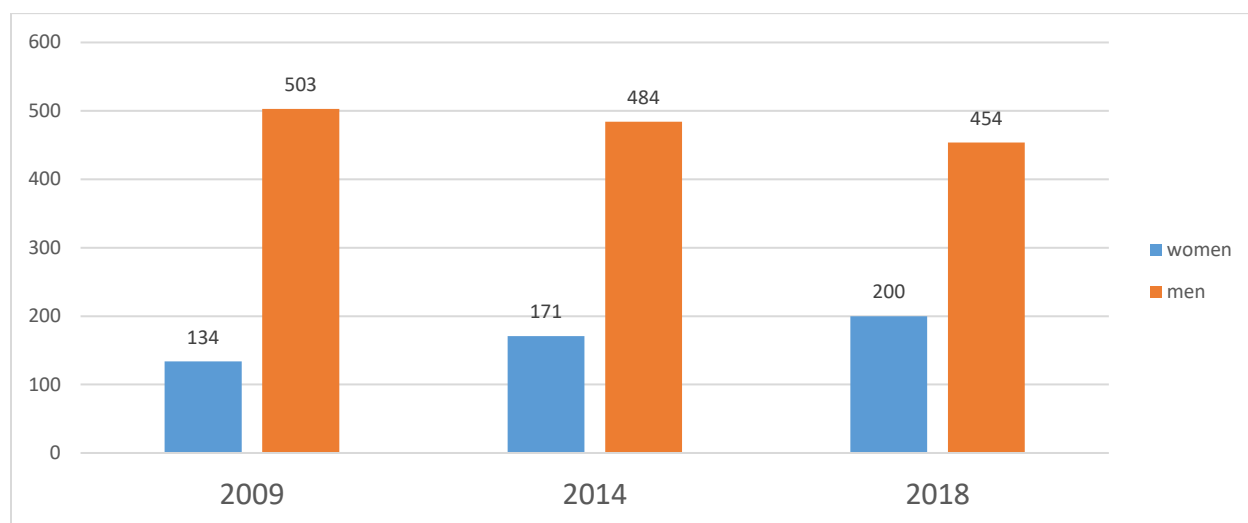


Diagram 15. The gender composition of Heads of Chairs at state higher education institutions

⁵⁸ The data are provided according to the statistical materials in https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_10.pdf, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/kanajq_ev_txamardik.pdf, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_6.pdf



At state higher education institutions, men dominate at the decision-making level. At non-state higher education institutions, the picture is a little bit different: there are more women at the decision-making level. However, this is explained by the fact that at these higher education institutions spheres of influence are more limited, and the salaries are lower.

Thus, although the prevailing majority of employees in the area of education are women, decisions are primarily made by male officials.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The RA legislation and legal documents provide for prohibition of sex-based discrimination, mandatory free secondary education irrespective of sex, vocational and higher education on a competitive basis, and the right to post-graduate education on a competitive basis. Gender discrimination is de jure absent.
2. Although at the legislative level discrimination is absent in the area of education, there is latent gender discrimination, which is conditioned by gender stereotypes, traditional roles of women and men in the family and society, the socio-economic and health status of persons or families, and national minority affiliation.
3. No gender mainstreaming is done of programs adopted in the area of education and they are often gender-blind, which adversely affects the development of the field. The absence of a state gender strategy for 2015-2018 has had its negative consequences.

4. Children's enrolment in preschool institutions is very low (31.6%) with 36.5% in towns and 22.6% in villages. As of 2020, more than 171 thousand children or 70% of children do not attend kindergartens in Armenia. The differences according to sex are not major (girls' enrolment is 33.6%) and, as a rule, they correspond to the proportion in respective age groups. However, there are major differences by marzes, by the urban-rural breakdown and from the perspective of the social status of the family. Women are greatly disadvantaged due to the lack of preschool institutions.
5. It is a positive development that after 2015 secondary education became mandatory. However, by 2019, the republic had not yet implemented the commitments it made in the area of education for 2015 and there are children left out of schooling at all levels, and especially at higher grades. The reasons for dropout of children from educational institutions vary : the family's position on the issue, social insecurity and children's engagement in the labor market (especially taking into consideration the fact that due to low quality of education, parents do not hope that educational expenses will be compensated in the future), disability, migration, poor progress in studies and absence of motivation. Being left out of secondary education has different consequences for women and men. In case of girls, the dangers of early marriage, not continuing education later, and economic dependence on husbands or other relatives are increasing. Due to the dropout of children, the country loses the opportunity of fully utilizing the potential of its citizens.
6. The number of girls in the area of primary and secondary vocational education is lower than that of boys. This is explained by a number of factors : girls with higher progress in studies prefer to continue their education at higher education institutions since the rating of the higher education diploma is higher; the concentration of primary and secondary vocational institutions in towns, i.e. in order to study at these institutions, girl children have to leave their residency areas every day, and that is not encouraged by their parents; for girls, chances to get jobs are higher in case of higher education, even if for a given job no higher education qualifications are necessary. Not full introduction of the system of credits in the area of vocational education hinders the possibilities for ensuring the continuity of education.
7. Although women's enrolment in the area of higher education is higher than that of men, gender segregation according to professions persists and, as in the past, women dominate in 'feminine' professions, which decreases the possibilities for receiving higher salaries and income in the future.

8. No system of continuing education is introduced in Armenia at the state level. The system of post-graduate training of cadres does not correspond to women's needs. Although it is envisioned, no training programs for young women returning from maternity leave are implemented yet to ease their return to the labor market and to expand the opportunities for their competitiveness.
9. The system of education is not aimed at the promotion of students' perceptions of gender equality norms and principles and the overcoming of gender stereotypes. Moreover, it contributes to constant reproduction of these stereotypes. The textbooks and other educational materials reinforce students' perceptions of the image of an active, strong, conquering, heights attaining, high-achiever man and of the image of a woman that performs housework, is a caring wife and mother, and has no role in public life and history.
10. No gender courses are offered at secondary schools and primary and secondary vocational institutions, they are only available at a very small number of higher education institutions.
11. From the perspective of professional orientation and growth, there is a clear-cut horizontal and vertical segregation, which is the result of the weakness of professional orientation and of the ineffectiveness of introduction of a gender component in it.
12. The STEM area has a special place at the global market. However, Armenia's showing in this area is very low. In this area, there is a major difference between equal opportunities and output results of women and men. The impeding factors include unequal accessibility of schools in the STEM area, and, in particular, the weaknesses of teaching in rural schools, non-satisfactory advocacy of the demand in STEM professions, and institutional shortcomings (boys, when admitted to free education, get deferment from compulsory military service and, as a result, boys receiving scholarships make up the majority in the STEM areas). Gender stereotypes leave a negative impact too. Vertical segregation existing in the area of management of organizations also plays a negative role.
13. A gender component has been introduced in the training programs for teachers, form-masters, and principals of schools and VET institutions. However, it was not reviewed by gender experts and is formal by nature and, for this reason, its effectiveness has been very low.
14. Due to women's double workload, gender stereotypes, and the glass ceiling phenomenon, the opportunities for women's professional advancement, professional

and technical training, and continuity of education are more limited and it is not possible to solve these problems without special programs.

15. The model of decision-making in the area of education is the typical gender pyramid model when the majority of employees are women, but chief decision-making positions are held by men.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To engage gender experts in the implementation of the monitoring of the 2019-2023 gender policy strategy in the Republic of Armenia;
2. It is necessary to include a gender component into the subject-matter of scientific research funded by the state and to provide for budgetary funding for implementation of gender research at the Institutes of Humanities of the RA National Academy of Sciences;
3. Since the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance will continually be carrying out accreditation of colleges and higher education institutions in the republic and it is envisioned to review criteria and standards for institutional accreditation, it is necessary to add a gender standard to the accreditation criteria (Professional educational programs - the third one, Students - the fourth one, and Research and Development - the sixth one), which will help incorporation of a gender component in the professional educational programs of higher education institutions;
4. It is possible to provide for delegation of some activities within the framework of social partnership with non-governmental organizations, which will allow to coordinate educational activities in the non-formal sector, making them more targeted;
5. Newly-developed educational criteria, standards, educational and methodological sets, and draft textbooks should undergo gender mainstreaming. The existing ones need to be subjected to gender expertise. Since it is costly to change the textbooks, it is possible to create “gender-sensitive” supplements in the form of small booklets;
6. Professional orientation programs should be gender-sensitive. For this purpose, all those responsible for this area should be trained with gender modules. In orientation programs, it is necessary to envision for girls presentation of strengths of professions not traditional for their sex, especially of STEM professions, and development of motivation;

7. To provide for gender expertise of training programs for principals, deputy principals, and teachers of general education schools and VET institutions and to engage gender experts in training with gender modules;
8. To enhance the level of accountability of all structures in the area of general education for dropout children and their reasons for not continuing education, showing consistent caring for the future of these children;
9. To initiate broad-based discussions in society on benefits of education and career in the STEM areas, to encourage girls to develop a profound interest in mathematics and science, and to present to schoolgirls positive role models of women working in STEM jobs;
10. To invite the attention of the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport and of marz- and community-level structures to programs on distance learning, electronic and blended learning and, through their combination, to solve the problem of ensuring quality education for children of all rural communities that do not have schools and teachers ;
11. To carry out more coordinated work for education of girls among national minorities ;
12. To accelerate the spreading of the new model of creation of preschool institutions;
13. To make more precise the statistics on the dropouts from schools and to conduct special research on access to education in Armenia ;
14. To maintain clear-cut and understandable statistics on the STEM area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- To demand and carry out gender mainstreaming of the laws regulating the area of education: laws on *Education*, on *General Education*, on *Technical Vocational Education and Training*, and on *Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education*, adding also the prohibition of sex-based discrimination and a definition of discrimination.
- To demand and carry out gender mainstreaming of all laws and sublegislative acts related to the area of education.
- To demand systematization and provision of sex-disaggregated statistics related to the area of education during law and annual budget discussions.

PART 2.

**CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN:
*WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT***

The following are the strategic objectives set in the section on *Women and Armed Conflict* in the Beijing Platform for Action:

1. Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation;
2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments;
3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations;
4. Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace;
5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women;
6. Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

Below presented is a general assessment of the state policy achievements and systemic problems in ensuring women's rights and equal opportunities in prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, based on the Armenian realities over the past five years. Presented are also recommendations aimed at increasing the effectiveness of actions by the Government and legislature.

ACHIEVEMENTS

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ACHIEVEMENTS

During the past five years, and particularly in years 2018-2020, after the democratic changes took place in Armenia, National Government acknowledged Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issue as a priority in its Gender Equality agenda.

As a significant achievement in this field could be mentioned the elaboration and adoption of the 1st National Action Plan for the implementation of the provisions of the UN SC

Substantiation Brief

On the Necessity of Adopting the RA Government's Draft Decision on the 2019-2021 National Action Plan for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the Timetable for Its Implementation

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security focuses on the impact of armed conflicts on women and engagement of women in the process of armed conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

The National Action Plan on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was developed in line with Point 76 of Appendix #1 of the Decision N 483-N of May 4, 2017 by the RA Government, based on the 2017-2019 National Strategy of the Republic of Armenia on Human Rights Protection.

In November of 2016, Armenia received a recommendation from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which specifically calls to "finalize and adopt the National Action Plan to implement Security Council Resolution No. 1325 (2000), in cooperation with women's organizations." Taking into consideration the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, including the situation of women in Armenia's borderline areas affected by the conflict, the adoption of such a Plan will allow Armenia to pay greater attention to the needs of vulnerable groups residing in those areas.

The existence of an action plan will not only help coordinate activities carried out in this area before, but will also provide an opportunity to secure financial assistance both from different countries and the special fund created for UN 1325.

The above noted Plan will enhance the weight of Armenia in the international arena as a country struggling to strengthen women's role and peace.

Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security⁵⁹ (February 28, 2019 Decree N197-L of the Government of Armenia).

In order to develop a National Action Plan (NAP), an interagency commission has been established by the N1014-A Decree of the Prime Minister (September 13, 2017). The commission has been comprised of representatives of all line ministries and agencies. Thus, Armenia became the 80th UN Member State to adopt NAP.

Armenia's NAP takes into account the situation on the ground with a view to accelerating political participation and economic empowerment of women in the context of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, as well as underlines the importance of engagement of women in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions and rehabilitation activities in the post-conflict period. Particular focus has been given to vulnerable population groups, including women residing in borderline communities, women directly affected by conflict, women displaced or under risk of displacement, etc.

This important document heavily focuses on increasing women's participation in and awareness of the protection of women's rights within the defense system (military, police, and peacekeeping missions). The NAP also puts particular emphasis on creating comprehensive programs to address the special needs of women and girls impacted by or displaced as a result of the armed conflict. The NAP includes components on the international implementation of the WPS agenda, especially in light of the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

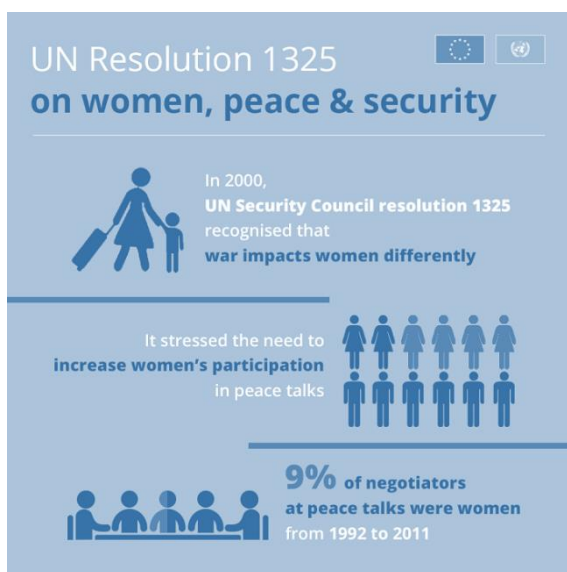
At the same time, the document specifically states that Armenia considers the NAP "as a national machinery for the protection and promotion of women's rights in public life". In fact, the Implementation of the resolution 1325 in the overall context allows once again focusing on the important link between the empowerment of women and sustainability of peace and development. These priorities square firmly in achieving Sustainable Development Goals # 5

⁵⁹ http://peacewomen.org/countries_and_regions/393

and #16, where the commitments related to women, peace and security aim at increasing their participation in public life, at local, national and regional levels.

Armenia's NAP on 1325 is based on four major pillars: prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery and includes 18 specific objectives and a monitoring component.

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION



The coordination of the development/implementation of the National Action Plan has been assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. In order to develop a National Action Plan on implementation of UNSC Resolution #1325, an interagency commission was established (Decision N 1014-A of the Prime Minister dates 13th, September 2017), which consists of representatives of: Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor and Social

Affairs, Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, Police, National Institute of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science, Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, and Armenian Red Cross Society. As one can see from the list, only Armenian Red Cross Society out of the 12 relevant bodies involved in the process of developing the NAP is a civil society organization. It is seen as a certain omission, taking into account the significant role and contribution of NGOs in promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Armenia, before and after the adoption of NAP.

The same observation applies to several points on implementation of the National Action Plan: civil society organizations are mentioned as co-executors "upon consent" only for the half of the objectives. For example, NGOs are not included among others as co-executors of objective

#2 “Promote cooperation between governmental bodies, women’s organizations and women affected by conflict, in the field of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding”, which, from our point of view, is not quite the right approach to the implementation of such specific objective.

In other words, the underrepresentation of civil society structures in the implementation of the NAP and the non-use of their extensive experience and expertise in this direction, in our opinion, may reduce the effectiveness of the planned actions for its successful implementation.

Another remark on the Plan relates to “performance indicators” that in some cases are not clear, difficult to measure and do not take into account the medium-term and long-term impact. It would also be desirable to have a more comprehensive and detailed monitoring part of the Plan as well.

However, the biggest concern for the successful implementation of the National Action Plan is the lack of funding from the state budget: NAP does not contain an allocated or estimated budget. It is clear that without attracting serious financial resources it is difficult to expect high effectiveness of actions and achievement of significant outputs.

It should be emphasized here that all remarks and comments noted above in no way diminish the importance and significance of the National Action Plan, the adoption of which was *de facto* the result of the joint efforts of state bodies, non-governmental women's and human rights organizations and civil peace activists with essential support from international organizations such as UN, EU, OSCE and other structures.

At the same time, the issue of Women, Peace and Security should not be limited only by the adoption and subsequent implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSC Res. # 1325. In our opinion, it is important to integrate commitments regarding WPS issue into key national and inter-ministerial policies and to reflect in relevant documents, planning and monitoring frameworks. However, this important issue did not find a place even in the recently adopted

Strategy for Implementation of Gender Policy and Action Plan in the Republic of Armenia for 2019-2023⁶⁰, nor in National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia⁶¹, adopted in year 2007 - although we hope that in the new version of this strategy, which is currently under development, these issues will be included in the national security priorities as it was recommended by a number of NGOs.

Women's leadership, representation, and participation

During the past five years and especially after “Velvet Revolution” (April-May, 2018) the role of women in all stages of the conflict circle, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and engagement in other humanitarian missions as well as rehabilitation activities in the post-conflict period was enhanced. The adoption of the National Action Plan allows Armenia, in relation to the provisions of Resolution 1325, to address a number of issues of special importance for the country. Those issues include: focusing on economic and social development of women residing in borderline communities; ensuring a special protection of displaced women and girls; promoting women's engagement in peacekeeping missions; protecting women's rights and increasing their political participation, etc.

It should be emphasized that Armenia's NAP includes also components on the international implementation of the WPS agenda, which is especially important in light of the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although the negotiation process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group gives some optimism regarding the non-violent peaceful resolution of this conflict, today, unfortunately, Armenia faces an increasing risk of renewed hostilities, the outcome of which might be a failure of mediation efforts and escalating militarization. In April 2016, the conflict erupted again, resulting in casualties on both sides, and ended with a ceasefire after four days of tough military confrontation.

⁶⁰<http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151906strategy>

⁶¹ <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/Doctrineeng.pdfsecurity>

This escalation as well as the NK conflict in general has had distinct gendered impacts, affecting women's lives in the public and private realm alike. In this regard, the efforts undertaken by the Government of Armenia for the promotion of WPS Agenda look as fully justified and timely and meet the existing challenges.

Here it should be noted that official negotiations on the NK conflict are held between Prime Minister of Armenia (before 2018 - President of RA) and President of Azerbaijan and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries with participation of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. On the official level, negotiators are mostly men; the representation of women in peace processes in general has been at the level of technical experts and observers. High-level diplomatic negotiations process itself includes a very limited number of people, and provides no space for women. At the same time, women's NGOs and women civil peace advocates have been at the forefront to demand an end to hostilities and establishment of peace, being involved in meetings and discussions on fostering conflict regulation, but more on a non-formal level.

In this context, Armenia attaches special importance to ensuring women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding as well as to promoting women's rights and protecting them from violence.

To fulfill these and other obligations arising from the adopted NAP, over the past two years state agencies and local NGOs with support from some International organizations have taken a number of specific steps at the national and local level, in particular:

Ministry of Defense

A number of initiatives aimed at promotion of women's participation in decision making in policy development such as the Guidelines and Action Plan for ensuring the protection of women's rights and equal opportunities in the defense system were implemented. These Guidelines underline the importance of creating opportunities for women's engagement and meaningful participation in the defense system as one of the precondition for modernization of the RA defense system.

A number of meetings and discussions were organized with participation of various groups of society, targeting the promotion of women's equal participation in decision making and highlighting the important role of female military servants in the defense system, as well as a number of studies were carried out on ensuring women's rights protection and equal opportunities in the RA armed forces.

Also were carried out some important activities targeting women's engagement in various units of the armed forces (including units participating in peacekeeping missions). For example, in year 2017 a women's unit was formed in the framework of the peacekeeping brigade of the Ministry of Defense. The first group of the female peacekeepers was engaged in the Armenian group that implemented the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo in 2018 (Kosovo forces).

The Ministry implemented several capacity building and awareness raising activities for the personnel engaged in peacekeeping missions of the RA armed forces on women's rights, impacts of armed conflicts on women, women's engagement in prevention, regulation of armed conflicts and peacebuilding.

A special training course on women's leadership and social and psychological adaptation was provided to female graduates of military education institutions; needs assessment of female military servants, as well as identification of types of gender-based discrimination was carried out.

Police

As a result of the policy adopted by the RA Police, the number of females serving in different police subdivisions as well as holding senior positions is constantly increasing. Thus, currently 19 female employees hold the leading positions within the RA Police: 1 of them is Deputy Minister, 1 is Department Head, 1 is Deputy Head of the General Department, 4 are Department Deputy Heads, 8 are Division Heads, 1 is Head of a Chair, 3 are associate

professors. Sixty-five women hold senior group positions. According to the police services, the picture is as follows: traffic police - 7, public order - 185, juvenile affairs and violence prevention in the family - 77, operative - 36, state protection - 94, police - 77 females.

The number of female students in the Police Educational Complex has increased: the number of female students admitted to the educational complex in the 2018-2019 academic year was 62, and in the 2019-2020 academic year - 64.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

In May-June of 2019, 10 regional visits were initiated, which included the more vulnerable borderline regions. Within the framework of the regional visits, the issues of women were mapped, the scope of issues of concern to women living in the regions, especially in the borderline communities, was identified, and the programs and events implemented by the Ministry were presented.

The mapped problems were summarized and presented during the conference held on, July 16, 2019 in Yerevan. Participating in the conference were state structures, civil society and international organizations interested in the identified sectorial issues. Later, the issues raised within the framework of the work process were discussed with the relevant responsible agencies.

It is also planned to carry out a needs assessment of women living in borderline communities in order to have the socio-economic characteristics of the conflict. In this regard, the RA MFA developed the initial concept paper of this needs assessment, for the implementation of which preliminary agreements have already been reached with the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Armenia to secure appropriate financial assistance.

On December 4, 2019 the *Women Aiming for Peace: Opportunities and Challenges International Conference* was held in Yerevan in order to share experience and lessons learned in the field of Women, Peace and Security and to find common ground for more effective

cooperation among state agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Armenian Prime Minister's wife Mrs. Anna Hakobyan attended the Conference presenting her *Women for Peace* initiative, followed by a moderated discussion.

NGOs

The seventh International Conference *Women at Peace Table – More Justice for All* was held by Democracy Today in July 2019. The conference was attended by women peace builders and human rights activists from different countries, representatives of foreign embassies accredited in Armenia and civil society representatives. Actions necessary to ensure women's access to justice were discussed, and possible mechanisms for women's participation in the negotiation process were studied.

In 2018, the Training Module on *Development of the Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Agenda* aiming to contribute to the creation and implementation of the National Action Plan on the UNSC Resolution 1325 in Armenia in was elaborated by Society Without Violence in partnership with Global Network of Women Peace builders. This training module, which includes comprehensive theoretical and practical information as well as further references, is designed for trainers who wish to contribute to the effective implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Armenia.

In 2019, Civil Society – National Assembly Cooperation Platform was initiated to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The Platform has already held several discussions about the most urgent issues such as gender equality. The latter contributes to the formation of the political agenda.

The *Dialogue for Peace and Development: Women's View* Project was implemented in 2018-2019 by Armenian Committee of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in cooperation with NK-based Center for Civic Initiatives. The project contributed to boosting civic peacebuilding initiatives

in conflict-affected borderline communities of Nagorno Karabakh (NK) and the south of Armenia through motivating and involving local young women to become peace advocates, and promoting cooperation and synergy between project stakeholders and other interested NGOs from Armenia and NKR.

In addition to the above mentioned examples of NGO actions in this direction, we should also note their involvement in and essential contribution to regional and global peacebuilding programs initiated by international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations such as UN Women, OSCE, EU, Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC), Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation etc. Thus, a number of women's and human rights organizations in Armenia, successfully cooperating with partners, have implemented a number of important joint initiatives aimed at the civic dialogue through dividing lines, trust building and prevention of conflict's escalation, thereby contributing to the promotion of Women, Peace and Security Agenda not only in the South Caucasus region and beyond, but also at national and local levels.

Judicial and non-judicial accountability in the conditions of international humanitarian law violations and in situations of armed and other conflicts

The legislation of Armenia does not provide for a special mechanism for responding to violations of the human rights of women and girls in armed and other conflicts. These situations are regulated within the framework of general laws and by-laws in this area. However, over the past two years, in fulfillment of the obligations arising from goals #8 (Ensure protection of women and girls from violence during conflicts) and #9 (Protection of the rights of women and girls affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) of the National Plan of Action state agencies have carried out a number of activities in this direction, some of which are listed below:

Police

At the initiative of the RA Police Criminal Investigation Department and within the framework of cooperation with international and local non-governmental organizations,

training courses for police officers were organized in February 2019. The courses were focused on gender-based violence and discrimination against women.

Ministry of Emergency Situations

According to the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of January 22, 2015 *On establishing the procedure and program for training the population and the state and local self-government bodies and organizations in the spheres of population protection and civil defense in emergency situations*, in 2019 , in cooperation with local authorities, the Ministry organized workshops consisting of special tactical exercises and lectures for civil defense officers, which will continue. During the training particular attention was paid to the protection of women and girls during conflicts.

In 2020, research will be conducted on the technical, safety and regulatory requirements of defense structures, as well as on the provision of shelters for residents of borderline communities, kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Armenia and on the establishment of new shelters.

Ministry of Justice

Ministry has proposed to the Academy of Justice of Armenia to include women, peace and security issue in the subject courses of the year 2020 for training of judges, investigators, prosecutors, candidates for judges, civil servants, state employees of the Investigative Committee, state employees and judicial bailiffs. Taking into account the offer, the training program includes courses such as: Current issues on equality and non-discrimination, Features of the Criminal Procedure and Examination of Torture, Current issues of international human rights law, Prevention and control of violence against women and domestic violence in Armenia, Examination of gender-based violence

In the context of the topic discussed in this subsection, namely *accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in*

situations of armed and other conflicts, it is impossible to ignore the actions of Azerbaijan against civilians, causing serious concern, in particular incidents of torture of women and elderly during the escalation of the conflict in April 2016 and targeted shootings at the borderline villages. It should be noted that the state bodies of Armenia informed the relevant organizations, including UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, about these cases.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summing up the review, we can conclude that over the past five years, Armenia has made significant efforts to promote the Peace, Women and Security Agenda and fulfill its international obligations in this area.

Below are some recommendations for accelerating implementation and improving the effectiveness of actions in this direction:

- To integrate a gender perspective in the prevention of escalation and transformation of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict;
- To support inclusive and gender-sensitive conflict analysis, early warning and prevention mechanisms;
- To encourage women's meaningful participation in peace processes, including official and non-official negotiations;
- To incorporate the women, peace and security issue into state policy and programs, particularly to include WPS as a priority area into the new edition of the National Security Strategy;
- To develop communication strategies to increase awareness of the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
- To initiate an entry-point baseline survey among women directly affected by the conflict aimed to identify specific areas of intervention;

- To conduct a comprehensive and multifaceted needs analysis of the most vulnerable groups of women (residents of borderline communities, young women, refugees, rural women, etc.), in order to best meet their needs;
- To improve the level of cooperation and partnership between relevant state bodies and civil society organizations, particularly in terms of implementation of NAP on UN SC resolution #1325;
- To seek opportunities for budgetary allocations for promotion of the women, peace and security agenda and especially the implementation of NAP on UN SC resolution #1325;
- To develop an inclusive and transparent process for NAP's monitoring and evaluation, including indicators, timetable and responsibility sharing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- Within the framework of the National Assembly-Civil Society Cooperation Platform created in 2019, to pay special attention to the women, peace and security agenda, which has a special significance given the unsettled Karabagh conflict;
- It is necessary to make a broader use of parliamentary diplomacy, including the international tribune of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to promote the women, peace and security issue from the perspective of resolution of the Karabagh conflict and to demonstrate Armenia's efforts in this direction, including the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

PART 3.
CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN:
WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

The strategic objectives set in the Beijing Platform for Action for **the critical area of concern on Women and the Economy** are as follows:

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

Below presented is a general assessment of the state policy achievements and systemic problems in ensuring women's economic rights and equal opportunities over the past five years. Presented are also recommendations aimed at increasing the effectiveness of actions by the Government and legislature.

ACHIEVEMENTS

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the noted period, the most important achievement is the securing women's equal economic opportunities in the RA Constitution. The RA Constitution in effect contains a number of very important provisions on promotion of de facto equality between women and men. These provisions are:

- **Article 29. Prohibition of Discrimination**

Discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion, world outlook, political or other views, belonging to an ethnic minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other circumstances of personal or social nature is prohibited.

- **Article 30. Equality of Women and Men**

Women and men are legally equal.

- **Article 86. The Main Objectives of the State Policies**

The main objectives of the state policies in the economic, social, and cultural areas are:

2) Promotion of the population's employment and improvement of working conditions.

4) Promotion of de facto equality between women and men.

- **Article 87. Implementation of the Main Objectives of the State Policies**

1. State and local self-government bodies are, within the scope of their jurisdiction and possibilities, obliged to implement the objectives defined by Article 86 of the Constitution.

2. Within the scope of the report envisioned by Article 156 of the Constitution, the Government shall provide information on the implementation of the objectives defined by Article 86 of the Constitution.

By changes to the **RA Law on Employment**⁶² adopted in December of 2017, the RA Government took the first step towards creating opportunities for women for reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. The RA Law on Adoption of Changes and Additions to the above law secures the right of young mothers on child care leave for children under the age of three to receive support for organizing child care parallel to work in the event of their return to work before the child turns two years old. Thus, in 2018, the program on provision of support to persons on child care leave for children under the age of three was introduced and implemented and, according to that program, the state was to provide assistance with organization of child care to mothers in the event of their return to work before the child turned two years old. In other words, a state approach is adopted towards nannies and specialists employed in the shadow economy up to date are being brought out into the legal

⁶² <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=87734>

field. The program was experimental and 300 women had the opportunity to benefit from it in 2018. The number of beneficiaries for this year is 500.⁶³

The RA Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men also contains some provisions on elimination of discrimination against women in the labor market. The law has incorporated, to the maximum extent, a number of requirements stipulated by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The law, specifically, secures the concept of “gender discrimination,” regulates the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the areas of politics, public administration, work and employment, entrepreneurial activities, healthcare, and education, provides for the opportunity and procedure for protection of citizens from sex-based discriminatory manifestations, and envisions liability for discriminatory practices.

In 2019, an article on *Prohibition of Discrimination* was added to the RA Labor Code:

“3.1. Prohibition of Discrimination

1. The labor legislation prohibits discrimination.

2. Discrimination is any direct or indirect differentiation, exclusion or restriction on the grounds of sex, race, skin color, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion, world outlook, political or other views, belonging to an ethnic minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other circumstances of personal or social nature, the purpose and result of which, in cases of origination and (or) change and (or) termination of collective and (or) individual labor relations, is manifestation of less favorable attitude or impediment to or denial of recognition and (or) exercise of any right, as defined by labor legislation, on equal footing with others, with the exception of those cases when such differentiation, exclusion or restriction are objectively justified by the pursuit of a lawful objective and measures used to achieve that objective are commensurate and necessary.

3. In job announcements (competitions) and during realization of labor relations, it is prohibited to define any condition serving as a basis for discrimination other than businesslike qualities, professional preparedness and qualifications, with the exception of the cases when those conditions derive from work’s inherent requirements.”

In addition, Article 10 of the RA Draft Law *on Ensuring Legal Equality* developed by the RA Ministry of Justice provides legal regulations prohibiting discrimination in employment relations, according to which, in labor relations, it is prohibited to make, without

⁶³ Source: Republic of Armenia Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing+25 , Government report, 2019. https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Armenia.pdf

objective bases, any differentiation, exclusion, restriction or showing of preference, which violate legal equality in labor relations and the person is deprived of equal rights and opportunities in comparison with others.⁶⁴

Since 2014⁶⁵ the RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has been implementing a number of programs in the employment area, which are aimed at supporting employment of job seekers. Within the framework of **annual state programs on employment regulation**, a number of state programs and subprograms are implemented, which target to provide employment to women and to engage them in the labor market. In 2014-2019, more than 20 000 women became beneficiaries of these programs.

Since 2016, based on **the Decree on the Procedure for Assignment and Payment of Maternity Allowance to Non-Working Persons**, the non-working and self-employed women have been receiving maternity allowance. The non-working and self-employed women's maternity allowance is provided for 140 days of pregnancy and childbirth leave defined by the RA Labor Code for working mothers.

At present, changes are being made to **the RA Labor Code**, which envision to enhance the opportunities for reconciliation of work and the family, as well as to expand the tools of state policies aimed at recognition of the household work and non-paid care provision.

In Armenia, international organizations and the RA civil society organizations are also carrying out work aimed at expansion of women's economic opportunities. This work includes the following programs by *OxYGen* Foundation :

- a) With support from the EU, the organization implemented **Inspired+ Armenia program**, which targeted women's labor rights, and developed a roadmap for their improvement ;
- b) With support from Visegrad Foundation, it studied the best international practices for ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities of women in the labor market. Based on these studies, **recommendations on improvement of the policies** in this area were developed for Armenia too, taking into consideration the local context ;
- c) With support from the Government of Sweden, the organization initiated participatory discussions on women's problems existing in the country and developed **Women's**

⁶⁴ Ibidem

⁶⁵ According to the RA Government's Decree N 534-N of April 17, 2014.

Agenda, which summarizes national priorities for gender policy improvement. It also launched a public advocacy campaign *Equal* on women's economic rights at the national level, targeting not only the voicing of problems, but also improvement of policies ;

- d) With support from Austrian Development Agency, it worked to promote **economic empowerment of women employed in the area of agriculture**, which resulted in formation of women's self-governing agricultural cooperatives in communities. They were provided with greenhouses and community-based production units were constructed for processing of agricultural produce.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank have conducted a number of researches on the exercise of women's economic rights in Armenia.

The objective of the project on **Women's Economic Empowerment in South Caucasus**⁶⁶ by UN Development Programme and UN Women launched in 2019 is to ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in relevant decision-making.

PROBLEMS: CURRENT SITUATION

In spite of a high educational level of women in Armenia, their contribution to the country's economic development is significantly lower than their actual potential. In practice, women almost have no influence on decision-making related to economic development and, generally, are engaged in management and development processes to insufficient extent. Such a situation can be described as an ineffective use of human resources and it directly impacts the development processes in and competitiveness of the country.

The direct connection between gender imbalances and the country's competitiveness is revealed by **Gender Gap Index**,⁶⁷ which is calculated by World Economic Forum in the following four pivotal areas: economic participation and opportunities, politics, education and healthcare, reflecting the difference existing between women's and men's opportunities in each

⁶⁶ The project is being implemented in the three countries of South Caucasus with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Austrian Development Agency.

⁶⁷ Gender Gap Index

of the noted areas. In 2020, Armenia ranks 98th among 153 countries of the world by Gender Gap Index.⁶⁸

Source	Index	Score	Place
2019 Human Development Report ⁶⁹	Human Development Index	0.760 ↓	81/188
	Gender Inequality Index	0.259 ↓	
2020 Global Gender Gap Report	Gender Gap Index	0.684 ↓	98/153
	Economic opportunity and participation	0.673 ↓	78/153
Social Watch Report 2019 ⁷⁰	Gender Equity Index	0.259 ↓	57/162
Human Capital Report, World Economic Forum 2017	Human Capital Index	49/130 countries	

In the **economic activity** area, by gender imbalance indices (the ratio of men's and women's employment level, equal remuneration for equal work, the share of men and women among specialists and technical staff), Armenia worsened its positions in 2019, occupying the 78th horizontal as compared to the 69th horizontal in 2016 and the 24th horizontal in pre-crisis 2007. In the structure of this index, especially great is the gender gap in the employment (84th horizontal) areas of Labor force participation and Estimated earned income (PPP US\$) (97th horizontal).

The problems in the labor market of Armenia can be clearly seen when looking at the 2017 **Human Capital Index**. According to the 2017 report (The Global Human Capital Index) by World Economic Forum,⁷¹ Armenia ranks 49th among 130 countries of the world, developing 64% of its human capital. The index is defined by four aspects: availability of

⁶⁸ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

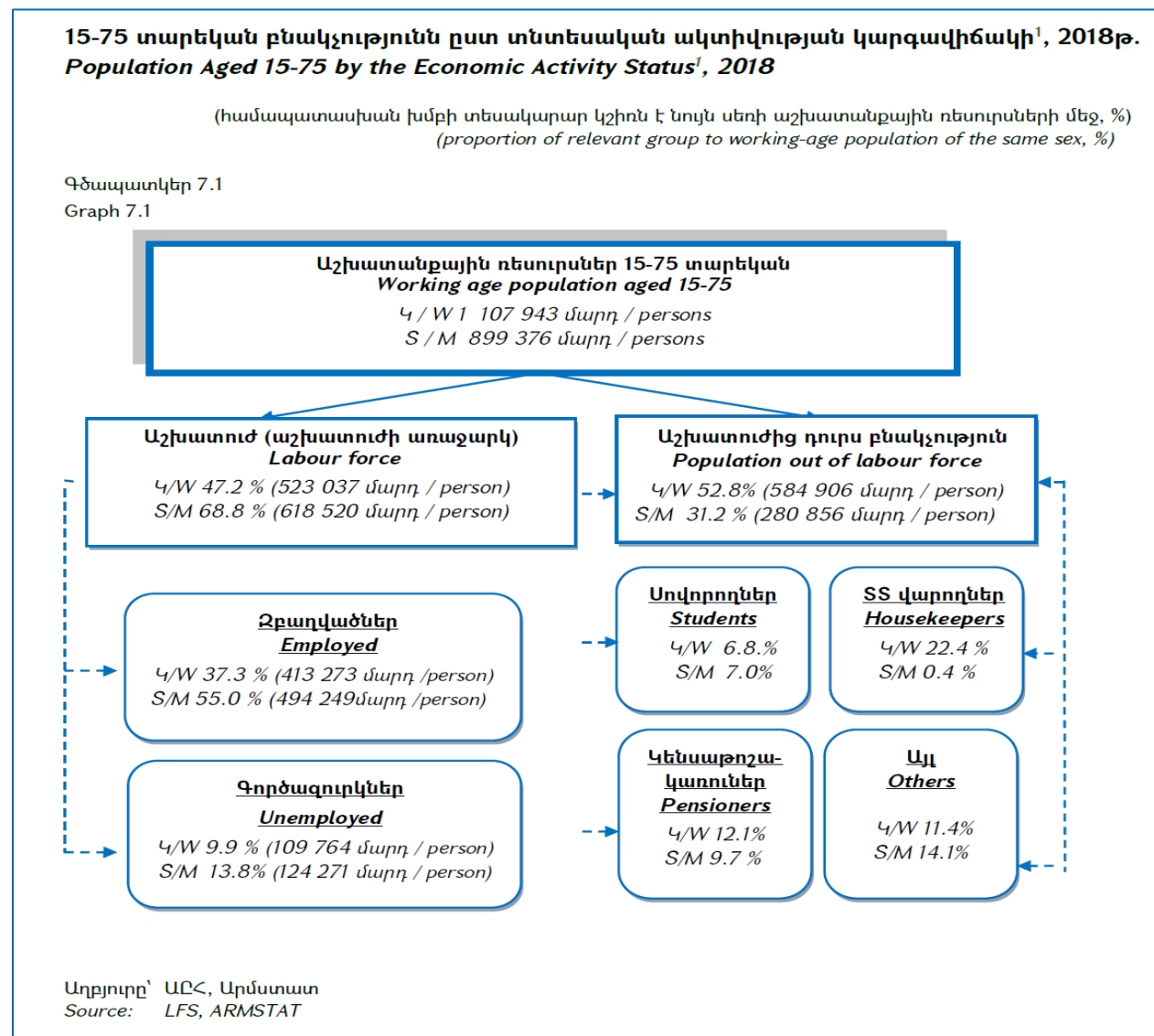
⁶⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-index-ranking>

⁷⁰ <https://gtmarket.ru/ratings/gender-equity-index-un/info>

⁷¹ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-human-capital-report-2017> - taken into account are more than 50 indicators, which are combined into four main groups: education (primary, secondary, higher) and professional training; healthcare, physical and psychological well-being; work placement and employment; infrastructure, legal protection, and social mobility.

potential/education, realization of the potential, development and know-how. Although by the indicator of enrolment in education, Armenia comes third, by the indicator of potential realization, which includes gender gap in the employment area and unemployment, it ranks 114th, which demonstrates an ineffective realization of the human capital.

The obstacles, which women confront in the labor market, lead to non-full utilization of human capital and economic losses not only for women and their families, but also for the entire society.



In Armenia, only half of the women participate in the labor market, which is lower by 21.6% as compared to men. One of the reasons for this gap is the role of women as custodians of households imposed on them by gender norms. The main obstacles for women are often determined by difficulties of reconciling responsibilities associated with the care of the family and work, which leads to low participation of women in the labor market and employment area, their lower income and other manifestations of inequality.

**Աշխատուժից դուրս բնակչության մակարդակն ըստ չաշխատելու պատճառների, 2018թ.
Population Level Out of Labour Force by Reasons for not to Work, 2018**

Աղյուսակ 8.2 (յուրաքանչյուր խմբի մասնաբաժինն է նույն սեռի աշխատանքային ռեսուրսների մեջ, %)
Table 8.2 (share of each group to working-age population of the same sex, %)

	Կ / W	Տ / M	
Ընտանեկան հանգամանքներ	22.4	0.4	Family circumstances
Սովորող, ուսանող	6.8	7.0	Full-time students, pupils
Հիվանդություն, հաշմանդամություն	12.1	9.7	Illness, disability
Չունեն աշխատանք գտնելու հույս (հուսազուրկներ)	11.2	9.7	Hopeless to find a job (discouraged)
Մեկնելու են / գտնվում են արտերկրում	0.2	0.6	Going abroad / is abroad for a job
Այլ	0.1	3.8	Other
Ընդամենը	52.8	31.2	Total

Աղբյուրը՝ ԱԸՀ, Արմստատ
Source: LFS, ARMSTAT

Disrimination by employers is an additional factor for restricting women’s participation in the labor market. And although the RA Constituion and Labor Code define principles prohibiting discrimination, they are not always applied. The existence of discrimination can partially explain persistence of gender gaps in Armenia.

Employment

Women’s share in labor resources is 55%, however, 55.8% of women and 75.2% of men are economically active. The gender gap in the economic activity of women and men in the

age group of 25-34 is 41.6%, which is primarily conditioned by women's family responsibilities (pregnancy, childbirth, care of children and other family members).⁷²

Indicator	Score	Place	Female	Male
Economic participation and opportunities⁷³	0.673	78/153		
Workforce participation %	0.742	96/153	55.8	75.2
Management, high-level positions %	0.419	88/153	29.5	70.5
Specialists, professionals %	1/153	1.000	64.2	35.8

Within the overall number of the employed, women make up 47.5% and men – 52.5%: Thirty point three per cent of the employed women and 28.1% of the employed men have higher or postgraduate education. Nevertheless, women make up only 29.5% of those in leadership positions.

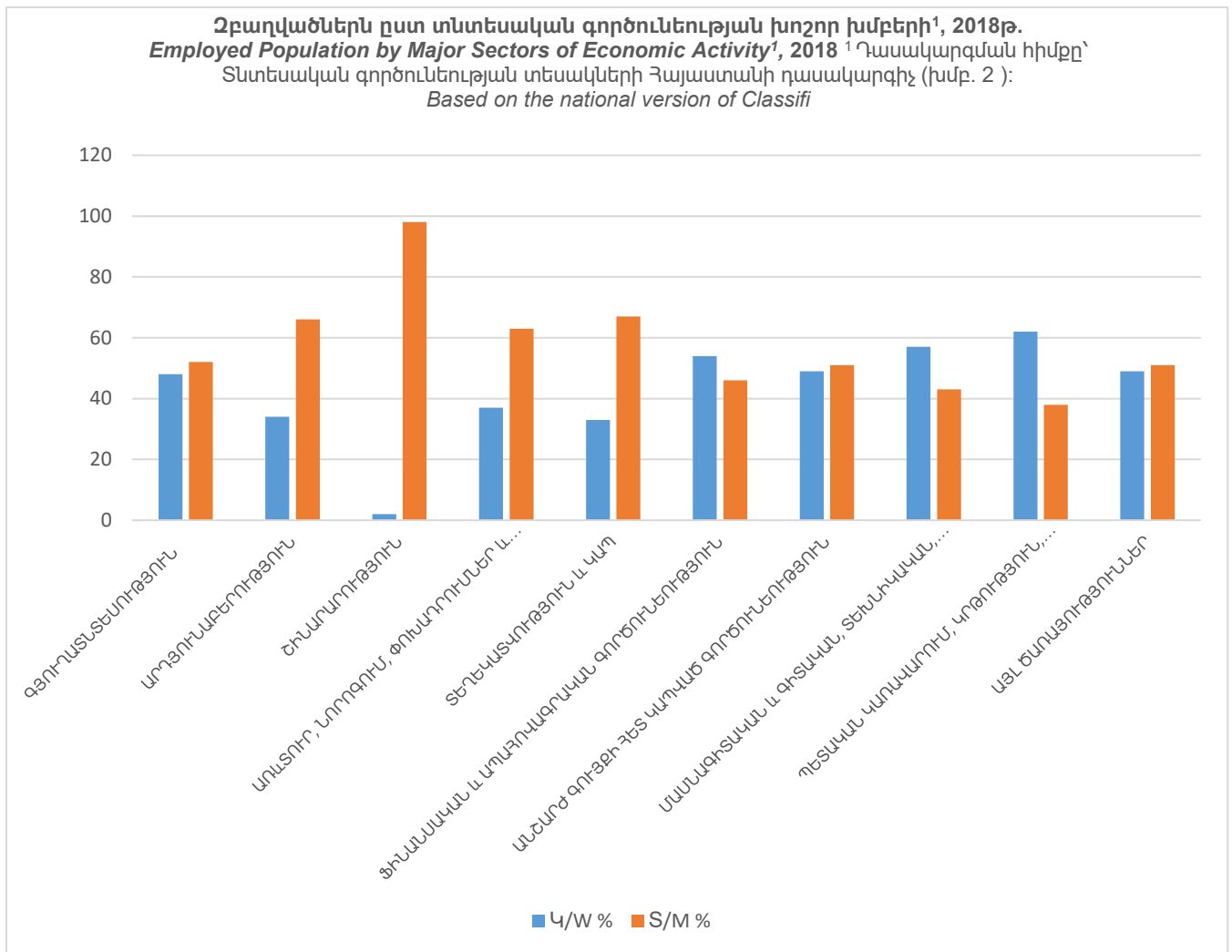
Indicator	Measure		
	Female	Male	Value
Workforce participation			
Workforce/mln	0.55	0.60	0.48
Unemployed adults (15-64) %	18.2	18.3	1.0
Part-time employed	42.9	23.8	1.80

Both women and men are primarily hired workers. The majority of employers and the self-employed are men, whereas women exceed men among family members working without remuneration. More women than men are employed in the state sector of the economy. Thirty-nine point two per cent of women and 21.6% of men are employed part-time, which is primarily conditioned by the nature of work and its seasonality. Another more prevalent reason in case of women is the absence of the opportunity to work full-time due to family

⁷² Women and Men in Armenia, 2019, the RA National Statistical Service, https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf

⁷³ 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

responsibilities, and, in case of men, the reason is that they simply have not been able to find a full-time job.



From left to right: Agriculture; Industry; Construction; Trade, repair, transportation and storage services; Information and communication; Finance and insurance; Real estate; Professional and scientific, technical, and administrative activities; Public administration, education, and healthcare; Other services.

Agriculture in the republic is the largest employment area, where around 34% of the employed are working. Forty-eight per cent of them are women, which makes women a very important participant in the agricultural development. The share of agriculture in men's employment structure is 24%, and in women's employment structure – 26%. In fact, it is women who create the larger portion of agricultural produce and they are the main guarantors for food supply and survival of households in rural areas. At the same time, women's employment in the agricultural sector is primarily non-formal by its nature, which allows to describe women as representatives of the lowest-paid and socially unprotected segment.

According to the data of a comprehensive agricultural registry, women head 25% of rural households.

Women-headed households are more vulnerable due to the absence of the agricultural machinery, difficult access to land plots, and problems related to irrigation and financial means.

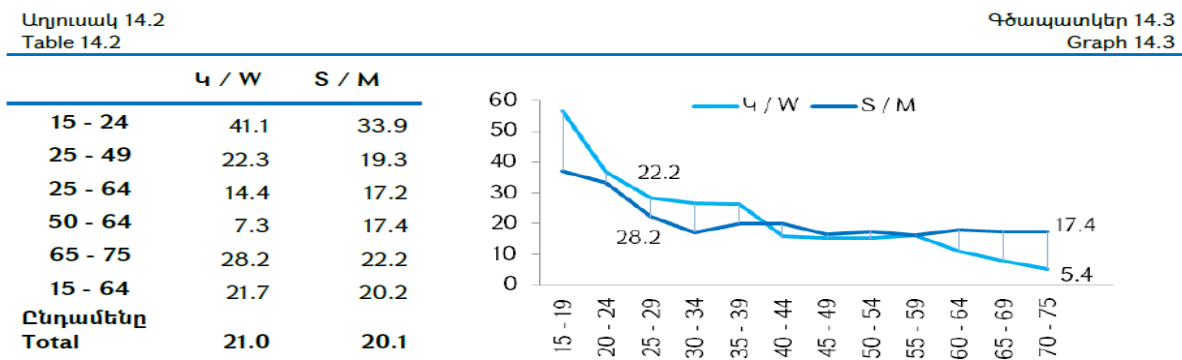
Unemployment

According to the 2019 Human Development Report, employment difference between women and men of Armenia is 1.02.

The unemployment rate in Armenia is the highest from among CIS countries.⁷⁴ It makes up 21% among women and 20.1% among men. At the same time, there are essential gender differences in terms of unemployment duration and reasons for not working. Sixty-seven point eight per cent of the officially registered unemployed are women and long-term unemployment level is especially high among women, making up 62% of the unemployed women.⁷⁵

Գործազրկության մակարդակն ըստ տարիքային խմբերի, 2018թ. Unemployment Rate by Age Groups, 2018

(գործազրկվածների մասնաբաժինն է նույն խմբի աշխատուժի մեջ, %)
(share of unemployed to labour force of the same group, %)



Աղբյուրը՝ ԱԸՀ, Արմաստատ
Source: LFS, ARMSTAT

⁷⁴ <http://www.cisstat.com/>

⁷⁵ Women and Men in Armenia, 2019, the RA National Statistical Service.

The young (16- to 30-year-olds) continue to remain a stable vulnerable group in the labor market with 47.9% of economic activity, 30.3% of low employment rate and, respectively, 36.7% of high unemployment rate. According to the 2018 data, almost 46% of the female young and 34% of the male young in the age group of 15-29 did not study and did not work.⁷⁶

Wage differences⁷⁷

Overall, the gender situation in the labor market of Armenia is characterized by vertical (unequal access to career growth) and horizontal (according to professions and employment areas) segregation, which leads to a significant gender pay gap.

According to the 2017-2018 data, women's average monthly nominal salary (earnings) in Armenia made up 64.7% of that of men, or gender pay gap was 35.3%. Over the past ten years, this difference has decreased by only six percentage points.

Due to the difficulties existing in women's professional advancement, a high education level does not always alleviate gender pay gap. Vertical segregation persists even in employment areas traditionally considered feminine: healthcare, education, culture, and agriculture. Men holding leadership positions exceed women by 2.4 times. Women are more engaged in jobs requiring high (59%) and medium-level (58%) qualifications than men.

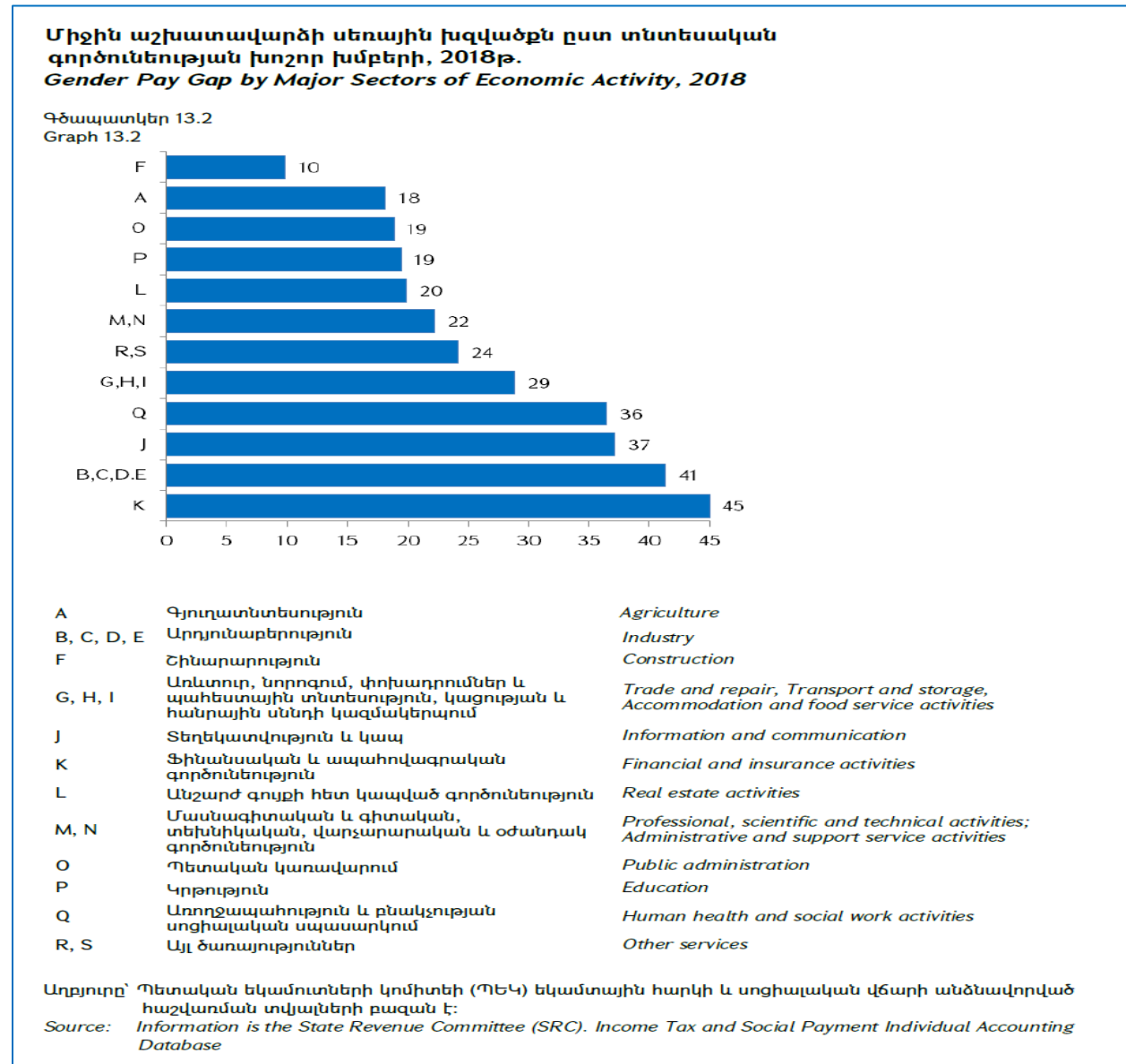
Surveys conducted in the republic reveal that the public opinion justifies the difference in women's and men's pay, believing that in the event of a working woman the man's salary should definitely be higher than that of the woman since otherwise the woman might use this circumstance by showing "disobedience" in family relations.⁷⁸ No advocacy work is carried out by the authorities in this direction, which contributes to preservation of gender

⁷⁶ Ibidem

⁷⁷ Gender Pay Gap

⁷⁸ Center for Gender Research and Leadership, Armenia's Gender Barometer, Yerevan, 2015, <http://www.yso.am/files/Gender%20Barometer.Armenia.English.pdf>

stereotypes.



There are gender differences also in the amount of pensions although *the RA Law on State Pensions* sets 63 years as a common retirement age for women and men. In 2018, the average amount of pensions for women stood at 39 158 drams and that of men was 42 520 drams.⁷⁹

Economically non-active population

Thirty-one point two per cent of the economically non-active population are men, and 52.8% are women. The gender gap is particularly high in the age group of 25-49 (64.9%-

⁷⁹ Women and Men in Armenia, 2019, the RA National Statistical Service, https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf

71.5%), which is also primarily conditioned by women's family responsibilities: pregnancy, childbirth, child care, household workload, etc.⁸⁰

The larger portion of the economically non-active women are housewives. In 2019, 47% of 15- to 75- year-old women did not have jobs and did not look for one, being primarily busy with housekeeping. Women perform the larger part of unpaid household work, which does not undergo any value assessment and is not reflected in the national accounts system. At the same time, around 40% of the economically non-active women have a higher or secondary vocational education.⁸¹

Research demonstrates that if more women worked in Armenia by their profession and did not limit themselves, of their own free will or against their will, to being just housewives, the gross domestic product, GDP, of Armenia's economy would be higher by at least 50-60 million dollars.⁸²

Obstacles to finding a job

According to the data of the time budget survey carried out by the RA National Statistical Service in 2008, women spend five times more time on unpaid work (housekeeping and family care) than men. The paid work does not free up women from household work to the same extent as men. As a consequence, women perform bigger volume of work as compared to men. Men spend three times more time on paid work and have almost 30% more free time than women.

Both women and men note that the primary reason for obstacles to finding a job is lack of workplaces. The second reason is insufficient work experience for women and low wages for men. This fact indirectly proves that women's expectations in terms of remuneration for work are lower than those of men. Women constitute a significant majority (70%) among the hopeless, i.e. among those persons who have no hope to find a job and do not even seek one. The intention to leave the country is more pronounced among men and is a major reason for not working.

What does research demonstrate?

⁸⁰ Ibidem

⁸¹ The Labor Market in Armenia, 2019, the RA National Statistical Service, <https://armstat.am/am/?nid=82&id=2226>

⁸² Diagnostic Study of Discrimination against Women, UNFPA, 2016

62% of men and 56% of women believe that when there are few jobs, men should have more extensive rights to get a job than women.

60.4% of men and 41.1% of women believe that men perform more responsible jobs better.

48% of men and 29% of women agree with the opinion that women belong in the kitchen and their primary role is to bring up children.

The state support measures in reconciling family responsibilities and career are not satisfactory, which is attested by the fact that 98% of those not working due to family circumstances are women. This fact is also conditioned by lack of daycare institutions for children, especially in the regions and rural communities.

Children's enrolment in preschool institutions (among 0- to five- year-olds) is 28.9%: 35.6% in urban areas and 17.2% in rural areas. The enrolment is particularly low among 0- to two-year-old children, making up just 5.2%.

Poverty

In 2018, the poverty rate in Armenia was 23.5% with 1% being extremely poor and 10.6%⁸³ very poor.⁸⁴ Fifty-six point six per cent of the poor are women and 43.4% are men.

In 2018, the poverty rate of woman-headed households (they make up 33% in the republic⁸⁵) was higher than that of man-headed households (28% vis-a-vis 22%). In 2018, woman-headed households accounted for 30% of the poor and 25% of the entire population. As compared to the average rate in the republic, woman-headed households with children under the age of six run a bigger risk of (by 1.6 times) of being poor (Table 3.13). In urban areas, the chances of being poor for the noted households are higher than in rural areas (40.8% vis-a-vis 31.8%).⁸⁶

Poverty rates according to the sex of the household head, 2018,⁸⁷ %

⁸³ Poverty Snapshot in Armenia, 2008-2018, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_2.pdf, page 41

⁸⁴ The term 'very poor' was replaced by 'moderately poor' https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_2.pdf, page 21

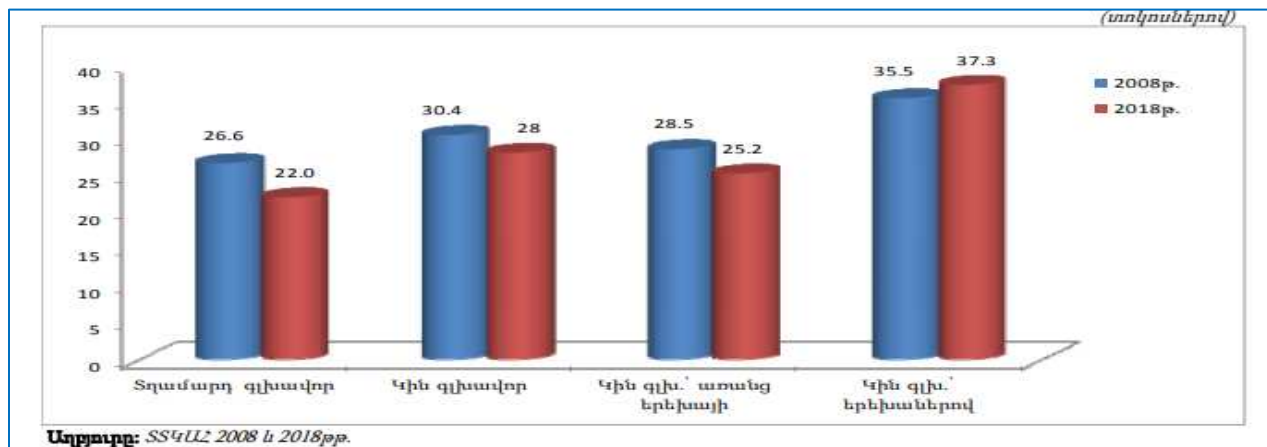
⁸⁵ Women and Men in Armenia, 2019, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2019.pdf, page 88

⁸⁶ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_2.pdf, page 54

⁸⁷ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_2.pdf, page 55

Sex of the Household Head	Extremely poor	Poor	% of the poor population	% of the general population
Male, Head	0.9	22.0	69.8	74.6
Female, Head, including:	1.3	28.0	30.2	25.4
Female Head without children under the age of 6	0.9	25.2	20.9	19.5
Female Head with children under the age of 6	2.4	37.3	9.3	5.9
Total	1.0	23.5	100	100

Armenia: Poverty rates according to the sex of the household head based on the population of a given year, 2008-2018⁸⁸



Form left to right: Male Head; Female Head; Female Head without children; Female Head with children

Entrepreneurship

The economy cannot develop to the fullest of its potential unless women and men are full participants in the country's development processes. The World Bank report on *Women, Business and the Law 2020*⁸⁹ published very recently evaluates those laws that relate to women's work and entrepreneurial activity and are aimed at expanding women's economic

⁸⁸ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_a_2.pdf, page 55

⁸⁹ World Bank. 2020. Women, Business and the Law 2020. Women, Business and the Law. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1532-4. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf?sequence=10>

opportunities and ensuring gender equality. According to the report's evaluation, 40 countries in the world have introduced 62 legislative improvements, which will help women to realize their potential and promote their countries' economic growth and development.⁹⁰

According to the report, **Armenia ranks 69th with a total score of 82.5 among 190 countries.** In particular, by the criterion of mobility the Republic of Armenia has 100 points, by job placement -50, by work remuneration – 75, by marriage -100, by maternal care – 60, by business management -75, by property administration -100, and by pension provision – 100 points. According to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, business structures headed by women or those with a share by women constitute just 14.5% vis-à-vis 85.5% in case of men.⁹¹

The RA Government views the advanced development of the economy's private sector, and in particular of small and medium-sized businesses as an effective means for solving employment and social problems. According to the assessment of the Republican Council of Armenian Entrepreneurs, women's share in large, medium-sized and small businesses does not exceed 10%. Women's share in microbusiness is larger and constitutes 20-25%.⁹²

Over the recent years, the principle of *classifying the employed by status in employment according to the ILO International Classification of Status in Employment* has been applied to draw a distinction between hired and non-hired workers. According to that principle, *an employer is the person who, on his/her own or with a number of partners, pursues profitable activity and, for that purpose, always engages one or more hired workers.* However, the change in classification did not lead to a change in the situation and the percentage of female employers is significantly lower (0.3) than the percentage of male employers (1.4), see below:⁹³

⁹⁰ The report authors have made use of a 100-point system to evaluate the legislative field promoting women's economic participation, with eight criteria characterizing a woman's practical life: mobility, work place, remuneration, marriage, maternal care, entrepreneurship, property administration, and pension.

⁹¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

⁹² Gender policy in Armenia and the Right of Women Entrepreneurship
<http://employers.am/News.aspx?NewsId=39&lang=eng>

⁹³ https://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud_2019_4.pdf

4.2.8. Զբաղվածներն ըստ զբաղվածության կարգավիճակի¹, 2018թ.
Employed Persons by Status in Employment¹, 2018

	Ընդամենը <i>Total</i>	Տղամարդ <i>Men</i>	Կին <i>Women</i>	Քաղաք <i>Urban</i>	Գյուղ <i>Rural</i>	
<i>1000 մարդ persons</i>						
Ընդամենը	975.1	531.5	443.6	517.5	457.7	Total
Վարձու աշխատող	610.7	309.6	301.1	428.2	182.5	Employee
Գործատու	9.0	7.6	1.3	6.6	2.4	Employer
Ինքնազբաղված	341.6	210.0	131.6	81.6	260.0	Own-account worker
Առանց վարձատրու- թյան աշխատող ընտանիքի անդամ	13.9	4.4	9.5	1.1	12.8	Contributing family workers
<i>Ընդամենի նկատմամբ, % As share of the total, %</i>						
Ընդամենը	100	100	100	100	100	Total
Վարձու աշխատող	62.6	58.2	67.9	82.8	39.9	Employee
Գործատու	0.9	1.4	0.3	1.3	0.5	Employer
Ինքնազբաղված	35.1	39.5	29.7	15.8	56.8	Own-account worker
Առանց վարձատրու- թյան աշխատող ընտանիքի անդամ	1.4	0.8	2.1	0.2	2.8	Contributing family workers

In Armenia, gender aspects of private enterprise are not always taken into account by organizations operating in this field and supporting business development. To start a business, women have to overcome the following obstacles: lack of practical skills and preparedness, a feeling of uncertainty and absence of the desire to run a risk, absence of business relations, and the existence of stereotypes on women's participation in the economy and business. The objective reasons for this situation include limited access to finance, difficulties in securing a loan, absence of property to receive financial means and loans, high interest rates, etc.⁹⁴

In reality, support for women's enterprise has a huge potential. In the Republic of Armenia, the *RA Law on State Support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* outlines the main directions of state support for SMEs, which include assistance for women's enterprise. *Special Strategy for Women's Enterprise* developed in 2014 targets to expand women's participation in the economic development and women's entrepreneurship, and the 2016-2018 Strategy on SME Development also defines the latter as a strategic objective.

At the level of implementation, the annual program on state support for SMEs contains a special section on women's enterprise. In 2016-2018, the Government offered training and consultative services to enterprises with little or no experience, carried out capacity-building activities and organized the Prime Minister's prize giving ceremony on *the Best Female Entrepreneur*. These activities received funding support from donors, for example, SME

⁹⁴ Gender Assessment USAID/Armenia

DSC⁹⁵ and Asian Development Bank had provided a one-time assistance, training and advisory services to startups. Actions and indicators related to awareness raising and role models were incorporated into the strategy on women's entrepreneurship, and the 2016-2018 Strategy on SME Development includes *women's enterprise support* as a priority.⁹⁶

To help women's entrepreneurship and their access to financial means in a broader sense and to support women's engagement in business, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is implementing the program on *Women in Business*. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development provides financial means for development of female-managed SMEs to local banks through its credit lines, as well as business consultations, which allows enterprises to enhance their competitiveness. In 2015-2017, within the framework of the program, it provided more than 36.3 million Euros to its partner banks in the region (six countries). More than 576 women have benefited from access to knowledge (know-how), including through around 246 consultative programs implemented in the region.⁹⁷

However, support at the national level is very limited and is offered only in the capital city. Frequently, NGOs are the main promoters of women's entrepreneurship. Overall, following the recent assessment of the Small Business Act, support for women's enterprise has remained stable, however, there is a significant room for improvement. Moving forward, Armenia should enhance the coordination of its stakeholders as regards women's entrepreneurship through a national constructive partnership, for example, through the SME Development Council. Such a partnership should involve all pivotal stakeholders and head development of policies in this area.

Thus, the action plan can include promotional activities, such as dissemination of success stories of women entrepreneurs, as well as can envision capacity-building activities, such as training to improve the competencies of women in leadership and management. Moreover, the assignment of the functions of monitoring the progress and results and of impact assessment to institutions, for example, to SME DSC, will be an important step towards ensuring the necessary flexibility of strategic improvements and activity effectiveness envisioned by the

⁹⁵ Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship Development Support Center (SME DSC), currently, *Investment Support Center* Foundation (ISCF).

⁹⁶ OECD et al. (2020), SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2020: Assessing the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe, SME Policy Index, European Union, Brussels/OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8b45614b-en> <https://www.oecd.org/global-relations/SMEPI-EaP-2020-Armenia.pdf>

⁹⁷ EBRD program *Women in Business*, <http://www.eu4business.eu/hy/programme/gortsarar-kanayk>

strategy. The statistical data on the business sector, including periodic collection of sex-disaggregated data, can be one of the pivotal areas for improvement.

Women in the area of information technologies

Armenia comes first in the world in terms of women's engagement in the area of information technologies. By this indicator, Armenia is ahead of the US, Canada, and a number of European countries, which is confirmed by research carried out by *Enterprise Incubator* Foundation. According to the data of the Statistical Committee of Armenia, the number of girls in Departments for Information Technologies and Information Security at higher education institutions of Armenia has increased by more than five times over a period of four years.

Approximately 30% of employees in Armenia's IT sector are women vis-a-vis 20% in other countries. The main peculiarity of Armenia's IT sector is not only rapid growth, but also gender balance tendencies. For example, 33% of engineers working in leading positions for chip design and semiconductors at the Armenian office of Synopsys are women, whereas at the company headquarters in Silicon Valey they make up just 15%.⁹⁸

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analyzing the exercise of their economic rights by women in Armenia, one can identify the following problems:

- The difference between de jure and de facto labor rights of women in the Republic of Armenia;
- Discrimination against women in the labor market;
- Lack of opportunities for reconciliation of work and family responsibilities;
- The problem of business development among women;
- Lack of a mechanism for labor rights protection;
- Gender blindness of laws and programs related to the field.

Hence, acknowledging the necessity of increasing the awareness and gender sensitivity of all stakeholders in the area of labor rights protection, we recommend the following actions:

⁹⁸ Report on the State of the Industry - Enterprise Incubator Foundation, 2018
<http://www.eif.am/eng/researches/report-on-the-state-of-the-industry/?fbclid=IwAR0bxL4HHLPXhyUonUjx27yuJIxvWa7kXbfc6scT8IvD7HESPcrKqsopPB4>

- To ensure the implementation of the provisions on prohibition of discrimination envisioned by Article 29 of the RA Constitution and on promotion of de facto equality between women and men envisioned by Articles 30 and 86 of the RA Constitution;
- To implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its Concluding Observations on the Republic of Armenia's fifth and sixth periodic reports by introducing relevant amendments to the new Strategic Program on the RA Gender Policy and Action Plan, prioritizing the objectives related to the socio-economic area;
- To carry out awareness raising activities on the RA Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to promote the advocacy and realization of the opportunities provided for in the law;
- To provide for opportunities for reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities by women, to support creation of family models based on equal division of family responsibilities and mutual respect;
- To ensure the modernization of the strategy for support of women's entrepreneurship and formation of a constructive partnership for policies, shifting assistance to women's entrepreneurship to the next level;
- For the purpose of ensuring the relevance and quality of trainings, the Government should consider creation of a system on collection and analysis of data on SME skills;
- To ensure the expansion of the sphere of competence of the SME Development Council and introduction of working groups on entrepreneurship training and women's enterprise. It is important to develop the Council's potential to coordinate various stakeholders in all areas of policies on human capital development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- To carry out gender expertise and mainstreaming of labor legislation to ensure equal exercise of labor rights by women;
- To create a structure overseeing the enforcement of labor legislation;
- To set quotas for ensuring women's sufficient engagement in top levels of the management of private and state organizations and councils of companies with state and community participation.

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