

2004-2010 Republic of Armenia National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society

The Republic of Armenia National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society (hereinafter, the “Action Plan”) defines the principles, priorities, and key targets of the public policy that is pursued to address women’s issues in the Republic of Armenia. The Action Plan is based on the relevant provisions of the Republic of Armenia Constitution and is targeted at the fulfillment of the UN Convention on the Discrimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, the recommendations of the Fourth Beijing Conference (1995), the documents of the Council of Europe Committee for the Equality of Rights of Women and Men, the UN Millennium Declaration requirements, and commitments of the Republic of Armenia under other international instruments.

The Action Plan will facilitate equality of rights and opportunities for women and men, as a prerequisite to shape a democratic, social, and legal state and civil society.

The measures contemplated under the Action Plan will also be helpful in addressing social and economic problems of women, which will, in turn, facilitate in overcoming poverty in the frameworks of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

The Action Plan conceives women as individuals, women, and mothers, and pursues the approach of not countering family with the professional or social and political activities of a woman, but rather, one of developing conditions for the fully-fledged realization of women’s potential in both employment and families.

In the light of those peculiarities of women and men, which are driven by nature, and viewing their differences as complementary features supporting harmony in social life, the aim of the Action Plan is to maintain such features in the course of implementing its measures.

Although Armenia is currently number 76 in terms of the Human Development Index, and number 62 in terms of the Gender Development Index, which illustrates that there is somewhat of an equality between women and men, one can claim, on the basis of historical facts, that discrimination against women is not a phenomenon embedded in our national mentality and philosophy, but rather, that the signs of inequality [that may be found] are due to the present social-economic situation and the low level of civilization in some groups of society.

Therefore, some of the measures contemplated in the Action Plan emphasize awareness-raising undertakings, as well as efforts targeted at enhancing the overall level of development in society.

The Action Plan comprises 8 sections:

- Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in decision-making and in the social and political spheres;
- Improving the Social and Economic Condition of Women;
- Education Sector;
- Improving the Health Condition of Women;
- Eliminating Violence against Women;
- Elimination of trafficking of women and girls;
- Role of the Mass Media and Cultural Institutions in Reporting on Women’s Issues and Building a Female Role Model; and,
- Institutional Reforms.

Each section is made up of the following parts: Situation Analysis, an overview of Challenges, Strategies, and Measures to Address the issues.

The implementation Action Plan will be pursued in close cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations.

Section 1

Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in decision-making and in the social and political spheres

Situation Analysis

In 1993, Armenia ratified the UN Convention on the Discrimination of All Forms of Violence against Women.

According to Article 7 of the Convention, the authorities undertook to carry out practical measures to ensure equal participation of women and men in the development and implementation of public policies. The ratification of the Convention was followed by the adoption of a number of other instruments, but there has still been no significant progress in this area.

Here are some of the most recent facts: after the parliamentary elections that took place in the Republic of Armenia in 2003, women currently make up 4.1% of the members of the National Assembly. One of the 6 female parliamentarians was elected through the majoritarian lists, and the other five—through the party-proportionate scheme. Female candidates made up 4% of the majoritarian lists, and 14.1% of the party-proportionate lists. One can conclude from the numbers that the small percentage of women in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia is partially due to their limited participation in elections. One of the female parliamentarians chairs a standing committee.

The fact that women are less than 20% of the Parliament of the country complicates the adoption of socially favorable laws; furthermore, the international experience has shown that without the use of temporary radical means (such as gender quotas), it will be difficult to attain equality of women and men in political activities.

The number of women in executive leadership positions is limited, too—only one female minister and five female deputy ministers.

A similar situation is to be found in territorial administration and local self-government bodies. In the local elections of 2002, only eight of the 932 female candidates were elected.

Equal participation of women and men takes place at the middle level of administration, as well as in the international organizations that operate in Armenia.

The number of women exceeds that of men in the spheres of education, health care, culture, and services.

Women mostly exercise their decision-making rights in the non-governmental organizations' sector, and the role of women and women's organizations in the construction of a democratic, civil, and sustainable society is increasing. Women can do a lot in both sustaining peace and protecting the environment.

Resolution 1325 adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000 is one of the essential instruments concerned with the new millennium, which reflects both the necessity of women actively participating in the peace process and at all levels of decision-making aimed at conflict prevention and resolution, and the need to protect rights of women and girls during wars and in the aftermath of conflicts.

The UN Security Council calls upon the Member States to pursue the safeguarding of principles of international law on the rights of women and girls during armed conflicts, to introduce gender mainstreaming in the adoption and enforcement of reconciliation treaties, and to ensure the fully-fledged participation of women in the peace process.

A similar approach should be adopted in relation to environmental protection.

It is necessary to ensure the protection of the environment, because it is important for both the preservation of humankind and the reproductive health of women. Concurrently, it is necessary to enhance the participation of women and women's organization in this process.

At present, the environmental situation in Armenia is alarming. Cities lack sufficient development of residential areas, drinking water, anti-epidemiological services, and heating. Green areas have been shrinking in cities and, especially, in Yerevan. Despite that Yerevan occupies 22,700 hectares, its green areas are about 2,400 hectares, which, under European standards, is 10-fold below the threshold for a city of 1.1 million. This, indeed, is not only a problem of urban development, environment, and culture, but also, a social one.

Challenges

- Inadequate involvement of women in decision-making and politics.
- Unequal participation of women and men in various spheres of social and political life.

Strategy

- 1.1. Ensuring the fulfillment of the Convention on the Discrimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the key recommendations of the Beijing Conference.
- 1.2. Ensuring oversight of the enforcement of respective legal acts.
- 1.3. Ensuring the equal participation of women and men in the political and social life of the country.

- 1.4. Ensuring the gender awareness of women, their legal awareness, and their empowerment.
- 1.5. Ensuring the active participation of women in the process of democratization and the development of civil society.

Measures

- 1.1.1 Conducting gender expertise of the RoA legislation and if necessary work out suggestion on changes and amendment to be made in corresponding legal acts.
- 1.1.2. Review the international instruments of the RoA, which ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men, in order to harmonize the RoA legislation with the international standards.
- 1.2.1. Produce periodic reports on the fulfillment of the provisions of the UN Convention on the Discrimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations to be found in the documents of the Council of Europe Committee on Equality of the Rights of Women and Men.
- 1.3.1. Draft recommendations on the introduction of temporary quotas to ensure the fully-fledged participation of women in the decision-making process in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and in local government.
- 1.3.2. Submit for ratification the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women.
- 1.3.3. To discuss and to submit for ratification the [December 22 2000] Protocol to the UN Convention on the Discrimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- 1.3.4. To conduct surveys and to produce statistical data on the participation of women and men in social and political life.
- 1.4.1. To organize training courses for women in leadership and self-empowerment techniques.
- 1.4.2. To develop and implement special educational and continuous training programs to ensure the participation of women in governance and public and political sector activities.
- 1.5.1. To develop recommendations on intensifying the effective participation of women in the peace-making process.
- 1.6.1. To devise recommendations on the development and implementation of environmental and nature protection projects and to intensify the participation of women in these processes.

Section 2 Improving the Social and Economic Condition of Women

Situation Analysis

Equal rights of women and men to operate in all the sectors of the Armenian economy are enshrined in the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

However, the financial and business activities of women are currently restricted mainly to retail trade and small business, especially in the service sector.

Improving the social-economic status of women not only is an economic challenge, but also relates to the possibility of enhancing the activities of women in the political field.

The introduction of a new market system brought about various structural changes in the country, which resulted in many enterprises and organizations being either shut down or reorganized; the number of jobs shrunk enormously, the demand for certain professions fell, unemployment grew, and migration accelerated. As a consequence of all of this, a large number of people found themselves in dire straits.

Despite that unemployment is common problem for both men and women, statistics have confirmed that regardless of the changes in the annual number of the unemployed, women have continuously taken up a larger share of this group. As of January 1 2002, women were 66% of the total number of the registered unemployed. Unemployment in women is 13.5%, which is greater than twice the level of unemployment in men (6.4%).

A gender analysis of officially-reported unemployment for 1995-2001 illustrates that the majority of the unemployed in Armenia are women. Furthermore, the level of unemployment in women grew by 3.5% in 2002 compared to 1995.

Studies have confirmed that the number of women who have been granted the status of the unemployed is greater in cities than elsewhere. Household surveys have shown that families with many children and families led by women are the ones that suffer rather harsh social-economic conditions.

Thus, the new circumstances and needs emerging in the labor market and the depleted infrastructure have rendered women less competitive than before.

Moreover, the virtual unfeasibility of combining family duties with professional ones deprives women of a sound career record, which later negatively affects the amount of their pension.

Development of small and medium businesses in the country is still underway; there is a shortage of favorable conditions and a conducive tax environment for doing business. All of this by and large hinders the enhancement of economic opportunities for women. Back in 1997, research conducted by the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Industry and Trade demonstrated that women were 17.2% of all those doing business in Yerevan, and 3.1% of those doing business

in the regions (the “marzes”), and that there were far fewer women employed in the manufacturing sector here (1.9%), while the activities of female entrepreneurs was mostly in trade and services.

Nevertheless, economic advancement of women is a necessary prerequisite for their empowerment in not only the economic, but also the political life of the country.

The reduction of the number of women in the labor market was furthered by the depletion of the pre-school and extra-school education facilities, especially the decline in the number of pre-school institutions, as well as the shrinking scope of enterprises engaged in utilities and services: during the period from 1996 to 2001, the number of pre-school institutions fell from 978 to 712, of which 135 were idle in 2001. One should also note that pre-school institutions became subordinate to the local communities, which do not have sufficient financial capacity to support the normal operation of pre-school institutions. Deterioration has been reported in not only the capacity, but also the inclusion and accessibility of the pre-school system.

A large number of children from impoverished families have ended up in orphanages and boarding schools.

The decline in the number of pre-school institutions also resulted in lay-offs of staff, most of whom were women.

The food and agriculture sectors are pivotal to the economy of Armenia. According to the findings of the 2001 population census, 35.7% of the population of the country resides in rural areas. 45.1% of the population are involved in some form of agriculture, of whom almost half are women, but the number of women in agriculture tends to increase. One of the problems in this area is the low level of automation in agricultural work, which results in most of the activities being performed manually, which, in turn, cannot but affect the overall and reproductive health of women.

Over the recent years, most of the credit programs targeted at the provision of economic assistance to women in Armenia have not had sufficiently concessional terms, and, therefore, do not facilitate the economic advancement of women. In some of the schemes, the lending interest rates are so high that women cannot develop their business and, in the best case, hardly cover the subsistence of the family.

Surveys conducted by the RoA Department of Migration and Refugees and the National Statistics Service in 2001 and 2002 have illustrated that about 1/3 of those who leave the country are labor migrants. The migration is driven by social-economic causes, the lack of any prospects to find professional employment, the low level of income, and the skepticism about the future. About 2/3 of them are women. Furthermore, women constitute 53% of those who leave for permanent residence.

Among women, one of the vulnerable groups is that of refugees, who make up 54% of the total number of refugees, and almost half of them are elderly women.

The refugees had their education in Russian, and due to objective reasons, do not fully master the Armenian language. Furthermore, most of them used to leave in cities, but once in Armenia, ended up being placed predominantly in rural areas, in which they are less likely to find employment; besides, most of the employment opportunities in rural areas have to do with agriculture. These circumstances further complicate their integration process.

Despite that female military servants need special attention, their social-economic conditions are yet to be studied to a sufficient degree.

The new economic system posed obstacles before women active in arts and science. Clearly, they lack the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in this economic system.

Challenges

- Low income of women.
- Vast unemployment amongst women.
- Social proneness of refugee women.
- Limited business activity by women.
- Inadequate participation of women in the process of social and economic development in rural areas.
- Insufficient participation of women in the process of social and economic development in urban communities.
- Underdevelopment of national arts and crafts that traditionally generated employment for women.
- Lack of knowledge and skills that women active in arts and science need to operate effectively in the newly-emerging economic system.
- Deterioration of the pre-school child care infrastructure, especially the reduction in the number of, and lack of access to, pre-school institutions.

Strategy

- 2.1. Gearing social policies towards improving the economic status of women.
- 2.2. Gearing social policies towards encouraging an increase in the birth rate.
- 2.3. Settle the use of the labor force of women by facilitating a reduction in the number of unemployed women
- 2.4. Facilitating an expansion of business activities of women.

- 2.5. Enhancing women's participation in the development of rural communities, and ensuring new jobs for women in rural areas.
- 2.6. Enhancing the knowledge and skills of women artists and scientists to operate efficiently under the new economic system.
- 2.7. Developing national arts and crafts that traditionally generate employment for women.

Measures

- 2.1.1. To mobilize and to consolidate statistics on poverty in women, and to reveal the root causes and consequences of such poverty.
- 2.1.2. To develop and carry out special projects of employment and health care support for refugee women and their families.
- 2.2.1. To draft a Law on the Social Protection of Families with Many Children.
- 2.2.2. To enhance the public benefit scheme to prioritize the need for assisting families with children and vulnerable categories of women.
- 2.3.1. To develop and carry out projects ensuring employment for women in the frameworks of population employment programs.
- 2.3.2. To develop arrangements ensuring continuity of professional training for women in order to enhance their competitiveness in the labor market to support the combining of employment with family duties.
- 2.3.3. To rehabilitate and to develop rural and urban networks of community-based day-care centers for children and pre-school institutions.
- 2.4.1. In the frameworks of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, to carry out projects targeted at reducing poverty in women, including, especially, concessional micro-credits to facilitate the develop of small and medium-sized women-owned and controlled businesses.
- 2.4.2. To mobilize resources of international donor organizations to develop small business and to organize special business courses for women.
- 2.5.1. To conduct researches aimed to identify the new job establishment and crafts work opportunities for women in rural areas.
- 2.5.2. To carry out projects aimed at developing home-based work and crafts work in rural areas and promoting the participation of women in the social-economic development of rural areas
- 2.5.3. In the frameworks of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, to carry out projects targeted at reducing poverty in rural women, especially by means of concessionary micro-credit projects.
- 2.6.1. To run business training courses for women who are active in arts and science in order to equip them with knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in the market.
- 2.7.1. To carry out specific projects targeted at developing arts and crafts that have traditionally generated employment for women.

Section 3 Education Sector

Situation Analysis

An analysis of statistics illustrates that there is no gender discrimination in terms of inclusion at various levels of education in Armenia.

It is also noteworthy that in Armenia, traditions of equal inclusion of girls and boys in primary education date back to the 19th century.

In gender terms, inclusion at various levels of education looks as follows.

In 2002, 44,849 children attended pre-school institutions, of which 22,488 were girls. Of the total number of children in the country, 18.5% attended pre-school institutions.

In basic education (grades 1 to 8), the number of students was 424,372, of whom 208,029 were girls: the slight difference in this sector is mainly due to demographic factors. However, these proportions, especially in high school, have recently been shifting towards becoming more favorable for girls. In the 2002/2003 academic year, girls were 51.8% of the total number of high school students in the country.

The number of women in vocational education is now somewhat higher than that of men. Statistics for the 2002/2003 academic year have illustrated that the differences are rather apparent in secondary vocational education institutions, in which women were 66% of all students, compared to only 34% of men.

The percentage share of women in higher academic institutions (49.7%) was due to the fact that more women attended private institutions.

As for the small share of women (34.2%) in post-university education, it is due to the large number of men (65.9%) attending post-graduate schools, although the number of women in graduate school exceeded that of men (women were about 51.9%).

At present, there are 28 doctorate students, of whom 27.4% are women.

There is, however, a different situation insofar as faculty is concerned.

In the pre-school education sector, the total number of pedagogues was 5,397, of whom 5,394 were women. Of the 636 leadership positions, three were occupied by men.

In the 2002/2003 academic year, about 54,276 pedagogues worked in public schools, of which 83.4% were women.

There are 4,157 faculty members in public secondary vocational academic institutions, of which 3,044 are women. In higher academic institutions, 3,906 of the 8,495 faculty members are women.

As of yearend 2002, the number of researchers was 6,737, of whom 476 were science doctors, of whom 83 were women. 1,758 of the 6,737 were candidates to the science doctor degree, of whom 688 were women.

The aforementioned numbers show that there is gender disproportion in the corps of education sector pedagogues. Public education institutions, in particular, have been feminizing—83.4% of the teachers are female, and this does not support the upbringing of fully-fledged citizens. Due to the low salaries, the poor professional image, and the inadequacy of social guarantees professional educators have been quitting the system. It's also should be mentioned that a big number of male educators left their jobs. In 2001, compared to 1991, the salaries of teachers had declined about 14-fold.

As for professional education institutions, there is somewhat of a balance in this area.

Innovation and harmonization of the education contents with the new requirements of society is a topical concern. The slow process of innovation of the educational contents does not facilitate the spiritual, economic and social progress of democratic society, as well as it doesn't support the development of both civil society and rule of law. The units of educating the issues on establishment and development of life skills, awareness of citizens' rights and gender issues should be enlarged. It is also important to educate the students with the healthy life-style and preparation for the future family life.

Certainly in this case the collaboration with parents and their help in raising and developing children are also essential. Within the recent years the number of pre-school institutions and children attending them has considerably decreased. As a result, family became the main responsible body for raising and developing children that do not attend pre-school institutions. Therefore, parents need methodological guidance to improve the ways in which children are raised in the family.

Challenges

- Inadequate social protection of pedagogues and the outflow of male educators from the system.
- Insufficient awareness of gender approaches among participants of education process.
- Slow pace of updating education content.
- Insufficient awareness of parents in pre-school child care and upbringing issues.

Strategy

- 3.1. Ensuring social protection of pedagogues.
- 3.2. Ensuring public awareness on gender issues.
- 3.3. Incorporating new education programs and methods in education.
- 3.4. Ensuring awareness of parents in childcare and education issues

Measures

- 3.1.1. To reconsider and to increase salaries of pedagogues.
- 3.1.2. Integration of the pedagogues in the social life reduced in the result of the implementation of educational reforms.
- 3.2.1. To organize training courses for pedagogues in gender issues.
- 3.2.2. Gender mainstreaming of textbooks and curricula.
- 3.2.3. To offer a special course in gender studies in the universities of the country.
- 3.2.4. To organize special training courses, seminars, discussions, and experience-sharing events in gender issues for social and political stakeholders and civil servants.
- 3.3.1. To develop and invest of the training course "Healthy way of living" in secondary schools, publish appropriate literature.
- 3.4.1. To organize a 15-day training course on child care and education for parents of children who have pre-school children, publish relevant materials.

Section 4

Improving the Health Condition of Women

Situation Analysis

The social and economic changes of the last decade left their trace on the health care sector, among others, which gave rise to numerous problems. Health care became unaffordable for the majority of the population, and the quality of health care in hospitals and policlinics deteriorated.

Social disease, such as the tuberculosis and sexually-transmitted infections, thrived. Uncontrolled cases of oncological and cardio-vascular ailment became more frequent than before. The use of homogenous and scarce food, lacking the right balance of proteins, vitamins, and microelements, resulted in malnutrition of pregnant women, a 10-fold increase in the number of early and late anemia cases, and an increase in the number of under-weight newborns.

Furthermore, reproductive health of women deteriorated, as illustrated by a key indicator such as the maternal mortality index. Over the last few years, this index has been fluctuating around 40 per 100,000 live-borns, and so far, does not show any signs of a decline trend.

Despite that the Republic of Armenia Demographic and Health Survey (ADHS) for 2000 claimed that 61% of the fertility-age women used contraceptives, reliable modern contraceptives were used only by 22%. As a consequence of this, abortion continues to be applied as a measure of fertility regulation.

The number of abortions has tended to fall over the last few years, due to the improvement of family planning services in the frameworks of the National Reproductive Health Program. In 1995, abortion numbers stood at 623 and 30.5 per 1,000 deliveries and 1,000 fertility-age women, respectively; 562 and 24.3 in 1997; and 305 and 8.4 in 2002.

Most of the maternal mortality cases have been caused by the deteriorating health conditions of women, as well as the lack of comprehensive prenatal surveillance, early detection of anomalies, and timely medical check-ups and appropriate pregnancy interruption for women in the risk group.

The demographic situation is alarming, too. Over the last decade, the birth rate has halved, and natural growth has declined 8-fold. Among the causes are not only migration and social difficulties, but also the ensuing changes in the reproductive behavior of women. The fertility ratio has fallen from 2.6 to 1.1. The decline in the birth rate has been furthered by infertility, which currently stands at 31.9%.

Any overview of the health sector would be incomplete, unless one considered the problem of children born with congenital defects.

In this respect, the ratio of congenital defects was around 18.7-18.0 (per 1,000 live-borns) during the period from 1998 to 2002.

Challenges

- High rates of mother and child morbidity and mortality.
- Deterioration of women's reproductive health and a decline in the natural growth of the birth rate.
- High share (60%) of the perinatal component in infant mortality, and its increase trend.
- An increase in the prevalence of sexually transmitted disease.
- Lack of HIV screening.
- An increase in oncological disease of female organs.
- Limited use of contemporary reliable contraceptives.
- An increase in the number of infants born with pathologies.

Strategy

- 4.1. Provision of free-of-charge medical care to women.
- 4.2. Maintaining the system of public delivery homes and improving the conditions and capacity thereof.
- 4.3. Increasing access to health care by means of broadening the scope of government-subsidized services.
- 4.4. Facilitating an improvement in the health and, especially, reproductive health of women (reducing morbidity by some 30%).
- 4.5. Facilitating a reduction of mother and child mortality (to 50% and 30% by 2015, respectively), reducing infertility, especially secondary infertility (by at least 30%), and reducing the number of pathological births.

Measures

- 4.1.1. To increase the volume of government-subsidized free-of-charge health care.
- 4.2.1. To undertake additional measures to protect motherhood and reproductive health in the frameworks of specific projects of the Government.

- 4.3.1. To organize mandatory regular examination of women in clinics and “traveling” ambulatories.
- 4.3.2. To ensure continuous oversight of the nutrition status of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children, and to carry out health food provision programs.
- 4.4.1. To develop and implement a project of targeted scientific research in obstetrics and reproductive health.
- 4.5.1. To introduce state-of-the-art technology, including genetic surveillance in the early phase of fetal development to detect anomalies.
- 4.5.2. To ensure HIV screening of pregnant women.
- 4.5.3. To enhance the professional knowledge and skills of health care personnel.
- 4.5.4. To raise the health awareness of the public by means of the mass media.

Section 5

Eliminating Violence against Women

Situation Analysis

Violence against women is not a new problem. It has always been a central point of concern for the international community. Women are weaker and more vulnerable in terms of their ability to protect themselves, and, therefore, often turn into victims of violent conflicts.

Violence is expressed in different forms: physical, moral-psychological, domestic, sexual, social-economic, social-cultural, and the like. There are different causes of violence.

At present, there are cases of sexual and physical violence against women and girls, and restrictions of their rights and freedoms by means of compulsion, which require some attention.

Surveys and studies conducted by the Republic of Armenia Police during the 2001-2003 period have illustrated that 52, 51, and 55 women, respectively, suffered apparent violence during those years.

Here are some statistics that deserve attention.

From 1998 to 2002, a number of crimes committed against juvenile girls were reported in the country, including: sexual violence against a person below 16 or a person who has not reached maturity—11 cases in 1998, 16 cases in each of 1999 and 2000, 22 cases in 2001, and 8 cases in 2002; establishment of an effectively marital relationship with a person who has not reached the marital age or a person who has not reached maturity—2 cases in 1998, 6 cases in 1999, 3 cases in 2000, 5 cases in 2001, and 8 cases in 2002.

Violence is frequently targeted against commercial sex workers. This phenomenon has recently become widespread due to the deterioration of the social-economic situation in the country, as well as the prevalence of rather liberal laws in relation to exploiters and organizers of commercial sex work. Another essential cause is the lack of an efficient system of moral and sexual education for adolescents and the youth.

Challenges

- Lack of statistics and social and scientific research.
- Imperfection of the legislative framework.
- Lack of an efficient system of moral and sexual education for adolescents and the youth.

Strategy

- 5.1. Ensuring research into the phenomenon of violence and generating concise information.
- 5.2. Developing effective arrangements to protect the rights and lawful interests of women and girls.
- 5.3. Facilitating the prevention of prostitution and sexual exploitation.
- 5.4. Developing arrangements and methods to address the consequences of violence in families of violence victims.

Measures

- 5.1.1. To carry out research aimed at detecting cases of violence in various areas of social life and analyzing their reasons.
- 5.2.1. To develop a set of indicators defining violence, which should be incorporated in statistical reports.
- 5.2.2. To harmonize the provisions of the national legislation with the requirements of the international treaties of the RoA.
- 5.2.3. To study successful experiences of other countries in addressing this issue.
- 5.3.1. To organize comprehensive education and training courses for social workers, health and education system experts, and law enforcement personnel dealing with women who are victims of violence.

5.3.2. To institutionalize professional services (hotlines) for reporting and preventing violence in appropriate urban and rural institutions of the country (hospitals, police units, and social service centers).

5.4.1. To study successful experiences of other countries in addressing this issue.

5.4.2. To create professional facilities to address the consequences of violence in relevant urban and rural institutions of the country with the aim to provide medical services, legal, social-psychological rehabilitation assistance to the victims of violence.

Section 6

Elimination of trafficking of women and girls

On June 5, 2002 US State Secretary published 2001 annual world report on human trafficking, where Armenia was placed within Tier 3, which was the most unfavorable one. According to that report, Armenia is considered to be the country of origin of girls and women.

The Republic of Armenia has already undertaken steps for rectifying the existing situation. On January 15, 2004 RA Government has adopted the Decision #58-N on National Plan of Action against Human Trafficking 2004-2006. The main activities of the plan are directed towards the elimination of trafficking of girls and women. The main direction of the program is:

- Legislation and its implementation
- Conduction of researches
- Prevention
- Protection and support

No actions are planned by this NPA. All actions for elimination trafficking of girls and women in the Republic will be carried out within the framework of the 2004-2006 NPA on Human Trafficking.

Section 7

Role of the Mass Media and Cultural Institutions in Reporting on Women's Issues and Building a Female Role Model

Situation Analysis

The mass media has a crucial role to play in shaping the conscience of the public. In recognition of this fact, the Beijing Conference has recommended some actions to the Member States.

The role of the mass media in shaping a role model image of women has also been emphasized by the Council of Europe Committee for the Equality of Rights of Women and Men.

Although women's issues are covered by the mass media, there is not sufficient reporting on the prevailing problems, the real difficulties faced by women, and the obstacles to women's fully-fledged participation in social life. Moreover, the contribution of women to social, political, and cultural life is not properly covered. The way in which the mass media present women's issues is, from time to time, colored by rejection and degradation.

It is necessary to mention the negative impact of aesthetically cheap TV content, movies, soap operas, and various shows, which are full of images offending the dignity of women, often preach violent and uncivilized ways of addressing conflicts within the family and society, and are conducive of moral devaluation and the emergence of socially unacceptable morals.

In various commercials, women are often presented as either commodities, or supplements to commodities, despite that arts and the mass media ought to shape positive ideals of women and men and overcome negative stereotypes. TV stations, in particular, have much to do in this respect; they should not neglect these concerns and should emphasize the peculiarities of and differences between women and men.

Challenges

- Insufficient and ineffective participation of the mass media in raising awareness on women's issues.
- Ineffective operation of the mass media and cultural institutions towards shaping noble role models of women and men. The preaching of stereotypes of women as commodities.
- Unhindered dissemination of information insulting the dignity of women.

Strategy

- 7.1. Ensuring effective coverage of women's issues, as well as public mass media reports and publications aimed at building positive images of women and men.
- 7.2. Supporting private mass media reporting on women's issues.
- 7.3. Supporting the development of positive ideals of women and men in the perception of society, and enhancing the reputation of women.
- 7.4. Ensuring oversight of the process of disseminating and advocating information that encroaches upon the dignity of women in the mass media, the Internet, and spiritual-cultural institutions.

Measures

- 7.1.1. To organize training courses to raise the gender awareness of journalists.
- 7.2.1. To order the production of TV shows and special pages in the print press, and to publish brochures on women's rights and gender issues.
- 7.2.2. To facilitate the entrenchment of sound partnership between the mass media, NGOs, and other stakeholders
- 7.3.1. To carry out monitoring of radio and TV content and publications in order to overcome the trend of presenting a socially undesirable and degrading image of women.
- 7.4.1. To ensure supervision of efforts of the mass media, the Internet, and spiritual-cultural institutions to preach and disseminate information that encroaches upon the dignity of women.
- 7.4.2. To develop legislative proposals on banning and supervising mass media content that preaches indecency and violence.

Section 7 Institutional Reforms

Situation Analysis

At present, women's issues are dealt with by the Department for Women's and Children's Issues created within the Republic of Armenia Social Security Ministry in 1997, as well as the Mother and Child Health Protection Division of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health. In 1997, the Prime Minister issued a decree on creating a Committee to carry out the 1998-2000 Gender Policy Development Program. This was a three-year program designed to improve the status of women, which was never implemented due to the lack of financing.

In 2000, the Women's Council was created under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, which is a voluntary consultative body. In 2002, a deputy minister was appointed in the Social Security Minister to coordinate activities aimed at addressing women's issues. However, all of these bodies tackle social, health-related, and employment concerns, and do not have sufficient resources and powers to either develop or carry out an effective policy to overcome women's issues and to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

Thus, it is necessary to either create a new institution or to give more powers to an existing one, to carry out persistent projects aimed at addressing women's issues, to coordinate and oversee activities of executive authorities in areas related to women's issues, to come up with recommendations on the legal regulation of women's issues, and to collaborate with legislative and judicial authorities and non-governmental organizations.

This type of an approach fits well with the international standards and complies with the international commitments undertaken by the Republic of Armenia.

Challenges

- Lack of a public agency with appropriate functions to deal with women's rights.

Strategy

- 8.1. Developing effective institutional arrangements to address women's issues.

Measures

- 8.1.1. To develop suggestions regarding the establishment of a public agency, which will coordinate and supervise activities of executive authorities in relation to women's issues.
- 8.1.2. To pursue a policy of developing social partnership between the Government, NGOs, and international organizations.