

Gender Inequality Intensified in Armenia



According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2014 published by the World Economic Forum, Armenia ranks 103th among 142 countries; compared to last year its score went down by 8 points and the country now is at the worst position in the region. Georgia is at the 85th position, Azerbaijan ranks 94th. The Gender Gap Index is calculated in four fundamental categories (sub-indices): *Economic Participation and Opportunity, Political Empowerment, Educational Attainment, and Health and Survival*. The index, in fact, reflects the disparities between men's and women's opportunities in each of these areas.

State Governance



At present 9 out of 152 Heads of States worldwide are women (5.9%). There were only three female presidents 20 years ago. Among the prime ministers of 193 countries 15 are women today (7.8%), while 20 years ago this number was twice lower. The parliament speaker's position is taken by 40 women (14.8%). In Armenia women have never served at any of these positions.

Globally, every 5th parliamentarian is a woman



In accordance with the most recent data of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the average representation of women in the parliaments of the world is 22.5%. Twenty years ago women accounted for only 11% of parliamentarians. The index of women representation in the OSCE country parliaments is 25.3%. Women's representation in the parliaments of the Arab world is 17.8%, with the lowest index observed in the Pacific countries – 13.4%. Representation of women in the National Assembly of Armenia is just 10.7%.

Woman & politics

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In the photo: Nvard Varyan, Gohar Araskhanyan, Varduhi Simonyan, Tatevik Margaryan

My choice

Police Academy girls

In recent years an interesting trend is observed in the RA Police Academy: the number of female cadets keeps growing year to year. Whereas in 2011 only 6 girls were enrolled in the Academy, this year their number outscored that of male cadets, with a ratio of 21:16. Perhaps it was the enrollment of young women in the famous police squad of "angels" that broke the stereotypes?

Colonel Tigran Yesayan, First Deputy Head of the Police Educational Complex, told in a conversation we had that girls have always displayed notable interest in the policing profession, but previously they accounted for only 10% of the students.

While talking to female cadets we found out that many of them dreamt about becoming a police officer since childhood.

"I was a 4th grade schoolgirl when I decided to become a police officer. Once I happened to be close to be overrun by a car. Thank goodness, I escaped, and on that very day I decided that I would become a traffic police officer - to help reduce the accidents", 22-year-old Varduhi Simonyan, a 4th year student of the Academy says. Prior to being admitted to the Academy she had specialized in pharmaceuticals. "I opted for my first education on the condition that later on I will apply for being enrolled in the Police Academy, so my family did not object to it".

"I've heard about cases of girls telling about their fathers, or even brothers, being against, but in our case there was nothing of the kind", says Gohar Araskhanyan, another cadet of the Academy. According to her, she always took decisions independently and the one to become a police officer is also hers. All the girls stated that their family members only encouraged them in the choice of the profession.

"I had a try to be enrolled, it didn't work, and then I got better prepared for the next year and succeeded. My father always inspired me", 22-year-old Tatevik Margaryan says. She is from Sevan, entered the Police Academy with her brother, however, she notes, her decision was not influenced by the choice of the profession by her brother.

As for 19-year-old Nvard Varyan, her own father who served in the police for many years served as a source of inspiration for her."

"I would really like to work towards strengthening the link between the police and society; I wish to see in the media coverage not only what defames the name of a police officer but also stories of the work of those dedicated individuals who unsparingly serve the society", says Nvard.

The girls say they had no difficulty in overcoming the physical fitness preparation norms, though studying in a group with disproportionate gender distribution was a challenge in the beginning. "There were ten times more boys in the class, it was a little difficult in the beginning, but our boys never allowed anything in their behavior that would make us feel uncomfortable, they always treated us respectfully", says Varduhi. Garegin Malkhasyan,

Deputy Head of the Police Educational Complex responsible for human resources and staff,

informed that upon completing their study, all the graduates of the Academy, regardless of their gender, will be provided with employment in various subdivisions of the police; their allocation is made based on their preference, specialization and place of residence.

"There is demand for our female graduates especially to serve as inspectors dealing with juveniles, however, their appointment to any other position is not excluded", colonel Yesayan says.

Gohar and Tatevik wish to work as investigators, Varduhi – as a traffic police officer, Nvard has not yet formed her final preference. However, all of them are confident that they will remain within this system in all cases. "I don't think that I will leave my work in any circumstance as becoming a police officer has been the goal of my life, and marriage, having children should not be an obstacle in my way", says Varduhi.

According to Susanna Naltakyan, Politico-Military Programme Officer in the OSCE Yerevan Office, starting from 2006 the OSCE Yerevan office closely has collaborated with the RA Police to the end of introducing democratic practices in the system. "Although the Office has not conducted a specific survey of the public opinion on female police officers, the public's wish to see more female police officers has been persistently articulated during all our events. This is especially so in case of community policing as they are directly dealing with the population, visiting households, and a woman's sensitivity and tact are exceptionally important here", she says.

They say it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in the armed conflicts of today. Apart from their will women are found in the frontline of numerous conflicts, suffering incongruently from the consequences of such conflicts. Quite often the number of casualties among the civilians, mainly – women and children – exceeds that of the killed and wounded military.



Hence, the following is recommended:

- Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making Levels;
- Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of Armaments;
- Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations;
- Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace;
- Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women;
- Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-selfgoverning territories.

Beijing+20: Women and Security

The Beijing Platform of Action emphasizes that rape in times of armed conflict is a punishable crime and, in certain circumstances – an act of genocide. This approach was reflected in the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and the successive six resolutions that laid the basis not only for protecting women in armed conflicts, but also for their active participation in peacemaking and preventive processes.

Decision making

Beijing+20

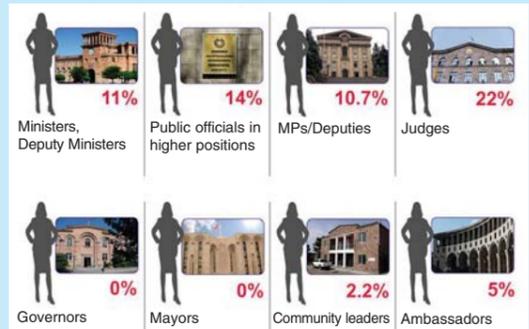
Democracy comes to an end when women are left out of decision-making processes. Women's participation in decision making is not just a matter of social justice and democratic value; it is a mandatory prerequisite of good governance. Underrepresentation of women in leading positions impedes their possible influence on the national policies and development processes.



The following is recommended:

- Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making;
- Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership..

Women in the Armenian authorities



Infographics by WomenNet.am

1096 ministerial portfolios



In 189 countries of the world a total of 1096 women serve as ministers in the government cabinets. Within 30 areas led by women the position of the social security minister prevails, with 105 females accounting for it. Top ten ministerial positions are those dealing with family issues, ecology and natural resources, women and gender issues, education, trade, labour, culture, healthcare and foreign affairs. There are only three countries worldwide where women

account for more than 50-60% in the cabinets of ministers – Nicaragua, Sweden and Finland. In the governments of 30 countries, women account for 30-50% of ministers. There are no women in the cabinets of 8 countries. Only two out of 18 ministers in the Armenian government are women.

Nine females among 28 European Commissioners



The proportion of women MEPs in the newly elected European Parliament is 37%. Since November 1 the newly formed European Commission has started functioning, headed by Jean-Claude Juncker, EC President. It consists of 28 Commissioners, 9 of whom are women (i.e. about one third). The same number of women was present in the previous structure of the EC headed by Jose Manuel Barroso, although Juncker had promised to ensure 40% ratio of women in the European Commission. In this new structure three women are Vice Presidents, the other six are responsible for quite significant portfolios.

Expert opinion

Inclusion of young females in military institutions is part of the armed forces reforms

A series of most serious changes is underway in the Armenian Army. In a few years we will see among the armed forces officers also “representatives of the subtler sex”, as Seyran Ohanyan, Minister of Defense, put it.

The Vazgen Sargsyan Military Institute of Armenia and the RA MoD Marshal A. Khanperyants Military Aviation Institute are ready to welcome those girls who would wish to obtain military education and serve in the Armenian Army. At this point there is at least one thing the ministry officials are confident about – female cadets will surely contribute to better discipline and vigilance.

According to Seyran Ohanyan, Minister of Defense, resulting from the reform processes initiated in the army high quality education is enhanced: education and upbringing have a most important role in terms of ensuring a higher level of military service and avoiding negative manifestations of interpersonal relations. The list of reforms also includes participation of female officers in building army forces. The minister states that the female officers' service is not a new thing for the Armenian Army. There are numerous female military in the administrative bodies. Ohanyan also recalls women's participation and heroic activities during the war. Many of them still serve in the Armenian Army and set an example for the young.

Hrachya Petrosyants, a military expert, considers that admission of female students in military schools should be analysed sufficiently as there have been no such precedents. According to him, in spite of the fact that the girls will have the right of freely exiting the school premises to spend the night in their homes, there are issues that remain unsettled so far. “On the one hand, the presence of female cadets will certainly

have a sobering effect, enhancing vigilance both for the students and command staff and faculty. On the other hand, though, this very staff lacks experience in working with female students, which will lead to complications in the first stage”, says the military expert.

He also says that we are trying to persuade ourselves that allegedly women and army in Armenia are incompatible, while this is not true. “It's just a matter of mentality; we don't try to perceive this reality. It is quite useful to recall how the public responded some time ago to the announcement of the Police Academy connected with possible admission of females. Now it is already a commonly acceptable fact: it is not perceived as surprising or unusual any more”, he says.

Writer and journalist Ara Aloyan, father of a 5-year-old beautiful girl, is confident that women's inclusion in the military can psychologically lead to establishing a specific balance and harmony therein. However, he thinks, this should be given a thorough consideration and be adequately prepared. In his opinion, the girls' guidance should start since middle school age, and then, later on, advancement should be ensured through preliminary military preparedness courses. In the Armenian reality the idea of introducing young females' recruitment



and military service emerges now and then, and gets shattered each time it does, encountering statements about its being incompatible with the national mindset, patriarchal and customary attitudes. There exists also the following counterargument: army life is not something attractive not only for females but males as well”, he says.

In another expert Tigran Abrahamyan's opinion, the fact that currently Vazgen Sargsyan Military Institute has organized admission in a number of specialties means that women's enrollment can be most useful for the army and in near future the number of females in the armed forces will grow, specifically – in the status of career officers.

« In today's Armenia girls account for 0.3 percent of the students seeking for higher military education. »

Women at War

Why did women go to war?

Patriotism-driven

“If our youngsters go to war, how could we just sit in our homes?! At those times we were not saying we were up for becoming heroes”.

“We took up arms to defend our land, so our kids and parents could live in safety”:

Situation-driven

“I thought that I would go and make food for our boys« to help them. When I saw that all of my friends were taking up arms, I said – no problem, I am in, too, to fight the enemy”.

“Turks invaded our village, everyone tried to defend themselves in any way possible. We were forced to fight – willingly or unwillingly”.

Because of the relatives

“Why, my son was 17 and he went to participate in the war« where else should I go if not to the battlefield?”

“Frankly speaking, I don't know the reason; that strength is still within me, I thought of only one thing – God forbid something happening to my husband, if they did something to him, I would strangle anyone with my own hands. That was it, I guess, and it made me follow him. I wasn't a hero... no, now that I look back« it was so frightening, but I had to be by his side, that's why I followed him”.

“Women in the Military” research, conducted by the YSU Center for Gender and Leadership Studies



About 600 women fought in Artsakh war. The image of Mummy Soseh symbolizes the Armenian woman's selfless patriotism and courage in the battlefield. Women played a significant role also in the Soviet Army where about 1 million females served, including 10,000 Armenian women.

At present about 2,000 women serve in the RA armed forces – administrative staff members, snipers, and heads of various subdivisions.

Army appeal

“Break the stereotypes, join our ranks!”

Recently a public service advertisement was produced by the RA armed forces aimed at overcoming those stereotypes that are based on “no woman can serve in the military” kind of statements.

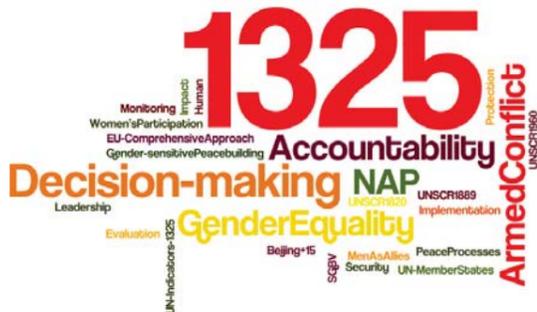
“Women do not like to hurry”, “women have fear of heights”, “a female is weak and helpless”, “a female would not take decisions”. These are the stereotypes to be reconsidered - to make women's service in the military possible, should they wish to serve.



Seven resolutions on security

Women can make the world more peaceful

Since 2000 the UN Security Council adopted seven resolutions pertaining to various aspects of women's participation in peacemaking and security issues.



The first of these was the UN Security Council's Resolution No. 1325 adopted in 2000, aimed at mitigation of the armed conflict negative impact on women and enhancing the role of women in prevention and regulation of conflicts, and in peace support processes.

Resolution 1820 (2008) made it clear that sexual violence in the times of conflict should be qualified as war crime.

In the next one, Resolution 1888 (2009), the UN SC specifically mandates its peacemaking missions to ensure protection of women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict.

The next one, Resolution 1889 (2009), contained a call for further strengthening of women's participation in political processes, this being a necessary condition for implementing Resolution 1325. In fact, this was about changing the rules of

Time to act

During any armed conflict and warfare operation sexual violence-related crimes are committed; many women, underage boys and girls are subjected to rape. Armenians went through such tragic experience especially in the beginning of the 20th century when thousands of Armenian girls became victims of sexual servitude and rape.

Today sexual violence is still part of all armed conflicts, being a means of committing genocide. Rape of women and young girls was reported also during the Sumgait massacre and other conflicts. During the massacre that took place in Rwanda in 1994, 800 thousand people (20% of the population) were killed in a 100-day period, and the number of raped women, according to the UN data, totaled to 250 thousand. During the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) 60 thousand women were raped, in Liberia (1989-2003) - 40 thousand, in former Yugoslavia (1992-1995) - 60 thousand, in Congo the number of women raped since 1998 exceeds 200 thousand.

A *Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict* was held in June of this year in London, co-hosted by William Hague, former Foreign Secretary of UK, and actress Angelina Jolie who is a Special Envoy for the UNHCR. It should be noted that in 2012 Angelina Jolie's first directorial motion picture about rapes during civil war in the Balkans, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, was released, depicting a story of thousands rapes that occurred in Bosnia.

Foreign Secretary Hague referred to this fact in his address, saying that twenty years ago almost 50 thousand Bosnian women

struggling for power.

In 2010 Resolution 1960 was adopted - to further develop and enhance the theme of combating sexual violence within the context of women's issues, peace and security.

Last year two more Resolutions were adopted. One was Resolution 2106 aimed at strengthening efforts to end impunity for conflict-related sexual violence; herein the need for increasing women's political, social and economic rights and opportunities is emphasized. The second one, Resolution 2122, enhances the responsibility for the implementation of the landmark Resolution 1325, as well as the importance of women's participation in the efforts geared towards ensuring peace, security and development.

Within the framework of the *UNSCR 1325 week in New York* that started on October 28, the main focus was on the UN Security Council's Open Debate on "Women, Peace & Security", marking the anniversary of Resolution 1325. In his address to the participants of the session, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, urged the international community to view women as active agents and drivers of change in peace and development processes rather than mere victims of confrontations.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka announced about the intention of the UN Secretary-General to prepare a global research paper related to realization of Resolution 1325. It will be dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the Resolution adopted on October 31, 2000.



were raped, however none of them was able to achieve perpetrator's punishment. "Sexual violence still continues to remain a taboo, we must combat this taboo as well", the Summit co-host announced.

Nine hundred experts, representatives of public organizations, individuals subjected to sexual violence in conflict and leaders of religious associations from approximately 100 countries had arrived in the capital city of Great Britain to participate in the Summit. They decided to join their efforts through the specific programme and actions that will put an end to the use of rape as a weapon of war.

Protection and prevention

OSCE acknowledges progress

OSCE, after adoption of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, has had considerable success in terms of women's representation in the leading positions of its own structures. Thus, starting from 2004 to date the number of females in the leading positions of the OSCE offices has increased from 14 to 34%. As for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, this year's elections resulted in more than half of the leading positions filled by women. In the three General Committees of the Assembly seven out of nine leading positions are filled by women, with all the three OSCE PA Committees headed by women.



Female Defense Ministers



This photo caused an Internet sensation early this year. It shows Defense Ministers of five European states – Albania, the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Italy – at a security conference in Munich. What caused specific admiration and astonishment was the fact of all five being women. However, only few people knew that one of them - Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen, Minister of Defense of Germany - is a mother of seven children. These ladies were appointed to their positions not so long ago and, judging by the media publications, are criticized no less than males and not always correspond to the image of a "peaceful dove". By the way, there are only 15 women found in the position of a defense minister.

Women among the UN Blue Helmets

In October 2014 the UN Peacekeeping forces comprised more than 104 thousand Blue Helmets, including 92,000 military servicemen, 12,000 police officers and about 1,700 military observers. Women account for 3% of the military, 10% of the police and 4% of the military observers. The UN Police Division has developed a special strategy towards ensuring 20% ratio of female police officers within the structure.



Recently Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, appointed the native of Norway major general Kristin Lund the commander of United Nations Armed forces on peacekeeping in Cyprus. Lund is the first woman to fill this position.

"Without women's security, you cannot build any security"

Women's participation in conflict regulation is exceptionally important for achieving sustainable and durable peace.

- Women took part only in 5.9% of peace negotiations that started within the period of 1992-2009.
- Only 2.4% of peace agreements were signed by women.
- Only in 16% of 585 peace agreements signed within the period of 1992-2009 women are mentioned.

Yesterday and today

"The *Young Turks* leadership, immediately after the break of war, carried out a systematic extermination of non-Muslim nations of the country. Young women, girls and children were forcefully taken away. Many of these women committed suicide at the first possibility. Many parents would throw their young daughters into the waters of the Euphrates River. Many young women with newborn babies in their hands also would jump into the chasm". "So many of them lost sanity. Some of them managed to escape after being raped, but mainly died when trying to get away".

From a famous writer Zabel Yesayan's report recently discovered in the Nubarian Library of Paris

"Rape occurs every day and everywhere. Kurdish and Yezidi girls, unable to cope with the psychological stress committed mass suicides. A story was told about 3 girls taken hostage by terrorists and raped by them. Getting back to the camp on Sinjar mountain where Yezidi refugees were hiding, they were unable to bear the burden of infamy. The mother of one of the victims told that the girls had asked members of their community to kill them but no one agreed, so the girls ended their lives on their own will by jumping down the gorge".

According to the Kurdish Rudaw news agency



Armenian Genocide, 1915



Kurdish Genocide, 2014

A question

Finally, it is time to ask ourselves: "What contributes more to security, \$3 billion invested in women or the \$900 billion squandered on weapons?"

Nafis Sadik,
Special Adviser to the UN
Secretary General
2005, Beijing+10

Peacemaking

Artsakh: war as seen by women

Two decades have passed since Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Liberation War; however, the consequences of the war are still there, having turned into day-to-day struggle for many people facing daily life hardships, health issues, loss of their family members.



The Armenian women on the crossroad of confrontation and peace conference that was held in September by the initiative of the Women's Resource Center NGO and its Shushi-based branch office brought to Nagorno-Karabakh many representatives of public organizations, state agencies, activists, as well as those women who survived the war through overcoming all the hardships related to it. We talked to the participants of the gathering.

"This is the first time that we have such an event on this topic in Shushi! It's so important since Shishi has symbolic significance for every Armenian that survived the Artsakh war. Here the consequences of the conflict are felt so profoundly... We hosted women who participated or eye-witnessed this war", says Lara Aharonyan, President of the Women's Resource Center, adding that having women's voice heard is crucial.

Our interlocutor Mrs. Anahit from Shushi is a poetess, an author of two books; she admits, though, that it is only in the recent years that she has been able to resume her preferred mode of life, writing. She tells that a few days after the liberation of Shushi she moved to live there with her three children.

"It was really difficult, because it was just the end of May and people were worried: we were not sure whether this was the end of war or the enemy would attack again, here and there we could see houses set in fire. There was no water, no electricity, we were kind of disheartened. Walking from the administrative building to your house you would see no one on the way. Bread was brought in sacks from Stepanakert, at night we were queuing with my three children for getting two loafs for each, to be able to stay home the following day.

Mrs. Anahit's native village is Nakhijevanik in Askeran region. The Azeris did not miss this village, either; many people perished there.

"My brother was the commander of the village. At that time six of our family members were in the battlefield – my brother, three sons of my uncle, and two sons of the other uncle. When they came home at night to change their clothes, we quickly washed the clothes and dried them in the tonir (tandoor) so we could make them ready for the morning; I remember hanging them on a rope that was stretching from one end of the house till the other.

Nune Davvidyan is a young activist representing the Shushi Resource Center.

"I don't remember much from the war time. I was just 5 at the time.

However, I remember quite well a day when we were at home, there were sacks with wheat laid side by side, then the Grad [missile] hit and everything turned into a mess. I lost my father in this war, I remember almost nothing about him, it's only through his photos and stories about him that I know him. My mother, like very many Artsakhian women, took up all the burden of the family on her shoulders, she never thought of marrying again. I'd be jealous at that time, but now I think differently. Mother is a living legend for me.

Mrs. Azita is from Iran. During the Iranian-Iraqi conflict she worked as a nurse for eight years.

"I think, a woman becomes even stronger at the time of war: 80% of the hospital staff were women – doctors, nurses, medical orderlies. All of us worked as one body; there was no man-woman difference there. You did whatever you were able to do. People were brought with such terrible injuries that no gender issue existed – you just thought about saving the person.

During the war years Manush Sargsyan, the leading obstetrician-gynecologist of Shushi's Mother and Child Healthcare Center, was also in the battlefield, serving as a nurse.

"I served in the battlefield in the time of war; during those years I also took care of women delivering babies. There was no gas supply, no electricity, no water, even no clothes were available, but even in such conditions women gave birth to their children. Yes, it was too far from hygienic requirements – we would wash our hands with water from bottles, the sterilization of the instruments was carried out on the wood furnaces, but, perhaps, our God was with us at the time and no outbreaks of infection occurred".

Mrs Manush also tells about those postwar hardships that are faced by women:

"Within the recent years we have seen an increase in the fetal development defects, and in the number of infertility cases; this is directly connected with the war consequences since today's mothers are the generation that grew up in humid basements, facing malnutrition. We also have an issue related to the widows of freedom-fighters that perished in the war; these women avoid even consulting a doctor, especially a gynecologist, fearing that people in their environment would say: she is a widow, having lost her husband, and now she consults a gynecologist. This is a problem as these same women often have serious health issues, breast pathology, etc., which could be avoided in case of timely consultation with a doctor.

The refugee issues were referred to by Ruzanna Avagyan, who is a representative of an organization dealing with refugee issues in NKR.

"Our women have survived two wars, the first one in Sumgait and Baku where atrocities took place, and the second – already here, in 1991, with these wounds still affecting our women. There are about 1,000 families in NKR that have no homes, live in the absence of hygienic conditions, give birth to children in such conditions, and these children grow up in the same conditions", Mrs Ruzanna says.

"It's true, the war is suspended now, but the consequences are still there, quite visibly", Inga Avanesyan, a representative of the NKR International Committee of the Red Cross says, emphasizing also the issue of missing persons' families.

"No information is available about a person being alive, and also – nothing about his death. Such women have but hope and try not to become desperate, and they go on like this – not giving up the hope. A woman whose husband is considered to be missing, faces lots of problems. What could she do – perhaps, get married, create a new family or not? This situation makes many women isolate themselves from the others and even avoid leaving their houses.

Border guards



Chinari village is in Tavush Marz, on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is regularly shelled from Azerbaijani positions. Chinari's kindergarten is also under the threat of enemy fire. The traces of bullets can be seen in the building. The little ones, when asked, say they're not afraid of the shooting. On the mountain across the kindergarten the enemy's vantage point is located, and also - the Armenian monastery. Children are sure the monastery will defend them from the enemy. Little Masis says that they go into a pit when the shooting is heavy. "We are not afraid but Ms Aghasyan tells us to quickly run into the 'dark room'", Masis says and shows where the room is. When there is no shooting, children like to play, and more than anything they like to stand in a row and sing their favorite song, *Fly up, eagle*.

Beijing+20: Everyone is Responsible

Every Woman, Every Right, Every Minute

"Everyone is Responsible: and the Time is Now" – this was the theme of the NGO Forum held on November 3-5 in Geneva, which adopted a declaration summarizing the implementation results of the Beijing Platform of Action in 56 countries of the UNECE region, including Armenia. The Forum also developed recommendations in 10 problematic areas. These were submitted to the intergovernmental meeting dedicated to the discussions of Beijing+20 held on November 6-7 in Geneva.

Following the Beijing Summit, non-governmental organizations have been actively involved in all post-Beijing processes, and their viewpoints are mandatorily considered in the course of such gatherings on the governmental level. The Geneva Regional Review meeting was not an exception to this rule: the discussions were held almost concurrently. Seven hundred delegates from 56 countries participated in the NGO Forum, representing 350 NGO, coalitions and networks. Five hundred delegates took part in the discussions of the Member States' government representatives, which started immediately after the close of the NGO Forum.

It is expected that such an assessment of the results will be



made by each of the five UN regional commissions, and thereafter, in March 2015, the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will summarize the global results of "Beijing+20" and outline the next steps to be taken.

The voice of the young

"In Azerbaijan there are also people who, like us, wish to settle the issue exceptionally in a peaceful way"

In Karabakh conflict regulation only males are involved from both sides – Azerbaijan and Armenia. The two countries' women are interacting on lower levels, within the framework of various meetings and educational programmes organized by non-governmental organizations. Armenian young women that had personal contacts with their Azerbaijani peers share their viewpoints on the effectiveness of such meetings and the issue of ensuring women's involvement in conflict regulation processes.



Ani Hovhannisyan: "Armenian-Azerbaijani meetings are important just cognitively, but the conflict resolution should be tackled on the political level. Women should be made part of political processes, as suggesting peace models is not the sole privilege of males only. When both societies reach such a level of development as to ensure equal participation of women and men in political processes, perhaps there will be a chance for a dialogue at that time".

Gayane Avagyan: "We should take into account the fact that women as the ones responsible for peace in their families, acting as preventers of violence and manifestations of force, in contrast to men, they are always for a peaceful settlement of any issue. The problem is, though, in the following: what is the atmosphere in which their children are growing, can they educate them without sowing seeds of hatred towards their neighbour?"

Lilit Nurijanyan: "I studied in Georgia for a year, and had fellow students from Azerbaijan there with whom, I'd say, I was on better terms than with Georgians. I still am in contact with them now. For Armenians Azerbaijan may be perceived as a country of monsters and stupid persons with a moustache. An Azerbaijani for me is also my fellow student Perish whom I recall with a smile and gladly. However, when my soldier is shot at the border, the Azerbaijanians turn into those who fire at my neighbour, my brother, my friend, my beloved, and then Perish, my fellow student, cannot in any way reduce my anger and the desire to fight them back".

Marine Sargsyan: I met Azerbaijanians for the first time as a student, during a seminar organized for future journalists. I remember that only in this first meeting there was considerable tension and desire to see what does the enemy look like. Afterwards I found out that this enemy is a youngster just like my neighbor and me, who is trying to achieve change in their country, like we do. The importance of such meetings is, perhaps, only in getting to know people and seeing that they are young people like us, and that's it. Of course, we do have discussions on the issues of mutual concern, but I don't recall a case when these would have led to agreement. We would mention the atrocities in Baku, Sumgait, they would speak about Khojaly, and then they would say: our land, we would respond: it's not your land... that would be the end... Then we would part and go to sleep, stressed out and disappointed..."

Mary Mamyan: I once took part in a bilateral meeting; it was quite interesting since within the Azerbaijani delegation there were three quite different attitudes even with regard to getting into contact with us. Such meetings help to be rid of some stereotypes: you realize that in Azerbaijan, too, there are people with whom you could socialize regardless of the existing circumstances. There are people in Azerbaijan, too, who wish to see the issue regulated exceptionally in a peaceful way, just as we do. However, such meetings affect only certain people within smaller layers of the society, whereas global changes are considered on quite a different level".

The issue prepared by:

Lilit Kochinyan, Lala Ter-Ghazaryan,
Hasmik Harutyunyan, Arman Gharibyan,
Mariam Martikyan, Liana Sargsyan

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Editor: Tamara Hovnatanyan
E-mail address: womennetam@gmail.com