

Factsheet

Women candidates of the Elders' Council constituted only 5%



The elections of the local self-governing bodies (LSGB) held on November 5 of this year showed passive women participation, which perhaps can be explained by the reform of consolidation of communities. Thus, in 54 communities, including 34 enlarged ones, 983 candidates were nominated of which 49 or 5% were women. They were running the elections to become a member of Elders' Council only in 24 communities of which 20 were consolidated. As a result of elections almost half, i.e 24 of 49 women candidates were elected constituting 4,4% of the newly elected 544 members of Elders' Councils. This is a serious decline given the fact that in 2016 women presentation in the Elders' Council constituted 11,8%.

In Lori, 11 women candidates out of 22 were successful and celebrated victory



22 women candidates of 49 participated in the elections of the local self-governing bodies of November 5 were nominated in the Lori marz (province) communities. 11 of the candidates celebrated victory and became members of the Elders' Councils of 6 consolidated communities. The Elders' Councils of the remaining four consolidated communities are merely comprised of men.

"Women's Agenda" Discussions in the Parliament



As it is known the "OxYGen" Foundation, heading towards parliamentary elections, presented the Women Agenda aiming to focus the attention of political parties elected to the Parliament on the main issues faced in ensuring equality of women and men in public policies and legislative acts.

Within the same context, the Standing Committee on Health Care and Social Affairs of the National Assembly convened a round table discussion with the participation of women members of Parliament on the issue of "Women's Agenda". The aim of the discussion was the creation of platform for cooperation with elected Parliament members expecting that the political forces represented in the Parliament will raise the issues of "Women's Agenda" from the parliamentary rostrum and will contribute to their solutions. During the round table discussion, the participants addressed the necessity of expanding political and economic participation of women and the mechanisms promoting it.

Woman & politics

Women constitute 28% of the Yerevan Elders' Council



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"Yeghegnadzor Women Resource Center" activists Karine Movsisyan and Meline Sargsyan together with Narine Grigoryan, a member of the Elders' Council presented toys to the town kindergartens made by the gifted schoolchildren. This beautiful New Year initiative is only one of the examples of partner relationship between the Elder's Council and civil society...

Now are 502 communities in Armenia of which only 7 are headed by women

This year, due to the local elections, 325 communities were consolidated and united in 34 groups. According to the data of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, after community consolidation reform took place, in total 502 communities continue to function in Armenia of which only 7 are headed by women constituting 1,4%.

Among the women leading these communities are Ljudmila Petrova - the mayor of Verin Dvin community of Ararat marz, Susanna Gevorgyan - the mayor of Arevshat community and Anahit Davtyan - the mayor of Artamet community of Armavir marz, Karine Martirosyan - the mayor of Geghakar community of Gegharkunik marz, Srbihi Harutjunyan - the mayor of Bazum community of Lori marz, Alina Harutjunya - the mayor of Nor Yeznka community of Kotayk marz, Jemma Harutjunyan - the mayor of Amasia community of Shirak marz who is currently the only women leading the consolidated community. The two of women community leaders - Susanna Gevorgyan and Alina

Harutjunyan have more than 20 years of leadership experience in their communities.

In four marzes of Armenia -Aragatsotn, Tavush, Vayots Dzor and Syunik there are no women community mayors at all. None of the cities of the country has women mayors. It should be noted that according to the data of 2016 17 communities out of 793 communities of Armenia were headed by women that constituted 2,02%. Such a regress was recorded due to the fact that women were forced out of the hot electoral battle in the consolidated communities or were not nominated since just from the beginning they stood little chance for success.



Local elections -2017



The two of just three woman candidates nominated for the community leader post lost the vote

In the majority of communities during the LSGB elections held in November 2017, the acting community heads were nominated. Out of 104 registered candidates, only 3 were women. They were fighting in Odzun consolidated community of Lori marz, Geghakar community and consolidated Geghamasar community of Gegharkunik marz. The two of women community mayor candidates out of three lost the election battle. Only one candidate - Karine Martirosyan

was successful and then only in non-consolidated community. 67 electors voted in her favor whereas his opponent nonparty Rafik Safaryan received 19 votes. Karine Martirosyan has been leading the community since 2012.

Two candidates representing Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) were battling to lead the enlarged Geghamasar community of Gegharkunik marz. The party nominated and supported Zoya Gevorgyan who had been leading

Shatjrek community since 1996. 1392 residents voted in her favor. Her opponent, self-nominated Hakob Avetyan received 2078 votes.

In Odzun community of Lori marz 64 electors voted in favor of self-nominated nonparty candidate Donara Hakhinyan. Here Arsen Titanyan, the sitting mayor of community nominated by the RPA won the battle by receiving 1885 votes. Barsegh Aivazyan, the third candidate received 1852 votes.

Questions and Answers

"What qualities should the community leader have?"

Jemma Harutyunyan, the mayor of Amasia consolidated community, was elected in 2016. She is an ARP member, married and has one child.



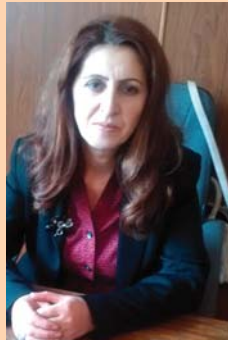
- In order to lead the community one should have a strong sense of responsibility, be hard-working, enter into the dialogue both with the employers and households, listen to their requests and wishes and be ready to provide solutions. In this case being a woman is an advantage as women are more patient, do not demonstrate casual attitude to the problematic issues and go deep even into the details. Consequently, having a woman leader is an advantage and derives from the community interests. I do hope that in the future, the consolidated communities will also have women leaders and I will not be the only one.



Ljudmila Petrova, the mayor of Verin Dvin community of Ararat marz has taken over the office since 2004. Last time she was re-elected in 2014. She is a nonparty leader, married and has three children.

- The community leader should be honest and never promise something he/she cannot fulfill. What is more important, the people should know that when you say "no" it means that it is surely impossible to do and you do not just kill time or cheat. It is therefore I enjoy the trust of people.

Karine Martirosyan, the mayor of Geghakar community of Gegharkunik marz has taken over the office since 2012. Last time she was elected this year. She is an ARP member, married and has two sons.



- As the community leader works with the people, the most important thing is, as the saying goes, to find a common way to deal with everybody. The community leader should know the advantages and disadvantages of the home folk and build approaches on this basis. What is more important, the leader should be honest with the people.



The mayor of Bazum community of Lori marz Srбуhi Harutyunyan has been holding this position since 2008. Last time she got elected this year. She is an ARP member, married and has one daughter.

- It is important to understand the psychology of Armenian people. The community mayor should be able to take the problems of the home folk as his/her own and rejoice at their success. If the leader does not experience dialogue with the people, he/she cannot be in the office for a long time and work with the home folk.

Consolidated communities

The trend of significant decrease in number of women in the Elders' Council still exists

In general, due to the reform of consolidation of communities the women percentage ratio in the Elders' Council has reduced more than two times and in some marzes - up to 3-6 times. This conclusion was reached based on the results of LSGB election analyses in 34 enlarged or consolidated communities held on November 5.

- Before consolidation, 325 communities included in 34 groups had 2059 Elders' Council members of which 250 or 12% were women.
- During elections, among the 769 nominated candidates 41 or 5,3 % were women, whilst they have been nominated only in 20 communities.
- After consolidation, 34 groups have 416 Council members of which 23 or 5,55% are women.

In Gegharkunik marz 35 communities were united in 4 groups - namely, Geghamasar, Chambarak, Shoghakat, Vardenis. Before consolidation, the total number of the Elders' Council was 200 of which 28 or 14% were women. Four enlarged groups have in total 46 members of which three or 6,5% are women.

In Lori, 61 communities were involved in 10 groups - Alaverdi, Akhtala, Stepanavan, Tashir, Odzun, Gyulakarak, Shnogh, Lori Berd, Sarchapet, Metsavan. Before consolidation, the total number of the Elders' Council was 365 of which 76 or 20% were women. The consolidated ten communities have in total 120 Council members of which 13 or 13,2 % are women. Currently the consolidated Berd has 15 members of the Elders' Council of which only 1 or 6,6% is a woman.

In Syunik marz, 48 communities are united in three groups - Kapan, Qajaran and Sisian. Before consolidation, the Councils of these communities had 264 members of which 54 or 20,4% were women. Now the enlarged three communities have 41 members of the Elders' Council of which 4 or 9,7% are women.

In Aragatsotn marz, 46 communities are united in four groups - Aparan, Alagyaz, Aragatsavan, Tsagkahovit. Before consolidation, the Councils of these communities had 261 members of which 17 or 6,5% were women. After consolidation, the number of the Elders' Council members is 46 where no woman is represented.

In Shirak marz, 40 communities are united in three groups - Marmashen, Ani, Akhuryan. Before consolidation, 40 communities had in total 230 Elders' Council members of which 16 or 6,9% were women. After consolidation, the three communities have 41 Council members where women are not represented.

Twenty-four (24) communities of Vayots Dzor are united in three groups - Gladzor, Areni and Yeghegis. Before consolidation, the total number of the Council members of these communities were 138 of which 17 or 12,3 % were women. Presently, the enlarged three communities have 33 Elders' Council members of which only one is a woman (just 3% representation).

In Kotayk marz, 31 communities are united in six groups - Byureghavan, Charentsavan, Yeghvard, Akunk, Meghradzor and



Armenia. Before consolidation, the 31 communities had 503 Council member of which 45 or 8,9% were women. After consolidation, the Councils have 74 members of which 2 or 2,7% are women.

It should be noted that last year due to the elections in the consolidated communities in 6 marzes - Syunik, Tavush, Shirak, Ararat, Lori and Vayots Dzor, 125 communities in total were united in 17 groups. In all the consolidated community Councils, the representation of women was reduced at least for 2-3 times. The election results of this year show that this tendency is maintained.

According to the data of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development the consolidation process shall be continued. The non-enlarged communities of 8 marzes (except Syunik and Vay-

ots Dzor) will be consolidated. The composition of the groups is in discussion phase and there is no yet a development plan. Pursuant to the RA Government Program, the consolidation process shall be completed in 2019. As a result, the number of consolidated communities will be circa 120-140 as informed by the Ministry.

To our question about the actions directed at the increase of women's representation in the enlarged communities, the Ministry answered that appropriate explanatory and organizational activities were underway.

The Ministry claims that: "Radical changes in this direction shall be expected while passing into the proportional election system of the Elders' Council, which is planned after the completion of consolidation process".

Women's viewpoint

"The consolidation reform made the election battle more difficult for women" ...

For years, concrete and consistent policy efforts by the Government and civil society were undertaken in Armenia to increase the number of women in the LSGB. However, based on some specific examples of consolidation, it can be persisted now that a serious decline is recorded in terms of women's representation in LSGB.

Aghunik Hazryan, successfully leading Aregnadem community for many years lost in the hot electoral battle. She is not in general against the consolidation process, though she thinks that there are issues that need to be adjusted and changed. One of the important issues is that in this process, women are the weakest point and their number in the LSGB are decreasing.

She notes; "In consolidated communities, the battle becomes more complicated for women. Before it was also difficult to win the elections, but now women face more hardships because if people in the community know the woman, her work, she is visible to everybody, and is able to run her campaign. The situation now gets tough and chances of women for presenting themselves in other communities is significantly reduced".

According to the former community leader, the consolidation is timely and she was quickly convinced that this was effective for community development, whereas in terms of women this is perhaps the worst scenario.

Based on this she noted that the worst negative impact of this process was the decrease in number of women and it was difficult to imagine how this issue could be

adjusted given the doubled efforts of men in election battle in consolidated communities. According to her, one of the serious obstacles for women can be the prospect of overtime work especially in case of consolidated communities when women will be obliged to travel long distances.....

"In any case, a lot depends on women and especially those women who have been nominated in the past, who run the community or feel that they have appropriate capabilities. These women should fight for taking leading positions in consolidated communities. There is a widespread stereotype among us that women cannot compete with men neither financially nor with resources but this is not a reason to throw up the game", said Mrs. Hazryan.

She also highlighted the participation of women as authorized representatives of the communities. To her belief, authorities should not ignore this issue.

The overall idea of community consolidation reform aims at increasing the livelihoods of communities, kicking off new projects, and generating effective solutions to small community problems. Nevertheless, the evident reduction of women's participation in the Elders' Councils may question positive expectations from the consolidation reform itself. It is necessary to develop new mechanisms providing a possibility to attract the potential of active women to solve the problems of their own communities.

"We do not even hope that we will have a woman leader"

Before consolidation, the current administrative representative of Karahunch community Lusine Avetyan had been holding the position of community mayor for 14 years.

According to Lusine, many people think that today's administrative leader of the community is the same like the community mayor, but it is not. The administrative leader has neither independence nor is a budget holder.

Avetyan stated; "The scope of powers is not adequate". According to her the consolidation process triggered a situation where the communities pass entirely to the hands of men and what is more there is no hope that the enlarged community will have a woman leader".

"It is to be regretted that the involvement of women in the LSGB system is gradually decreasing. I did not use the right word, it is not decreasing, it almost equals to zero. An obvious example of that phenomenon is the Tatev consolidated community where I am the only administrative leader and there is no another woman member in the Elders' Council", said Mrs Avetyan. She added that, overall, the consolidation reform was not a bad idea since then community problems seemed to be solved faster. However, the government should pay special attention to the fact that along with positive developments

women were much affected, their representation in LSGB is gradually decreasing thus undermining the endeavors of last years aimed at the increase of women's presence in the LSGBs.

The voice of small communities



The picture shows the discussion on "Enhancing women's participation in the LSGB as a precondition for social and economic development of communities" within the frame of "EQUAL" campaign.

"There are both risks and hopes with regard to community consolidation"

Gomk community of Vayots Dzor marz, like other communities united in Zaritap group, has water, road reconstruction and housing problems.

The absence of kindergarten is the main concern raised by **Nune Avagyan**, the director of "Vankadzor" agricultural cooperative and former member of Gomk Elders' Council. According to her, the young mothers are not able to do agricultural works due to no kindergarten functioning in the community, as well as someone at home to look after the children.

Recently women initiated a petition to submit to Simon Babayan, the mayor of Zaritap community. Regardless of the fact that lately he has solved issues relating to street illumination and garbage removal, the community budget does not suffice to resolve other problems. The school building needs renovation, there are no workplaces and young people leave the village....

As Nune told us, sometimes community people express dissatisfaction about the consolidation reform process. They are bewildered about the fact that their village tracing back to a long history, accommodating cultural monuments and with a comparatively large population was not selected as the center of consolidated communities.

"Fairly speaking before the consolidation reform started, we felt unhappy and ignored. Investment projects were implemented in our village before; now, we have to wait to see how things progress. However, I am sure that the consolidation process will bring positive developments too. At present there are both risks and hopes, later we will see how the laws are changed or what powers are granted to small communities", Nune said.

She feels that appointing community administrators will cause problems. The role of those people is to bring the issues of small communities to the consolidated Council of Elders. The law allows them to be present in the meetings of Elders' Councils, but they are not entitled to sign any papers. They can only come up with suggestions on community issues. "Very often the administrators do not participate in the meetings and are not aware what is going on there, and this is a big problem", Nune says. In her opinion, they fail to fulfill their duties since they are not invited to the meetings. In addition, in case of limited powers, good or bad work, as well as to what extent the community mayor considers the suggestions, depend on the personality of the particular administrator.

"It is still early to speak of progress and reform benefits"

Nvard Khachatryan lives in Zaritap village but works in the neighboring Gomk as a school

director. She is concerned about the challenges and future perspectives of both communities. According to her, the community consolidation process is in its early stage and it is still early to note progress and reform benefits.

N. Khachatryan thinks; "To be frank, I do not know to what extent this project will be justified, however life in Gomk became rather lively. It is clear that not all the issues can be solved in all the communities simultaneously and completely. However, I would like the communities to be separate and solve their problems in their own way".

According to her, the community consolidation process cut down women's public and political activism. Previously, the work of three women members of Elders' Council from their community helped to achieve tangible results for the village development. Unfortunately, no woman was elected into the Elders' Council during the last LSGB elections.

- Although men have changed their attitude and opinion on women's, particularly their wives participation in the Elders' Council, they were not anyway interested in nominating woman candidates in the elections. If not so, the only woman candidate nominated in Gomk village could win.

To the question why women candidates are not supported, N. Khachatryan gave the following answer:

"During elections in the villages a big family is an advantage and if you

have a big family they mostly support men candidates. Women candidates are rarely supported. The process of the election campaign is equally important - it helps to learn more about the candidate. During meetings in several communities, people confessed that if women candidates organized an election campaign in their villages they would surely win".

"The most important thing is the equal approach to all communities"

According to **Naira Mnatsakanyan**, the Director of School in Hermon, Vayots Dzor marz, unlike other villages, the employment issue in Hermon village was partially solved. Employment in three hydropower stations located in the village, "Luysi Tun" hotel, village administration and school significantly alleviate the social condition of the households. The need for road reconstruction, lack of illumination, irrigation and drinking water systems are important issues to address yet but Naira Mnatsakanyan is convinced that these issues will be gradually solved due to skilled, hardworking people and the mayor that cares for both the community and people.

Hermon and 11 communities were united under the consolidation reform with Yeghegis community as the center of enlarged communities. Not all the people in the community understand this process, particularly how well it was planned, its future perspectives and why another community was selected as a center. These questions arouse concern among the households of the communities.

Naira Mnatsakanyan is also concerned about the future of this process. "I compare the community consolidation reform with the 12-year education system. At first, everybody was inspired with this idea, afterwards nobody knew what to do, and the pupils did not know what to do during the last two years. The efficiency of the consolidation reform will also be noticeable sometime after".

According to N. Mnatsakanyan the community centers were selected based on comparatively favorable geographical location and communication roads. However, the most important thing is equal and fair approach towards addressing challenges of all the communities.

Leading the Community

Susanna Gevorgyan "Women have the potential to solve those problems"



The 20th anniversary of the LSGB system marked in 2016 was to some extent a "jubilee" for Susanna Gevorgyan, the mayor of Arevashat community of Ararat marz, since her election into a community mayor's post coincided with the initial steps of the system introduction in Armenia.

S. Gevorgyan notes; "The gender stereotypes in rural communities are stronger than in urban areas. People see more men than women in positions of community leaders. Many people are convinced that politics is not for women. 23 years ago community residents were also of the same opinion, however my loyalty, accountability towards the main problematic issues of the community, and in particular towards women's issues and my hard work in the past changed their opinion on a woman community leader. In my work, through years it became clear to me that we needed to encounter and solve numerous issues while the LSGB system was fully established and sustainable. I do believe women have potential to solve these issues".

Alina Harutyunyan "Women have the mission of laying foundations, regulating and setting up everything"



Alina Harutyunyan who has led Nor Yerznka community mayor for 20 years, is well-known throughout the country. Recently she received an award - "gratitude medal" by the RA President for her efficient and faithful work. She says that being nominated and re-elected in the position of the community mayor for several times, she has never had an intention to compete with men or aimed to assert herself, she has simply thought of being useful to her community as a citizen of her country and a person that values culture.

- The mission of a woman is to lay foundations, regulate and set up processes and I am committed to accomplish this mission as a community leader. Now, the life of the community has radically changed: community-owned facilities are reconstructed, drinking and irrigation water supply issues are completely solved, the former orchards that looked like deserts, bloomed and, what is more important, the people have regained their previous enthusiasm and faith in future.

Alina Harutyunyan assured that she would not be content with current achievements, and would continue seeking a new and perfect plan for improvement of the community life together with the new generation where women prevailed.

Opinions from Government

"We should not blame the consolidation reform only"...

Our interlocutor, **Ashot Giloyan**, the head of the Local Self-Governance Department at the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development does not agree with the opinion that the community consolidation reform definitely decreases women's representation in the LSGBs.

"Perhaps the consolidation reform processes somehow affected women negatively, but not in their decision to participate in the elections. Simply, our respected women that considered themselves leaders in their communities and used to participate in political competition refrained from similar actions when the consolidation reform started. In many communities, women were not nominated at all due to some reasons. Maybe they were afraid to do so and if they were not nominated how they could be elected", Ashot Giloyan said. He noted that possibly women leaders felt more confident in their own communities than in consolidated ones and therefore were not nominated.

Even in their own communities, women could hardly compete with men whereas in

case of enlargement the provision of equal conditions for all the candidates becomes more difficult. The representative of the Ministry brings the example of Tegh community, where stereotypes on women's political participation prevail. However, three women were elected into the Elders' Council. "Hence, the decrease of women representation cannot be explained only by the consolidation process", he said.

By the way, several years ago, when the government had just initiated the consolidation reform, in one of his interviews Ashot Giloyan voiced an opinion that consolidation would create wide opportunities for women to increase their representation indicators in the LSGBs. He particularly mentioned that competition opportunities for the Elders' Council

would increase and each community will strive to "send" smarter and more skilled representative of the community as a member of the Elders' Council. Remembering what he said, Mr. Giloyan stated that today he was ready to repeat his former viewpoint with one main exception. "At that time we said that the consolidation of communities would result in the change of the election system but up to now the elections were not carried out by proportional representation. If the LSGB elections are held in proportional system after making relevant changes in the election legislation, as well as are based on social initiative, which assumes that the people of communities will go to the election with their own candidate, I am sure that in this case the situation will change". Then he added that for all the elections held within the proportional system the elections legislation specifies a quota according to which the sex ratio in the pre-election voter lists should be at least 25/75.

How did the quota work?

In the Yerevan Council of Elders women constitute 28%



Eighteen (18) members or 28% of the 65 members of the newly elected Yerevan Council of Elders are women. This means that women's representation in the Elders' Council has significantly increased compared with the previous one where the number of women was 10 making 15%. We can state that the quota fixing the 25/75 ratio in the Yerevan elections worked well, although the female candidates in the parties' pre-election voter lists constituted 38% on average.

Ten (10) out of the female members of the Elders' Councils are involved in the "Hanrapetakan" faction (46 mandates in total), 5 - in "Yelq" faction (14 mandates in total) and 3 in "Yerkir Tsirani" faction (5 mandates in total). Women's representation in the Armenian Republican Party (ARP) is 21.7%, although the male and female candidates were represented in the parties' pre-election voter list in 25/75 proportion pursuant to the requirement of the law, and before the self-withdrawals, 12 women were involved in the initial 46 rows of the parties' election list. The eight of candidates who had declared self-withdrawal were women. Currently, 10 women are elected in the Yerevan Elders' Council from the RAP voter list, namely Astghik Gevorgyan, Anna Asatryan, Naira Nahapetyan, Roza Sirounyan, Natalya Lapauri, Lilit Beglaryan, Anna Mkrtchyan, Alina Qushkyan, Anush Hayryan, Hasmik Sargsyan.

There were no self-withdrawals from the other factions, besides NA member Nikol Pashinyan heading the list of "Yelq" alliance.

Five (5) women are involved in the "Yelq" faction, namely Anahit Bakhshyan, Ani Khachatryan, Ani Samsonyan, Tehmina Vardanyan and Zaruhi Batoyan. The women's representation in the faction makes 36%, which is more than in the alliance pre-election voter list, where the female candidates constituted 33%.

From five members of "Yerkir Tsirami" faction presently three members maintained mandates and all women, namely Zaruhi Postanjyan, Sona Aghekyan, Marina Khachatryan. In the party's pre-election voter list the female candidates constituted 57%.

Thus, the efficiency of the 25/75 quota in elections of the Yerevan Elders' Council was much higher than in all the proportional elections held before, including National Assembly (18%), as well as in the elections of the Gyumri and Vanadzor Elders' Councils (24%). In addition, if there were no women self-withdrawals from the ARP voter list, the women representation could have reached even up to 30%, ensuring the so-called women "critical mass" in the Elders' Council.

Initiative

It is recommended to set up a "Council of Women" in the National Assembly.



"We have passed one stage of the community consolidation process, and the existing statistics already allows to record that women involvement in the local self-governing bodies has obviously reduced by 2-3 times. This issue was highlighted from the National Assembly's tribune by Shake Isayan, NA member of "Tsarukyan" faction. She said; "If so far no marz and town has been headed by women, and women were represented only in the leading positions of the rural communities, now due to the ongoing reforms, we encounter significant gap in terms of the women representation in rural areas also", and added that the National Assembly should do something to regulate this issue. The delegate proposed also to set up a "Council of Women" in the NA, which will be in contact with the relevant bodies of the Government due to which the involvement of women in certain activities may increase. She referred also to the international practice stating that in many parliaments there are commissions and boards for women rights advocacy. It should be noted that so far no response to this proposal has been received.

Kindergartens

Reality and Pre-Election Promises

Around 8000 children of pre-school age living in Yerevan queued up for attending kindergartens, and 1800 of them are more than 3 years old. According to the official data, there are 160 pre-school educational establishments under the Yerevan Municipality. Number of the children attending kindergartens makes 30.067.

Free kindergartens of Yerevan admit mainly three-year-old children, and thousands of children after this age cannot go to the kindergarten.

"Our child was one and half years old and we got registered to attend one of Malatia-Sebastia kindergartens. They were silent for a year. I visited the kindergarten and made inquiries about the time we had to wait. I had to arrange with my employer the time of resuming my work. They told me "We cannot receive the child, as he is still small, there are older children in the line", says K. Hakobyan, a citizen of Yerevan. She reminded the Director of the kindergarten that the children of working parents could be prompted, but there was no place in the kindergarten groups, they were overloaded. She has to wait until the child was three, but even then she

faced difficulties in admitting the child to the kindergarten. Another parent, K. Harutjunyan, told that they did not wait for their turn, and instead of waiting for years, decided to take their child to a paid kindergarten.

Please note that in Yerevan there are 77 non-state preschool establishments, with the monthly payments within the range of 30-100 thousand AMD.

Yerevan Municipality does not envisage increasing the number of kindergartens during the next year. Nothing is mentioned about new kindergartens in the draft budget or in the development project. The activities envisaged for 2018 include renovation and basic repairs of kindergarten buildings, activities directed at regulation of queues for going to kindergarten. It is not clear how this problem will be regulated.



During the campaigns, all the political parties nominated in the elections of the Yerevan Elders' Council addressed the kindergarten issue.

"Today about 8000 children wait in line for going to kindergarten and cannot get this opportunity. On the other hand, the premises of numerous kindergartens in Yerevan are rented by other entities", said Nikol Pashinyan, the leader of "Yelq" voter list. Zaruhi Batoyan, the candidate nominated by the list of the same alliance, wrote the following in her Facebook profile: "If I become a member of the Elders' Council, I will raise the issue of shifting kindergarten working hours up to 18:30, as the working day ends at 18:00, while the kindergartens are closed an hour earlier. Perhaps the children of the people who worked out this order are taken home by storks". "Yerkir Tsirani", another

opposition party participating in the elections highlighted this issue in the published program pointing out solution ideas such as "Renovation and construction of preschool establishments (kindergartens) in Yerevan at the expense of the budget resources thus creating new jobs for tutors and nurses, due to which registrations in lines with corruption risks will be also eliminated".

The ARP pre-election program envisages to ensure: (i) mandatory health insurance of the kindergarten employees of Yerevan Municipality, (ii) complete pre-school education with full regulation of the line issues for admission to kindergartens, (iii) continuation of the free of charge pre-school education program.

Recommendation

Davit Khazhakyan, the head of "Yelq" faction of the Yerevan Elders' Council applied to Taron Margaryan, the Yerevan Mayor, with a request to set up a commission for examination of the activities of pre-school education establishments under the Yerevan Municipality. In the justification, it is particularly said: "In a number of education establishments under the Yerevan Municipality it is regularly observed abuses relating to work organization, professional activity of the directors, tutors, nurses, illegal fundraising, violence against children, density of groups and other issues. The efficiency of spending funds allocated by the Yerevan Municipality, as well as funds raised

by the "Help your Kindergarten" internet site is also disputable."

In talk with us Davit Khazhakyan noted that according to the law the Commission is to be set up by the request of the faction for which the decision or agreement of the Mayor is not required. According to him, the kindergarten issue touches almost every family, and numerous complaints prove that the existence of Commission is not only justified but it is a necessity. "Among the problems are the queues, density of groups, condition of premises, including the building alienation and food issues. There is much to do, and we are quite determined about it", he added.



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