

In September, next round of elections is due in 17 communities



According to the CEC decision, three days of this year were set for local self-government elections: February 17, June 9, and September 29.

Upcoming local self-government elections are due in 17 communities of Ararat, Armavir, Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik, Lori, Kotaik, Shirak, and Tavush marzes on September 29.

The number of female community heads replenished by one more



On June 9, LSG elections were held in 23 communities of the republic, fourteen of which were regular elections, and nine were snap elections. The elections have resulted in replenishment of the number of female community heads in Armenia by one more. Currently, women are heading nine out of 502 communities of Armenia.

Ditak- the Record-Breaking Community



In LSG elections of June 9 eleven candidates out of 97 candidates for local councils were women. Seven of them were elected. The record-breaker was Ditak community in Ararat Marz, where five out of six nominated candidates were women, and four of them were elected. Currently, four out of five local council members in the village of Ditak are women.

Garnering maximum votes in their communities



On February 17, LSG elections were held in 24 communities, 14 of which were regular elections, and 10 of which were snap elections. 20 communities were electing community heads, and none of them had women among the candidates.

In four of the communities, local council elections were held, and only 3 of them - Margara, Geghahovit, and Ijevan, had 5 female candidates competing for seats in local councils. Three of them were elected, garnering majority of votes in their communities.

Woman & politics

2019 Special Issue

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What do the results of the research on public perceptions of women's participation in local self-government demonstrate?



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“No argument stands to justify women's low participation”

The local self-government system in Armenia was established in 1995, after the adoption of the RA Constitution. The first local self-government elections were held in 1996.

Today, after more than twenty years, the system is still in the development stage: much needs to be done, especially for the development of the institution of local councils. The country is undergoing the community consolidation reform. According to the Conceptual Framework on Consolidation of Communities and Development of Inter-Community Unions adopted in 2011, consolidation of communities aims at strengthening them in terms of financial sustainability and effective use of consolidated community resources (human, financial, land, etc.) As a result, instead of the previously existing around one thousand communities, there are currently 502 communities in Armenia, 52 of which are consolidated.

One of the development indicators of the LSG system is the level of women's participation in decision-making at local level, and, in this regard, we should note that the number of women in LSG bodies has always been low. The consolidation of

communities resulted in further reduction of women representation, leaving women confronted with a new "glass ceiling." During the entire existence of LSG bodies, women's representation among community heads has hardly changed, remaining on average within the limits of 2%. This indicator was the highest in 2008 reaching 2.5% and the lowest as of July 2019, reaching 1.8%. Whereas, the State had committed itself to increasing this number to at least to 10% in the frames of Millennium Development Goals, in 2000. As of now, women's representation in local councils stands just at 9.3%.

Although currently the State hasn't set a new threshold within the framework of the new commitments on Sustainable Development Goals, obviously such a low representation of women at the local government level leaves much to be desired and is viewed upon as discrimination against women according to international criteria. This is often justified by the argument that women them-

selves do not want to be nominated for LSG elections; however, the logical follow-up question as to why they would not want is surprisingly not asked. Even if this question is asked, numerous reasons and obstacles pop-up that can be overcome only by exceptional women. The rest prefer to barricade themselves behind the answer "I do not want to" ...

In this context, Vache Terteryan, Deputy Minister for Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, made a noteworthy observation at the opening ceremony of the project "Women in Politics" launched early this year, "Today, we have more than 300 female members of local councils in Armenia (out of overall 4011-editor's note), but this is a low number, and I believe that this project will boost their involvement in the local self-governance. In the current reform of the local self-governance, women's participation is a priority. The main target of this project should be the increase of women representation in the local self-governance, since we are convinced that no argument stands to justify women's low participation".

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Women at the helm of communities

- There are no female community heads in four out of ten marzes of the republic - Aragatsotn, Tavush, Vayots Dzor and Syunik.

- Only one out of 49 urban communities is headed by a woman: Diana Gasparyan, the recently elected mayor of Echmiadzin.

- Only one of 52 consolidated communities is headed by a woman: Jemma Harutyunyan, the head of Amasia community.

- Women form only 5.8% of the administrative heads of communities; only 24 out of 413 administrative heads are women.

Moreover

According to the 2008 data, women headed 24 (2.6%) out of 915 communities of the republic in 2016, 17 (2.1%) out of 793 communities, and as of July 2019, women lead only 9 (1.8%) communities out of the total 502.

Women lead Verin Dvin community of Ararat Marz (Lyudmila Petrova), Echmiadzin (Diana Gasparyan), Arevshat (Susanna Gevorgyan), and Artamet (Anahit Davtyan) communities of Armavir Marz, Geghakar of Gegharkunik Marz (Karine Martirosyan), Bazum (Srbuhi Harutyunyan) and Karadzor (Hranush Rostomyan) of Lori Marz, Nor Yerznka (Alina Harutyunyan) of Kotayk Marz, and the consolidated community of Amasia (Jemma Harutyunyan) of Shirak Marz.

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As of 2016  2.02%

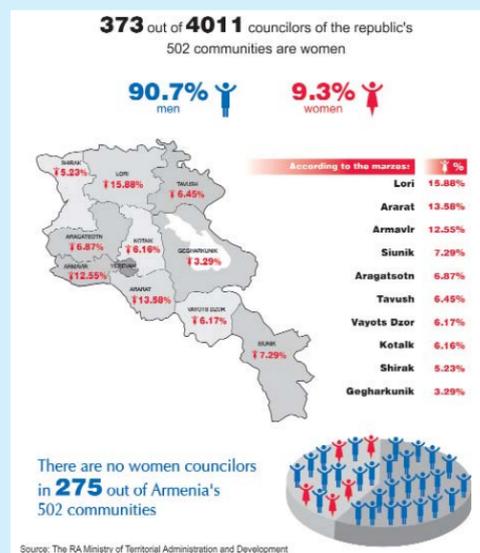
17 out of 793 communities are headed by women

As of 2019  1.8%

Only 9 out of 502 communities are headed by women

Numbers speak

Women are not represented in more than half of Armenia's community local councils



There are no women among members of local councils in 275 out of 502 communities. According to the data of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, women constituted 373 or 9.3% of 4011 members of local councils, as of January 2019. For comparison, it should be noted that in 2016 women's representation in local councils formed 11.7%.

Women have the highest representation among local council members of Lori, Ararat, and Armavir communities, constituting respectively 15.88%, 13.58%, and 12.55%. The lowest level of women's representation is in communities of Gegharkunik, standing at 3.29%. Overall, the decrease in women's representation is correlated with the level of community consolidation in the marzes. Women have higher representation among local council members of Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor, where LSG elections are based on the electoral system of proportional representation. Today, women's representation among all elected bodies is the highest in the Yerevan City Council, by forming 32%. Women constitute 24% in other two major cities - Gyumri, the regional center of Shirak Marz and Vanadzor, the regional center of Lori Marz.

It should be stated that women's highest representation in local self-government bodies is only due to the proportional system of election of local council members, and the main reason for the reduction of women's representation at the local governance level is the community consolidation process. For example, women's representation in local councils of all 52 communities formed through consolidation of 465 communities as a result of the 2016 and 2017 elections has undergone reduction, decreasing by at least 2-3 times as compared to the situation before the consolidation. Recently, Suren Papikyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, has informed that the community consolidation process will continue, and the Ministry will present a new program on community consolidation in the near future, taking into consideration objective concerns about the process. In addition, legislative amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government Bodies are being drafted. Hopefully, the reduction of women's representation will also be listed among the objective concerns.

Mission

“Women in Politics” Project Launched

Early this year, the project “Women in Politics” was launched in Armenia. The goal of the project is to reinforce women's role in the society and at the decision-making level, as well as to promote youth engagement in local governance and community development, based on the already existing capacities and expanding the positive experience, acquired during the recent years. The project will be implemented in the upcoming two and half years by UNDP and OxYGen Foundation in cooperation with the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures and with financial support of Great Britain's Good Governance Fund.

“Gender equality is a priority in the entire world”



ing all these objectives to life. We should also create a large pool of experts on the issue and I am sure that the results will not keep us waiting.”

Dmitry Mariyasin, UNDP Resident Representative

“Women's low representation at the local level is disturbing”



“Women's political participation in Armenia can be realized and promoted only by joint efforts. Many obstacles are impeding that, but of great importance is awareness of the society and civil society efforts in this direction. Although much has changed in the RA after revolution, we still have rather low indicators on women's political representation. Yes, we do have tangible results in the NA: the number of female MPs has increased, however, it is not the same with the Government, with only one female minister. At local level, the indicators are even more worrisome and low: there is only one female mayor and eight female village heads in the entire republic. These numbers are disturbing, and we hope that the project will provide the opportunity to boost women's active engagement.”

Margarita Hakobyan, Executive Director of the OxYGen Foundation

actively for ensuring a completely different picture during the next elections and I am convinced that we will succeed. Yes, women's representation has increased in the NA; however, we do not have a sufficient increase in local self-governance. Women cannot yet utilize their full potential. Our goal is to reinforce women's capacities, to increase their representation in political structures, to work with youth so that they become supporters of female leaders in communities. During the upcoming two and half years, we will be striving to achieve a situation when women's interest to enter the political field is guaranteed by relevant mechanisms at the national and local levels. In addition, we will be carrying out an assessment of gender sensitivity of parties. And although it will take time after the project completion to really witness the results, we are convinced that it will be precisely like that.”

Natalya Harutyunyan, UNDP Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme Manager

“Positive shift in public perceptions is the earnest for success”



“The project ends in 2021, and we expect that in the upcoming two years national and local policies will become more favorable for women's participation, especially in communities. To achieve that, we should create a solid evidence base for political gaps. Within the framework of the project, a large-scale multi-component study will be conducted. We consider positive shift in public perceptions to be the earnest for success and wish that the stereotypes impeding women were eliminated”.

Kristine Hovhannisyan, OxYGen Foundation's Program Officer

“It is going to be challenging as the project has set very ambitious targets”



“The project launch was long-expected, but we also realize that it is going to be challenging because of the ambitious targets. However, it's not holding us back since we have already implemented many projects in Armenia. Armenia has yet a long way to go in terms of gender equality and there is still room for improvement in this regard. With this project, we will try to strengthen women's capacities in the fight against corruption by enhancing women engagement in communities. We also work with the youth, as we are confident that their engagement is very important in bring-

“Our goal is to empower women”



“The project title “Women in Politics” speaks for itself. We should work very

What to do?

More than two dozen member organizations of the National Assembly-CSO Cooperation Platform, formed at the initiative of the OxYGen Foundation in March, this year RECCOMEND:

- Taking into consideration extremely low indicators of women's representation in the local self-governance, to increase the number of communities, including urban and consolidated communities of the republic, where local council elections are held through proportional representation;
- To revise the quota for representation of sexes in party lists defined by Point 4 of Article 83 of the RA Electoral Code through replacement of the current wording by the following: “the number of representatives of each sex in party proportional lists should not exceed 60 per cent” and extend the application of this threshold to elections to local self-government bodies based on the electoral system of proportional representation;
- Along with transition to proportional elections for local self-government bodies to con-

- sider the possibility for nomination of civic initiatives. To lower the electoral threshold for engagement of parties and alliances in local councils;
- To clarify and expand the responsibilities and functions of the Central Electoral Commission and Territorial Electoral Commissions in ensuring broad awareness raising of population about elections and related procedures;
- To legislatively fix the CEC responsibility to collect and publish all elections-related data based on the sex disaggregation principle, as well as to incorporate gender component in the work of all bodies responsible for organization and conduct of elections;
- To envisage clear-cut actions and measures for promotion of women's political partic-



ipation in the RA 2019-2023 Strategy and Action Plan on Implementation of Gender Policy, including the vision for increase of women's representation in the local self-governance;

- To clarify the activities of different institutions at marz and community level within the scope of improving the national machinery for women's advancement.

Vox populi

Women in Local Self-Government: Public Perceptions



The research "Public Perceptions of Women's Advancement and Their Participation in Decision-Making and Policy Gaps within the Context of Local Self-Government Reform" was carried out within the framework of the project "Women in Politics" through surveys among 1700 respondents in all marzes of Armenia and Yerevan. The preliminary findings of the research are presented below.

Women's work in local self-government bodies is assessed positively

Only 5.9% of the survey respondents noted that the head of their community is a woman, which was predictable, taking into consideration that the number of female community heads in the republic is 1.8%.

To the question on how successful the female community head was in the performance of her duties, 80% of the respondents gave a positive evaluation and only 5% assessed it as "bad."

Rural residents are particularly pleased with female community heads? 63.2% of them have noted that the community head performed her responsibilities well. Taking into account the fact that women primarily succeed in small villages with a socially dire situation and limited resources, the high evaluation by residents carries a higher value.

Analysis of the responses according to the sex of the respondents demonstrates that, overall, women are more appreciative of female community heads than men are.

84% of the respondents noted that they would like their community head to continue one's tenure. This opinion was shared by 75.0% of male and 90.0% of female respondents.

The survey results indirectly confirm the expectations that female community heads can create a conducive environment for voicing important issues from women's perspective, for identification of women's needs and solution to them. In addition, the prevalent stereotype that women have negative attitude to female officials is not confirmed. The survey results have demonstrated that women's work is especially appreciated by women.

Lack of awareness on the composition and work of local councils

34.2% of the respondents noted that there were female members of local councils in their communities, and 27.1% noted that there were not any. It is noteworthy that the significant proportion of the respondents, 38.7%, had no idea whether there were women or not in local councils.

The unawareness of the respondents about the composition of local councils can be

viewed within the context of the general low level of awareness about the work and duties of local self-government bodies.

When comparing the work of female members of local councils with that of male members, only 10.7% of the respondents evaluated it as "worse than that of male members of local councils," with half of such responses provided by women and half by men. Almost one third of the respondents, 29.6% evaluated women's work as "better than that of male members of local councils," and 34.9% pointed out that women's work "was of the same quality as that of male members of local councils." One quarter of the respondents, 24.8%, found it difficult to answer this question, and this number is almost unchanging with respect to all questions associated with the level of awareness on the work of local self-government bodies.

Irrespective of the above-mentioned evaluations, 78% of the respondents, including 77.6% of men and 78.2% of women, noted that they would like the female members of local councils to continue their tenure. This figure is higher than 64.5%; the percentage of those who evaluated the work of female members of local councils as "better than that of male members" or "of the same quality as that of male members."

Ready to vote for a female candidate?

10.2% of the respondents, including women, expressed willingness to unequivocally vote for a female candidate in elections of community heads. At the same time, twice as many respondents, including 19.7% of women, will unequivocally be electing a male candidate. Taking into consideration the fact that the majority of women noted that they would be equally voting in favor of "female and male candidates," one can conclude that the statement that "women do not elect women" is not confirmed by this research.

Although preferences voiced verbally do not always match the behavior in a specific situation, 10.2% of the respondents voice an intention to vote for a female candidate and 9.9% of the respondents actually voted for a female candidate during the elections of community heads.

Are women invisible?

Although a significant proportion of the respondents positively evaluates the work of women in their capacity of a community head or a local council member, and, moreover, the majority believes that they should continue their tenure, the survey results come to state that there are serious problems related to the public acknowledgement of women's potential. For example, although 75.9% of the respondents noted that they would like to see women in the position of local council members, only 42.8% of them could identify women in their community that could take that position. Similarly, if 63.1% of the respondents expressed a desire to see women in the position of community head, only 24.6% identified women in their community worthy for the role of community head. By the same principle, being in favour of enhancing women's participation in local self-governance, men do not want it to become a reality through engagement of their relatives - wives, daughters, and sisters.

Expectations are high, so is the scepticism

Overall, the survey has demonstrated that the public expectations on enhancing women representation in local government are quite high, i.e. in public perceptions, women can definitely become managers of positive changes. It is another issue that it can become a reality only through enhancing opportunities for women to engage in decision making positions of the local self-governance, and here public perceptions differ.

In particular, the opinions of the respondents were divided regarding the following statement: "In our community, the level of women's representation in local self-government bodies will never increase since it will be hindered by the existing customs, stereotypes, and mentality." 50.4% did not agree with the statement, 43.5% questioned the possibility of overcoming the stereotypes and women's advancement, and 6.2% found it difficult to respond. It turns out that, on one hand, the public sets certain hopes regarding women's engagement in local self-governance, and, on the other hand, it is sceptical about the opportunities for women's advancement.

Who wants to participate in the work of local self-government?

The number of women wishing to hold any position in local self-government does not exceed 16.6%. Moreover, it is three times less that the number of those women wishing to become community heads.

By the way, the number of men wishing to hold any position in local self-government is rather low (12.4%). That is, as compared to other elected positions, for example, the MPs, and except for a few big cities, local self-government bodies are less attractive, and not only to women.

One of the main reasons are the problems associated with a fully-fledged development of the institution of local self-governance, which affects the motivation of women and men. However, as demonstrated by the indicators of actual participation in the elections, these problems affect women and men in a different way.

Posing a question

Don't women want to be nominated?



The survey results demonstrate that public perceptions on five most prevalent causes for women's non-nomination for local self-government are the following:

- Women are prevented by their family members 73.4%
- Women themselves do not want 55.2%
- Women are hindered by negative public attitude 51.1%
- The work of local council members is non-paid 47.6%
- Women avoid major responsibility 47.6%

The reason "women themselves do not want" pointed out by 55.2% of the respondents is particularly noteworthy, given that, at the same time, the large number of women not wanting to hold any elected position in local self-government bodies (83.3%), as revealed by yet another question.

In reality, the reason for not wishing to be nominated is a consequence of a number of obstacles and barriers existing in society and revealed by the other answers of the respondents. These obstacles and barriers can be divided into three major groups:

- The greater part of the reasons is stereotypical by nature and confirm the existence of discrimination. These are: "Women are prevented by their family members," "Women are hindered by negative public attitude," "Being a woman hinders," "Women are impeded by the established traditions, stereotypes and mentality," and "Fear of loss of respect or a feeling of shame in case of losing the elections." These reasons confirm the necessity of carrying out a large-scale and long-term advocacy work and campaigning to influence the public opinion.

- The second large group of reasons refers to the lack of resources, capacities and time among women and includes the following statements: "Women lack managerial skills," "Shortage/absence of financial resources," "Lack of information on electoral processes, community head's liabilities, etc.," "Women do not have the necessary acquaintances and connections," and "Women cannot combine the family and work in local self-government bodies."

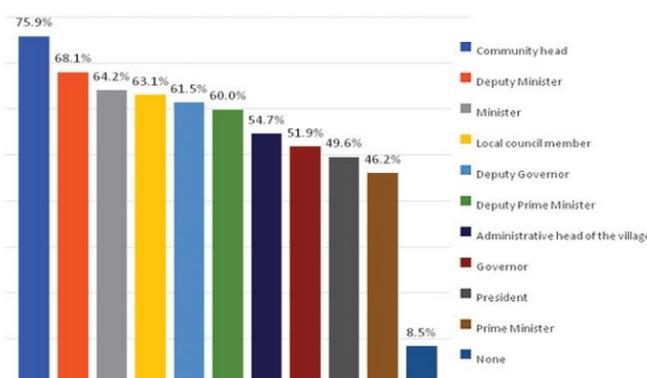
It is noteworthy that the thesis about women's double workload and incompatibility of the family with work in local self-government bodies is supported by more men than women. Two third of the respondent women do not consider this as an obstacle at all. This group can include also excuses like "Women do not have relevant education," "Women avoid major responsibility," and "Women cannot make correct/adequate decisions," which is a consequence of women's low self-esteem, their exaggerated self-criticism and the stereotypes. The steps that need to be taken to neutralize these excuses require implementation of educational programs aimed to provide necessary information, to develop women's skills and to boost their self-esteem.

- The third group of reasons is directly connected with the expectations of the respondents towards state policies and includes; "The government does not ascribe sufficient importance to women's participation in politics," "Non-adequate legislation," and "The work of local council members is non-paid."

Incidentally

"In which positions would you like to see women most?"

The responses to the question "In which positions would you like to see women most?" were, overall, predictable: the higher is the position, the fewer respondents see women in that position. The most respondents see women in the position of local council members (75.9%) and minimum number of respondents see women in the position of Prime Minister (46.2%). Women are more seen in the position of deputies than as leading figures. Only positions of community head (63.1%) and village administrative head (54.7%) are left out of the noted pattern; there the respondents wish to see women less than, per say, in the positions of deputy minister (68.1%) or minister (64.2%).



Women at the helm of communities

Jemma Harutyunyan:

“Strong nerves, balance and competent staff”



With her roots in Kars, born in Amasia, grown up and tempered in the north of Armenia, with a will as hard as a stone, and herself as warm as the sun, here comes Jemma Harutyunyan. She is the head of Amasia consolidated community in Shirak Marz. After graduating from the Polytechnic Institute of Yerevan, she hurried to her birthplace, took up a job and married a neighbor's son. She has held many positions in

Amasia: senior water management engineer, Deputy Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the District Council, head of the Service Office of the Real Property Cadastre...

Today, Jemma Harutyunyan is leading the consolidated community of Amasia, which includes 9 villages all headed by men. The community head confesses that it would be impossible to work without strong nerves, balance, and a competent staff. She says that professional and diligent cadres are the main earnest of success. A number of young people are working and getting specialized at the municipality on par with those with rich working and life experience.

The proper management of the consolidated community is the main pre-condition of its achievements. In this respect, Amasia has much to be proud of. The community children have benefited in particular. The kindergarten was put in order and re-opened.

The community head successfully cooperates with different international organizations and the European Union. Amasia has seen the opening and operation of a wool-processing workshop, which will be providing permanent jobs to more than 60 local residents.

"Whatever I do, I reckon with the residents' opinion and their primary needs. I do not take individual decisions. People should share with what they consider to be important at the moment so that we can discuss and understand it, and seek solutions to the best of our capacity," says the community head, noting that the problems of enlarged communities are large, and there are not always major opportunities for their solution. However, some issues of vital importance have already been addressed: night-time illumination has been provided for all the villages in the community of Amasia.

Srbuhi Harutyunyan:

“I am not looking for excuses, but for ways of solution”

Srbuhi Harutyunyan is the only female head of community in Lori Marz. She has been leading 1900-strong community of Bazum for eleven years. In the 1970s, she came there from Gugark and got married in Bazum. For many years she worked as an accountant in the village. When she nominated herself for the position of community head in 2008, her family inspired and supported her and the villagers elected her. She took the position and was re-elected in the next electoral cycle. And recently she has been re-elected for the third time...

"First time, when I was elected, I was afraid of spending each penny; I was personally engaged and participated in all the processes. Working became easier after the re-election: I managed the oversight mechanisms better and was more skillful in my work. Now, nothing seems to be difficult. We have learned to find mechanisms for overcoming any problem. I am



supported by my deputy, local council members, and villagers. We manage to work together and achieve success. In general, I do not differentiate between the work of women and men. At first, I would feel constrained at the marz council meetings, was shy to introduce myself; there were more than one hundred male heads of villages, and I was the only woman. After a while

I felt that they did not notice that at all and it became usual," says Srbuhi.

During her tenure the community has witnessed the implementation of a number of projects: night-time illumination of the village, partial improvement of the roads, gravelling of the roads, and fencing of the cemetery. A community center was constructed with a playing ground and kindergarten. Today, 20 children attend the kindergarten. One of the community districts was provided with drinking and irrigation water. However, when touching problems requiring urgent solution, she still mentions water. She has decided: "The rest of village districts should be supported with water as well."

"Women are thrifty, well-organized and if they set a goal, they will definitely achieve it. And do you know why? Because they never look for excuses, but for ways of solution." This is the motto that guides Srbuhi Harutyunyan in her life and work.

Hranush Rostomyan:

“All the villagers know me and acknowledge my adherence to principles and all the work I have accomplished”



The sixty-eight-year-old Hranush Rostomyan won the majority of votes among the four candidates standing for snap elections of the local self-government body in the community of Karadzor of Lori Marz, held on June 9 of this year. She is a member of the ruling Civil Contract Party.

"I was born and grew up in this village. I want

to do something in my community. I have always acted unselfishly for my people and now as well I want to work so that my name is always remembered positively in the village. I want to work as long as I am alive... I am healthy, active and start working from the morning till midnight and then wake up at 5 in the morning and start working again," H. Rostomyan tells about herself.

The tensions had almost peaked in the village recently; the former village head was blamed for abuse of power and because of that, he together with the local council members resigned under the pressure from people.

A snap election was called. Hranush Rostomyan says that under the circumstances only a woman had the strength to alleviate the tensions existing in the community.

"I nominated myself assuming that if the village head were a woman, the tensions in the village

would be alleviated, a positive atmosphere would emerge and people would develop mutual respect instead of fighting each other for personal gain; I pursue to bring a change into this state of affairs so that the villagers come to understand one another..."

When she made her decision to run for community head, her son did not agree easily, but the decision was taken.

"He said, mom, darling, don't create a headache for yourself at your age. You should rest and we will work. But I told him that I could not sit doing nothing and I would work and participate in politics until I died," Ms. Hranush tells.

She did not campaign in the pre-election period. She says that all the villagers know her, her adherence to principles and all the work she has accomplished. That is why she was convinced that the villagers would appreciate her services over the years and would vote for her.

Lyudmila Petrova:

“Verin Dvin lives like one family...”

"Being the only female head of community in the marz is not easy," says Lyudmila Petrova, head of Verin Dvin community in Ararat Marz. She has been heading the Assyrian community of Verin Dvin for fifteen years now. Prior to that, Lyudmila worked as Secretary of Staff in the municipality of Verin Dvin. In 2004, she was nominated and elected as community head, and she has been treating her work and mission with major responsibility so far.

"I was nominated by the community. When they told me that they would be electing me as a community head, I would say that I was too far from imagining myself as a community head. How could I bear that burden? However, it was public demand. My husband and even my father-in-law did not object, neither did my relatives, only I was against it," tells Lyudmila.

After holding an absolute victory in the local elections, Lyudmila Petrova started gradually solving of the problems of the decaying economy of the community with the smallest budget in the marz.



"Verin Dvin has about 2500 residents, 2000 of which are Assyrians, 500 -Armenians, and also with a small number of Yezidis and Russians. We have become like one family. We get our daughters-in-law from Armenians, wed our daughters to Armenians, we have also daughters-in-law of Russian origin. Assyrian-Armenian friendship has strong grounds in Verin Dvin. Without them I would hardly be able to manage the community for such a long period," says Lyudmila.

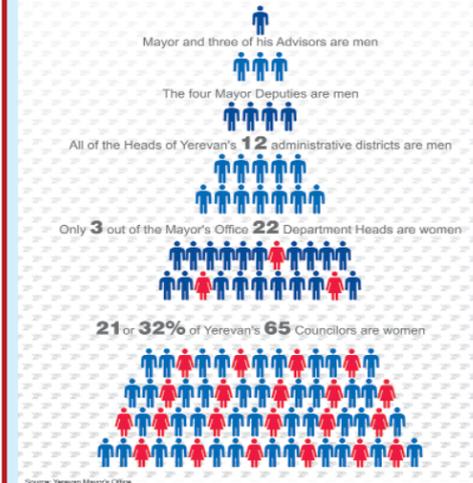
According to the community head emigration level has significantly decreased over the recent years. Only a few people are leaving the community in search of jobs today. "I am against that although I understand the reasons behind it. A family should stay together, otherwise it will not be strong," says Lyudmila.

The round-the-clock workload of the community head does not dispense Ms. Lyudmila from household chores and responsibilities. She is primarily running the household, and her agriculturist husband is engaged in the cultivation of their land plot putting the harvest into the market, though, Lyudmila manages to directly participate in all that, either. "Every day I wake up at dawn, at 4-5 a.m. to see off my husband to work, to cook the day meals, to finish my housework and to get to work on time. Sometimes, on holidays my husband and I visit my daughter's family in Yerevan: I miss my grandchildren very much," says Lyudmila.

The Yerevan Pyramid

Only men are on top

YEREVAN LEADERSHIP



As is well known, after the snap parliamentary elections many members of Yerevan City Council, including women, became MPs. Their vacancies in the Yerevan City Council were filled in by other candidates, included in the lists of political parties. This resulted in an increase of women's representation: currently 21 or 32% of 65 Yerevan City Council members are women. One should remember that formerly, after the snap elections to the Yerevan City Council held in September of the previous year, only 18 out of 65 Council members were women, which made up 27.6%.

It is noteworthy, though, that the increase in women's representation at the Yerevan City Council in no way affected the composition of the managerial staff of the Mayor's Office, which is entirely made up of men as it was before. Yerevan Mayor and his four Deputies are men, all three Advisers to the Mayor are men, Mayor's Assistant, Press Secretary, Chief of Staff, and the City's Chief Architect are all men. Women appear to be holding only some of the positions of department heads, with only three departments at the Mayor's Office out of the total 22 headed by women. To complete the picture, we should add that men also lead all twelve administrative districts of the capital city. Only one out of the 19 deputies to administrative district heads is a woman.

The indicator of the OSCE countries is 36%

According to the 2016 data the average indicator of women representation in LSG bodies of the OSCE countries is 36%. Women's representation among community heads fluctuates between 5-25%, according to the OSCE 2016 report on Advancing Women's Political Participation in the OSCE Region.

It should be noted that as far back as in 1999 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution, envisaging to ensure a balanced representation of women and men at the level of local decision-making.

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The special issue of Newspaper was produced within the framework of "Women in Politics" project. The project is implemented by UNDP in Armenia and OXGen Foundation, with financial support from the UK Good Governance Fund, and in partnership with the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures.

This special issue of the Newspaper has been funded by the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies. The views expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the UNDP.