

**Women's Entrepreneurship in Armenia**



Currently 18 thousand women are doing business in Armenia. And this is the achievement of the last three years. According to the data of the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia in 2009 ratio of businesswomen was 20 times lower. Although the dynamics is obviously positive, nevertheless the ratio of women doing business is still very low in relation to 123,750 businesses available in Armenia. Most of the women are engaged in activities ensuring the minimum standard of living, i.e. trade and retail services. Women's ratio in microbusinesses makes 20-25%, the ratio in small and medium business does not exceed 10% and there are almost no women in large businesses. Although according to official data, women constitute 32% of the registered business owners of private enterprises, but this is not the real picture since very often men being owners and managers of their businesses, but for some reason or another register them on their spouses or other relatives. Lack of comprehensive and reliable statistics hampers the targeted assistance to women's entrepreneurship.

**Asian Development Bank Supports Women**



Starting from March 2013 the four-year program on "Women's Entrepreneurship Development" was launched with the support of Asian Development Bank and is being implemented by the German PamConsult Company in close cooperation with Armenia's Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center (Armenian SME DNC). Participating in the training programs of SME DNC women entrepreneurs learn how to develop business plans, more efficiently conduct business. The best proposals are funded in the most competitive terms existing in Armenia, i.e. 10% interest rate per year and up to 5 years' repayment period, up to AMD 5 million without collateral. It should be noted that in the frames of the project needs assessment in the area of women's entrepreneurship was done and the Armenian Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy was developed together with the Armenian SME DNC.

**Concealed Discrimination**

Due to perpendicular (non-equal access to career levels) and horizontal (by professions and sectors) discrimination towards women in the Armenian labor market and employment sector the average monthly income of women makes 59% of that of men and 64.4% of the average monthly salary of men.



# Woman & politics

Emma Watson Called Men to Fight for Women's Rights



September 2014

WomenNet.am



## Goris Women's Secret to Success

**It is already five years that thanks to handicraft club established by the Goris Women's Development Resource Center Foundation the region's women having many children, unemployed, socially disadvantaged women have the opportunity to earn income. Women who have joined the club make woven souvenirs in the form of about 60 animal species. These handmade souvenirs carrying the trademark "Goris Crochet" are sold in different countries around the world and in larger quantities – in Norway.**

The Goris Women's Resource Center considers the creation of new jobs as one of its most important missions.

"Almost every day women and girls apply to us with the wish of earning money with their handwork. We support them, give advice, provide materials and threads. First, women learn working at our workshop, adapt them-

selves to the requirements and when they are able to make high-quality products start getting orders," says Nune Aghatelyan, coordinator of the club. According to her women employed by them are not only from Goris, but also from the rural communities. It is a good opportunity for a woman living in the village to earn extra money as they are mainly weaving at

home, can combine work and family; they get the order and within the set deadlines complete the work and hand them over.

"Five years ago we had only 4-5 women working at the same time; in the beginning they were not so certain that it would be possible to make income by weaving small toys. But currently we have a great flow of women, people believe in us, rely on us," says Nune Aghatelyan adding, "Our club has a significant role also in the sense that mostly socially vulnerable, needy women come to us with the majority of them being single mothers and the income that they make here, in many cases, is the only income for the family..."

The Resource Center provides for the women all the necessary conditions for good work.

A revolving fund was established enabling women to deal with the order without having a problem with the threads, particularly if we consider the fact that they are available only in the capital. The products are being collected locally and sent to the client; women are not dealing with technical or organizational issues, thus getting rid of excessive stress. All the souvenirs have quality certification; the products meet the international standards that make them consumable in different countries without any problem.

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## Beijing+20: Women and Economy



In the frames of the process Beijing +20 launched in June of this year the 12 sectors of the Beijing Action Plan are analyzed and presented. In September, the UN Women organization proposed to particularly focus on the sector "Women and Economy".

**F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY**

F.1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment and appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.

F.2. Facilitate women's access to resources, employment, markets, and trade.

F.3. Provide business services, training, and access to markets, information, and technology, particularly to low-income women.

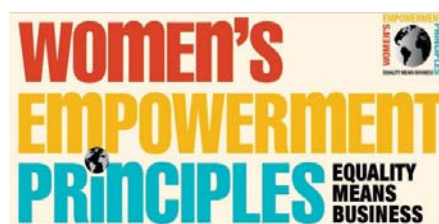
F.4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.

F.5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.

F.6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Beijing Action Plan considers women's entrepreneurship development as a means for overcoming poverty and women's discrimination in the labor market.

## Equality Means Business



The Women's Empowerment Principles are a set of Principles for business offering guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. They are the result of a collaboration between the UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact. This is a global initiative reflecting social responsibility of business that unites more than 8 million business institutions from 135 countries. These principles guarantee the success of business companies and welfare of the countries.

- 1 Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
- 2 Treat all women and men fairly at work - respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination
- 3 Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
- 4 Promote education, training and professional development for women
- 5 Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- 6 Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- 7 Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

## Progress and challenges

## OSCE's Gender Equality Review Conference

This year the OSCE marks the 10th anniversary of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality adopted in 2004. During the first Review Conference held in Vienna in July the success of the OSCE and participating States in terms of implementing this document was discussed. The primary idea is that the process of developing a full and equal participation of women and men is the key towards peace, prosperity and stability. Accordingly, the 57 OSCE participating States attach great importance to the equality of rights and opportunities of women and men believing that this factor plays a key role in any country's political and economic stability and sustainable development.



## Obstacles to Women's Entrepreneurship in Armenia

There are no differences in the legislation for men and women in terms of business registration, running and other processes. But the researches show that in order to start-up a business Armenian women have to overcome a number of obstacles - low self-esteem, sense of uncertainty, willingness to take risk and lack of business ties. Objective reasons include lack of property to get financial resources and loan, high interest rates for loans, non-favorable business environment and unofficial corruption payments. As opposed to males, women are also taking care of home and household affairs and are not able to spend more time on business, which negatively impacts the development of business ties and business management. Besides, gender stereotypes still existing in the society hamper the development of women's entrepreneurship. It is perceivable by the society that women run small businesses; however there is the opinion about women entering a big business that they are backed and supported by an influential male. As inquiries show majority of business women get support in the families, especially when they provide additional income for the household.

## International Business Report



According to International Business Report of Grand Thornton International for this year 24% of managerial positions in the business are held by women, which is the highest indicator since 2010. According to the findings of the survey 35% of managerial positions in the Armenia's business are held by women, which is obviously higher than the average indicator recorded in the world. However, it should be noted that the methodology of the survey included not only real managerial positions, i.e. President/Deputy President, CEO/Managing Director, COO, but also Financial Supervisor, who does not have any real influence at the decision making level of businesses in the Armenian reality. Women's ratio holding this position in Armenia makes 60%, which certainly increases the general ratio of women's representation in businesses.

*Oliver McCoy:*

## “There is light at the end of the tunnel..”



**T**his document is not the manifestation of an ideological approach, but reflects a concrete political commitment by all OSCE participating States specifically on gender equality and sensitivity. The 2004 Action Plan, first of all, obliges the OSCE itself to include gender as a component of the organization's comprehensive approach to security. The Action Plan encourages OSCE participating States to take up specific measures such as ensuring non-discriminatory through legal acts and policy frameworks as well as combating violence against women.

Taking Armenia as an example, I would like to mention that implementing projects within the RA Police system, we take into consideration male and female participation factor in the projects, as well as we analyse the impact of those projects from the gender point of view. Besides, since 2008 the OSCE Office in Yerevan has invested in expanding the economic capacities of women in Armenia. After a comprehensive needs assessment, the Syunik province was identified as a priority area for OSCE Office in Yerevan. As a result, the OSCE supported the establishment of three women's resource centres in the region and has continued to promote co-operation amongst them. In a relatively short period of time, especially in the last two years, these centres have achieved quite a bit, particularly in the area of economic empow-

Our interlocutor is Oliver McCoy, Officer on Gender Issues at the OSCE Office in Yerevan; and the topic is related to projects implemented by the Office in Armenia to support the equal participation of women and men in the development processes. Our first question is on the action plan to promote gender equality; what does it imply and how is it implemented in Armenia?

ment. I am pleased to see how these women's resource centres have contributed to improving the economic situation in the entire Syunik province. As prosperity and economic security are linked with civic participation, it is satisfying to see how political activity has developed. A significant number of Syunik's current local council members have benefited from the centres' support because the initial confidence to participate in local elections was cultivated as a result of the centres' activities.

**– Can such projects make a difference and bring about real gender equality? In Armenia today there are many projects and strategies that seek to improve the situation; however, these initiatives remain, for the most part, on paper.**

– You are right, there are reams of documents, project proposals, and implementation plans developed to help Armenia realize its international commitments on gender equality. Even a quick look at the statistical data reveals an obvious inequality between women and men throughout society both in terms of political representation as well as in economic activity. There is no denying that at the national level representation of women in parliament is much lower than the 20 per cent envisaged by electoral legislation; the same goes for other political domains. At the same time, however, change is taking place, especially at the local level. If you look at gender equality from the perspective of local self-government bodies, there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel. Today, women participation in Syunik local self-governmental bodies is quite high, even though several years ago the number of women represented on that level in Syunik was amongst the lowest. To me, this is an indication that change is possible and that despite the many challenges of participating in political processes that there are women who are willing to stand for their

ideas and have the capacity to be leaders in the communities.

**– What are the OSCE Office in Yerevan's plans for the current year? What kind of projects are you planning that would improve the status of women?**

– First of all, the OSCE will continue to support the development of the women's resource centre network in Syunik, and in particular continuing to focus on economic and political empowerment. As the OSCE is a political organization as opposed to a donor organization, we will continue to explore network sustainability by identifying other sponsors and by establishing other income streams. The volunteers and community leaders involved in the centres have many creative ideas and innovative projects and the OSCE will certainly be next to them to see how these ideas come to life. Personally, I would like to see the positive experiences in Syunik shared with other provinces and community activists in Armenia. I am very pleased that the Syunik Women's Resource Centre Network was recently accredited by the European Network of Resource Centres, and the OSCE is committed to help this network take root in Armenia.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan considers gender equality a cornerstone for democracy, development and security, and based on this principle, will continue to support the provision of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. We have planned to enhance the meeting with women parliamentarians, will engage with political parties to promote women's participation in traditionally male sectors, such as police, as well as will keep our eye on trafficking which also relates to women and children. I would like to note that the Office has implemented a number of activities in that direction very successfully in close cooperation with the Government and the civil society of Armenia.

## Survey

## “Every Village Woman is a Potential Entrepreneur”

**The stereotypes that women are weak, their place is in the kitchen and that women's role is merely associated with the upbringing of children is gradually changing. Women can be more successful in the business as they are more prudent, discreet and have higher sense of responsibility towards their work, says Gagik Makaryan, Chairman of National Union of Employers of Armenia based on the findings of their survey. Our conversation with him is about female entrepreneurs residing in villages.**

**–** Women in the villages are usually engaged not only in domestic affairs, i.e. cooking, household work and child care, but also carry out much harder works – from caring for the cattle to canning and drying fruits and this is already a basis for such women to establish a small production building on their experience. They originally have practical knowledge and in this sense almost every village woman is a potential entrepreneur; it is just necessary to provide a little support at the government level, says our interlocutor.

In general, there is no legislative restriction between village and city women in terms of business establishment, but even for running small salon village-women face more obstacles. According to the survey implemented by the Union this year women entrepreneurs performing some work in non-household conditions by establishing legitimate company noted that their primary concern was the small market and low level of people's solvency. For example, if a woman

opens a salon in the village she cannot have much hope that there will be many customers, as women in the village are hardly to visit a hairdresser as often as women in the capital. Hairdresser's work is cheaper in the village, but taxes are the same. This is stated also by Gagik Makaryan.

As a response to Union's inquiries the business women in the Marzes noted that they had very few orders, moreover, the orders are not for the long term. For example, according to Makaryan women entrepreneurs having small workshop of food, sweets, sewing workshop or a design shop get so few orders that cannot tell what will be the end of their business about 2 months later.

According to the Chairperson of the Union, “The market is buoyant, stable, dynamic in the city than in the communities and it is more difficult in terms of finding workforce. It is more difficult to conduct business in the community than in the capital. One of the difficulties is related to willfulness of inspection authorities more obviously

demonstrated in the communities; in the city they do not dare to create sensational stories or abuse their right of inspection, whereas in the marzes you can come across such situations”. Although Makaryan assured that their survey identified that village-women entrepreneurs do not go through corruption and do not make deals with tax authorities, they protect their rights quite well.

Another problem is related to loans, which are more difficult to get in the marzes; usually the real estate ownership is registered not with the woman, but her husband, father or brother. In addition, Makaryan notes, that due to mentality reasons, many men in the villages do not get used to woman's being engaged in business, especially if it is a serious business.

Alongside to this, if men are forced to leave their families due to migration and temporarily leave, then women need to do business in order to sustain the family, to strengthen their social position.

Makaryan determined also one more noteworthy aspect related to the success of women in their business: it is female instinct; and very often, according to surveys, women better feel how to organize the business in order to succeed. Following one or two good results even the household men started to entirely trust the business to their wives.

Success story

Ruzanna Torozyan:

“Incite hope in women”...



In 2008 with the support from the OSCE Women Resource Centres were established in Goris, Kapan and Meghri cities of Syunik province. Initially it was hard to imagine that they would become as successful as they are now. The goal was rather ambitious which aimed to enhance the role of women in politics, economics and social life. “It was very difficult for us to evoke hope and to instil belief towards their own abilities during the work with women, since Syunik province is full of traditional stereotypes. Besides that it is a relatively isolated region of Armenia and in fact our target was to become well-known. Today, however, I can surely state that we succeeded”, says Ruzanna Torozyan, the only female member of the Council of Elderly of the city of Goris and the Executive Director of Women’s Development “Resource Centre” Foundation.

today I am happy to say that the development of local handicrafts is one of the most successful projects that we have ever had.

Currently, 95 socially vulnerable women are involved in our activities, who make handicrafts souvenirs and thus support their families. We organize professional trainings and support them with threads and product marketing. I have heard so many success stories from women who have never been employed previously, had neither education nor other opportunities, but did improve their livelihoods due to their involvement into our handicrafts activities: for example, for the first time ever they could buy schoolbooks for their children. Consequently, providing an income for their families increased their self-esteem.

**- Can we say that you try to ensure economic independence for women?**

- Yes and not only that. For example, in Halidzor we created a handicrafts group. This handicrafts group involved the most active women from the community. Later we worked with this group and involved them into political empowerment activities, four women from this group decided to run as candidates for the local Council of Elderly.

Overall we experienced positive developments in Syunik in regards to women’s involvement in politics. In comparison to other regions, Syunik is exemplary for its women participation in self-governing structures. In 2012 elections, of 36 women candidates 28 were elected as members of Council of Elderly.

And this is where I would stress the important role of women’s resource centres. With assistance from OSCE and the Embassy of Netherlands we worked to promote women involvement into political activities. We have worked in urban as well as in rural areas, organized leadership courses, promoted application of new mechanisms and many more activities. I have witnessed women gaining self-confidence and becoming more active in their communities as a result of our activities.

**- There is an opinion, according to which women involvement into politics is artificial and in fact, men are the decision makers and women do not solve problems.**

- I disagree with that opinion and our experience proves the opposite. In 2003, when I was elected as a member of the Council of the Elderly in Goris, I realized that some issues may seem important to women but may not be a priority or important to men. Women pay more attention to social issues and as mothers and caregivers they have a different approach to many questions. During my first three years at the Council of Elderly I have raised issues that were welcomed by both women and men, such as preschools or lobbying for playground construction instead of garages. The biggest problem in that context is that the work done by women remains in the shadow.

New and Old

«From wool to carpet»



Goris Women’s Development «Resource Centre» Foundation implements another major initiative in the largest village of the region Shinhayr. Previously there was a rubber shoe factory and many people from that village used to work there. After the collapse of the Soviet Union unemployment greatly increased in the community. Now in the same factory wool washing plant will be operating.

Our slogan is «From wool to carpet». We have introduced our idea to the owner who liked it and provided the area without any payment for 20 years in order to be able to support rural women. The plant is situated on the road to Tatev. And no tourist can be indifferent. In the plant not only wool will be washed, but also carpets will be made, and a tourist will have a chance not only to see all these activities but also to personally participate in them,- tells the head of the foundation Ruzanna Torozyan.

It was possible to realize the initiative with the help of different organizations and structures. The main part of decorating the plant was done due to former governor of Syunik region Vahe Hakobyan and «Lernahayastan» foundation. Also «World vision» Sisian Area Development Programme supported to get equipment and materials. Through support PUM volunteer program equipment was imported from Netherlands, also OSCE Yerevan office supported and experts were invited who introduced their experience.

Stereotypes

Why men Fear Successful Women

“He makes me choosing between the family or the business”

In a very small area, in the basement floor of one of the high-rise buildings in Yerevan a young woman is sewing non-stop one can say from early in the morning till late at night. The lighting is absolutely not appropriate for sewing, but it seems the price for the space was affordable, the new-started entrepreneur woman rented it and started working without sparing herself, at the cost of own “eye sight”.

32-year-old Lilit established her own small business about 2.5 years ago; first her husband was strongly against that and had no hope that her wife would succeed; he didn’t believe that it is possible to do business in Armenia and “not to lose”. Lilit said that had able hands, but more liked sewing, learnt it from her mother.

“When my husband became unemployed we were in panic – we were renting an apartment, had two school- children, we didn’t know how to live. Sometimes I was sewing at home, but at some point I decided that I must be completely involved in it. For about a year I was convincing my husband to allow me opening a workshop; he was against my being absent from home for the most part of the day; he was saying, “what about children, who is going to take care of them, feed them, help with the homework, what about the housework...?” I could understand that he was embarrassed that he could not work on one side and that I will have to

sustain the family and he was afraid that I will not succeed on the other side,” tells Lilit.

The young woman said her husband was so jealous that during the first months did not allow her to take orders from men; as if on purpose, men were applying to her more often for shortening or re-doing trousers. Her husband was always present during such orders, later he got used to it. It was very difficult during the initial months of starting the business, there were not many orders, there was not enough income to cover the costs. “Sometimes, secretly from my husband, I was borrowing from relatives to be able to pay the rental fee; there were days that I was going home doing a good shopping to show my husband how much income I can get. I was sure that my business would improve, because my clients were happy with my work, I was sewing with affordable prices, gradually my orders increased; currently I have so many orders that I can hardly manage”. Lilit says that she is missing her kids; it’s difficult for a mother to do business throughout the day, not to spend much time with the kids. “My younger son is in the grade 5, after the school he is often coming to me to do the homework here, later his elder brother is coming and they go home together.

Lilit is going home late at night and no matter how tired she is, her husband should not feel that, other-

wise he will say, “Then close that tire-some business down”. Going home after work she is cleaning the house, doing laundry, cooking, etc. “Although it is very difficult, sometimes I sleep only 3-4 hours at night, but at work, I have a nap sitting and then pass to my orders”. Now Lilit’s business is run so well that they can even buy an apartment with a mortgage... but her husband got a job offer in Moscow and if he accepts the

Expert Opinion

“One of the obstacles for the women to succeed in business or make career in other sector is associated with the obstacles and restrictions imposed by men. In fact, they are manifestations of gender roles,” comments Gohar Shahnazaryan, Director of YSU Center for Gender Studies and Women’s Leadership, “If society has laid this function on the man, when he is anticipated to settle this issues, earn money, support the family, if the society is expecting him to do this and if he fails, then he will be complexed; in order to avoid this men are putting restrictions for the women. Women, in their turn, say that if they start making a career their personal life, etc. will suffer”.

offer the whole family will have move. “You know, even though my husband admits that I am doing well, nevertheless, he does not want me to work, he is grumbling. If he moves to Russia he will make me to close down the business, take my children and move with him. I am praying so that he doesn’t go, so that he finds a job here, otherwise I will lose my years’ achievement. I am sorry, this business is like my third baby, he is making me to choose between the family and the business”.

“I think he could not forgive that I was doing a good business and he ...”

Anahit considers herself twice as unfortunate; although she got teacher’s education, but her husband did not allow her to work. Years later, after the birth of her child the 28-year-old Anahit took hairdresser’s classes and as soon as she acquired the mastery started to work in a beauty salon. After getting clients, contacts and experience she rented a little booth-like facility and started her own business. At first everything was fine, she had

happy with my work,” tells Anahit.

Once Anahit even tried opening a small hairdresser’s salon far from their home, so that her husband did not come. I was good in the beginning, but one day the owner of the booth said that he was increasing the rental fee for 15 thousand. “That was a big amount for me. I begged him and he decreased to 10 thousand. After that he began to abuse me, he was coming, sitting in the salon and saying, “Don’t you want to treat your benefactor with coffee?” At first I was not refusing, then he started to “drop hints,” invite here or there; I was always declining his invitations; eventually he got furious and told me that he did not do me a favor just for no reason, just for my beautiful eyes, that I had to re-pay for his favor. Can you imagine what I felt? I was about to hit him with my scissors. I collected my belongings and left,” tells Anahit.

When she told her husband that she had closed down the salon, he started to swear in front of the child, then started to beat her saying “What am I going to do now, I don’t care you have to find money for my vodka”. “Sometimes I feel as if I am guilty for his becoming a drunkard, I think he couldn’t forgive me that I was doing a good business and he failed”.

Once, when her husband was not at home she collected her belongings, took the child and left. She is renting an apartment for already 5 months; she is providing hairdresser service there. She says one day she will have her own beauty salon; now she is already able to save some money to start a business.

## Strengthening the Communities

## “We are trying to break the indifference”



For nearly a year and a half Armenian Young Women's Association is implementing the project on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in the Lori Marz. It is a three-year project with the deadline on April 2016. In the initial stage there were 12 communities involved, whereas now 20 more communities have joined the memorandum. AYWA implemented activities generally in about 50 communities out of 113 communities in the Lori Marz and within the project about 100 women participated in special business courses. The project is implemented with the EU funding. Among its partners are the Lori Marzpetaran (Governor's Office), Vanadzor municipality, CISP Italian company. Our discussion with Lilit Asatryan, AYWA chairperson is about the project achievements and obstacles that women entrepreneurs come across.

jointly with our expert team and local population. And our success is also conditioned with the fact that during the development of the models there was almost an equal ratio, i.e. 50:50 of women and men participants. This also leads to the change in the attitude of men, so that they also support women for their more active involvement in the business.

- Nearly a year and a half has passed, what were the difficulties you faced and generally to what extent women are ready for this project?

- Without difficulties it would be boring, it would mean that a wrong project was selected and that there would be nothing to do. It is typical for a human being to dream and very often they say if I had money I would start this kind of a business, but they are not considering in the reality whether the idea will work or not in the given setting... In the marzes women mainly are not ready to for doing business. There is a group of women whose husbands support them and they believe that there is no need to do business. However, there are women who are willing to be engaged in entrepreneurship, but think that are not strong enough, don't have adequate knowledge, fear, think also about the public opinion. Our goal is to make women not only economically active, but also an active citizen, participants of decision-making processes so that they also live with the community problems. Nowadays we have a serious problem in our society – indifference. In the frames of the project we are trying to break the indifference not only of women, but also of the society.

- To what extent the business environment is open for women?

- At every step, almost every day we hear, read, see on TV, in the media, that favorable conditions have been created for women, they talked about promoting women's entrepreneur-

ship. I think that mere talking is not enough. Currently, NGOs, including AYWA are doing a great job in this field contributing to the economic empowerment of women. However, it is necessary to have government approach, support, which will contribute to the development of women's entrepreneurship – perhaps banks could provide loans to women with lower interest rates, they could have certain advantages... And the mere fact that a woman engaged in business may register her entrepreneurial company within only 30 minutes I do not find this enough. For instance, she registered it and then realized that she cannot make it, can she close it down as easily as she opened or there will be problems? Regulating one issue we cannot say that the field has become favorable.

- I know that there are some complete business plans that have received grants.

- There are many examples – from confectionery production to eco-production of poultry. One of our successful projects is also social entrepreneurship. It was proposed by a group of women from Akhtala community and they got support. Six women jointly established a puppet theater. This is both cultural and business and social business; there are both free performances and commercial ones.

A project was designed for four northern communities in the Lori Marz planning to establish four enterprises for refrigeration and medicinal and herbal plant drying, packaging. In this issue we got a helping hand from the US Embassy.

Another success story is that AYWA represented by the Network of Women Entrepreneurs became a member of Global Association of Women Entrepreneurs, which is also a broad opportunity for the network members to find partners outside of Armenia in order to obtain raw material, export the production.

The Project aims to contribute to participation of women in the decision-making process through easing up the socio-economic burden of women. Why the Lori Marz? Because according to statistics the highest ratio of migration was recorded here, at least this was the situation during the commencement of the project. Majority of male population is overseas; certainly all the marzes have this problem and females are “carrying a huge burden on their shoulders,” households are mainly run by women. Our task was to provide certain skills, knowledge to women, thus making them economically stable, which will serve as a basis for family reunification if men have left for overseas employment; it is well known that such employment is not always justified to the extent to what extent they were dreaming.

- What was the reaction of the community, public?

- During the project we cannot work only with women, we work with broader layers of population, i.e. men, family members of women to achieve greater success. One of the project components was the elaboration of local economic development models. We have identified economic competitive advantages of the communities, demonstrated the perspectives of specific community development. This was done

## How One Woman Changed the Whole Village

We can say, that the life in Amasia village, Shirak Marz began to change since 1999. This year was marked for the village with the fact that Mery Melkonyan moved here from Gyumri marrying a man from this village. Due to her active and creative behavior she has changed a lot and is still changing in remote Amasia.

“When I just married and moved here I was thinking what I can do here. And when my son was born I was wandering around this building and thinking that I could establish an NGO, have puppet theater, create a stage, implement projects, have a gym for the kids. And in a couple of years the NGO was called to life,” tells Mery.

About 14 projects were implemented in Amasia since the establishment of “Amasia Civil Society Development Center” NGO. “At that time, when computer was a rare thing, we had 3 computers, the kids were coming to us to learn. In the past when we were saying volunteer, people were asking are you going to take us to the army. But gradually they understood what volunteerism meant”.

Mery Melikyan established a kindergarten in Amasia on her own initiative. “I was giving a call to my acquaintance-women and asking if they would bring their kids. I found two women who were ready to work as volunteers. We were bringing food from home, then we were baking bread here. Everybody was working with great pleasure, I was telling them that nobody would care for our children, we had to do that ourselves,” she recalls.

Later the kindergarten expanded so much that



it got state registration and now 15 persons (12 women and 3 men) are working there. Mery worked as the director of the kindergarten for two years and then quitted to continue on the strengthening of the NGO.

When the representative of “Caritas” organization asked Mery what can be initiated in Amasia to help the families, she offered to deal with

wool processing. “People were throwing away the wool in front of my eyes as they had so much that could not consume all. About a year later “Caritas” invited me to Austria to get acquainted with wool processing technology in one of the villages,” tells Mery. Promising to share the obtained knowledge with Amasia women she keeps her promise to date. In the frames of JOIN project of CARE International Humanitarian Organization Mery taught Amasia women to the wool processing and felt items production technology.

Currently the products of Amasia women have their brand - “Nrane”. “Nrane” produces ecologically clean shoes, scarves, pillows, souvenirs, bijoux. Local wool and imported silk and fine wool imported from other countries is used as raw material.

Mery Melikyan being an engineer by profession has professional approach to her work. By the way, she defended her master's degree thesis on the topic of wool processing.

“I personally go to the barn and only by looking I understand which is good and which is not. We buy the wool, have it washed, village women are washing, storing for us, then we tease out the wool on the hackle, then spread it and keep in soapy water,” during the conversation Mery is preparing scarf for us also demonstrating her designer skills.

By the way, Amasia women's handiwork was presented during the felt goods expo in “Berlin Art Hotel” of Gyumri on September 24. “Felt slippers especially for newly developing feet of kids and children are healthy, hygienic, ensure sufficient microclimate, have high thermal characteristics. Thus, our next step should be to license our products as environmentally friendly goods and introduce to the European market,” says Mery Melkonyan.

## Beijing+20

## Emma Watson Called Men to Fight for Gender Equality



Still in summer Emma Watson, who gained fame by being shot in the movies on Harry Potter was appointed as UN Women Goodwill Ambassador. The 24-year-old British actress is collaborating with UN-Women acting as a defender of women's rights. On September 20 she gave a powerful speech about feminism and gender equality in the UN headquarters making an incredible impression on everybody.

She made a speech in relation to the launch of HeForShe campaign announced by the UN-Women organization. The campaign was announced in the frames of Beijing + 20 process and aimed to get one billion men and boys to become advocates against the inequalities that women and girls faced worldwide. Emma's speech was met with ovation; she urged men not only to become an ally in the fight for gender equality, but also explained the misconceptions surrounding feminism.

“I decided that I was a feminist. This seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word. Women are choosing not to identify as feminists. Apparently, I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, and anti-men, unattractive even.

Why has the word become such an uncomfortable one for women? I think it is right I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decisions that will affect my life. I think it is right that socially, I am afforded the same respect as men. But sadly I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights,” she said attracting the participants with her directness.

The universal affection that Emma Watson enjoys as an actress of “Harry Potter,” certainly, provides her the opportunity of having a broader influence. “You might think, ‘Who is this “Harry Potter” girl? What is she doing at the UN?’ I've been asking myself the same thing. All I know is that I care about this problem and I want to make it better. And having seen what I've seen and given the chance, I feel it is my responsibility to say something. Statesman Edmund Burke said all that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for good men and women to do nothing,” concluded the UN Women Goodwill Ambassador.

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## Quote of the Issue

“Women entrepreneurs are heroes; they are the beings who despite the obstacles in the area convinced themselves that they could and moved forward in that spirit”.

Hermine Naghdalyan, RA NA Deputy Speaker