



PROJECT CHRONICLES

Issue # 7, July - August 2009

COMBATING
GENDER BASED
VIOLENCE IN THE
SOUTH CAUCASUS
PROJECT/ARMENIA

FUNDED BY:
GOVERNMENT OF
NORWAY



AND THE UNITED
NATIONS
POPULATION
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Is a three-year regional initiative launched by UNFPA in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with the purpose to create enabling environment for reduction of gender-based violence in these countries and to support them in fulfilling international obligations in this field.

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World Population Day 2009, Armenia:

Women and the International Financial Crisis

Nowadays, international community is slowly recovering from financial crisis that severely hit both developed and developing parts of the world. Doom consequences of financial crisis in rich countries are continually aggravating economies of developing countries that suffer the most from deep economic recession. More and more families are forced into extreme poverty. Mortality is increasing and women and children are the most vulnerable in face of the crisis.

This year, UNFPA marked World Population Day (WPD) under “Responding to the Economic Crisis: Investing in Women is a Smart Choice” slogan. On this day UNFPA focused on the most effective economic agents of change: women, and appealed to the governments to protect women’s ability to earn income, keep their daughters in school, and obtain reproductive health information and services.

Within the framework of WPD 2009, UNFPA Armenia organized a number of events that focused on the topic of “Women and the International Financial Crises” and featured active participation of local Mass Media. Gender equality and GBV issues were also presented and discussed during the following activities organized by UNFPA/Armenia:

- *Publishing of a special issue of “Woman and Politics” newspaper insert,*
- *Breakfast with prominent Media representatives,*
- *Talk show on popular TV channel.*

A special issue of “Woman and Politics” newspaper

Cooperation between UNFPA and Print Media has long years of positive experience. Within the framework of this year’s World Population Day (WPD), it was decided to publish a special thematic issue of “Woman and Politics” newspaper to be distributed as a newspaper insert inside “Republic of Armenia” and “Aravot” dailies - the most rated local newspapers.

The insert featured numerous articles by prominent Armenian journalists who talked about the importance of focusing first of all on the support to reproductive health issues since many Armenian families face unemployment as a result of economic crisis and the future of growing and upcoming young generations directly depends on the timely support provided to these families by the government of Armenia and local organization working in this field.



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Among the raised issues of concern was suspension of “Ororots” social support programme implemented by local NGOs in Armenian marzes and funded by “Hayastan” All Armenian Fund to support socially vulnerable families in the regions. According to the Programme Coordinator (AAWUE), every year about 5000 young Armenian families from marzes lack essential child care means for their new-borns. “Ororots” aimed at providing these families with free-of-charge child clothing, food, means of hygienic care and other necessary accessories. The importance of continuing this programme was stressed and an appeal was made to all those who do care and want to support young families, the foundation of our future.

Another important topic discussed in the articles was the role of women in mitigating consequences of global crisis and the role of Armenian female entrepreneurs in the national economy who despite unfavorable conditions for conducting business activities and harsh market competition intend to “conquer new markets”. It was stressed that introduction of innovative technologies and approaches by female entrepreneurs should be acknowledged, appreciated and fully supported by the government of Armenia.

The newspaper also features interesting facts and statistical data from around the world on the current trends and situation with population worldwide, including but not limited to ageing of population, demographic crisis, increase of maternal and child deaths, infertility.

The thematic insert became a powerful awareness raising tool which attracted attention of newspaper readers on the importance of women’s rights observed in the context of economic crisis.

Breakfast with Prominent Mass Media Representatives and Journalists

Part of the UN Communication strategy fully focuses on the work with Mass Media to increase awareness on the work of different UN agencies. Meeting in the format of “Media breakfast” was aimed at creating informal and free environment which would allow invitees to openly discuss urgent issues of concern.



The first meeting in this format was organized by UNCT and UNFPA to discuss impact of economic crisis on women worldwide and particularly in Armenia. The following issues were

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presented and discussed with the most prominent Mass Media representatives and journalists:

- *Women and girls suffer disproportionately during times of economic crisis. We need to protect their rights by increasing social investments, especially in reproductive health.*
- *Our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals must remain a global priority, none higher than MDG5 (maternal health) and its target of universal access to reproductive health.*
- *Economic benefits to nations are linked to health, education and workforce opportunities for women.*
- *No investment in development costs so little and brings benefits that are so far-reaching.*

Also, a PSA on gender equality was screened during the breakfast.

The outcome of the discussion was a number of electronic and print publications, as well as radio and TV programs covering the issue.

Talk Show on “Women And Economic Crisis” Organized and Aired on Popular TV Channel

With a purpose to raise awareness of the audience on primary population and gender equality issues in Armenia in the context of world economic crisis, and within the framework of events dedicated to the World Population Day, UNFPA organized a talk show on “Women and the International Financial Crises” topic. The talk show was aired by “Shant” TV on July 12, 2009 and broadcasted in almost all of the country, as well as in Europe, Middle East and North America via satellite.

Famous media specialists produced and facilitated the programme, among them: the Host of the program – political correspondent of “Shant” TV channel Artem Yerkanyan and the programme director – Vahe Gevorkyants, the author of 30 documentary movies and TV programmes, prize winner of four international festivals, laureate of the Special Award of the President of the RA in the field of Art in 2008.



Among participants of the programme were politicians, representatives of RA government, international and non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from UNFPA.

The participants talked about impact and negative consequences of the world economic crisis, discussed how it affects women and Armenian families and possible ways to improve the situation. They stressed the importance of continuing efforts and required dedication to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Participants also observed Armenian

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women's potential and opportunities for women's participation in economic and political life. UNFPA experts presented the UNFPA's approach to the problem by stressing the importance of carrying out family planning and reproductive health related activities.

Faith and Spirituality as Ethical Guidelines for Action:

Promoting active FBO involvement to combat GBV in Armenia

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt, September 1994, UNFPA has been steadily pursuing achievement of the objectives spelled out in ICPD Program of Action and supporting nations worldwide in implementation of ICPD localized national action plans that aim above all to integrate a wide range of population, development and human rights issues.

In the course of the implementation of ICPD Program of Action **Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)** were acknowledged by UNFPA as **important and undeniable agents of change** that can become active promoters and supporters to UNFPA and its activities, thus effectively contributing to success of projects envisaged within the framework of UNFPA main program areas including **Reproductive Health, Women's Empowerment, and Population and Development Strategies**.

Throughout centuries, the Church has been playing a leading role in fostering education and Christian values in Armenian society. Religious institutions provided spiritual and ethical stewardship to families, promoted and disseminated knowledge and humanism among population. Today, Armenian Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) are willingly engaging in numerous activities and events that pave the way to fulfillment of ICPD Programme of Action goals and objectives. Their participation increases trust of population towards implemented projects that among other aim at fighting against gender-based violence (GBV).

In order to effectively address the issue of GBV in Armenian families and to promote understanding of the scope of this problem among priests who directly deliver messages to community members (women, men, and youth), UNFPA and "Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation of the World Council of Churches" (ART) FBO launched a two-year initiative aimed at capacity building of priests. This initiative is implemented within the framework of UNFPA's "Combating Gender-Based Violence in the South Caucasus" (CGBV) project and envisages, the following:

- 1 Elaboration of a manual/guidelines on Christian understanding of anti-GBV approaches for the priests who will address GBV related issues during their services and at work with parishioners;**
- 2 Capacity Building Training for priests and development of "Action plans" to be implemented in the communities they serve;**
- 3 Implementation of Action plans – work with parishioners and counseling for victims of violence.**

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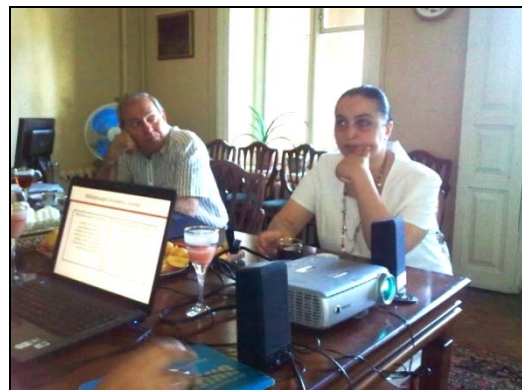
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The manual/guidelines will be elaborated by the group of experts invited by the ART FBO. Experts were invited to a workshop on Gender and GBV, held on July 29 in Etchmiadzin – religious center of Armenia.



During the workshop the experts actively engaged in discussions with a particular focus on adverse cultural effects that may take place if sensitive aspects of GBV phenomenon are not properly presented to the population. At the end, an action plan for the preparation of the first draft of guidelines on Christian understanding of anti-GBV approaches for the priests was developed. According to the outline the following issues will be considered in the manual:

- 1. Introduction to Gender theory: The Concept of Gender, Gender Equity and Equality, Gender Stereotypes, Gender-Based Discrimination**
- 2. Gender Based Violence (including domestic violence): types, manifestations, and consequences**
- 3. Input of Armenian Apostolic Church towards love and peace in families:**
 - Roles of men and women as per perception of Armenian Church;
 - Family and its validation by Church: the sacrament of matrimonial;
 - Sin and virtue in family life: the path from sin to virtue;
 - Preconditions for maintaining health in families from the prism of piety;
 - "Family of Paradise" writing by Mkrtych Khrimyan – Catholicos of All Armenians, religious, public and political outstanding actor of the past century. The work addresses issues of marriage; duties and roles of wife and husband, children and parents; challenges, freedom and mutual respect in family life, etc.
- 4. Cooperation with stakeholders: prospects of expert assistance, information exchange, and joint projects/activities will be considered between Church and civil society organizations, other structures addressing domestic violence.**
- 5. Dissemination of electronic and printed information to public on subject matter.**
- 6. Conclusion: "Love Speech" by John Pluz.**

The manual will be finalized prior to Training for Priests to be held in November, 2009.

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Awareness Raising and Training:

Second Phase of Activities

Awareness raising and education of diverse groups of population on GBV is considered as an important stage in the process of creation of enabling environment for combating GBV in Armenia.

UNFPA CGBV project continues awareness raising and education activities for diverse target groups of population while heavily relying on successful experience of cooperation with the Consortium of NGOs led by the International Center for Human Development (ICHD).

The following target groups were selected for the second phase of awareness raising meetings: journalists and mass media representatives, school teachers and university lecturers, high school and university students, as well as general population – more than 1200 men and women.

The next - training component envisioned under the second phase aims at building capacities of more than 300 representatives of NGOs and Local Self-Government Bodies, Health Institutions and Law-enforcement structures.

This time a special attention will be given also to the **work with victims of violence**, which envisages:

- **Education/ information meetings** for possible victims of GBV,
- **Provision of psychological counseling** to the participants of education/information meetings who acknowledged that they are victims and asked for help
- **Development of detailed guidelines** on psychological counseling and work with victims of violence.

Activities planned for the second phase of the awareness raising and training component will start in September 2009.

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