



PROJECT CHRONICLES

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COMBATING GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE IN
THE SOUTH CAUCASUS
PROJECT/ARMENIA

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STRATEGY - 2009



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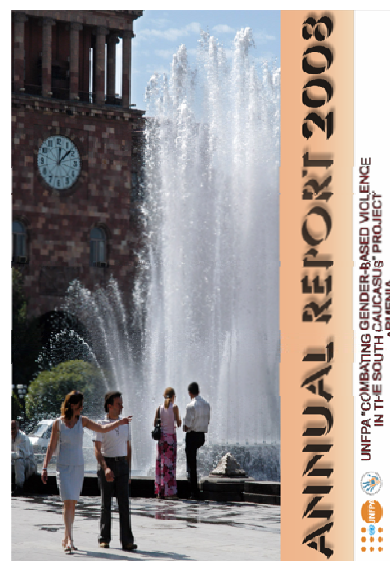
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Increasing project's visibility through raising awareness on the project's activities and results is one of the strategic directions highlighted in Advocacy and Communication strategy of CGBV project in Armenia.

In order to share its best experiences and results with stakeholders and beneficiaries, the project proceeded with preparing and publishing Annual Report that focused on the past year's project activities.

The narrative Report is structured in a way that would ensure the logical sequence and linkage between the project components and implemented activities which all together create a complete picture of the project's common goal and outputs on one hand and implemented activities and achieved results on the other.

The Report opens up with general information on UNFPA, its mission, goals and ongoing projects in Armenia. Then, the focus narrows down to GBV as a global issue of concern and situation with GBV in Armenia. After this introductory part, the project related information is presented in separate chapters each representing respective Project Component, Output, and Indicators, Activities planned and actually implemented and Results achieved in 2008. Each Chapter concludes with the AWP that shows activities planned for the year 2009 in the context of the respective Project Component.



The Report highlights numerous activities and events that were implemented in 2008 as per project outputs:

- **OUTPUT 1: Qualitative and quantitative research conducted on the causes and consequences of gender based violence (particularly domestic violence) to be used in awareness raising activities and as a basis for the formulation of appropriate national policies and strategies to combat gender based violence.**
- **OUTPUT 2: Increased awareness and improved knowledge among public (women, men and youth) on gender issues, rights and equality to combat gender based violence.**
- **OUTPUT 3: Improved enabling environment (plan, programs, policies and laws) to promote and protect rights of women and girls and combat gender based violence particularly domestic violence.**
- **OUTPUT 4: Capacity strengthened at both national and local levels for protecting and enforcing the rights of women and building reporting mechanisms.**



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➤ **OUTPUT 5: Established mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and cooperation between all actors working on gender issues and creating inter-country networks among agencies working on GBV,;**

as well as presents information on activities envisaged for 2009. The Report concludes with inviting all interested organizations to join together efforts and resources for a better effectiveness and higher impact of activities through increasing cooperation and developing synergies in this field.

P.S. Electronic version of the Annual Report is available at the following link:
<http://www.un.am/?laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=124>

FOCUS GROUP MEETING ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION FROM GBV PERSPECTIVE

In 2008, UNFPA CGBV project in Armenia started implementation of the legal component of the project. Within the framework of this component a group of local and international legal experts conducted assessment of the national legislation from GBV perspective with a purpose to review whether, how and to what extent the national laws of Armenia comply with international legislation, legal norms and standards pertaining to GBV prevention.

Nowadays, the assessment has entered into its final stage and the experts are preparing a final report with outcomes of the assessment and general recommendations that will be presented to the RoA government for further consideration.



Prior to official presentation of the results of assessment, a focus group meeting was held on June 3, 2009 with participation of the group of legal experts as well as invitees

representing relevant state structures, civil society and international organizations working on GBV related issues, including: RA National Assembly, RA Ministry of Culture, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Issues (MLSI), National Institute of Labour and Social Researches, RA Ministry of Justice, International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), HCA-Armenia, "Women's Forum" NGO, "Association of Armenian Women with University Education" NGO (AAWUE), and OSCE Yerevan Office.

Ms. Sargizova, CGBV Project Coordinator opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and presenting the main goals of assessment of the national legislation from GBV perspective and main directions of the work carried out by the group of national and international legal experts. Then Coordinator of the team of experts, Ms.



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Anna Aghababyan presented main findings of the assessment and passed the floor to the experts who shared assessment results of the following major legal instruments of Armenia:

- **RA Constitution, Civil and Family Codes**
- **Criminal Code, Criminal Procedures and Labour Codes**
- **Legal field of Social protection (Social Sector legislation and Health-care Sector legislation).**

Presentations were followed by discussion that included Q&A session led by legal experts. During the discussion participants also made their comments and suggestions regarding produced recommendations, mainly those concerning the Constitution, Civil and Family Codes, Social Sector and Health-care Sector legislation.



Following the Q&A session and discussion, it was decided that the results of the assessment will be presented in the format that will include both the analytical part and the recommendations reflecting on the main strategic directions to be pursued by relevant state structures and legislators who will work on the improvement of the national legislation from GBV perspective. The final version of the results of the Assessment of

the national legislation from GBV perspective will be published in July.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF AAWUE "WOMEN'S DIALOGUE" BULLETIN DEVOTED TO GBV ISSUES IN ARMENIA

A special issue of "Women's Dialogue" bulletin published by "Armenian Association of Women with University Education" NGO (AAWUE) entirely focuses on gender-based violence issues in Armenia. It is a unique report that reflects on the personal feedbacks of experts and participants of trainings and information meetings conducted by AAWUE within a framework of CGV project training component implemented by AAWUE in cooperation with the International Centre for Human Development (IChD) and Scientific Association of Medical Student's of Armenia (SAMSA) NGOs.

The front-page presents a general overview of the training component implemented by AAWUE and summarizes results of trainings and information meetings conducted by AAWUE for diverse target groups of participants from 7 regions of Armenia, including village governors, high school students and teachers, male and female university students, as well as women and men.

The next page presents a brief assessment of the situation with GBV made by Jina Sargizova, UNFPA CGBV Project Coordinator. It focuses on the local efforts in the field of GBV prevention and elimination and presents UNFPA CGBV project, its goals and main directions of work in Armenia including cooperation with NGOs.



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The following articles were also included in the bulletin:

- "Activities targeting Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Gyumri" by Ms. Knarik Sargsyan, Local coordinator of "Against Gender-Based Violence" project in Gyumri. The article focuses on the information meetings conducted for the groups of men in Gyumri, the major city of Shirak region, which is believed to be the most vulnerable region from the perspective of both socio-economic conditions and GBV prevalence.
- "The importance of awareness raising activities in contributing to better understanding of GBV phenomenon" by Ms. Liana Ghazaryan, ToT participant and employee of the Legal and Monitoring Department of the RA Ministry of Culture. She presents her personal observations based on personal experience attained as a result of participation in GBV ToT trainings.



- "To Break the Silence" by Armine Hovhannisyanyan, a student of journalism faculty of the Northern University of Yerevan. The article provides a deep and thoughtful insight into the problem of GBV, gender-based discrimination and trafficking, linking these issues together through identifying the common source of these problems, gender inequalities that existed and still pertain in our society.

- "Student-participants of information meetings expressed their willingness to participate in activities aimed at combating Gender-Based Violence" by Ms. Nina Hovhannisyanyan. She reflects on the importance of engaging young generations into various activities in the field of combating GBV in Armenia and highlights the vital role young generations play as a source of potential positive change in society, particularly in the field of GBV prevention and elimination.

- "Combating gender based violence: present challenges" by Mr. Armen Avetyan, ToT expert. The article provides a review of the trainings and information meetings conducted in Lori region. The author points out that among the most interesting and important information meetings were those that involved participation of village governors from Spitak, Gugark, Tumanyan, Stepanavan, and Tashir communities. The participants of these meetings greatly valued the importance and urgency of awareness raising on HIV/AIDS and GBV topics in villages where male migration rate in search of seasonal works abroad is very high.

- "Calls for and pursuit of gender equality are very natural for Armenians" by Mr. Artak Hovhannisyanyan, ToT expert. He explores different dimensions of the social stereotypes and perceptions that dominate today in Armenian society.



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- “White ribbon” suits everyone” by Ruzanna Panoyan, expert of “Against Gender-Based Violence in Armenia” project. The article starts with affirmation that “Violence will never yield anything good”, the words of a student from a small Dilijan school that participated in one of the awareness raising meetings. The author shares her personal learning experience in building awareness and knowledge on GBV phenomenon and different aspects of everyday life where GBV is manifested. As she mentions in the article, during one of awareness raising meetings topic of violence against men was also discussed. The participants pointed out difficulty of corresponding to clichés of “the real man” and “manhood” in Armenian society. She concludes that all male participants of the meetings agreed to wear white ribbon as a token of fight against despotism and violence against women.

FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION AT ARMENIAN OPEN UNIVERSITY

Recently, CGBV project organized a film screening event for the students of the law faculty of Armenian Open University. It was the second event that the project conducted for the academic community of the University.

During the film screening session three documentaries were demonstrated: “Zone of Silence” produced by Armenian film producer, Ms. Mariam Ohanyan, and two parts of “Women on the Front Line” documentary series translated and post scored for Armenian audience.

Students tried to compare Armenian realities with those of other countries based on the demonstrated films, to identify what are the dominating gender stereotypes and norms present in Armenian society and to observe how these link with GBV phenomenon. The films gave students a unique opportunity to observe different approaches towards finding solutions to GBV problem in different countries.

INTERVIEW WITH MARIAM OHANIAN, DIRECTOR OF “ZONE OF SILENCE” FILM ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The film “Zone of silence” , directed by Mariam Ohanyan features a story recited by a girl from one of Armenian villages where she was born and lived until she moved to Yerevan city. The heroine mentally travels back to her village sharing her memories with the audience. She admits that the only brightest moments of her village life are closely linked to her school memories as school was the only discrimination-free environment where boys and girls equally enjoyed and benefited from education. Then she told her schoolmate’s life story full of disappointments, regret, lack of understanding and estrangement.

What prompted and inspired you to shoot a film on the topic of violence against women in villages?



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M.O. - Well, I am very interested in the phenomenon of violence as such and consider violence against women as one side of it. Unfortunately, there is a certain "tension" present in our society and in my opinion violence might be consequence of this tension as well. I can't tell for sure what causes this tension; it might be due to our national temper and high level of sensitivity and emotional vulnerability that we are prone to as a southern nation. Regarding the reason behind shooting a film on the topic of violence against village women, this idea came to me after hearing a rather sad story shared with me by one of my students who grew up in a village.



What was the message that you tried to convey to your audience, what did you want to show and to explain through this film?

I wanted first of all to address the problem of this village where inhabitants live in harsh living conditions, in a sort of "closed" community with its own rules, traditional and moral norms of behavior that can't or hardly can be overcome. In fact, it will take a whole lot of courage to go against these norms or to try to change something and we can't expect this kind of heroism from women who live there.

In your opinion, what's the reason behind violence against rural women, and to what extent does their situation differ from the situation of urban women?

I strongly believe that a family should build on mutual respect and love. However, in villages there are fewer chances that a marriage will be based on shared feelings and love, thus lack of love in relationships might become one of the possible reasons of violence outbursts. Also, I would like to point out that level of education and well-being has little to do with this form of violence since even in the city-based, well-educated and prosperous families one might come across this phenomenon. Thus, I assign a great importance to love and to feelings as many times we forget that in some cases a man can also become victim of violence when his right to love and to be with a woman he loves is violated by dominant family members who deprive him of decision-making in love related affairs. An example of this can be a mother selecting a bride for her son or deciding whether or not he should marry.

What advice would you give to heroine of your film and women she tells us about?

First of all, I should say that destroying is always easier than creating and from this point of view, saving women from violence and helping victims is a very difficult task. A woman has to understand and to make a decision whether or not she wants to be subjected to violence, whether she has self-respect or she prefers to remain a victim and tolerate violence. In many cases these women are housewives who depend on



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their husbands both economically and emotionally. In a way, this situation reminds me of situation with a free person and a slave. A person in freedom always pays for it with numerous difficulties in life and responsibility for personal decisions while a slave isn't responsible for decision and takes everything as granted from the "master". Thus, it is a matter of personal preferences too.

Did you encounter any difficulties while making this film taken into account that the topic of violence against women itself is not an easy one?

Yes, indeed it was a rather challenging and difficult task. First, the heroine of the film refused to get involved in the project and didn't want to participate in the shooting sessions. Although later she changed her mind, difficulties went on as villagers completely refused to cooperate with us. Although villagers seemed to be very nice and warm people at first glance, they would immediately close up and refuse to talk as soon as the topic of violence against women would be mentioned. They even didn't permit the operator to shoot a village wedding scene which would have greatly enriched the film. Initially we envisaged shooting many scenes from every day life of villagers, actively involving them in the creative process. Unfortunately, this wall of silence persisted.

What are your future creative plans?

I would like to shoot a film with participation of the real hero, ex-victim who would be ready to open up and freely talk about this problem.

Interview conducted by Anna Arakelyan, CGBV project

ARMENIAN CGBV PROJECT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2009

In the beginning of 2009, UNFPA CGBV Armenian team moved ahead with updating *Advocacy and Communication Strategy* of the project. The strategy was initially designed in 2008 to serve as *guidelines while carrying out activities targeting awareness raising on gender based violence (GBV) among public in general and the key target groups in particular.*

Based on the set of strategic objectives, the team compiled a new Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the year 2009 that lists activities which can be implemented according to the following three strategic directions:

Raising awareness on GBV among representatives of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), independent journalists and mass media representatives, police, health and social workers, victims of violence and male groups

- Dissemination of Nationwide Survey Findings on GBV;
- Duplication and Dissemination of PSA on domestic violence (prepared in 2008);



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- Post scoring, dissemination and screening of " Women on the frontline" documentary series (prepared by UNFPA and UNIFEM in 2008);
- Awareness raising and capacity building workshops for priests;
- Awareness raising and capacity building workshops for independent journalists and mass media representatives;
- Awareness raising and capacity building workshops for police, health and social workers;
- Education/Information meetings for victims of violence;
- A public campaign for male involvement in combating GBV within the framework of 16 Days campaign;
- Design, printing and dissemination of a special publication on 16 days campaign 2008 in Armenia;
- Design, publishing and dissemination of Manuals on Gender and GBV;

Initiating and promoting social dialogue on GBV issues in Armenia

- Round table discussions with participation of international and national organizations working in the field of GBV prevention and mass media representatives;
- Round table discussions with MPs and policy makers presenting the findings of GBV Survey, campaigns and project progress;
- Facilitated TV discussions and special TV programmes on GBV with participation of public figures and experts;
- Support to publishing of special issues on newspapers covering GBV topics;
- Round table discussions dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the ICPD;

Increasing project's visibility through raising awareness on the project's activities and results

- Publishing of bi-monthly "Project Chronicles" E-Newsletter;
- Printing and dissemination of fact sheets, success stories, press releases, information kits;
- Analysis of Mass Media coverage of the project activities;
- Creation and maintenance of E-library, partners' database and e-distribution of info. materials;
- Design, printing and dissemination of 2008 Annual report on CGBV project implementation in Armenia;
- UNFPA CGBV Regional / Armenian websites preparation, launching, and update.

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