

# Existing Gaps in Gender Programming in Armenia

A study conducted for the Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Armenia (2011) by Hillevi House and Pavlina Ekdahl students by the Gender Studies Faculty at Lund University.

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# Existing Gaps in Gender Programming

## Task

Identify local and international organizations that have ever implemented gender-related programs/projects in Armenia since early 2000's. Elaborate a contact list of organizations, their areas of expertise and the level of involvement. Produce a short report on existing gaps in gender programming that Eurasia Partnership Foundation (hereinafter EPF) might focus on in its (future) programming.

## Method

In our research on gender projects and organizations we use a broad definition of gender that includes working specifically with the categories women, men and LGBT persons. This means that we include the three categories women, men and LGBT in the area of gender. We are including organizations working with LGBT issues, i.e. sexual orientation and gender identity, since sexuality and gender are closely interconnected.

The aim of our research is to identify organizations working with gender projects. In the selection of the organizations we started by visiting a website that list non governmental organizations in order to find all NGOs working in the area of gender.

We focused on the organizations labeled as "women's issues" in order to get an overview of NGOs working in the gender area. "Gender", "men's issues" or "LGBT" label did not exist, why we only included organization listed under "women issues" in this first stage. The labeling system might not be reliable in the way that organizations under other labels than women's issues might have projects that would fall under the gender area.<sup>1</sup>

As already mentioned our definition of gender is also broader and include other dimensions than just "women's issues". Another problem is that the catalogue published on the website might not be up to date.

Due to the limited period of time for our study we only included organizations located in Yerevan. We decided only to contact the organizations that had an e-mail address in order to distinguish the less serious organizations from the relevant. After this selection we had narrowed the number of organizations down to 21.

After contacting all the organizations by e-mail (both in Armenian and in English) we managed to get in contact with a few of them. We received answer from only 2 of the 21 organizations. We realized that many organizations where not active. A majority of the e-mail addresses were not in use.

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<sup>1</sup> For example "human rights", "family issues" etc.

In total we meet with 12 organizations. We got in contact with many of them through, what might be described as, the snowball method; the organizations that we meet with referred to each other, and in some cases they also had the same partner organizations and donors. In this way we managed to get in touch with the most active organizations located in Yerevan. We have been in contact with both local NGOs and international organizations. The international organizations we have been in contact with are OSCE, UNDP and Helsinki Citizen Assembly. And the local NGOs are Women's resource center, Women right center, Sexual assault crisis center, Armenian young women's association, We for civil equality, Democracy today, Armenian association of women with university education, Society with out violence and Public information and need of knowledge.

For the interviews with the organizations we used semi structured interview method. We asked the organizations to tell us about their main area of activity; in what way they work with gender issues and if they had any specific gender projects. We also asked about their target group(s), either in specific projects or in general. These areas were the focus for the interviews.

Our research is qualitative and the results of the interviews are interpreted through gender theories that will be presented in the theoretical chapter.

## Theoretical perspectives

### Definition of Gender

We understand the term "gender" as a socially constructed category and will use the definition of WHO to define gender:

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Simplified:

*"Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories.<sup>2</sup>*

### Gender inequality

To understand gender inequality Yvonne Hirdmans theory about the gender system is relevant. This theory is based on two notions. The first notion is a distinction between men and women which creates a binary gender system, i.e. a dichotomy where men and women are assigned different areas and characteristics. The second notion is the existence of a hierarchy between the two genders, male is superior female. Men are also the norm of human beings, thus represents the normal and the universal.<sup>3</sup> The gender system creates inequality, for example in form of domestic violence.

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<sup>2</sup> World Health organization (<http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/>)

<sup>3</sup> Hirdman, Yvonne (1997) "Genussystemet – reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning" I Furuland, Lars & Svedjedal, Johan (red.) Litteratursociologi – texter om litteratur och samhälle Lund: Studentlitteratur

The inequality between men and women is linked to a hierarchical gender relation where what is considered typically masculine is usually superior to what is considered typically feminine. Violence is seen as a structural element in the way that men's violence against women in intimate relationships [i.e. domestic violence] is seen as a consequence of the unequal power relations between men and women in society. In other words [domestic violence] reveals the gender inequality, or the gender system, in which we exist within. [Domestic violence] is also understood as a means to maintain the gender system and in this way a hindrance in reaching gender equality. [our translation and notes]<sup>4</sup>

Gender inequality in society can also be seen through a vertical segregation, or a "authority gap". This means that men are more likely than women to reach authority positions.<sup>5</sup>

### **Women's studies and Gender studies**

In order to analyze how the organizations work with gender we find it important to give a short overview of gender studies, this because gender studies as a discipline gives a broad understanding of the different ways in which one can interpret gender as an analytical category. An overview will also give an understanding of how focus has change throughout history when it comes to gender and gender studies.

Gender studies examine the entire gender system, this means that it examine how cultures, societies, political organizations and ways of thinking are based on, and depend on, a binary notion of gender. Gender studies regard gender as a sociocultural category rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon.<sup>6</sup>

An important development in the field of gender studies is the shift of focus in some aspects regarding the discipline. Throughout the 1970s the focus was on a difference between the two sexes, for instance that of how women's sexuality differ from men's sexuality. The subject of women studies were women, and women where seen as a universal and homogeneous category. Focus then shifted from difference between women and men to difference within in the category of woman. The fact that the subject of study ("women") was viewed as a coherent group was now criticized. Gender (identity construction) was studied through the matrix of race, class and gender. The new focus constitutes an important change in the history of gender studies. The change of focus has led to a renaming of many "women studies" departments to "gender studies".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Burman, s. 41

<sup>5</sup> Barnes, Medora W. "Gender Wage Gap." Encyclopedia of Gender and Society. 2008. SAGE Publications. 8 Dec. 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Roof, Judith. "Gender Studies." Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender. Ed. Fedwa Malti-Douglas. Vol. 2. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 624-628. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 12 Dec. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

## **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality theory can be viewed as a part of the change, and shift of focus, that has taken place in the field of gender studies. By applying intersectional theory one can address the difference within the group women, rather than to see the groups as universal and homogeneous. Intersectionality can serve as a useful analytical tool to make visible the differences both within the category of women and the category of men.<sup>8</sup>

An intersectional perspective is aimed at trying to understand how different power structures interact. With the notion that gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality etc. are interconnected and operate simultaneously, an intersectional way of thinking offers a critique of one-dimensional analysis of power relations. Consequently one can not exclusively take into consideration, for example, gender in an analysis of power relations. An example of how an intersectional approach can be understood is in the specific situation of women of color; the power relations of patriarchy and racism interact and are interdependent, and form the identity and situation of a woman.<sup>9</sup>

## **Queer theory**

The main focus of queer theory is to examine the role of sexuality. Questions raised are for instance how sexual norms occur, what sexuality is, and how sexuality has changed throughout history. Of great importance is also to see how the concept of sexuality is interconnected with gender and theories of masculinity and femininity. It is also important to see these components through a power perspective.<sup>10</sup>

The use of queer theory in the field of gender studies can, as intersectionality, be considered as a reason for the change in the history of women studies. Since queer theory focus on the importance of sexuality as well as gender, queer theory offers a perspective in which one can see how sexuality and gender are strongly linked together. Queer theory directs criticism towards an essentialist view of categories, for example the notion that the categories man and woman are natural and fixed.

Heteronormativity is important for the understanding of queer theory. Heteronormativity is based on the notion that heterosexuality is natural and normal. The notion that heterosexuality is natural makes heterosexuality seem superior. Heteronormativity however is not only about sexual orientation but also about gender.<sup>11</sup> Woman and man as binary categories is relevant for maintaining a heteronormative way of thinking, since heterosexuality requires the categories of man and woman.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> de los Reyes, Mulinari 2005 s. 90-99.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Ambjörnsson 2006 s. 35-48

<sup>11</sup> For instance, the heteronorm requires that a man behaves according to the norm for how a man "should" behave, if a man instead would behave as a woman (i.e. in a feminine way) he is breaking the heteronorm.

<sup>12</sup> Ambjörnsson 2006, s. 51-82

## **Masculinity studies**

As women studies have focused on developing theories on women, sexuality, gender and identity, the interest in exploring masculinity grew. But it is only recently that that gender and masculinity have become a subject of disciplinary study.<sup>13</sup>

The subject of masculinity studies is the male. Masculinity studies explore subjects such as male identities, gender roles, bodies, sexualities, relationships between men and women, fatherhood, sports, work, the state and criminality. Before masculinity studies emerged, few have questioned conceptions of masculinity, maleness, manhood or the category male. Masculinity studies has its base in post-modern theoretical perspectives that consider gender to be a social construction, therefor the existence of multiple masculinities is acknowledge.<sup>14</sup>

## **Summary of the main areas of work**

We have identified a number of areas in which the different organizations work. The categories we have identified are based on the information we have received through our interviews. All the areas except LGBT and sexual health and rights have women as their target group.<sup>15</sup>

### **Empowerment**

Some organizations working in the area of empowerment are Women Resource Center Armenia (WRCA), Armenian Young Women Association (AYWA), Society without violence (SWV) and OSCE. WRCA organize human rights trainings for women, they also have women clubs working in many different areas. AYWA offers leadership programs for women, both young girls and women. SWV work mainly in the regions by having trainings in schools for young women. OSCE worked with a project in which they empowered women in regions to open resource centers, and by that empower other women.

### **Gender based violence**

In the area of gender based violence one can address domestic violence, sexual violence and trafficking. The organizations working directly with victims of gender based violence is Sexual Assault Crisis Center (SACC) and Women right Center (WRC). SACC work with victims of sexual assault and WRC work with victims of domestic violence. While SACC work mainly with counseling (through a hotline and meetings), WRC also provide shelters. The organizations also work in the legal sphere by lobbying for stronger legal protection in these areas. Some organization work with domestic violence in the sense that they work to empower women in order to educate them on their rights, and in this way indirectly combat violence against women (for example. SWV, WRCA). One organization, Democracy today, work with a anti-trafficking project.

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<sup>13</sup> Phillips, Debby A. "Masculinity Studies." Encyclopedia of Gender and Society. 2008. SAGE Publications. 12 Dec. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> The areas of work of course interacts, and therefor it can be tricky to do this kind of distinction between the areas.

### **Political representation**

Some organizations work with women's political representation. The organizations work mostly in the regions, in order to increase the representation of women in the political area in villages.

An organization working with this is UNDP, they had trainings for women candidates.

Democracy today had a leadership project for rural women to increase their chances of becoming mayor in their villages.

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)**

Public Information and Need of Knowledge (PINK Armenia) and We for Civil Equality (WFCE) work actively with LGBT-issues. Both organizations work with sexual health issues, both within the LGBT community and society in general. For example PINK Armenia organize awareness raising activities. The organizations also work with empowerment of vulnerable groups (mostly LGBT-people) and with protection of their human rights.

### **Peace and conflict**

A lot of organizations also work with the representation of women in the peace building area, mainly concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Examples of organizations working in the peace building area are Helsinki Citizen Assembly, WRCA, Democracy today and SWV.

### **Sexual health and rights**

As already mentioned PINK Armenia and WFCE work with sexual health issues, mainly concerning LGBT-people. WRCA and WRC work with women's sexual health and rights. For instance, WRCA arrange meetings for young women in which their sexual rights is discussed. WRC focus on reproductive rights and lobby for medical abortions.

### **Entrepreneurship**

To help women get an income by being self employed or finding a job, some organizations work in the area of entrepreneurship. Examples of organizations working with this is AYWA and Democracy today. They give trainings in, for instance, language, quilting, sewing and computer skills.

# Analysis

## Identity politics

An observation made is that many of the organizations use “women’s issues” to describe their scope of work. To have women as a target group results in that women as a group are given a specific identity. The aim of solving the specific issues of women can be described as identity politics. From an intersectional perspective the label “women’s issues” becomes problematic in the way that the identity of “women” become fixed and women are seen as a homogeneous group. Other categories besides gender then become invisible. A norm is created for which the concept of “woman” gets to represent a certain normative woman who is for instance is heterosexual, non disabled, not an immigrant etc. This results in a failure to see that many power relations interact, and that a person can be a part of many social groups that effects his/her life.

As gender is a socially constructed category, it is also problematic from a queer theory perspective to talk about women’s issues, since one tends to perpetuate stereotypes of femininity (and masculinity). These categories tend to be limiting both for women and men as they serve as excluding categories which also creates inequality. The separation of the two sexes, through the gender system and heteronormativity, does not only create gender inequality, but also make some people fall out of the concept of what a real woman (and a real men) is. Women who deviate from the heteronormative order by being for example lesbian, bisexual or transgender risk being marginalized; being a woman in a biological sense is not enough, to be a woman that can be represented by an organization working with “women’s issues”, one also need to have a feminine gender expression and identity, and being heterosexual.

We For Civil Equality is the only organization we have been in contact with that use the term intersectionality when describing their work. It is important to point out that some organizations work with an intersectional approach even though it is not defined by the organizations themselves as intersectionality. When working with intersectionality the organizations usually work with the intersections gender and age, gender and sexuality, gender and ethnicity/nationality. Because gender usually equals women, furthermore this results in the intersections women and age (young women), women and sexuality (lesbian and bisexual women), women and ethnicity/nationality (immigrant women).

## Strategy

To refer to women as a group and “women’s issues” can be seen as a strategic choice. Even though the group women is not homogeneous, it is in some cases important to acknowledge the groups common issues. A urgent issue to address is for instance women’s political representation. The gender system makes it difficult for women in general to access political power. Women are structurally subordinated men on an international level, and it shows very clearly in the case of political representation (in Armenia and worldwide), and also within e.g. the labor market. To address women’s issues is problematic, nevertheless it might be necessary. Due to the gender system, women are generally subordinated men, and therefor given less power. To reach gender equality the strategy of addressing women as a group can in this context be a crucial first step.

The organizations strategies can, with this understanding, be interpreted as a reaction of the gender inequality in society.

### **Women's issues**

Many of the organizations we have been in contact with work specifically with women's rights and issues; the main focus and target group are women. In their scope of work the term gender is rarely used. When the term is used it refers to women and does not include men. It is interesting to notice that few organizations working with gender equality work actively with men. Based on this observation gender, for a lot of organizations equal women, and men are left out from the concept of gender equality. Some of the organizations had a manager responsible for gender programs/projects. In these cases the managers where all women. This also confirms that gender issues is seen as something only concerning women.

### **Men's issues?**

Masculinity studies offer a perspective that focus on men, in the strive for gender equality. Since masculinity studies focus on men as the subject of research the concept of gender is broadened. As women studies become gender studies and offered critical studies of men and masculinity, the issue of gender equality also became an issue directed to men. This means that to only work exclusively with women is not sufficient to solve the problem of gender inequality. One also need to address men.

As already mentioned, not many organizations work specifically with men as a target group. The few that do are mostly active in the LGBT-area, i.e. they work with men that deviate from the norm of masculinity. In the area of gender based violence the lack of organizations working men as a target group is specificity problematic from a gender perspective. Gender based violence can be interpreted as a problem of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>16</sup>

The organizations that address the issue only work with the victims of the gender based violence.<sup>17</sup> The problem with this approach is that one does not work with the cause of the problem, but only with quick fix solutions. In other words, one does not focus enough on the power structures behind issue of gender based violence. Moreover a long term perspective is needed in order to come to terms with the issue.<sup>18</sup>

Working with women to help them understand there rights, as some organizations do, is crucial to empower women. When the mentality of women change they are more likely to claim there rights. But in order to reach fundamental change men's mentality also need to be changed.

The fact that only a few organizations work with the attitudes of men reflect on how the gender system makes men the norm in society. By calling, for instance, gender based violence a

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<sup>16</sup> The culturally normative ideal of male behavior.

<sup>17</sup> One of the organization (AYWA) work with men on a small scale.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, domestic violence is an issue not only regarding women in the sense that men are usually the ones violating women. Therefore one needs to work with changing the attitudes of men.

“Women’s issue” it becomes a specific and narrow area only addressing women. One does not see men as a category that needs to be changed. Men are the norm in society and thus never questioned.

It might be more difficult to work with men, due to men’s privileged position. Since women are subordinated and therefor effected by the gender system in a more negative way, they are more likely to want to change there position.

### **Sexuality and gender**

When working with issues regarding sexuality, the concept of heteronormativity and man as the norm become visible in the organizations scope of work. The target group when working with issues regarding sexuality is usually sexual minorities and women. For example, no organizations work with heterosexual men as a target group, when it comes to issues of sexuality. Sexuality issues is seen as something only concerning women and sexual minorities, especially gay men. Even when it comes to working with sexual minorities, men are the norm, especially when working with sexual health issues. The group gay men is usually the target group, not lesbian or bisexual women.<sup>19</sup>

The organizations do not work with attitudes regarding sexuality in general to a large extent, the main focus area is sexual health. Some organizations (Women’s Resource Center etc.) work with giving women information about their sexual rights, but not many organizations work with mainstream society when it comes to sexual norms.

Only two organizations work with LGBT issues as their main area of activity. They are also two of the few organizations working specifically with men, in their work with MSM (men having sex with men). LGBT issues/rights might seem like a very specific area that only concerns a minority of the population. As sexual orientation and gender are closely linked together according to a queer theory point of view, both categories serve as an important theoretical perspective of power.

### **Political representation**

Even though the representation of women in the National Assembly is very low, our findings show that the organizations we have been in contact with do not work with women’s representation on a national level. Some work on a regional level (villages) but only with empowerment of women. The problematic political representation clearly shows the vertical segregation in society. Men is the a norm in general, and specifically when it comes to decision-making and positions of power. The reasons why no organization work with the political representation of women on a higher level can be many. It is clear however that the fundamental gender power structure, the gender system, is never problematized. There is a structural exclusion of women in politics that is never questioned. Instead, it is women themselves who are defined as the problem; It is they who must change in order to reach higher positions or get into politics,

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<sup>19</sup> WFCE work with LBT women (lesbian, bisexual and transgender) but not to a large extent, and mainly with rights rather then sexual health.

therefore the organizations work with women, mostly through empowerment projects. Due to the norm men's position in politics is taken for granted and seen as natural. Women on the other hand are not seen as "natural" leaders and therefore not an important component in the political sphere.

### **Peace building and women**

A common way in which the organizations work to increase the political representation of women is through peace building projects. In our findings it is a far more common area ..then working with women's representation in other political spheres. The reason for this might be the essentialization of women; women are seen as more peaceful. Women are not seen as having a violent nature, why they are seen as needed in the peace building area.

## **Conclusion**

When working with gender most of the organizations are focused specifically on women's issues. No organization work with men to a large extent. To only work with women will not lead to gender equality, one need to have a long term perspective.

In the field of women's issues, women are in many cases preserved as a homogeneous group. This can be problematic but can also serve a purpose as a strategy, especially when it comes to political representation of women.

When it comes to the area of sexual health, the organizations do not work with the attitudes of the mainstream society to a large extent. The organizations mainly work with sexual minorities and women.

Women's political representation in the national assembly is an urgent issue, this is however not worked with. The organizations only work on a lower level and with women's empowerment, men's positions are never problematized.

## Recommendations

We provide the following recommendations for future gender programming:

1. Have an overall understanding of the gender perspective.
2. Have theoretical knowledge about gender and acknowledge the gender perspective as a perspective relevant for all areas of societal analysis.
3. Have an analysis of gender inequality and its consequences in different areas of society.
4. Be able to give a clear definition of gender in order to have a clear understanding and formulation of gender and be precise about the understanding of gender in a specific project. Be specific and clear about what is included in the scope of gender.
5. Be clear about the project's target group(s) and the outcomes for the specific target groups both in a short term and long term perspective.
6. Put emphasis on the evaluation part of the project. Evaluation of gender projects is important especially considering long term perspective in working with gender.

Addressing the differences between women (for example: nationality, ethnicity, age, sexuality): In gender projects the differences between women are rarely acknowledged. Therefore there is a need for finding a balance in working with women as a group and still be sensitive to the diversity among women and take into consideration the different needs of women. This is a part of an *intersectional approach*.

Inclusion of men: An important part of working with gender is the inclusion of men. In order to reach gender equality it is crucial to work with men and men's attitudes, stereotypes and the role of men.

**From a Swedish context some examples of working with men can be given. The examples given include the areas of men's attitudes, gender stereotypes and issues concerning men's psychological health.<sup>20</sup>**

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.machofabriken.se/-Informationssidor-/In-English/>  
<http://www.rikskriscentrum.se/english.htm>

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# ANNEX

## **Organization: Women's Resource Center Armenia (WRCA)**

Head of organization: Lara Aharonian

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Contact details: [contact@womenofarmenia.org](mailto:contact@womenofarmenia.org)

+374-60-445626

Web: [www.womenofarmenia.org](http://www.womenofarmenia.org)

WRCA was founded 2003 at Yerevan state university campus and served as a drop-in center for female students. Moved to a new location 2006, and there activities became open for all women.

### **Area of activities**

WRCA is a feminist member-based and volunteer-based organization and work a lot with activism for example demonstrations and public events. They work with diversity within the group women.

#### 1. Women human rights training

One of their main activities is a five days women human rights training which they have every other month, this is also a way to get members. The human rights training include training seminars on discrimination, gender based violence and peace building.

#### 2. Women's sexual rights

“My body, my right”

Discussion in small groups of women about subjects like sexuality, women's bodies, period, orgasm, intercourse, identity, sexual orientation, sexual violence/harassment and myths about virginity. This training is very popular and they have waiting lists.

### **Legal area**

In the legal area they lobby for changing the law on sexual violence. They presented a suggestion on a new law and it has passed the first hearing in the parliament.

#### 3. Women clubs

The organization have a lot of volunteer-based activities in forms of different women clubs. They give language classes in English and French (depends on the volunteers knowledge), they also have art classes, photo labs, film clubs, queer women clubs and clubs for young mothers.

#### 4. Refugee women

WRC work ones a week with women refugees from Iraq.

#### 5. Peace building

The organization work with women issues and relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in order to make women a part of the peace building process. They work together with some NGOs in Azerbaijan.

### **Partners/Coalitions**

Women support center

PINK Armenia

Democracy today

Human rights defenders in South Caucasus

HIV advocacy groups

Kvinna till Kvinna (their only donor)

Association of women for development

Global found for women

**Organization: Sexual Assault Crisis Center (SACC)**

Head of organization: Lara Aharonian

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SACC was founded in 2006 and started off with a volunteer based hot line. They work with women's sexual rights and the victims of sexual assault. SACC is an independent NGO but is strongly connected to WRCA.

**Area of activity**

The aim of the organization is to help victims of sexual assault, to get through the aftermath of a recent or past sexual assault.

**Hot line**

SACC has a hotline service for victims of sexual assault. With the hotline they help women through phone counseling.

**Individual help**

The organization gives individual counseling to victims. They also offer other services, like accompany victims of sexual crime to hospitals or the police station.

**Awareness raising**

They also raise awareness about sexual violence by having trainings for students in schools. Another example of activities is round table discussions. From 2011 they have also started working in the regions.

**Organization: Armenian young women's association (AYWA)**

Head of organization: Lilit Asatryan

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AYWA was established in 2004. The organization work mainly with equal opportunities and women issues.

**Area of activities****Leadership programs**

In the projects/programs they work with courses, trainings including team building, how to be involved in decision-making, democracy, governmental system, advocacy, women's networking. Their activities in this area are divided into two age groups: girls in the ages 13-18 and women in the ages 19-40 years old.

**Girls state project**

The goal of this project is to make the girls proud of their country, and to encourage girls to be active in public life, to try to solve problems by advocacy. They also wanted to create networks between girls in different regions. In a long term perspective they want these networks to lead to the establishment of women councils. The project started with 77 girls, but now more than 1500 girls are active. In this project they worked with the Ministry of Education and Science.

#### Personal & Business skills/Entrepreneur development

The organization also have trainings on how to start new business, help to develop business plans and make already existing businesses successful. They have had many success stories and worked with different kind of businesses, for ex. Bed & Breakfast, Pig Farms, Bread Industry and Mushroom production.

#### Economic Advantages project

This project aims to encourage people living in rural communities to discover their own communities special advantages and create something themselves.

#### Personal skills development

75 % of all unemployed people in Armenia are women. The organization gives courses to complement already existing competence (for example courses in English and computers courses). They also educate women in new professions to help them become self employed.

Some of the empowerment projects involve men. Including men in empowerment projects is a part of the organization's strategy. They include men in order to change men's attitudes and in this way include men in gender issues.

### **Organization: We for civil equality (WFCE)**

Head of organization: Karen Badalyan

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Web: <http://www.wfce.am>

WFCE was established in 2003 and is the first LGBT organization in Armenia. It is a non-profit, non-governmental, community-based organization. WFCE mainly work with the LGBT community, in the areas of sexual health, capacity building, legal issues and diversity.

#### **Area of activity**

##### Gender equality

In the area of gender equality the organization focus on lobby and advocacy.

##### Empowerment and health of LGBTQ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer)

In this area the organization works with capacity building and empowerment of the LGBTQ-community. The capacity building involves a story telling club for LGBTQ people, they also work some with LBT (Lesbian, bisexual, transgender) women as a separate community in the capacity building activities, but mainly the beneficiaries are LGBTQ people in general. Regarding the LBT community the organization have had a few projects. They have had fundraising projects and some focus on health care issues for this group. In 2009 WFCE held a training with LBT women, this in cooperation with Women's Resource Center. WFCE have done research on the "coming out" (to be open with ones sexuality) situation in Armenia, this research was based on a qualitative survey. There is also a program concerning mental health issues of LGBTQ people. WFCE also work with the legal situation for LGBTQ people in Armenia. In order to improve the situation they lobby for anti-discrimination laws. In 2010 WFCE published their strategic plan for the empowerment and capacity building of the LGBT community.

##### Youth diversity

The organization works with youth diversity through their minority program, which aims to increase the tolerance when it comes to ethnic minorities. The organization stress the importance of having an intersectional approach when it comes to working with different groups in society.

HIV-prevention

In 2006 the organization organized regional campaigns with the main focus on HIV-prevention. The organization has also done research on HIV and MSM (men having sex with men).

Partner organizations

Kvinna till Kvinna

Dutch foreign ministry

COC Netherlands

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ILGA

IGLYO

UNDP

UNAID

### **Organization: Democracy today**

Head of organization:

Address: 40 Toumanian str. Yerevan

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Web: <http://www.democracytoday.am>

Democracy today was established in 1994. The organization work to support and strengthen democratic achievements and human rights in Armenia. They do not work with gender as their main area of activity, but have implemented some gender projects.

#### **Area of activities**

Peace building

Involve young women in the peace building process in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. To involve women they organize trainings in peace building and conflict resolution for women.

They have also organized the conference: "Women of Nagorno-Karabakh for peace and coexistence".

Women's employment

In the area of women's employment they organize trainings for women on leadership, to increase their chances to become mayors in their villages. They also have trainings for young women, who are at risk of ending up in human trafficking, in sewing, crafts and English to increase their opportunities for self-support and independence.

They started the project "Rural Women's Leadership Project" that aimed at providing women in 20 of the most vulnerable communities, in the border regions of Armenia, necessary knowledge and skills to start up new market oriented agricultural projects. In 9 years the project expanded covering more than 50 villages.

Anti trafficking

Since 2004 the organization has been implemented a counter-trafficking project "Assisting Victims of Trafficking and Building Society Inclusive and Sensitive to Victims of Trafficking" in cooperation with UMCOR. The project activities have encompassed the following main directions:

- information campaigns and awareness building among different layers of population
- identification of victims and their referral to UMCOR shelter for assistance
- reintegration of victims into their communities and families and capacity building of project staff.

## **Organization: Public Information and need of knowledge (PINK Armenia)**

Head of organization: Mamikon Hovsepyan

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Started their activities 2007. The organizations main goal is to encourage safe sexual relations and foster human rights protection. PINK target groups are young people with focus on vulnerable groups (for example LGBT-people)

### **Areas of activities**

#### Awareness raising

PINK do a lot of public awareness raising projects about sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. They have a e-magazine (“As you”) in which they for instance raise awareness about human rights and sexual health. The organization also arrange public events to promote diversity, acceptance and eliminate discrimination and non-tolerance.

#### Human rights protection

The organization promotes the ideas of equality and acceptance of vulnerable groups. They arrange trainings on sexuality, sexual health, democracy, civil society, human rights, tolerance and discrimination. PINK also provide legal counseling to the members of target groups for their rights protection.

#### Sexual health and rights

In their struggle for sexual health and rights, PINK provides anonymous and free of charge individual, online or sms social counseling and outreach work on sexual health and sexuality. They also organize free of charge and anonymous HIV testing and distribute free of charge condoms, lubricants and information materials for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

#### Partner organizations/networks:

Coalition to stop violence towards women

Women resource center

## **Organization: Society Without Violence (SWV)**

Head of organization: Anna Arutshyan

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Society Without Violence has existed since 2001. SWV focus and mission is to protect women’s rights and to combat and prevent violence against women. An important part of the mission is to empowerment women.

### **Area of activities**

#### Empowerment of young women

SWV work mainly with the empowerment of young women in the target group 14-18 years old. In some projects SWV work with women up to the age of 30. The target group consist of pupils and students. SWV also have experience working with young men, but now only work with women.

SWV mainly work in the regions. When working with youth empowerment the approach is to hold trainings in schools using participatory methods like interactive activities, group work, brainstorming etc.

One of the projects implemented in the area of women's empowerment was: "Young women's empowerment in the regional villages of Armenia". This project was financed by Kvinna till Kvinna. The focus for this project was gender equality and women's leadership.

SWV have also conducted a survey on gender based stereotypes.

#### Peace building project

SWV had a peace building project with the aim to improve women's self confidence in order to increase the political representation of women.

#### Partners

Coalition against violence against women  
Kvinna till Kvinna (Women to Women)  
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### **Organization: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**

Head of organization:

Address: 64/1 Sundukyan Street, 0012 Yerevan

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OSCE is the worlds largest regional security organization and work with areas like human rights, democratization and counter-terrorism. The organization has had some gender related projects.

#### **Area of activities**

##### Empowerment of Women

The project "The economic empowerment of women in the Syunik region of Armenia" focused on women's economical participation. The target groups for this project was women with different backgrounds, for example lawyers, women in business, and other professional areas. The aim of the project was to empower women to use their skills and professional background to implement projects for women, for example starting women's resource centers and NGOs. The purpose of these centers is to offer a meeting places for local women and provide resources to help women to start businesses. The outcome of this project was the establishment of three women resource centers in Meghri. Goris and Kapan.

##### Implementation of gender-related legislation

Most of the legislation regarding gender and gender issues is not implemented in the country. The organizations have supported research of the existing situation of gender legislation and its implementation, cases and statistics have been carried out and individual and group meetings with lawyers and attorneys have been conducted.

##### Gender issues in the media

The organizations supports activities promoting women's issues and countering prejudice and stereotypical views of the role of women in society, promoting women role models as well as providing better coverage of gender issues in the media. To do this they have for instance had trainings for journalists. They have also had awards to encourage journalists to cover gender issues.

**Organization: UNDP**

UNDP Resident Representative: Dafina Gercheva

Gender projects: Armine Hovhannisyan

**Area of activities**

Gender and Politics

“Gender and politics in southern Caucasus: Armenia and Georgia” aimed to increase women’s representation in decision-making, and support the government of Armenia in implementation of the National action plan. Work on three levels:

- Policy advise

Comparative cap analysis of the national legislation, support the development of gender equality law.

-Capacity building and public awareness

Trainings, discussions and events for regional gender focal points.

- Local level

Training for potential women candidates of the regional branches of political parties to increase women’s political representation in local self government bodies.

**Organization: Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE)**

Head of organization: Jemma Hasratyan

Address:

Contact details: aawue@arminco.com

AAWUE was established 1995.

Area of activity

Gender studies center

One of the organizations main projects concerns Gender studies and aims to implement Gender studies as a discipline The first direction of this project is to initiate Gender studies at universities, both in its own discipline and in other disciplines, for example Political science and Literature studies.

The second direction of the project is to provide information on gender in order to assist institutions that implement for instance gender policies.

Awareness in political sphere

With funding from OSCE, AAWUE presented an Alternative Report on the CEDAW Convention implementation in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007.<sup>21</sup>

Organization: Helsinki citizens assembly

Head of organization:

Address:

Contact details:

Web:

The main direction for the organization is peace building and security. Gender is not the main focus but the organization have had some projects concerning women’s role in the peace building process.

Area of activity

Peace building

In the beginning of 2010, Helsinki citizen assembly together with 6 partner organizations launched a three-year project “Strengthening Women’s Capacity for Peace-building in the South Caucasus” to improve women’s capacity in peace building. The aim was to implement UN security council resolution 1325 and CEDAW (The Convention

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/AAWUE.pdf>

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) and trainings where held for people on their rights based on conventions.

Partners:

CARE

United Nations

UNDP

OAS (Organization of American States)

African Union

Federal Republic of Germany