

UNITED NATIONS  
POPULATION FUND

Combating Gender  
Based Violence in  
the South  
Caucasus Project:  
Armenia

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**COMBATING GENDER  
BASED VIOLENCE  
IN THE SOUTH  
CAUCASUS  
PROJECT (CGBVP)**

Is a three-year regional  
initiative launched by  
UNFPA in Armenia,  
Azerbaijan and Georgia  
with the purpose to  
create enabling  
environment for  
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*Recently gender based violence is becoming increasingly recognized as one of the most vivid forms of women's rights violations which occurs almost in every society irrespective of the dominating political views, social and economic conditions, cultural norms and traditions of a given nation. It produces a far reaching negative impact on the productivity of women, depriving them of equal access to, and participation in decision-making processes at all structures and at all levels of governance and in the employment field. Hence, gender based violence might impede even the most vigorous endeavors targeting sustainable development and become an obstacle to building healthy and prosperous societies based on democratic values.*

## New Regional Initiative Launched by UNFPA

On May 16, 2008 UNFPA Armenia officially launched the national component of "Combating Gender-based violence (GBV) in the South Caucasus" project which took place in the UN Armenia Office. **The ultimate goal of the project is to contribute to creation of the enabling environment for reduction of gender based violence in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and to support the countries in fulfilling their international obligations in the field.**

Combating GBV in the South Caucasus project is the **first regional project on gender based violence** which will work on both policy making and grass-root levels to ensure participation of civil society throughout the course of the project implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The event was opened with the welcoming speeches of UN RC/UNFPA RR Ms. Consuelo Vidal Bruce and Mr. Arayik Petrosyan RoA First Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Issues (MLSI). Both speakers stressed the importance of addressing gender based violence in Armenia and joining efforts of the local and international communities working in this field. MLSI is the important UNFPA partner for the project implementation.

The launching ceremony was attended by the representatives of international donor community, international and local NGOs, Government authorities working in the field of women's rights and gender issues and Mass Media. The latter are designated as the strategic partners of the project. The partnership will contribute to the implementation of the project activities through establishing cooperation and synergies and promoting exchange of the best practices and experiences in the field.



*Speakers from left to right: Ms. Jina Sargizova, CGBVP Coordinator, Mr. Arai Petrosyan, MLSI First Deputy Minister, Ms. Consuelo Vidal, UN RC/UNFPA RR, and Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Assistant Representative*



*Civil Society representatives at CGBVP launching*

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## Mass Media Coverage of the Project Launching

The start of the project was widely announced through local Mass Media outlets and covered by public and private TV channels' News programmes and in local news papers.

On May 27, 2008 H1 Public TV aired its regular "Good Morning, Armenia" programme with a participation of Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Assistant Representative and Ms. Jina Sargizova, CGBV Project Coordinator.



*From left to right: Mr. Garik Hayrapetyan, UNFPA Assistant Representative, Ms. Jina Sargizova, CGBV Project Coordinator and Mr. Mesrop Arakelyan, host of "Good morning, Armenia" TV programme*

The participants focused on the importance of addressing GBV issues in the country and stressed the role of UNFPA in this field by presenting "Combating Gender Based Violence in The South Caucasus" project aiming at creation of enabling environment for reduction of gender based violence in Armenia and to support the country in fulfilling its international obligations in the field. Further on, UNFPA representatives presented project main components:

- ✓ Adoption of gender sensitive legislation, programmes, plans and services;
- ✓ Providing basic knowledge to and increasing awareness on gender based violence among the target groups of policy makers, educators and the population at large;
- ✓ Building networks and strengthening partnerships between multiple actors on the local and regional levels;
- ✓ Increasing capacity of the national gender machineries to effectively address gender based violence issues in the region, and
- ✓ Advancing knowledge of the professionals in the field including police workers and prosecutors, social agents and health workers, statisticians and other actors involved.

In conclusion, it was mentioned that the main components of the project will be implemented in cooperation with the state, international and national organizations working in this field.

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## "My Happy Family" Photo Contest and Exhibition

More than 50 Armenian families participated in "My Happy Family" photo & story contest organized by UNFPA/Armenia to mark the World Population Day 2008.

Within the framework of the contest, a photo exhibition with the works of winner participants - more than 20 families, was opened at the UN Armenia Hall on Monday, July 14, 2008.



*One of the youngest participants of the contest excitedly points on her family's photo*

That day the UN hall was filled with Government, Civil Society, Business and Mass Media representatives, who came to share the excitement of this event with their UN colleagues, Armenian families and their friends.

The theme of this year's World Population Day was "It's a right, let's make it real", a slogan which reflected the basic right of individuals to determine freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of the children in family.

The exhibition aimed at demonstrating how the family happiness is pursued and expressed by the participants through the art of photography and thematic stories. The presented materials depicted different images of Armenian families and different stories behind.

Yet, while each family shared a different and unique vision of happiness, be that through posted photos, or through sincere and emotional creative writings on the topic, all of them drew on a common conclusion that the right to decide the number of children, to plan the family and the future, as well as gender equality are the pillars of love, harmony, and happiness of every single family.

The event opened with the welcoming speech of the UN RC/UNFPA RR Ms. Consuelo Vidal Bruce who stressed the importance of the roles international donor community and the State play in the field of providing equal access for men and women to all appropriate health-care services, including reproductive health in Armenia.

Lots of words were said by the UNFPA and Armenian Civil Society representatives to underline the importance of family planning, and reproductive rights. Speakers also called upon Government to support the social and healthcare systems of the Republic of Armenia.

As an appreciation of courage and good will to participate in the contest UNFPA Armenia granted each participant family souvenir cups with "My Happy Family" inscription.

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## TV Public Debate on Healthy Family Issues

A particular issue of the prominent analytical TV debate programme "The 5<sup>th</sup> Wheel" (RoA Public Television), was organized by the UNFPA initiative to focus on the problems related to family planning and reproductive health, ranging from demographic situation in the country, challenges and reforms of the health sector to the reproductive rights and education. The invited participants of the programme were:

- Mr. Razmik Abrahamyan, Head of the Institute of Perinatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology/ corresponding-member of the RoA Academy of Sciences,
- Ms. Lena Hayrapetyan, representative of the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Issues/Family, women and children department,
- Mr. Alexander Ter-Hovakimyan, President of Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia NGO (SAMSA),
- Ms. Jina Sargizova, UNFPA/CGBV Project Coordinator.



*The 5<sup>th</sup> Wheel: Debate participants around the symbolic wheel*

Mr. Abrahamyan talked about the importance of family planning as an effective tool to improve maternal health and to reduce maternal and child mortality as well as presented international experience in the field, Ms. Hayrapetyan complemented his words by providing information on the activities carried out by the RoA Government in the fields of the child's rights protection and social assistance to Armenian families. Mr. Ter-Hovakimyan further developed the topic of the debate by presenting threats of HIV/AIDS, smoking and drinking which can dramatically impact on the health of families and also supported the thesis of the necessity to carry out work with the groups of young people to raise awareness on the mentioned issues. Ms. Sargizova presented UNFPA activities in the field, as well as raised the issue of gender based violence as one of the main threats to the modern Armenian families which has far reaching negative effects on the physical and mental health of all family members where GBV takes place. Concluding the debate, the participants expressed a joint opinion of the importance of improving services in the field of reproductive health, promoting equal rights and equal opportunities of women and men and combating gender based violence to secure health and wellbeing of each Armenian family.

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## Training of Educators Started

Gender based violence prevention and promotion of equal rights and equal opportunities are to be prioritized and mainstreamed into the policies of the Republic of Armenia in order to contribute to the creation of enabling environment to effectively combat GBV in the country. Therefore, it is crucial to shape an adequate demand both in the general public and among the decision makers on this matter. With this regard, implementation of activities aimed at education and awareness raising is to ensure that gender-based violence is accepted as an **impediment to good governance, economic development, public health and a violation of fundamental human rights.**

In May 2008, with the purpose to identify national partners to conduct education and information meetings in Armenian marzes for target groups of youth, (high school and university students), women and men, UNFPA/CGBV announced a Request for Applications (RFA) among local NGOs. An application submitted on behalf of a consortium of three local NGOs was selected. All three organizations have substantial work experience in the fields of human and women's rights, gender and gender based violence issues, reproductive health and adult education as well as a positive experience of cooperation with a number of international organizations including UN agencies:

1. **International Center for Human Development** is an independent think tank which has been implementing activities aimed at development of democracy, dissemination of liberal values, initiation of reforms in the governance system of Armenia and implementation of research and analysis to study possibilities of regional integration. Since 2000, one of the major fields of the Center's activities has been education and training. The Center has worked out a number of training modules and manuals on gender issues.
2. **Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE)** is a non-governmental organization the mission of which is to contribute to the development of democratic civil society in Armenia. AAWUE has been active in supporting initiatives of human rights protection, ensuring equal rights and equitable treatment of men and women, increasing the role of women in society, enhancing more active participation of women in political and civic activities, addressing gender discrimination and gender stereotypes, promoting civic initiatives and the culture of peace. AAWUE also established the Center for Gender Studies which implements educational projects and provides human resources supporting the diverse activities of the Association.
3. Within a framework of its mission to promote healthy lifestyle in Armenia and to fight threats to health, **Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia (SAMSA)** implements health awareness, educational and training projects. SAMSA works closely with local and international organizations, including UNFPA, USAID, and the GFATM. SAMSA implemented a number of



*NGO representatives taking notes during RFA announcement*

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projects targeting public awareness raising on gender equality and discrimination, gender-based violence and reproductive health. Most projects targeted school and university students.

As an outcome of the project, at least 56 educators including representatives of public state institutions, local authorities and NGOs **will be trained** on gender and GBV issues, more than 500 young people, men and women, including secondary school and university students **will participate** in awareness raising events; and 160 public officials responsible for addressing GBV, including representatives of state and LSG bodies, **will gain knowledge** on gender issues, GBV and both local and international instruments to prevent GBV, ensure gender equality, as well as **skills** on managing national programs in these areas. All training materials will be prepared under the overall supervision of UNFPA CGBV. The project will last for 8 months.

One of the most interesting and innovative approaches to be applied within the framework of the project is to develop module and to conduct a two-day training course "Men Talking to Men" (MTM) with the involvement of an international expert. It aims at showing the role and the importance of contribution men can make to improve lives of women and focuses on what men can do to prevent gender violence through peer education.

Overall, trainings and further education and information meetings are to involve active participation of the community and grass roots which can contribute to the sustainability of the implemented project results by ensuring reference to gender and GBV issues even after the completion of the project. Another important aspect of sustainability is development of a network which will bring together professionals from different regions of the country to ensure implementation of gender related initiatives on the local level.

## Nationwide Research on Gender Based Violence Underway

In Armenia, notion of GBV is barely known or acknowledged. The absence of official data constitutes a serious hindrance for an efficient argumentation concerning the importance of combating the problem and is often used as an excuse for the lack of involvement from the side of the authorities.

With a purpose to create an official baseline for policy-makers to enable them to formulate targeted policies and programs aimed at GBV reduction as well as to contribute to awareness raising among population, the project initiated a nationwide research on GBV to ensure a comprehensive analysis of accurate data on gender based violence, in particular on Domestic Violence against women.

The research in Armenia is a part of the bigger regionwide effort in the field of GBV data collection. In Armenia, it will be implemented by the National Statistical Service (NSS) and will heavily rely on knowledge and advisory of local and international experts in the field.

The research will consist of a quantitative survey component providing representative information at Marz level\*. The **quantitative component** will be a cross-sectional population-based household survey. The sampling frame for the survey will be built using the database of addresses for the 2001 Population Census. All marzes, as well as all urban and rural settlements will be included in the sample population according to the share of population residing in those settlements as percent to the total population in the country. Totally, 6520 households will be surveyed within the framework of the initiative.

\* Marz is a territorial regional administrative unit in Armenia. There are overall 11 marzes including Yerevan, the capital.

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A group of international and local experts will be hired to support NSS and UNFPA in activity implementation.

The group of local experts will work on the following:

- Analysis of data submitted by NSS/Armenia;
- Preparation of data base to present research findings;
- Preparation of the country based report, which will include in the first place:
  1. Study objectives and research questions;
  2. Methodology including development of the questionnaire and its structure, country adaptation and sample design, ethical and safety considerations, data entry and analysis;
  3. Results as per defined forms of violence, victims, strategies and responses;
  4. Summary of findings, conclusions, and areas for further research;
  5. Recommendations.

The inception phase of the project is already completed and NSS will start field work upon finalization of the adapted and translated questionnaire which is expected in September.

\* \* \*