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**“CONSTITUTION” RESEARCH FOUNDATION,
“SOLIDARITY AMONG WOMEN” PUBLIC UNION**

***Alternative Monitoring
REPORT
on
Implementation of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women in Azerbaijan (Articles 10 11, 12, 13,
14 of the Convention)***

Baku 2013

**The Monitoring Report has been developed within Advocacy for Women
Development Project of the “Constitution” Research Foundation and
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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is one of the primary priorities of development of a democratic society and observance of human rights. Presently gender problem and provision of gender equality are among urgent problems of many countries of the world. This primarily stems from gender inequality in economic and social spheres, as well as worsening of the quality of human resources. Thus, seriousness of the problem impedes social-economic progress, reduces efficiency of the existing system for development of human capital and finally, causes social unfairness in the society.

Taking into account overall negative impact of this problem, since 1990, international organizations and developed countries actively started implementing projects aimed at solution of the gender problems and protecting gender equality. While before 1990 women issues were addressed one-sidedly in the development assistance sphere, after that year a holistic approach has been introduced to solution of this problem¹:

- ✓ Identification of the impact of the overall policy to welfare of women and men;
- ✓ Provision of opportunities for everybody to earn equal income;
- ✓ Provision of targeted social allowance system;
- ✓ Equal use of resources;
- ✓ Provision of necessary opportunities for equal use of education and health care services.

It should be noted that addressing 3 main social issues are found expedient in analyzing gender problem in international practice:

1. Assessment of men's and women's participation in economic and social spheres from gender equality perspective;
2. Creation of equal opportunities for both sexes through identification of gender inequality areas in different spheres;
3. Regardless of the sex of people, creation of conditions for their equal participation in formation of the civil society and in social institutions;²

The Republic of Azerbaijan recognizes full equality of men and women at the legislative level. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted in 1995 (Article 25-1), as well as other general pieces of legislation (Civil Code, Labor Code, Family Code and etc.) recognize equality of men and women .

As independent state, Azerbaijan recognizes that integration into public and political, socio-

¹ Human Rights Charter: Universal Declaration of Human Right adopted by UN GA on December 1948. Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others adopted by UN GA on December 1949. Convention on Political Rights of Women. Convention on Nationality of Married Women. Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women, UN GA November 7, 1967. declaration on elimination of violence against women December 20, 1993. IV World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 4-15, 1995. Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration. Convention 111 on Employment and Occupation Discrimination. Convention 156 – Workers with Family Responsibilities. Recommendations 165 - Workers with Family Responsibilities.

² 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, New York City, UN, 1999. p 10.

economic, technical and technological processes in the world, adoption of international conventions and recommendations ensuring gender equality and implementation of certain activities in these spheres are necessary conditions for democratic development and joining civilized countries.

According to Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan:

“The state guarantees equality of rights and liberties of everyone, irrespective of race, nationality, religion, language, sex, origin, financial position, occupation, political convictions, membership in political parties, trade unions and other public organizations. Rights and liberties of a person, citizen cannot be restricted due to race, nationality, religion, language, sex, origin, conviction, political and social belonging”.

However, the practice shows that as in many other countries, gender difference found its place in governance, public and political sphere in Azerbaijan and in ability of people to influence processes in those spheres. In this term, UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, hereinafter – the Convention) is a substantial tool for protection of women rights and their monitoring.

Constitutional Research Foundation and Solidarity Among Women Public Union are implementing the project titled “Advocacy Women Development” within USAID-funded “Women’s Participation Program” implemented by Counterpart International.

The goal of the project is to conduct advocacy campaign for implementation and promotion of the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee to the Government of Azerbaijan for formation of women as an active social group in the society. The alternative monitoring report developed under the project covers three topics of the Convention:

- Education;
- Health;
- Women entrepreneurship.

The monitoring report is designed to be an indicator in terms of defining the progress of implementation of the CEDAW Recommendations by the Governmental structures of Azerbaijan.

Goal

The goal of this document is to monitor the level of implementation of the Recommendations suggested by the CEDAW Committee to the report of the Government of Azerbaijan during the Committee’s 892nd and 893rd meetings held on July 24, 2009. The Report also covers problematic areas related to state of women in the country, as well as suggests certain recommendations to the Government and other relevant organizations.

Expected outcomes

Report will cause:

- Identification of real situation with women rights and welfare in the country;

- Increasing responsibility of the relevant authorities in development and implementation of the public policy targeted to improvement of women's welfare;
- Drawing public attention to implementation of commitments taken by the State with regard to implementation of provisions of the Convention;
- Development of social partnership between civil and public institutions.

1. METHODOLOGY OF THE MONITORING

1.1. The methodology of the monitoring is based on the following instruments : «Report on Implementation of Requirements of UN CEDAW»³, UNIFEM's «Assessing the Status of Women: Reporting Guide» (Commonwealth Secretariat, United Nations и International Human Rights Action Watch)⁴, «Shadow Report Guidelines»⁵ of the International Women's Rights Action Watch for Asia and Pacific, Guidebook on Assessing the Progress of Implementation of CEDAW developed by ABA CEELI with support of USAID⁶ and «Alternative Report Module»⁷. The Monitoring also covers recommendations of the Committee CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1⁸.

1.2. Monitoring areas:

- Education (Article 10 of the Convention);
- Health care (Article 12 of the Convention);
- Women entrepreneurship (Articles 11- Employment, 13 – Economic and Social Allowances, 14 – Rural women).

1.3 Selection of monitoring areas

The areas were selected for the following reasons:

- Despite that fact that equal education opportunities are envisaged in the legislation, this is not sufficient for gender equality in education.
- Gender inequality influences decision-making on personal health issues and different levels of access to health care services, thus in many cases creating danger for women health.
- Real situation with women entrepreneurship and their access to resources is the main indicator of gender inequality.

³ http://www.rlpp.ru/files/0/cedaw_russia_ru.pdf

⁴ <http://www.abanet.org/ceeli/publications/cedaw/home.html>.

⁵ http://www.iwraw-ap.org/using_cedaw/report_guidelines.htm

⁶ http://www.owl.ru/cgi/Content/runbroker.cgi?broker=Brokers::Showcontent&action=printversion&id_news=55182

⁷ www.clrpl.az/upload/file/Modul_Alternativ_hesabat.ppt

⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Pre-session working group Forty-fourth session, 20 July-7 August 2009. Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the fourth periodic report. Azerbaijan.

1.4. Research methods.

The research has been done within legal norms of the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with national and international practices, and based on qualitative and quantitative measurements. The qualitative and quantitative measurements are identified as a result of public hearing and surveys held in Masalli, Neftchala, Hajigabul districts and Novkhani settlements within Advocacy for Women Development Project. Officials of the local executive authorities, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, district prosecutor's office and court, management of the district Employment Center, women municipal councilors, school principals, women holding managerial positions in different State bodies, doctors, residents, and representatives of local NGOs participated in the public hearings.

Besides, researches of national NGOs, reports of different ministers, and data of the State Statistics Committee constituted the main information sources of this research.

1.5. Identification of respondents

400 people were surveyed.

The age range of the respondents were from 17 to 65. Majority of the respondents participated in the surveys were residents of the mentioned districts. 68% of them were women and 32% - men. 59% of women are employed permanently, 17% - temporarily, and 24% are unemployed.

Each family had minimum 2-3 and maximum 5-6 children. It must be noted that the families with 2-3 children are in majority.

Women doctors and teachers participated in the survey mentioned that they were involved in public activities related to their jobs, when unemployed women stated that they may get actively involved in public activities only upon permission of their husbands.

It was revealed that majority of unemployed women do not vote during elections. One can draw conclusion from this fact that permanent employment place critical role in participation of women in public-political life.

The surveys were dedicated to studying gender stereotypes, discrimination cases, education and health problems of women, facts that impact their economic state, and was based on the sociological method called "layered fan".

The age groups and occupations of the participants are given in Charta 1 and 2 below.

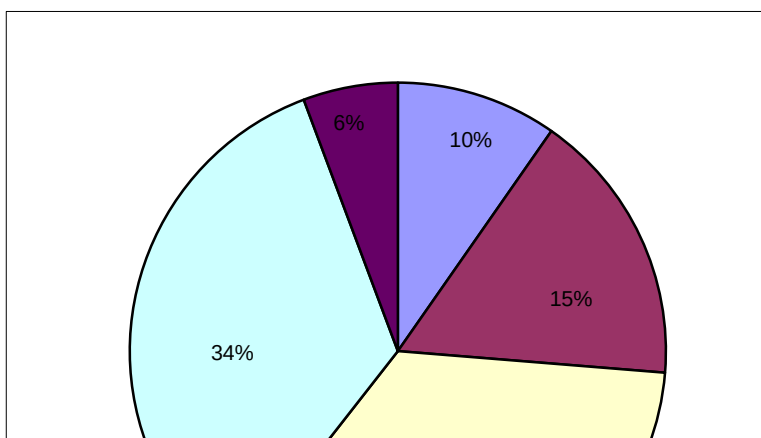


Chart 1. Respondents' age groups

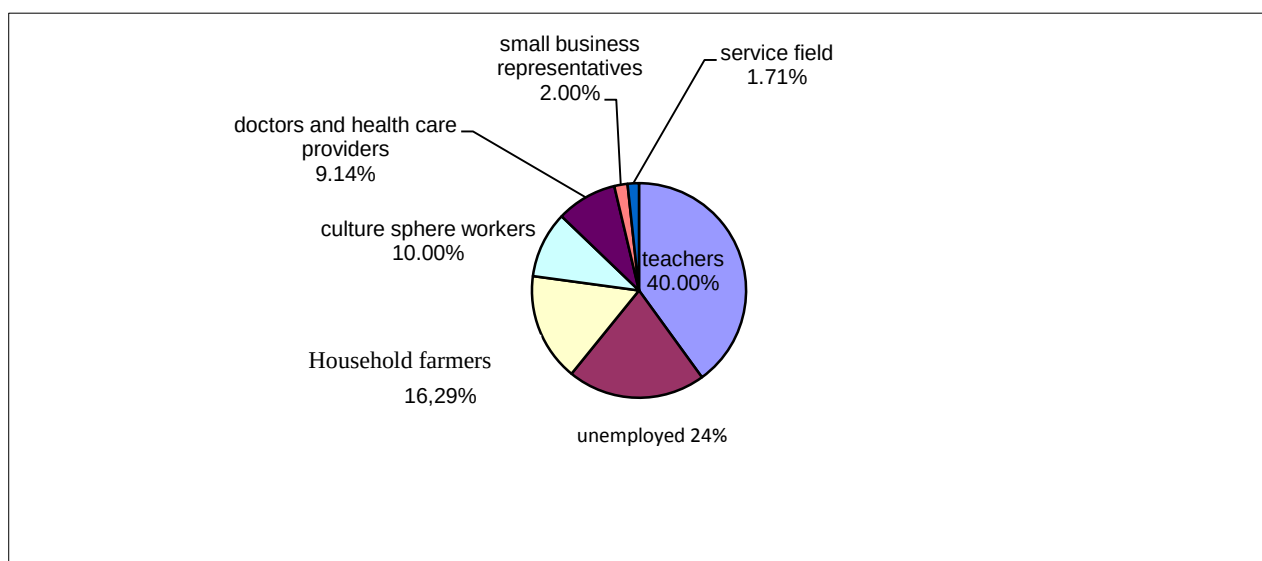


Chart 2. Respondents' spheres of activities.

2. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF GENDER EQUALITY IN AZERBAIJAN

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan protects rights and interests of all humans of feminine sex irrespective of their age, family status, factual family relations, domestic behavior, health conditions, and by this meets the requirements of the international documents the country acceded to⁹. The following instruments were adopted on women issues in Azerbaijan: Decree on Increasing the Role of Women and Decree on Establishment of the State Committee on Women Affairs (January 14, 1998) , Decree on Implementation of Women Policy (March 6, 2000).

⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1995.

In June 2000, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted the National Action Plan on Women Issues for 2000-2005. This plan takes into account national priorities and is developed based on the Beijing Strategy ¹⁰.

On the gender promotion issues the Government of Azerbaijan closely cooperates with international organizations such as UN, OSCE/ODIHR, and EU. Presently, various projects are being implemented in Baku and different regions of Azerbaijan on women engagement in politics and decision-making processes.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On gender (men and women) equality” has been adopted on October 10, 2006. By legally eliminating all forms of sexual discrimination and creating equal opportunities for men and women in political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres of life, the Law regulates provision of gender equality, prevents sexual harassment, and identifies main directions of the public policy on gender equality and other norms envisaged in the Law.

The Work Plan related to the National Action Plan and the State Program on Elimination of Poverty covering 2007-2011 envisages efforts aimed at elimination of legal and economic inequality between men and women, social protection of women, combating violence against women and gender education based on the universal experience and various documents¹¹.

By the Directive #3043 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 15, 2008, approved the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development. One of the main targets indicated in Part 3.3 of the Program titled “Overview of goals, targets and indicators” is about increasing the level of women participation in the decision-making processes before the end of 2015. The target is directed mainly to increasing the level of women participation and involvement in the positions like managers in central executive bodies, municipal members, judges and etc.

Recommendations of CEDAW Committee CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1¹² include proposals to make positive changes in the Family Code and implementation of relevant activities to eliminate domestic violence against women. Taken them into consideration, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Making changes to the Family Code” dated November 15, 2011, set 18 as new minimal marriage age for women equaling it to the marriage age of men. On June 22, 2010, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prevention of Domestic Violence was adopted. Coming forward from this Law, changes to seven other laws were made and five new legal-normative acts have been adopted.

¹⁰ Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” (Report of the Secretary-General, Commission on the Status of Women, 2005 (E/CN.6/2005/2))

¹¹ Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: A Handbook for Policy-makers and Other Stakeholders (by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 2003)

¹² Bax.9

Based on the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Making Changes to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan” dated November 15, 2011, Article 176-1 is included in the Criminal Code, which forbids to make woman get into marriage against her will and envisages sanctions for such action. The Article envisages even more severe punishment for forcing the person not reached the marriage age to get into marriage. The changes made to this law have special importance in preventing early marriage cases. Studies showed that early marriages of girls usually take place by consent of their parents.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has ratified a number of conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) related to improvement of welfare of women and families. Pursuant to the Law #1003-IIIQ and #1004-IIIQ of May 11, 2010, the Republic of Azerbaijan acceded to Convention #156 “On Equal Treatment and Opportunities for Male and Female Workers: Workers with Family” and #183 “On Revision of 1952 Convention on Protection of Maternity”.

CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1 recommendations of CEDAW Committee¹³ stressed the importance of strengthening control over implementation of provisions of the Convention by all branches of the Government. Inclusion of gender factor into the overall public policy is of great importance in terms of improvement of strategic plans and programs of the Government. All governmental bodies and other institutions improved their activities by assigning responsible persons for gender issues thus progressing in provision of gender equality. Gender Focal Points function in every governmental body. As a result, gender problems are included in policies and programs of all these bodies. Therefore, ministries and other governmental agencies have opportunities to easily monitor progress in solving gender problems. Along with that, there is serious need for assigning real authorities to Gender Focal Points, broadening and clarification of those authorities, and making the Gender Focal Point positions as a separate one in the governmental bodies.

3. STATUS OF WOMEN IN AZERBAIJAN – SUMMARY

As of January 1, 2012, the population of Azerbaijan is 9 235 100. 4 583 500 of them are men and 4 651 600 are women¹⁴.

Any discrimination against women in public-political life is prohibited by law in Azerbaijan. However, in certain laws there are provisions specific to women that “violate” men’s rights. This is called positive discrimination: certain benefits are envisaged for women based on their reproductive functions, physical abilities, status in family and etc.

The Labor Code¹⁵ prohibits refusing to employ women because of their pregnancy and breastfeeding (Article 173), as well as reduce their salaries for the mentioned reasons (Article 180).

13 See.9

¹⁴ Men and women in Azerbaijan. State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2012.

¹⁵ Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 1999 –cu il.

According to Article 174 of the Code, women are prohibited to work in hard and harmful works. Women get maternity leave and leave for child care (Article 181). Employment based on gender and other factors, but not based on skills, background is prohibited by the Labor Code. Labor rights of women must be regulated by a number of norms and regulations.

According to the above-mentioned benefits, many enterprises hesitate to employ women. In certain cases, the laws are not observed and women do not get their lawful benefits and they are employed to hard works.

Despite the change of gender roles in the society, traditional differences between men and women in social and property relations, decision-making process still exists. Lack of coordination between sectors and public offices, weak functioning of institutional mechanisms for implementation of laws and decisions, shortage of finances, still impedes breakthrough in progress of family and women issues. Gender stereotypes and contradictions in real roles of men and women obstruct change in social relations between them. Such situation especially worsens state of internally displaced women¹⁶.

CEDAW Committee's recommendations **CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1** state increase of women participation in decision-making as an important factor. The situation with this issue is as follows.

4 out of 16 members of the Central Election Commission and 3 out of 125 constituency election commission chairs are women. Women are mostly represented at the membership level in constituency election commissions.

The lowest proportion of women in the Parliament of Azerbaijan was in 1990 (4,3%). In later years this number changed gradually to 11% and reach 16% after 2010 elections. One of three vice-speakers and one of the committee chairs is women.

There are no women among 80 heads of executive authorities at the district level, only 36 deputy ExComs are women¹⁷. This is a result of either lower potential of women or discrimination. Both of these factors are problems for women and must be solved¹⁸.

After November 30, 2011 municipal elections, women constitute 26,5% of all municipal councilors. Presently 4137 members and 302 chairpersons of municipalities are women.

No one of 20 ministers in Azerbaijan is woman and only in three ministries vice ministers are women (Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Ministry of Health). Chairpersons of on State Committee (SCFWCA) and one State Commission (State Student Admission Commission), rectors of three universities (Construction and Architecture University, Baku branch of Moscow State University after Lomonosov, and Azerbaijan Teacher University), Vice Prime Minister of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, and Ombudsperson of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic are women.

¹⁶ Brigitta Bode. Conflict Affected Communities in Azerbaijan, CARE International In the Caucasus, 2011

¹⁷ Data of SCFWCA, 2012.

¹⁸ "Women in leadership roles" (Women Watch, Online discussion notes, 2007)

When number of woman employees in Health, Education and Labor and Social Protection Ministries is 79,5%, 68% and 60,8% respectively, the number of women holding managerial positions is 37% , 41,3% and 24,8% respectively. When number of woman employees in the State Statistics Committee and the State Committee on Refugee and IDP Affairs is 53,7% and 93,4% respectively, the number of women holding managerial positions in the same committees is 21,7% and 4%- respectively. These numbers, especially the last ones, proves lower level of participation of women in decision-making processes.

271 diplomats work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, out of which 91 is women. There 56 diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan abroad (embassies, consulates and permanent missions). There is no woman among 55 ambassadors, head 1 of 5 permanent missions is woman and only 7 out of 53 consuls are women. Overall, 20 out of 600 Azerbaijani citizens in embassies, missions and consulates with immunity status are women.

However, activities of women in international sphere is not limited to the mentioned areas. Azerbaijani women from state, non-state and non-governmental organizations take part in various events held by leading international organizations. Almost every delegation from Azerbaijan to any international event includes women members.

Deputy chair of the Constitutional Court comprising of 9 members and one judge, as well as chair of the Judicial Collegium on Civil Cases of the Supreme Court are women. 42 judges in district courts are women, 23 of them work in Baku district courts.

According to the report published by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (“CEPEJ”)¹⁹, percentage of women represented in courts of Azerbaijan is the lowest among 39 States participating in the process. Admission to the judicial-legal system, as well as public service is carried out through competition. However, many of women refrain from the positions requiring high skills and responsibility, like judge and political positions.

Unfortunately, inequality shows itself in the civil society as well. Only 90 out of about 2750 NGOs in the country are woman ones.

The role of media outlets is big in achieving gender equality. Conducted analysis show that women constitute about,

- 40-45% of all employees of national TV channels;
- 25-30% of all employees of regional TV channels;
- 30-35% of all employees of nationwide newspapers; and
- 20-25% of all employees of regional newspapers.

Nevertheless, representation of women in decision-making bodies of the newspapers is expressed with lower figures: heads of only 10 out of 90 media editorial offices are women. As a result, media outlets often promote negative stereotypes and traditional thinking about abilities of women, specifically shed light on victimization of women, and do not pay attention to their ability to extraordinarily contribute to

¹⁹ The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice. AZERBAIJAN: Evaluation exercise - 2012 Edition .

positive change. Women journalists must be able to use mass media in the same manner as men do. They must be more independent. Ensuring equality in this sphere for men and women is important.

According to the data of 2012²⁰, economically active women constitute 49,1%, unemployed women - 58,3%, employed (hired and self-employed) women – 48,6% of total active population. 23% of those dealing with agriculture, 14% of those working in electric industry, gas and water supply sphere, 6,5 of those working in construction sector, 33% - in trade, 27,7% - in hotel, restaurant and catering sector, 17% - in transport and communication, 71% - in education, 77,6% - in health care and social services, and 41,1% - vocational, scientific and technical fields are women.

Division of roles in decision-making proves the existence of latent discrimination. This also leads to lower level gender-oriented thinking and lower self-esteem of women in the society. All these factors cause obstacles for increase of women participation in political and social life.

Women who participated in the surveys conducted within “Advocacy for Women Development” Project expressed their attitude to the status of women in the country. 65% of them said that they found the number of women in the Parliament low. In their opinion, the more the number of women MPs, the easier women problems could be solved. 15% of the women respondents had difficulties to express their opinion on these issues. And 20% doubted that the increase of the number may influence solution of problems.

It is possible to identify through surveys the society’s attitude towards gender equality, balanced participation of women in political, social and economic spheres along with men. 85% of the respondents stated that they are for active participation of women in public life, business and politics, and 15% said that they had difficulties to answer this question. According to the results of the survey, economic activity of women aged 41-50 was higher than other age groups and constituted 40%.

Quote from a woman from Novkhani settlement: “Equal right is primarily money. Material difficulties obstruct women’s participation in decision-making and they lack self-confidence”.

A woman from Masalli said: “In rural areas not only men, but also majority of women think that women should not work; they have to sit at home and lead household economy irrespective of the children’s age.”

A man from Novkhani settlement: “I have a daughter-in-law. She does household works and my wife goes to work. When my wife was younger, she didn’t work as well”.

Social passiveness of women in rural areas is related to unemployed status of majority of them. This, in turn, shows very narrowness of public contacts of the women. “Women do nothing, except household work. First of all, women must be provided with gas and water in their households, roads must be constructed and workplaces open. In more civilized conditions women can be more active. They must be invited to different events and their worldview must be widened. Their views may change then”- said a woman who participated in public hearings.

Weak economic and political participation of young girls and women in the surveyed geographic areas can be explained by large families, lack of kindergartens or their bad conditions, high level of

²⁰ Men and women in Azerbaijan. State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2012

household works, and the societal stereotype that man labor is predominant over woman labor.

A women from Neftchala noted that not all works are appropriate for women. In her opinion, what impedes women's career is attitude of men in their families towards their employment and the level of the salary is not the decisive factor here; main issue is ending the work hours in appropriate time.

Majority of the surveyed people emphasized that lately women started to deeply realize their social importance and to try to get their niches and positions in public life and labor market. Respondents specifically stressed that gender stereotypes existing in the society create stumble blocks before women development.

One of the factors that put limitations for women to hold managerial positions is that women have limited possibilities to stay long hours after work. Usually high ranking officials stay late after hours which in many cases is not impossible for women. This is the reason that in many instances married women voluntarily refuse to take managerial positions.

It was revealed that only 30% of women are aware of CEDAW. Majority of these women were teachers and doctors. However, their understanding of the essence of the Convention was very low. Majority of the surveyed people were informed about the Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence. But they had doubts on implementation of the law. It must be noted that with regard to popularization of the Law, SCFWCA and a number of NGOs conducted educational campaign among population.

60% of the respondents mentioned about the existence of discrimination and tied this situation to the societal stereotypes and patriarchal values, as well as family and domestic commitments that impede women to be more active in public activities and lack of access to resources (Chart 3).

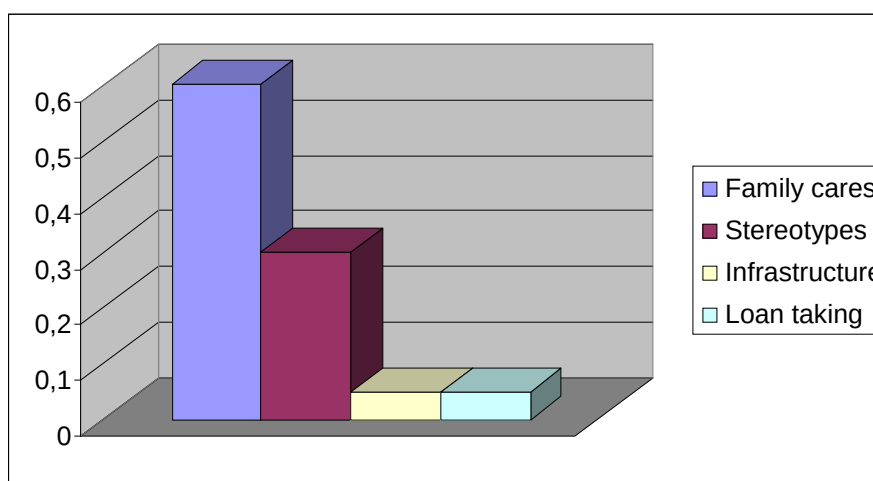


Chart 3. Factors impeding women's public activities.

40% of the surveyed people mentioned that women are passive themselves. As a way-out from the existing situation they mentioned the following measures: educative work among both women and men, reduction of domestic cares of women, more education and better professionalism of women and them knowing their rights. According to these respondents, educated and skillful women can achieve what she wants.

A man participated at roundtable discussions says – “Improvement of living conditions of women and strengthening them by actively involving them into social and economic life of the country can be a basis for long-term sustainable development. This could lead to harmony in the family and positively impact other areas as well”.

Dominance of women over men in certain spheres of economy and other areas is widely spread in the world. However, the women-dominated areas have lesser status and are paid less than the men-dominated ones. Gender-related information in Azerbaijan shows that women are more inclined to work in public service areas like health care, social protection, education and others. Salaries in health care sector constitute 30% of the average salaries throughout the country and this number for education sector is 70%. Since gender-based employment statistics cover only formal part of the sector there is no comprehensive information on labor sectors in economy. Tendency in statistics showing lower salaries for women than men is observed. Women mostly can work half a day, they don't think about career because of family reasons and most importantly can't hold high-salary positions.

Analysis of the conducted surveys also proved that there is sexual division in selection of profession. Thus, women participated in the surveys and hearings stressed that women are best in such specialties like doctor and teacher. Increase in number of women in banking sector is observed lately. Unfortunately, women are not in managerial position here as well and just work as operators. Positive answers of respondents to the question whether men and women can do the same type of work constituted 50% of all answers (see Chart 4).

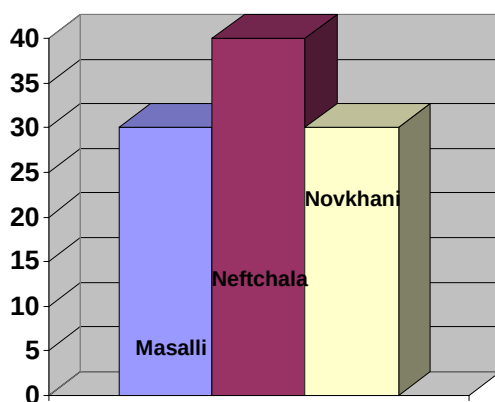


Chart 4. Positive attitude to ability of man and woman to do the same type of work (%).

As a result of the hearings it became clear that objective and subjective obstacles influence women employment. While elimination of subjective obstacles is relatively easy, elimination of objective ones like physiological, domestic and family commitments, not being able to accept offered jobs, limitations in travelling far for work, national traditions and customs, maternity function and etc. is much more complicated process. That's why elimination of the mentioned factors in employment sphere is not that easy.

All this shows the importance of understanding the problem in the society and women activation at different levels. Increase of women awareness on their rights and opportunities may help them actively participate in public life. Nevertheless, awareness-raising activities must be carried out not only with

women, but also with men. Men should understand that they must be represented in public-political life equally with women and realize the benefits of such equality.

Taking into account above-stated facts about the status of women in Azerbaijan one can draw conclusions that since administrative and public employees have no complete understanding of gender, it is doubtful that they properly consider gender aspects of their activities. As mentioned above, establishment of Gender Focal Points in all ministries, local governance bodies and other State structures is a positive step forward in terms of perspectives of understanding of gender issues in all public policies, programs and plans.²¹ However, innovation of the measures and shortage of previous experience created big gap in development of the implementation mechanism. Filling the gap may result in a breakthrough in the policy of strengthening of women participation in decision-making processes.

Proper formation of the work of Gender Focal Points is an important contribution to inform, advise and support professional staff, ministerial departments, agencies, research centers, schools, universities, professional organizations and other entities on gender issues. This adds new and important responsibilities and commitments to the objectives and routine duties of the Focal Points.

In most of the cases, Focal Points are not specialized on gender issues; they don't receive formal training courses on gender, and even haven't had prior experience on this field and haven't read relevant literature. Taking this into account, it is very important to provide the Focal Points with continued on-job training, including primary capacity building programs. Also, Focal Points must have opportunities to learn hands-on experience and support of the gender specialists working in other governmental agencies.

Gender equality issue must be approached from the angle of the law and public mind. The first angle is to direct public policy toward women's interests. For example, increase of number of women in managerial positions and elective bodies. The second angle must take into consideration the fundamental character of gender equality. Political will and legislative acts are not sufficient to ensure gender balance in any field. The society must be prepared to this. Therefore, the society must realize that gender inequality stems from the principles rooted in the society and necessity of transformation of the principles.

Examination of the above-stated problems shows:

- imperfection of the legislative framework,
- non-development of implementation mechanism,
- non-consideration of gender approach at all levels of the government,
- lack of cooperation between the government, civil society and business structures,
- unequal use of resources, and
- existence of violence against women.

One of the factors influencing these problems is Karabakh conflict.

²¹ Handbook for Gender Focal Points in UNESCO National Commissions (The Section for Women and Gender Equality Bureau of Strategic Planning, 2005)

There is no specialized governmental body in Azerbaijan to deal with gender equality issues. The only State body in the country working on women policy problems is the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs established in 2006. As the title of the Committee suggests, women problems are solved not in the context of their equal access to all spheres of the society, but in the context of family and child care.

4. ARTICLE 10 OF THE CONVENTION: ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Article 10 of the Convention is dedicated to education. The Article requires States to undertake “all appropriate” measures to eliminated discrimination against women in education field. To achieve this, primary and secondary education for girls and women must be compulsory.

CEDAW Committee recommendations CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1 includes concerns that girls obtain professions traditional for women, as a result they can get jobs related to new professions, and the number of women in managerial positions in education and health care is low.

Main problems in education are related to the following:

- Risks of school drop-outs for girls;
- Gender segregation on vocational and higher schools;
- Gender inequality in exercise-books.

Transition from one system to other and socio-political changes in Azerbaijan caused strengthening of patriarchal ideology. This in turn, resulted in school drop-outs by girls, early marriages and lowering women’s social status.

Education in Azerbaijan is carried out through the strategy based on international experience and in accordance with modern education standards. The strategy covers all levels of education: pre-school, secondary, high, post-graduate and distant. There is certain progress in this field: new school building shave been constructed or old ones rehabilitated, universities underwent capital renovation, material and technical capacity is strengthened, new curricula and interactive teaching methods have been introduced. Within various programs, both secondary school students and university students have opportunities to obtain education abroad and even at the expense of the State funds.

Despite some reforms done in the education sphere, discussions during the hearing showed that many problems still remain in education. Quality of education and student turnout is reduced. No activities are carried out in schools to efficiently organize students’ leisure time. Quality of text-books is low; low points for admission to pedagogical universities lead to low professional level of young teachers. Lack of specialized teachers necessitates the teachers of different specialties to teach other subjects, especially in distant rural village schools.

Academic performance among high school students is significantly low. The reasons for such situation are constant tutorial education, need for textbooks, school items and clothes for students from low-income families, drop-outs and early marriages of young girls, and indifference towards education.

Early marriage cases affect acquiring education by girls. Azerbaijan is considered a country with existence of early marriage. But incomplete statistical data makes it different to assess the scope and consequences of the marriages. Statistical data on early marriages become evident only upon registration of out-of-marriage children, registration of divorces and when other related problems come to surface.

According to statistical indicators²², the highest proportion of girls got into early marriage to those who got married in 1999-2011 was in 1999 (7,1%). The lowest indicator for the same issue was in 2003 (4,6%). Since 2007, the indicator shows steady growth. Presently, the girls not reached the age of 18 constitute 6,17 % of all married women.

According to the statistical research “On Studying Early Marriages and Extramarital Born” in towns and villages of regions of Azerbaijan conducted by State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, UNFPA Azerbaijan Country Office and SCFWFA, 38,9% of early marriages among women under 18 are registered in urban and 61,1% - in rural areas.

37,4% of women entered early marriage did it voluntarily, 25,9% - under the pressure of parents, 10,7% due to difficult financial situation in the family, 7,9% - because of welfare of their fiancé, 6,4% - as a result of kidnapping and 1,6% - because of pregnancy. Proportion of voluntary marriages at the age of 16 and because of pregnancy at the age of 15 was bigger. The cases of kidnapping mostly happened to girls of 15-17. Majority of fathers of the girls entered early marriage are agricultural workers - 31,9%, workers - 17,0%, and transport workers - 9,6%; of mothers – housewives - 53,7 %, agricultural workers - 17,9%; of husbands – agricultural workers - 21,1%, merchants - 14,1%, transport workers - 9,9%, construction workers - 7,2%, workers -13,1%, farmers 7,3 % and unemployed – 7,0%. This shows that majority of girls entered early marriage and had children at the age under 18 live in rural areas (including villages of Baku).

Complications as a result of early marriage affect not only women but the entire society. Lack of adequate education, career of young woman and her health problems at early ages jeopardizes the life of her future child. This factor significantly affects not only individuals, but whole society’s future development. Because the girls who skipped even minimum (compulsory) level of education and got in early marriage won’t be able properly fulfill their roles in future families.

One of the factors that impeded the girls with higher education to work after they get married is that their husbands ban them from working. “In marriage (husband’s house) girl’s rights are violated more than at parents’ place, and they become dependent²³.”

²² A. Veysalova. Early Marriages. Studies of SCFWCA.

²³ Anna Matveeva. Baseline Survey. CARE international in the Caucasus, ‘Strengthening Women’s Capacity for Peace Building in the South Caucasus Region’ project, 2010 – 2012

Majority of teachers working in general secondary schools are women. However, both women and men should take part in upbringing of schoolchild. Schoolchildren, from their childhood and adolescence, must understand that man and woman are able to fulfill the same duties.

Participants of the hearing came up with a number of suggestions after discussing these problems:

- measures must be taken to encourage young boys to choose pedagogical education;
- control over implementation of the laws adopted by the State on the ground;
- bribery in education must be eradicated;
- targeted assignments to regions must be restored in order to regulate staff potential in provinces;
- assignment of school directors must be carried out in elective and alternative manner;
- stimulus to teach in provinces must be increased (with certain benefits);
- programs in textbooks must be reworked;
- gender-related topics must be included in the textbooks;
- drop-out of children from school must be prevented;
- school camps must be created;
- school interest groups must be restored;
- work of creative centers must be strengthened;
- information on dangers of early marriage must be disseminated;
- parent-school contacts must be tightened.

Disaggregation of number of doctors of philosophy by sex in 1991 was 6566 men and 2339 women. By 2012, this proportion changed as follows – 5071 men and 3443 women (steady increase)²⁴. This is connected to the fact that people who get PhD degrees cannot get high salaries in science and education institutions. While men are mostly interested in high salaries, women are more interested in jobs with fixed working hours provided in higher schools and scientific institutions. Nevertheless, one can observe certain implementation of CEDAW Committee's **CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1** recommendations in this field in the country.

Despite the above-mentioned figures, the following data clearly shows gender misbalance in sexual composition of teacher-professor staff in higher education institutions: women vice rectors/branch directors -14,3%, faculty deans -34,8%, faculty heads -24,%.

Gender division of vocational schools and colleges shows existence of gender segregation as well. Chart 5 below is indicative in this term.²⁵ While the number of women teachers in comparison to men teachers in general secondary schools is much more, the situation in colleges is reverse. The reason for such situation is that salaries in secondary schools are significantly lower than in colleges.

One of the important issues standing before education is formation of gender-oriented mind of students. Not only students, but also majority of teachers has no idea about the gender approach. There are no subjects in general secondary schools on gender sensitivities of girls and boys. Only in some

²⁴ Men and women in Azerbaijan. The State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2012.

²⁵ See. 22

higher schools gender is taught as a separate subject. However, the subject can do little in terms of influencing pretty much formed mind of grown-up students.

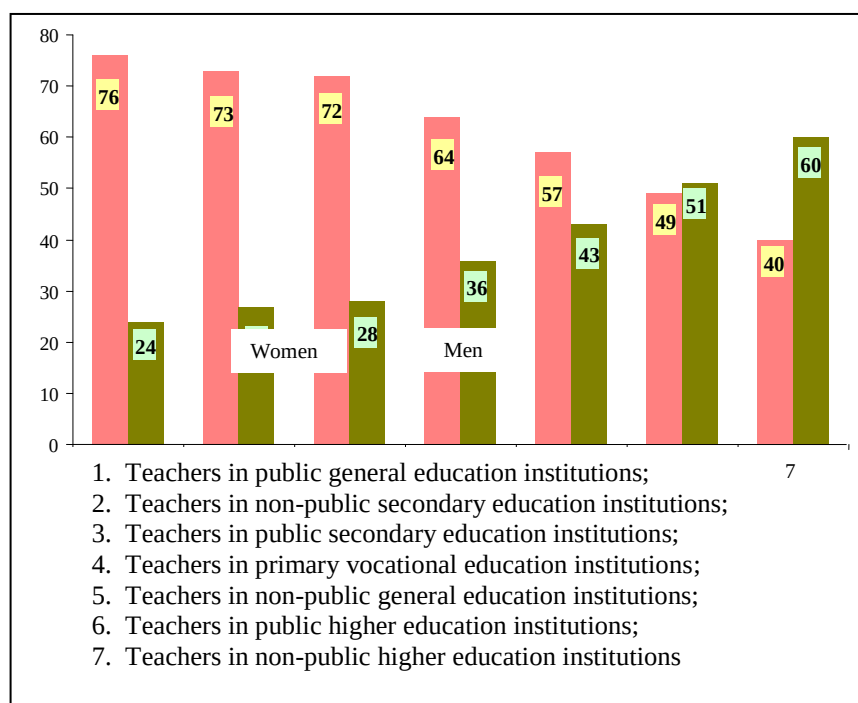


Chart 5. Disaggregation of teachers by sex in educational institutions at the beginning of 2011-2012 academic year (in percent).

There is obvious discrimination in topics of text-books, sample stories and texts. Thus, women in textbooks are usually displayed as mother dealing with domestic works and bringing-up of children. Due to fact that equal roles of women and men in the life are not reflected in the textbooks, gender inequality is cemented in the minds of people from their childhood. One-sided enlightenment of gender issue in textbooks is the result of insufficient participation of women in development and implementation of education policy.

Despite certain works being done in the country on CEDAW Committee recommendations **CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1** the following is recommended to do taking into account the situation in the country:

- Increase the threshold of points for admission to pedagogical universities to train highly specialized teachers;
- Conduct expertise of textbooks and increase their gender sensitivity;
- Develop special programs for preventing school drop-out of girls and ensure they acquire full education and vocational education on the professions crucial for the country's development.

5. ARTICLE 12 OF THE CONVENTION: ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN HEALTH

Article 12 of the Convention addresses the issues on prevention of discrimination against women in health care and sets forth certain relevant measures to be taken by the State.

CEDAW Committee's recommendations **CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1** noted problems existing in reproductive health and family planning of Azerbaijani women, especially in rural areas, and high maternity death rate.

Reproductive role of women

Article 5 of the Convention promotes "correct understanding of maternity as social function" and sets forth the requirement on sharing responsibility for raising the child among representatives both sexes – father and mother. Respectively, the Convention declares that protection of motherhood and guarantees related to child care are core rights.

The Convention requires the State to provide equal use of health care services by men and women, to ensure family planning, patronage care to women during and after pregnancy.

Article 4 recommends undertaking special measures for protection of motherhood and these measures are not considered as "discrimination". At the same time, the Convention recognizes and confirms women's right to make choice in the issues related to reproductive health.

The States joined the Convention must include family planning-related issues to the teaching process (Article 1) and develop Family Codes that guarantee women with "the same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights" (Article 16, e).

As throughout the world, one of the main issues in Azerbaijan is modern health care services to the population. Not accidental that UN Millennium Development Goals include, as main priorities, reduction of child mortality rate, protection of maternity health, combating malaria, AIDS and other diseases.

Since public health is important for Azerbaijan as well, a number of decrees and directives have been issued recent years. Targeted programs have been developed on "Protection of Public Health" (1997) and "Child Nutrition" (2003).

Maternal and Child Health Protection Action Plan had been adopted by Decision #211 of the Cabinet of Ministers on September 5, 2006. Certain proposals of SCFWCA were reflected in the Program.

Despite the works carried out in the country, a number of serious problems still remain in the health care sector. Discussions during the hearings revealed the following even more critical directions and related problems. The problems are connected not only with women's health, but at the same time, obstruct women from being the members of the society enjoying equal rights together with men:

1. there are no sanitary and hygiene rooms in more than 10% of enterprises where women work.

2. due to poor condition and shortage of ambulances in many district centers, it is not possible to transport pregnant women from distant rural areas to the district centers for delivery, which lead to increase of neonatal and maternal mortality.
3. conducive domestic conditions must be created for pregnant women in child and reproductive health field, women must be freed from hard physical work at home and at workplace, programs for improving the quality of nutrition and foster care services for breastfed children must be developed.
4. use of contraceptives for prevention of unwanted pregnancies must be promoted not only among women, but also among men.
5. attention to health of older and mature women must be increased, and control over conduct of their regular medical examination must be strengthened.
6. Creation of specialized diagnostic centers for children with physical and mental deficiencies, opening of centers and kindergartens that positively impact their development can bring psychological ease to mothers and allow them time for work.
7. Potable water must be regularly examined, normal level of iodine, zinc and iron there must be identified, and if it is less than normal, the local population must receive medicines and substitutes.
8. Timely conduct awareness-raising campaigns among population, especially youth on complications of marriages between close relatives for prevention of genetic diseases, and use mass media for this purpose.
9. For prevention of early marriages among girls to conduct awareness-raising campaigns for population on dangers of such marriages for health of young mothers and future children and set punishment measures for adults who participate in early marriage arrangements.

One of the negative factors for women's health is abortions. Azerbaijani legislation does not prohibit abortions. Abortions are legal and allowed to administer outpatiently up to 6 weeks of pregnancy, and in hospital from 6 to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Reasons of abortions in the modern world are defined as follows:

40% based on women's own will;

25% because of living conditions and welfare indicators;

23% because of social indicators;

12% because of medical indicators.

Anand Hrover, UN rapporteur on Azerbaijan on the issues related to the right to health stated that Azerbaijan was one of the "leader" countries on number of abortions. There are 10,3% abortion rate to 1000 fertile women in Azerbaijan²⁶. While this fact is related to children's sex on one hand, it stems from lack of State programs on sexual and reproductive health on the other hand.

Since abortion is an intimate issue, reliability of the mentioned data is doubtful. These figures do not correspond to real situation with abortions in Azerbaijan either. Despite the declaration of the Ministry of Health that there were no death cases as a result of abortions in Azerbaijan during last two

²⁶ Men and women in Azerbaijan. State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2012.

years, according to researches of the World Health Organization, more than 70 thousand women die globally every year due to abortion complications.

The conducted researches revealed that there are different reasons for abortions in Azerbaijan. Some women do not plan to have third and more children. Reasons for this decision are lack of good living conditions and unemployment. Sex selective abortions can be added to this list. Although women provide their written consent for abortion, in many cases they are forced to undergo abortion.

Proportion of boys and girls in total population was as follows in last several five-year periods: 0-17 y.o. children in 1996 – boys - 39,5%, girls – 36,1%, in 2001 - boys - 37,6%, girls -36,4%, in 2006 - boys - 33,1%, girls- 30,6%, in 2011- boys - 29,8%, girls- 26,0%, and in the first half of 2012 - boys -29,4%, girls- 25,6%²⁷.

According to optimal demographic development, there must be 100 girls to 105 born boys. But one can see sharp difference in Azerbaijan: 100 girls to each 112 boys. Even if the problem is not evident at the moment, its consequences may turn into demographic problem in the future.

The highest abortion rate in Azerbaijan is among women of 25-29. The number of such women during last 3 years was 17425. 35-49 y.o. women had 10488 abortions in last three years. So the conclusion is that it is expedient to carry out educational activities in towns and villages of Azerbaijan. These are official statistical data. The picture even more dangerous given that sometimes abortions are administered at home. According to unofficial statistics, 30 out of 100 pregnant women go for abortion. This leads to increase of the abortion rates. It must be noted that when percentage of 1000 women who used contraceptives in 2000 was 13,8 %, the same percentage in 2011 reduced to 7,3 %. Percentage of abortions for 1000 women for the respective years increased from 7,85% to 10,3%²⁸. The reason for higher rate of contraceptive usage in early 2000's was implementation of education campaigns by various organizations. This re-proves the necessity to have larger coverage and outreach to population with promotional information about the importance of contraceptives.

Focus group discussions revealed that both men and women do not have idea about their reproductive health and don't take care about it. Therefore, it is important to undertake educational activities with high school students in general and vocational education institutions, as well as university students. At the same time, in order to persuade pregnant women not to undergo abortion, doctors in female counseling centers must educate the women about consequences and side effects of abortion, and psychologists to inform them about psychological damage that abortion do to women. If female counseling centers would have sufficient number of visual aids like posters, photos and other means displaying the harmfulness of abortions, this may have positive effect on women who wants to undergo abortion. Besides, production of PSAs and coverage of the topic in media are important issues.

Percentage of breast and uterine cancer in 2011 constituted 32.6% and 19% respectively. The problem is late detection of the disease. There are almost no mammographers in female clinics. And

²⁷ A. Veysalova. Abortion as urgent problem of the modern society. Researches of SCFWCA.

²⁸ Health care, social security and housing in Azerbaijan. State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, 2012

since mammographic examination in private clinics is expensive, the number of women going through regular check-ups is low.

High maternal and child mortality rate is especially concerning. According to administrative data, maternal mortality rate is specifically high in rural areas. There are probably several reasons for such rate. First of all, one should note lack of sufficient medical equipment and experienced medical doctors in rural areas.

Other factor influencing maternal mortality is administering deliveries without participation of experienced specialized doctors. In some villages, especially in mountainous ones, the distance to the hospital is too long; there are problems with transportation, poor road conditions and lack of financial means that make some pregnant women deliver at home. All these reasons also lead to child mortality in villages.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Combating Diseases Caused by HIV” was adopted on May 11, 2010. This law regulates preventive measures, diagnostics, treatment of diseases caused by HIV (HIV infection), legal basis for provision of medical and socio-psychological assistance to people living with HIV and relations emerging in this field.

Since first detection of HIV in 1987 till 2012, 3720 people are proven to be infected with HIV in Azerbaijan. 2879 Azerbaijani citizens with HIV are men and 714 – women. The number of people at AIDS stage is 1098. 1082 of them are citizens of Azerbaijan.

The number of newly detected people with HIV in Azerbaijan during 9 months of 2011 was 412. 403 of them (97,8%) are citizens of Azerbaijan, and 9 people (2,8%) are foreigners. 296 people (73,4%) out of the registered 403 citizens of Azerbaijan, who has HIV infection, are men, and 107 people (26,6%) are women. During the same period, the number of people who shifted to AIDS stage is 160; 155 out of them are citizens of Azerbaijan. The number of people died of AIDS is 39. 38 of them were citizens of Azerbaijan. The number indicating infected women is not so realistic, because as others, many of women believe that this infection is transmitted only through sexual intercourse and therefore, do not undergo medical examination in order not to damage their reputation.

According to the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Health, only during 9 months of 2011, 56,8% of all cases of HIV infection in Azerbaijan were caused by drug use. Overall, from 1987 till 01.10.2010 61,7% of all infections were because of the mentioned reason.

There are many people unaware of AIDS and ways of its infection. Majority of the infected people are from provinces. Negligence about the disease and ways of infection lead to stigma towards the infected people and the fear of isolation forces the infected people to delay medical examination. Majority of infected women got the virus from their husbands – seasonal workers, who migrate abroad to earn money. Women are unaware of preventive measures to be taken in such cases.

The conducted research allowed categorizing the problems as follows:

- Inability of women to use good quality health services, including reproductive health medical services;
- Non-use of modern methods for family planning;

- HIV/AIDS-related discrimination;
- Low level diagnostics of breast and uterine cancer.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop foster health care service in villages;
- Conduct large scale education activities for both men and women on family planning and inform them on side effects of abortion;
- Conduct mandatory regular breast and uterine examinations for prevention of cancer;
- Inclusion of information on HIV/AIDS infection and sexual education to learning program for population, especially young people.

6. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CEDAW Committee's **CEDAW/C/AZE/Q/4/26.05.09 Add.1** recommendations include indication of existence of a number of women employment problems in Azerbaijan. Both vertical and horizontal gender segregation exists in the country's labor market; majority of women have low salary jobs and there is difference between wages of men and women in private sector.

The Convention calls for the States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment. It considers necessary to treat men and women equally in respect of work of equal value, as well as in the evaluation of the quality of work. The State Parties must undertake appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women and family structures and to effectively protect their labor rights.

The Convention states that as long as the State Parties do not provide economic independence of women, they won't be able to have their own homes and won't be able to build their own business. Financial and loan institutions set higher requirements for women to get loans which in turn makes it more difficult for women to enjoy the financial and loan opportunities. According to the Convention, the State Parties must ensure the right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit for women.

The legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan creates equal employment opportunities for women and men. Salary payment systems introduced in enterprises, offices and organizations of the country follow the principle of equal treatment of women and men in respect of work of equal value and there is no discrimination in payment for the work.

As in all countries, the number of poor women is more than the number of poor men in Azerbaijan. Among the mentioned problems in Azerbaijan the following ones are more important: employment opportunities, unemployment, unfair distribution of material resources and monetary income, non-consideration of the gender factor in budget line items, limited opportunities for women in

comparison with men for self-affirmation in the society and etc. As men are mostly involved in distribution of resources, it makes solution of the problems more difficult and shows that the gender problem is still critical in the country.

Majority of employable women who constitute 51-52% of the population do not have permanent jobs. This fact was re-confirmed during the hearing discussions. Closure of many children institutions or significant limitation of their activities, increase in service fees and lack of services in rural areas kept women away from public life and income generating work. On the other hand, unemployment among men, reduction of family income caused women to start managing families economically, which was not characteristic for common families in the past. Especially, the number of women in non-formal sector of economy has increased. However, salaries of women working in this sector are significantly lower than the salaries of men doing the same work.

Strategic importance of farms and the role of women in them were specifically emphasized during the hearings. Small size of garden plots that can contribute to family income, almost non-availability of compact agricultural machinery also plays in the level of poverty. Despite some reforms, there is overall and relative gender balance employment of the population countrywide. However, this balance is disrupted at economic activity level.

Problems of the women from vulnerable groups (IDPs, disabled, single) in social protection sphere are even more acute. Poor conditions of infrastructure, lack of water lines or their bad condition in the regions create many problems with employment, especially in mountainous areas. Bad road conditions make it especially difficult to connect with regional centers.

Economic status of women and the problems related to their business that came to surface during discussions were discovered as characteristic and common for entire Azerbaijan. It was discovered that the plan on opening new jobs must take into account availability of natural resources, geography and potential market. Opening of new jobs, revitalization of closed enterprises, widening of plantations and land plots based on climate, opening of small workshops on carpet weaving, collection and drying-out of medicinal herbs, fruit collection in mountainous areas may contribute to partial employment of women on the ground. Widening of garden plots and creation of product collection points and establishment of agrotechnical services for harvesting may help families to generate income and at the same time, prevent migration of young boys and girls from rural to urban areas.

Lack of knowledge of women on business planning, microcrediting and financial reporting, as well as problems with getting low-interest loans are among the reasons impeding women to do small and medium business.

Maternity has strong impact on woman employment. As a rule, in order to take care of the newly born child, mothers have either to take maternity leave (from 1,5 to 3 years) or resign at their own will or involuntarily. This situation, on one hand, reduces their economic activeness, and on the other hand, deprives them from opportunity to get high pensions and medical insurance in the future. This factor substantiates the importance of material and moral support to be provided by the enterprises where the women work and take maternity leave. Otherwise, according to international documents, this is

considered as social injustice. In order to prevent such cases, entrepreneurs try not to employ women in first place.

Besides, the facts of passiveness of women in labor market, shorter labor activity of women (inability to work after hours), less number of women willing to work voluntarily, requirement not to work put by husbands can also be related to national traditions and customs.

While there is no difference in salaries between men and women in the enterprises and organizations financed from the State budget, the difference is substantially visible in the private sector. According to the official statistics, average monthly salary of men and women gradually increase. According to indicators, average monthly salary of women constitutes only 50-58% of the average monthly salary of men.

Overall, the State Employment Service has employed 41442 women in 2009-2012 and 7594 women were admitted to various vocational courses²⁹.

When the level of employment for men was 68,4% in 2003, it went down to 64,8% in 2010. In contrary, the level of employment of women has increased from 44,9% to 57,7% in the respective years. If the issues are considered from gender point of view, one can observe reduction of difference in the employment levels from year to year. Thus, when the difference in 2003 was 23,5%, in 2010 it became 7,1%. This indicates the positive dynamics in terms of providing equal employment opportunities for men and women³⁰. However, if the problem is considered deeper, we can see that employment data also include temporary jobs.

The number of women in large State and private production enterprises, as well as high-income entrepreneurship business sector is very low. The number of reasons related to national mentality and causing such situation is pretty high. Men in families usually impede women to work in the positions where women can earn more money than themselves.

The National Association of Women Entrepreneurs functions in Azerbaijan since 1996. However, the studies show very low level of organization and initiativity of women entrepreneurs.

The share of the private sector in GDP in Azerbaijan constitutes 83%. The number of entrepreneurship entities had increased up to 500 000 in the country. Overall, presently 40.063 (8%) women entrepreneurs function in the country and 22.377 (4,47 %) of them are active in the market. As you can see, the number is pretty low. Women entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan are mainly have their businesses in light industry, textile industry, carpet-weaving, commercial art, traditional handicraft, food industry, agriculture, trade and service spheres.

Along with above-mentioned fact, women doing business in the country face a number of difficulties. They include low level of property ownership, stereotypes against women in the society, traditional dependence of woman from her family and others.

²⁹ Information of the State Employment Service, 2012

³⁰ T. İbrahimova. Data on provision of gender equality in Azerbaijan. SCFWCA.

III Forum of Women Entrepreneurs has been held on November 14-15, 2012 organized by UNECE and SCFWCA. The event brought together 35 foreign experts and 100 domestic participants. They discussed future perspectives of cooperation and brainstormed around the topics like “Women and tax”, “Women and economy”.

National Fund for Assistance to Entrepreneurship under the Ministry of Economic Development allocated 36 million manat funds to 1601 women during 2002-2012. It was envisaged to create 933 new jobs based on preferential loans to women entrepreneurs in last 3 years and 9 months of 2012. Sometimes women are *pro forma* owners of profitable enterprises. In many cases, man is doing the actual business in the family.

Economic status of women is one of the factors that plays important role in increasing their authorities, enables their participation in decision-making processes, and provides conditions for their participation in election process as nominees to elective positions. It is crucial to create opportunities for women to acquire vocational education in order to improve their economic status. They must be involved in the programs on development of entrepreneurship, loans-getting and development of business plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To develop educational programs for women on business plan writing, micro-credit and financial reporting to encourage them to do small and medium business;
- To provide women with long-term preferential loans;
- To conduct investment competitions among women entrepreneurs;
- To broaden opportunities for women entrepreneurs to use leasing services (house rental, equipment and technical services and etc.).

CONCLUSION

It is impossible to solve women problems separately from other problems. They must be studied in connection with gender inequality problems. Education, health and economic problems impact women's participation in political life. On the other hand, women must participate in the decision-making process to solve the mentioned problems.

The most of advocacy works for women participation in all spheres must be carried out by women themselves in order to be able to participate in all areas of the life. For effectiveness of the advocacy, women must be protected, sufficient resources must be secured to maximize opportunities for women and political arena must be provided for their access to decision-makers. Women have limited access to resources and limited opportunities to control the existing ones, including land plots, loans and household incomes.

The State should mobilize all powers to ensure equality and full participation of each individual. The role of NGOs in the mobilization is big. Education activities must be conducted to

change the public attitude to gender equality. Women and men must understand that they have to be represented in public-political life equally. Gender equality issues must be regularly covered in mass media outlets. It is important to carry out gender expert analysis in the legislative field. Such analysis can assist in formation of equal opportunity policy for men and women.

Gender mainstreaming, i.e. necessary policy implementation approach in the gender sphere, must be included in the strategies and programs at all levels by the persons making decisions on gender equality. The public hearings conducted within the project showed that officials of local executive authorities, local self-governance bodies and local structures of central executive power have superficial knowledge on CEDAW and the gender policy in general.

In order to change this situation and help representatives of local executive and self-governance bodies to better understand the public policy on gender, the objectives and responsibilities on implementation of the policy, the scope of educational and awareness-raising measures must be broadened. Material and institutional capacity of SCFWCA must be further developed in order to conduct such campaigns and organize cooperation with CSOs. Current capacity is not sufficient for large-scope activities. There is a need for taking relevant decisions at the governmental level in this direction.

The role of NGOs in discovering and realization of potential of women and in general, every person is incontestable. NGOs, especially those working on women issues have always been the force bringing change to the society. NGOs must contribute to solution of gender problems through establishment of relations with State bodies, all structures of the society based on partnership and cooperation.

Gender equality must be accepted and supported by all levels of the society. When other actors are outside of gender policy, the work done by the governmental structures and NGOs will yield no result. Only joint activities of all structures can make gender equality possible. Active participation of private sector, political parties, entrepreneurship organizations, research centers, academician structures and international organizations have big role to play in ensuring gender equality.

Analysis of the recommendations provided by CEDAW Committee to the National Report show that the Government of Azerbaijan should:

- ensure participation of civil society institutions, NGOs, political parties, media representatives, active citizens in solution of women-related problems;
- develop effective national mechanisms to improve women's welfare;
- include gender equality principle in the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development.

It is not possible to meet the requirements of the Convention without working national mechanism in place.

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