

Republic of Armenia National Report

**For the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the
Status of Women
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The Republic of Armenia is situated in the South Caucasus, to the south of the Caucasus Mountains. It borders with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey. Armenia is a mountainous country with a territory of 29,000 square kilometers. The population is 3.8 million, of which 70% live in urban areas. Over 95% of the population is Armenian. Women are 51.8%. Armenia was the first in the world to adopt Christianity as the state religion in as early as 301 AD.

Similar to other newly-independent countries, the Republic of Armenia encountered a large number of difficulties during the transition period.

The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted unanimously during the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, as well as the Millennium Development Goals have reiterated the commitment of governments to eliminate all forms of violence against women and to ensure equal participation of women and men in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of states.

After Beijing, the Republic of Armenia was confronted with the economic blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey, which is going on to this very date, exacerbated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the disastrous earthquake in Armenia, and the large inflow of refugees. In this situation, the Republic of Armenia undertook a number of measures to improve the conditions of women in respect of various issues faced by the country.

Within the frameworks of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government enacted Decree 242 [dated April 15, 1998] “On the Fundamental Principles of the Program on Improving the Status of Women in the Republic of Armenia” and Decree 406 [dated June 26, 1998] “On Approving the National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society” with the aim of furthering the development of gender policies.

These two documents are designed to provide guarantees of respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of women, protection of maternal and child health, and women’s participation in decision-making structures in the Republic of Armenia.

The National Action Plan (NAP) has not been accomplished in full, though some

of its provisions were implemented (gender screening of the RoA legislation completed, studies undertaken, recommendations developed on how to tackle violence against women and increase the number of women in decision-making positions, and disaggregated collection of statistical data introduced, which has resulted in the publication of bulletins). Among the reasons were the insufficiency of funding, as well as the lack of clear arrangements for implementation and the absence of coordination between different agencies. Poor public awareness has been an obstacle, as well.

In collaboration with UNIFEM, the “Women in Peace Building and Conflict Prevention in the Southern Caucasus” regional project has been implemented in order to ensure gender sensitization and improved legal awareness among women. The project supported training courses for employees of different agencies, social services, and local self-government.

By Decree 550-A of September 25, 2002, the Government of the Republic of Armenia created an Inter-Ministerial Commission for Drafting the Republic of Armenia National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society, led by the Republic of Armenia Deputy Minister for Social Security. Some of the members of the Commission were representatives of non-governmental organizations.

On April 8, 2004, the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted Decree 645-N “On Approving the 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plan of the 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society” (hereinafter, the “NAP”).

The NAP lays down the principles, priorities, and directions of the national policy on women’s issues in the Republic of Armenia. The NAP is based on the respective provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia and is targeted at ensuring compliance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Recommendations of the 4th Beijing World Conference on Women (1995), the documents of the Council of Europe Committee for Equality between Women and Men, the UN Millennium Declaration, and other international undertakings of the Republic of Armenia.

The NAP will facilitate the process of ensuring equal rights and opportunities to women and men—as a prerequisite for building a democratic, legal, and social state and shaping civil society. The NAP will foster the process of addressing social and economic issues which women face, which will help overcome poverty in the country in accordance with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

The NAP comprises 7 sections and contemplates measures in the following areas:

- Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men;

- Improving the social and economic condition of women;
- Education;
- Improving the health condition of women;
- Eliminating violence against women;
- Role of the mass media and cultural institutions in reporting on women's issues and building a female role model; and
- Institutional reforms.

A number of obstacles have been identified during the implementation of the NAP, including weak institutions, poor awareness, and under-funding.

Gender Statistics

In 1999, wide-scale activities were initiated in Armenia aimed at introducing gender indicators in statistical publications and collecting, disseminating, and maintaining gender-disaggregated data.

The statistical brochure "Women and Men in Armenia" has been published regularly since 1999. A statistical analysis bulletin entitled "Family and Children in Armenia" was published in 2000. These publications contain statistics on health, social security and insurance, families and households, education, the labor market and employment, and violations of rights.

Gender statistics are relatively new to Armenia; further development, improved administrative sources of information, and new gender indicators are necessary in this sphere.

At present, no gender statistics are compiled on agriculture, business, latent employment, labor time use, violence, trafficking, and irregular migration.

1. Women's Rights in the Context of Human Rights and Freedoms

Since accession to the UN, the Republic of Armenia has ratified the following international instruments on human rights and freedoms:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted on December 18, 1979 by the UN General Assembly, and ratified on June 9, 1993 by the Republic of Armenia;
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention adopted by the International Labor Organization on June 25, 1958, ratified by the Republic of

Armenia on December 21, 1993;

- Equal Remuneration Convention adopted by the International Labor Organization on June 29, 1951, and ratified by the Republic of Armenia on December 21, 1993;
- Convention on the Nationality of Married Women adopted by the UN General Assembly on January 29, 1957, and ratified by the Republic of Armenia on March 16, 1994; and
- Convention against Discrimination in Education adopted on December 14, 1969 and ratified by the Republic of Armenia on March 16, 1994.

On March 25, 2003, the Republic of Armenia ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

On December 25, 2003, the Republic of Armenia joined the Revised European Social Charter (May 3, 1996), which contains a number of articles on equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The Republic of Armenia Electoral Code (adopted in 1999) provided some privileges for women, including a provision setting a minimum 5% quota on women's inclusion in the party-proportionate contest lists. Under the new draft prepared by the National Assembly, this quota has been raised to 25%.

At present, there are no legal provisions in Armenia prescribing discrimination against women and men, because the Soviet legislation mainly inherited by tradition prescribed a number of systems granting privileges to women. However, most of these provisions were not implemented due to resource unavailability.

Amendments to the national legislation during the last decade have, on the one hand, prescribed realistic provisions in line with international conventions and, on the other, created the required machinery and supported the recruitment and training of staff, which has completely ensured respect for women's rights and interests (social services, the employment agency, and the like).

The Republic of Armenia Law on State Pensions (adopted November 11, 2002) defines, in furtherance of gender equality, that anyone who has reached age 63, regardless of gender, shall be entitled to a retirement pension.

Equality between women and men in labor, remuneration, and employment is regulated by the RoA Labor Code (adopted June 21, 2004), the RoA Law on Remuneration for Labor (2001), and the RoA Law on Remuneration of Civil Servants (2002).

State regulation of labor, including the protection of women's rights in the workplace and ensuring gender equality, has been supported by legislative improvements and the creation of appropriate machinery for the protection of these rights. Draft laws

on the state inspectorate of labor, compulsory social insurance, compulsory insurance against work accidents and professional disease, insurance premiums, capitalization of assets, and volunteer work and assistance terms and provisions have already been submitted to the RoA Government. In addition, about 15 sub-legislative acts have been or are currently being drafted in accordance with the labor legislation.

In accordance with international standards, the Republic of Armenia Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia provides that the marriage of a Republic of Armenia citizen with a foreign citizen shall not result in a citizenship change, and that citizenship change of one spouse shall not change the citizenship of the other.

In 1996, the RoA Ministry of Health Board approved the National Program on Improving Reproductive Health. The implementation of some components of the Program began in 1997.

Since 1995, the following legislation has been drafted and adopted on the basis of, inter alia, the “Beijing+5” Declaration adopted in 2000 by a Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Women’s Issues, the UN Millennium Declaration adopted in 2001, and the Regional Strategy on Sexual and Reproductive Health adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe in 2001.

1. The RoA Law on Prevention of the Disease Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (adopted by the National Assembly);

2. The RoA Law on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights of Humans (adopted by the National Assembly); and

3. A number of decrees adopted by the RoA Government during 2003-2004 on the basis of the RoA Law on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights of Humans aimed at improving reproductive health and furthering reproductive rights.

The amended Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia became effective on August 1, 2003. It contains a new chapter (Chapter 20) on “Crimes against Interests of Family and the Child” and a new article (Article 168) on “Trafficking in Children.” There is also a separate article in the new Criminal Code on trafficking in human beings.

II. Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms

Currently, women’s issues are being addressed by the Department for Women’s and Children’s Issues created in the RoA Social Security Ministry in 1997, as well as the Mother and Child Health Division of the RoA Ministry of Health. A commission was set up in 1997 by a decree of the Prime Minister to implement the 1998-2000 Gender Policy Development Program (it was a three-year program on improving the

status of women).

In 2000, the Women's Council under the RoA Prime Minister was created as a volunteer body of a consultative nature. In 2002, a Deputy Minister position was introduced in the RoA Social Security Ministry to coordinate activities addressing women's issues.

In 2004, the Human Rights Defender (ombudsman) was institutionalized in Armenia.

However, all of these institutions address social, health, and employment issues, and do not have sufficient resources and powers to address women's issues and to develop and implement effective policies to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men.

Thus, it is necessary to create a new institution or to upgrade the powers of one of the existing institutions to carry out special programs targeted at women's issues, to screen the performance of executive authorities in respect of women's issues, to produce with recommendations on legal regulation of women's issues, and to cooperate with legislative and judicial authorities and non-governmental organizations.

This approach is in keeping with international standards and the international undertakings of Armenia.

The 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia contemplates:

- Drafting recommendations on the creation of a public agency to coordinate women's issues and to screen the activities of executive authorities concerning women's issues; and
- Facilitating the development of a social partnership policy between the Government, NGOs, and international institutions.

III. Ensuring Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making

Under Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, States Parties committed to take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof.

In 2001, the Republic of Armenia Law on Civil Service was adopted, which safeguards equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

As a result of the 2003 elections, women took 4.1% of the seats in the National

Assembly. One of the six female MPs was elected through the party-proportionate contest, while the remaining five were elected in the single-mandate contest. Female candidates were 4% of the single-mandate lists and 14.1% of the party lists. The numbers suggest that the small share of women in the National Assembly is due, inter alia, to their under-representation amongst candidates. One of the female MPs is the head of a standing committee.

The number of women in executive leadership positions is limited (only three female deputy ministers).

The situation is similar in territorial administration and local self-government. In the 2002 local self-government elections, only 8 out of the 932 female candidates were elected to office.

Equal participation of women and men can be found in middle levels of governance and in the international organizations operating in Armenia. Women are majority in the social, education, health, culture, and service sectors.

Women exercise their right to decision-making mostly in the non-governmental sector. The role of women and women's organizations in building a democratic and stable civil society is increasing.

IV. Women and Poverty

Poverty reduction is currently deemed a priority that societies must address. Armenian society is no exception. Independent Armenia has faced this challenge from its very inception. In addition to problems caused by the collapse of the USSR and the systemic transformation that ensued in all the newly-independent states, the Armenian Government had to seek solutions to additional problems, such as the blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan, the sheltering of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Azerbaijan, the elimination of consequences of the 1988 disastrous Earthquake of Spitak, the rehabilitation of the borderline areas of Armenia from destruction by Azerbaijan due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and the like. The situation was exacerbated by the transportation blockade of Armenia, the complete loss of former economic ties, the halting and dismantling of numerous industrial activities, and other harsh factors.

In real terms, the aforementioned and other undesirable events led to an acute economic and social decline in Armenia during the '90s, reflected, inter alia, in the mass impoverishment of the population, income inequality, alarming polarization of society, and emigration.

According to UNDP estimates, 70% of the poor people in the world are women.

During transition to a market economy, women suffer rather unfavorable conditions compared to men. Women stay in these conditions longer and encounter more obstacles in attempts to overcome poverty than men do.

According to general statistics, 53% of all the poor in Armenia are currently women. Gender and age-disaggregated studies suggest that women more often find themselves in poverty than men do. However, the poverty risk for women is not much higher than that for men.

The situation is different in terms of woman-led households, in which the risk of extreme poverty is by 33% higher than that in other households. The main reason is that employment in women is much lower than that in men; in the absence of the man, who is often the main breadwinner, the risk of poverty in woman-led households is higher. According to data for the second half of 2004, the family poverty assessment system reported about 12,590 single-mother households, 9,672 divorced [-female] households, 17,487 woman-led households where a child/children has/have lost one parent, and 43,030 households with four or more children.

In view of the foregoing, the RoA Government has undertaken a number of steps during recent years, including the following:

- RoA Government Decree 994-N dated August 8, 2003 approved the RoA Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which is designed to provide adequate living conditions for vulnerable people and those in need of state care;
- In 2002, the Family Poverty Allowance proceeds were targeted at the minor members of families, and starting from July 2003, the Family Poverty Allowance bonus per child was increased from 1,500 to 2,000 drams; and
- Starting from October 2003, the child birth lump-sum allowance was increased from 5,900 to 35,000 drams.

Reforms have been carried out in social services, as well: the family poverty assessment system was introduced in social services over 10 years ago. In view of the imperatives of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper adopted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on August 8, 2003, families with many children and single parents have been treated as a priority in the poverty assessment schemes under the 2004 and 2005 state budgets. The country currently has 55 social service agencies, in which women are over 70% of staff. Measures are regularly undertaken to broaden coverage and to improve the quality of services.

V. Women and the Economy

Robust economic growth has been reported during recent years, coupled with an increase in budget-financed salaries, allowances, pensions, and stipends. The

2005 State Budget has a social character. Moreover, the RoA Government is pursuing a policy of social-economic development.

1. Equal Rights in Labor and Employment

Gender mainstreaming in the state regulation of labor is vital. The core principles of the gender policy in labor are enshrined in the RoA Labor Code and the RoA Law on Employment of the Population. The policy of state regulation of labor has facilitated improved labor productivity and better quality of work. The creation of a state inspectorate of labor to monitor legal aspects of the labor relationship has been another important step in the right direction. The aforementioned reforms in labor and employment have facilitated start-up and expanded business activity, in addition to improving the investment climate and macroeconomic framework and preventing any gender disparity.

The RoA Labor Code adopted in 2004 provides worker collectives and employers with the possibility of concluding collective bargaining agreements, setting tariff-qualification schedules, giving equal remuneration to women and men for the same or equivalent work, protecting motherhood, and safeguarding pregnant women and women looking after children. At present, the RoA Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs is working towards elaborating sample collective bargaining agreements, individual labor contracts, and procedures of bargaining between social partners (trade unions, employers, and public administration bodies).

The National Institutes of Labor and Social Research, which operate in the structure of the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, offer professional counseling and information to organizations, businesses, and trade unions on labor and remuneration.

The State Inspectorate of Labor monitors respect for labor rights of workers and labor conditions, discovers hidden or unlawful employment, studies cases of gender discrimination in the workplace, takes measures to protect the violated rights of workers, looks into matters concerning recruitment and dismissal based on nationality, gender, faith, or other status of workers, and precludes women's employment in harmful and heavy work.

In November 2004, the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Union of Businesses and Manufacturers, the Confederation of Trade Unions, and the International Labor Organization signed a 2004-2006 Technical Assistance and Cooperation Program. One of the activities under this Program is gender mainstreaming in the social discourse and effective use of collective bargaining and agreements to improve women's status in production and to ensure gender equality.

In 1999, 46.9% of those employed in the economy were women. In 2003, the number had grown to 47.5%. The share of women in governance grew from 1.8% in

1999 to 1.9% in 2003.

As of November 1, 2004, the number of unemployed women in Armenia was 78,000. Women continue to represent a high share of the unemployed (70%). The share of the urban population in the total number of unemployed women is rather high (94%). The unemployed women have the following education: university education (11.9%), secondary vocational education (23.7%), general secondary education (60%), and incomplete secondary education (4.4%).

In terms of the age structure, women under 18 are 0.2% of the total number of unemployed women, the age group 18-22 is 4.9%, ages 22-30 are 20%, 30-50 are 66%, and women above 50 are 8.9%.

Women above 50, in particular, encounter serious problems in finding employment. They have difficulties adapting to the new economy and are psychologically not ready to be re-trained and to start something new. Employers, in turn, prefer to recruit people who are from 18 to 30 years old. Even women of ages 30-50 and those above 50 with education and a profession have become uncompetitive due to not having appropriate qualification.

During 1998-2004, the “RoA Employment Service” agency has helped about 29,709 women find employment.

In order to mitigate the disproportion between labor force supply and demand, the “RoA Employment Service” agency has carried out professional training during 1998-2004 for 2,348 women in the following professional fields: accounting, small business, farming, computer design and publishing, precious stone processing, computer administration, computer operation and assistance, sewing, and carpet-making. 90% of the trained women were placed in different jobs. The training courses in sewing and carpet-making were offered exclusively for women.

During 1998-2004, professional training was organized for 237 disabled women in jewelry, computer skills, and sewing. About 43.4% of them were subsequently placed in different jobs.

The “RoA Employment Service” agency and its 51 regional centers undertook a number of measures to support businesswomen and family enterprises. During 1998-2004, the Employment Service gave grants to 97 women who were interested in setting up a business.

Community work has been organized as a way of providing employment for women. During 2001-2004, 1,577 unemployed women participated in the “Monetary Benefits for Work” Program, and another 2,266 took part in the “Food for Work” Program in the period of 1998-2004.

As of January 1, 2004, 3,309 unemployed women were receiving unemployment benefits. Another 5,216 were receiving cash allowances.

RoA Government Decree 994-N dated August 8, 2003 approved the RoA Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which is designed to provide adequate living conditions for vulnerable people and those in need of state care.

In 2000, the RoA Law on State Support to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises was adopted and an SME Support Center was created.

During 1997-2000, a Micro Enterprise Development Project was implemented. As a result, 2,600 individuals received business administration training and financial assistance to set up individual micro enterprises. In the review of applications, female-led individual and small enterprises were given an advantage.

In the frameworks of the Program, 630 individuals benefited from micro enterprise management training courses. 597 loans (US \$712,930 in total) were made. 2,000 beneficiaries in Yerevan and Gyumri (44% of whom were women) directly or indirectly received financial assistance.

During 1999-2000, a German Project entitled “Assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises in Armenia” was carried out with the aim of developing women’s entrepreneurship in Armenia. A number of measures were accomplished in this respect:

- Ensuring the participation of female entrepreneurs in the negotiations of partner organizations concerning SME policies;
- Ensuring cooperation with female entrepreneurs and facilitating female entrepreneurship support associations;
- Establishing business links between Armenian and German businesses with a special focus on engagement of female entrepreneurs;
- Providing business advice to Armenian businesses in enterprise management, marketing, export, promotion, and other areas, again with a special focus on female entrepreneurs; and
- Organizing business training courses, especially for female entrepreneurs.

At present, the “Aregak” micro-lending project is being implemented in the marzes (regions) of Armenia, most of the beneficiaries of which have been women.

The 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia contemplates a number of activities to improve women’s status in labor and employment, including the following:

- Designing and implementing women’s employment projects within the frameworks of general population employment programs;
- Creating arrangements to ensure continuous training for women with the aim of increasing their competitiveness in the labor market and ensuring compatibility of work with family duties;
- In the frameworks of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, implementing projects to reduce poverty amongst women, including, for instance, concessional micro lending

to facilitate development of women-led small and medium businesses;

- Implementing activities to channel international donor resources to small business development by means of organizing special training courses for women; and
- Carrying out special projects to facilitate development of folk arts and crafts to ensure employment for women.

2. Rural Women

As a result of economic liberalization and agricultural reform, including the privatization of land, agricultural assets, infrastructure, and sale and processing industries, various difficulties emerged, especially in borderline and highly-mountainous areas.

In the context of gender division of rural labor, the burden is equally shared by men and women. The situation is especially complicated in borderline areas, in which the bulk (about 60-70%) of land plots is in dangerous areas and is difficult to cultivate.

The difficulties in rural areas are due to the small share of the able-bodied population, the large-scale emigration, the mismatch between the registered population figure and the actual number of rural inhabitants, limited access to non-agricultural employment, the high share of the elderly, the disabled, and other non-able-bodied people, the persistence of life and labor hazards in 187 borderline areas, the remoteness from consumer markets, the inadequacy of roads and supply/purchase/production infrastructure, the insufficiency of utilities and health facilities in rural areas, the detrimental conditions of public catering and culture facilities, limited access to television, the radio, and print press, the dire conditions in kindergartens and nursery schools, and so on.

The aforementioned difficulties further exacerbate access to employment for rural women. The rural women have to carry the whole family burden.

According to a 2001 census, the permanent population of Armenia was 3,213.0 thousand, of which 2,066.1 thousand (64.3%) was the urban population, and 1,146.9 thousand (35.7%)—the rural population.

46.0% of the employed population of Armenia is engaged in agriculture and forestry. 45.0% of them are women. In addition to agriculture, working rural women are mainly engaged in middle-level teaching and health care positions. The level of professional qualification amongst rural women is low. The agronomists and veterinarians are predominantly men. Inclusion of the rural population in higher education institutions and, more generally, in vocational education, has been gradually declining due to transportation, affordability, and other obstacles.

Gender disparity can be found in agricultural work division. In general, rural social and economic development programs will focus on women's issues in view of gender peculiarities, because women's role in rural development is more important

today than ever.

Activities aimed at improving women's status and enhancing their role in society will, to the extent possible, focus on addressing these issues.

The following activities have been implemented in Armenia in the frameworks of the Agricultural Service Project supported under an IFAD loan designed to address women's issues in agriculture, including, among other things, poverty reduction and job creation.

During 2004, 446 farmers directly benefited from the "**Agriculture Development**" component of the Project in the form of assistance to establish fruit orchards. 38 of them (8.5%) are women, compared to a figure of 4.6% in 2002. The number of female beneficiaries has increased 3-fold.

Another component of the Project ("**Irrigation Development**") supported a considerable amount of work, including:

Rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure resulting in improved water provision to about 23,500 hectares of land owned by about 20,000 farms. The number of women living on these farms, who may be deemed beneficiaries, is approximately 23,800.

The number of female beneficiaries can be estimated on the basis of this component, since women were represented among the members of 23 newly-created Water User Associations (WUAs) and the staff of 14 design organizations, the "Jmak" State Institution, and the "Jrshin" SCJSC (155 women in total).

Under the "**Agricultural Finance**" component:

As of October 1, 2004, the Agricultural Cooperative Bank of Armenia ("ACBA") had extended loans to 482 women (4% of the total number of borrowers) who had borrowed a total of 983 loans (5.8% of the total number of loans) for a total amount of US \$655,000 (4.9% of the loan portfolio). These figures exceeded their 2002 levels 2.2-fold, 2.3-fold, and 3.7-fold, respectively. Among the staff of two regional branches of ACBA established under the Project are eight women (35% of the total staff of the two branches).

As of January 1, 2005, six of the enterprises borrowing from the "Aniv" Foundation were founded by women. 601 (39.7%) of the staff reported under business plans were women. The offices of "Aniv" currently employ three women (18.7% of the staff).

As of January 1, 2005, the renovation and rehabilitation of social facilities was accomplished in 21 communities under the "**Community Infrastructure**" component of the Project. These 21 communities have a total of 12,585 farms, where about 25,000 women reside (51% of the total population of the 21 communities). As of January 1, 2003, the activities had been accomplished in six communities covering a total of 1,499 households and about 3,100 women (51% of the population).

Under the "**Project Coordination**" component, seven regional project coordina-

tion offices employed 18 women (30% of staff).

The IFAD-supported Sustainable Livelihood and Poverty Reduction through Training in Traditional Crafts grant projects involved a total of 30 women.

With the aim of encouraging the activities of rural women, for the first time ever, the RoA Ministry of Agriculture awarded the Gold Medal for Agricultural Achievements to nine farmers of the country, including two women: R. Tsarukyan, the Chairwoman of “Multi-Agro” LLC, and L. Harutyunyan, the Chairwoman of “Vordi Armen” LLC.

In April 2004, the RoA Government approved the “Sustainable Agriculture Development Strategy,” the main objective of which is to facilitate sustainable agriculture development in the country, improve food security, and increase income of the rural population. The implementation of this Strategy will enable to address some of the problems faced in agriculture, which will result in rural poverty reduction and improved living conditions for the rural population, including women.

VI. Women and Education

Education has traditionally ranked high in Armenia. It is of nationwide importance to preserve and develop the education system and to ensure its international competitiveness.

Article 35 of the 1995 Constitution enshrines the entitlement of each Armenian citizen to education: secondary education in public institutions is free of charge, and each citizen is entitled to free-of-charge higher and other vocational education in public educational institutions on a competitive basis. In 1999, the National Assembly adopted the Republic of Armenia Law on Education, which aligns to some degree the education system development on the basis of the respective constitutional provisions.

According to this Law, the Republic of Armenia shall safeguard the right to education regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, faith, or political or other views. The Law also proclaims the equality of women and men.

An overview of statistical data suggests that there is no gender discrimination in terms of access to the different levels of education in Armenia. There are, in effect, no problems of involvement in this respect. Armenia has already achieved one of the targets (elimination of gender disparity at different levels of education—by 2005 in primary and secondary education, and by 2015 in professional education) prescribed under the 3rd MDG (“Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”). Equality between the rights of women and men, prescribed back in the Soviet period, has been respected and achieved in different spheres of life. It is noteworthy that the Armenian tradition

of equal involvement of girls and boys in primary education dates back to the 19th century.

The employees of pre-school institutions are mainly women. Women are 83.6% of public secondary school teachers. 75% of the teachers in public secondary vocational education institutions and 46.3% of those in higher education institutions are women.

Women are 45.3% of science, research, and development experts. They are 17.5% and 40% of Science Doctors and Candidate Science Doctors, respectively.

The aforementioned figures indicate a gender disparity in the number of educators. There is, in particular, feminization in public secondary schools (where about 84% of the teachers are women). The predominance of women in education has basically been a tradition. However, the situation changed abruptly during the crisis that began in 1993. Highly-qualified specialists have left the system due to low salaries, a poor professional image, and inadequate social protection. A large number of male pedagogues have left the system, as well. As for the gender composition of teachers in vocational education, there is somewhat of a balance. In order to address this issue and to strengthen social protection of pedagogues, the 2005 State Budget of Armenia has provided for an increase in teachers' salaries, which renders it 20% higher than the average salaries in the country.

In 2001, the 2001-2005 National Program for Education Development was adopted in the form of a law. Its main objective is to ensure progressive development of the education system as a prerequisite of strengthened statehood and social-economic progress.

In 2003, the RoA Government approved the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. One of the priorities laid down in the PRSP is to ensure the quality of education and equal access at all levels of education.

In 2004, the RoA Law on Higher and Post-University Professional Education was adopted. This Law regulates the principles of the state policy in higher and post-university professional education system, as well as the rights, responsibilities, liability, and relationship of natural persons and legal entities. This Law has proclaimed the following principles in this sphere of education: ability-based access to education, competitiveness, transparency, publicity, and the like. The Law has also laid down the academic freedoms of the faculty, research fellows, and students of higher education institutions.

At present, education development policies in Armenia are closely linked to the developments in the international education community. Armenia has adopted a policy of integration with the international education system, which implies harmonization of the structure and contents of education with the standards of democratic societies and market economies. To this end, it is important to pursue international cooperation at all

the levels of education.

The pre-school education system suffered considerable losses in the transition period. The number of nursery schools, kindergartens, and children attending these institutions fell abruptly.

With the aim of reforming pre-school education, a number of international organizations are supporting projects such as “Pre-School Education, Care, and Development”, “Parent Education”, “Step by Step,” and “Development of Inclusive Education for Children.” These projects, supported by the country offices of UNICEF and World Vision International and the Charitable Foundation “Step by Step,” have provided training for pre-school professionals, parents, and community members. Methodological manuals have been produced.

The objective of the “Parent Education” project, in particular, is to provide children and guardians with state-of-the-art knowledge on early childhood development and to expand parent and child involvement in pre-school education by means of alternative services. The Project renders methodological assistance to parents of children who do not attend kindergarten in order to properly organize their family upbringing.

The Civic Education course continues to be offered in public education institutions of Armenia. It comprises three subjects: Human Rights (8th grade), Civic Education (9th grade), and State and Law (10th grade). Teachers have been trained in order to teach these courses. To date, about 4,000 teachers countrywide have been trained in the Law course. The aim of the new subjects is to instill in the students respect for democracy and to encourage them to become active citizens of the Republic of Armenia. Practical meetings are held with teachers, senior state officials, and party leaders. Visits to the National Assembly, the Constitutional Court, the UN Country Office, and elsewhere are organized. In this process, a share of the initiative comes from individual NGOs.

A UNICEF-initiated Student Self-Governance Development project is being implemented with the aim of securing student participation in the development of civil society and the administration of their institutions.

The introduction of the Life Skills subject with UNICEF support is continuing successfully in the 1st to 7th grades. It contains a component on Human [Child] Rights. The Project has already encompassed about 300 schools. Over 500 teachers have been trained to date. Course materials will be developed in order to ensure sustainability of this Project through the 11th grade. It will include professional guidance, healthy lifestyle, environmental awareness, stress management, and other topics. It is planned that the number of schools involved in this Project will increase from year to year, and that the subject will be gradually introduced in all the schools of the country.

The Association of Women with University Education is carrying out a large amount of work in the country under the “Gender Awareness and Gender Sensitization: Preconditions of Balanced Democracy” project. The first steps have been taken towards institutionalizing inter-disciplinary and special gender courses in university education. For about four years, this Association has supported special courses in five universities and three institutes of the country on gender policy and equality of rights between women and men. A textbook called “Gender and Economics” has been produced. The Association has recently undertaken to draft and introduce gender education standards for university education. A policy of gender education standardization and a new concept will be developed for future implementation in universities. Gender is taught in the 8th and 9th grades of 36 public secondary schools. The results of these efforts suggest that a positive perception of gender equality is gradually emerging among gender students and democratic values, such as recognition of women’s political status and their right to participate in social and political life, are developing. Every year, gender courses are attended by about 400 university students and over 700 school-children. Under this Project, resource centers have been created in three universities. Conferences, round tables, and training courses have been organized. The project has once again born witness that gender education is important for achieving success in civic education, civic activity, increased responsibility, and gender equality in society.

The 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia approved by the Government contemplates an increased focus on shaping and developing life skills and teaching human rights awareness and gender. In the frameworks of the NAP, special gender training will be organized for NGOs, political figures, and civil servants.

VII. Protecting Women’s Health

The RoA Law on Population Health Care and Services adopted in March 1996 safeguards equal access to health care for women and men. Moreover, mother and child health has been proclaimed a core priority enjoying the sponsorship of the state. Similar to the previous decade, the state now adopts annual programs safeguarding free health care in cases of pregnancy and delivery, as well as free health care for socially-vulnerable women and in urgent cases. The scope and financing for these programs have grown from year to year.

In recent years, Armenia has seen positive trends in demography and healthcare, including a relatively stable level of mortality (6.3-6.6 per 1,000), high fertility, a high birth rate, and halting of the decline in natural growth. In 2001, the number of births,

fertility, and natural growth were 33,009; 1.01; and 2.1, respectively. In 2002, they changed to 33,423; 1.2; and 2.1, respectively. In 2003, the figures stood at 36,909; 1.2; and 2.4. Thus, starting from 2001, the year-to-year number of births has grown by 1.9%, 9.9%, and 2%, respectively. Unlike other CIS countries, natural growth, despite its decline over the last decade, remains positive, fluctuating between 2.1 and 2.4.

A statistical overview suggests that the main types of morbidity (including active tuberculosis, malignant neoplasms, STDs, and general morbidity) and the mortality rate in all age groups of women have declined compared to those in men.

In line with international instruments and the recommendations of conferences on reproductive health, the following activities have been carried out:

- Laws, governmental decrees, and many other legal and methodological instruments regulating medical practices and legal standards concerning reproductive health and reproductive rights have been drafted;
- In 1996, the National Program on Improving Reproductive Health was approved, and implementation of some of its components began in 1997;
- In 1999, the RoA Law on Prevention of the Disease Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus was adopted;
- In 2002, the RoA Law on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights of Humans was adopted;
- In 2003, the RoA Government Decree on Approving the 2003-2015 Mother and Child Health Protection Strategy was adopted;
- In 2003, the RoA Government adopted a Decree on Approving the Terms and Conditions of Sex Cell Provision by Reproductive Donors and Non-Donor Citizens and the Storage of Sex Cells and the Fetus; and
- In 2004, the RoA Government adopted a Decree on Approving the Terms and Conditions of Abortion.

In recent years, the RoA Minister of Health has issued various decrees approving regulations, strategies, programs, and decisions concerning improvements in reproductive health.

In Armenia, women's reproductive health care is provided through a wide network of ob/gyn institutions, including two highly-specialized republican centers, 10 autonomous maternity hospitals, 44 in-patient and out-patient ob/gyn wards within regional and city pyramids, 125 women's "consultancies" and offices, and 608 rural ob/gyn stations. With the aim of ensuring accessibility of health care, it has been organized on the basis of the territorial principle—by place of residence.

At present, the health system employs a total of 11,432 doctors, including 851 ob/gyns and 188 neonatologists. Though the majority of them (7,994) are women, only 363 of the 810 doctors in health care decision-making positions are women.

Delivery care is mainly financed from the State Budget. However, it remains inadequate in terms of both access to drugs, equipment, and medical supplies, and the payment of sufficient salaries to health personnel. Salaries in the health sector do not exceed US \$40-50.

In Armenia, the majority (98-99%) of deliveries takes place in hospital conditions, which allows better protection of women's reproductive health and helps decrease maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality and minimize the risk of post-natal purulent infection. The frequency of cesarean sections has recently tended to increase: in 1996, the number of cesarean sections was 45.6, growing to 88.5 (per 1,000 deliveries) in 2003.

Maternal mortality is a key indicator of maternal health and the quality of maternal health care. One of the Millennium Development Goals is to reduce maternal mortality. During the last decade, maternal mortality in Armenia has been higher than the WHO benchmark for Central and Eastern European countries (15 per 100,000), and much higher than the maternal mortality rate in Western Europe (8.8 per 100,000). Nevertheless, maternal mortality in Armenia is lower than the regional average of 40 per 100,000.

Despite the decline in maternal mortality noted in Armenia during the last 13 years, the fluctuation remains high, and the maternal mortality rate remains higher than the WHO Eastern Europe benchmark of 15 per 100,000 live-births.

Due to the small population of Armenia, the year-to-year fluctuation in the maternal mortality rate is rather high, which distorts the comparison. For this reason, the analysis is performed on a three-year basis: for the three-year period from 1996 to 1998, for instance, maternal mortality was 30.5 per 100,000 live-births, growing to 43.3 during 1999-2001, and falling to 25 during 2002-2004.

In Armenia, like in all the other developing countries, the main causes of maternal mortality are obstetrical hemorrhage, hypertension, and extra-genital disease.

During the last three years, infant mortality has declined considerably (by about 30%). Currently, it fluctuates between 11 and 12‰, despite the fact that from 1998 to 2000, it grew (14.7‰ in 1998, 15.4‰ in 1999, and 15.6‰ in 2000).

According to official statistics, abortions were the main method of fertility control and a primary cause of maternal mortality in Armenia prior to 1997.

Starting from 1997, Armenia began to carry out the Family Planning Component of the National Program on Improvement of Reproductive Health, which resulted in a considerable improvement in women's attitudes towards fertility control and the methods used by them.

According to official statistics, the abortion rate in 1996 was 669 (per 1,000 live-births), or 30.5 per 1,000 women of fertile age.

Starting from 1997, the number of abortions was cut in half. In 2000, the abortion rate was 335 per 1,000 live-births, or 10.9 per 1,000 women of fertile age. In 2003, the numbers were 297 and 11.8, respectively.

The reduction in the number of abortions is confirmed by the delivery/abortion ratio change over the last decade. In 1993, the delivery/abortion ratio was 2.4 (2.4 deliveries per 1 abortion), but as a result of implementing the family planning program, the delivery/abortion ratio changed abruptly starting from 1997—reaching 3-5 deliveries per abortion.

Prior to the implementation of the Family Planning Component of the National Program on Improvement of Reproductive Health, Armenia's network of family planning services was inadequate.

According to WHO reviews (for 1995), Armenia was the second last among Europe and Asia countries in terms of the indicator of contraceptive use (the rate of contraceptive use in Armenia was reported 9%).

In 1997, the Ministry of Health, the WHO, and the UN cooperated to design and implement a National Program on Improvement of Reproductive Health, which provided for the creation of family planning units, the establishment of 77 family planning offices covering the whole country, and training 195 medical personnel who in turn trained their peers and the population. Modules, brochures, and manuals on family planning were published. All the family planning offices were equipped with state-of-the-art medical supplies and the necessary contraceptives. Thanks to these efforts, the number of women using contraceptives grew in comparison to 1997: the number of women using intrauterine spirals grew 3.5-4-fold, and the number of those using hormonal supplies—8-10-fold, reaching 3.1% and 1.9% in 1997, 11.3% and 22.3% in 2001, and 11.8% and 13.2% in 2003, respectively.

1. Malignant Neoplasms of Reproductive Organs of Women

Malignant neoplasms, especially breast cancer and cervical cancer, are among the main causes of female mortality.

It has been proven that breast cancer is the most common form of female malignant neoplasm (23.8%, of which 50% found in ages 40 to 44), whereas cervical cancer is the second in terms of incidence (12.8%).

During recent years, though a major increase in the cervical cancer incidence has not been reported (14.3 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1990, 11.2 in 1998, and 13.9 in 2003), the incidence of unattended cases of female malignant neoplasms, including cervical cancer, has increased.

Malignant neoplasms, especially cervical cancer, have reportedly tended to “grow younger” in the country. One of the factors conducive for this phenomenon is,

in addition to the lack of a prevention system, the increased incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases such as the human papilloma virus, genital herpes, and chlamydia. Therefore, prevention of STDs could help prevent cervical cancer.

Parallel to a decline in access to health care in the last decade, there has been a decline in preventive activities aimed at diagnosing and treating oncologic disease of female sexual organs, including pre-cancerous breast conditions. This is the reason why the incidence of breast cancer has tended to increase during 1990-2003: in 1990, breast cancer incidence was 36.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, falling to 33.1 in 1998, and growing to 42.1 in 2003.

With the aim of reducing morbidity and mortality caused by malignant neoplasms of the female reproductive tract, screening of 2,600 women of reproductive age was carried out in the country in 2004 with UNFPA support (to study the incidence of STDs and cervical cancer). An analysis of findings will enable to develop a national program for the prevention of oncologic disease of the female reproductive tract and female mortality.

2. Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STIs)

The implementation of the Family Planning Component of the National Program on Improvement of Reproductive Health has supported a reduction in the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea in Armenia. In 1996, the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea per 100,000 inhabitants was 17.7 and 45.9, respectively, falling to 12.5 and 26.3, respectively, in 1999, and further to 6.8 and 17.7 in 2003. However, the recent trends of an increased incidence and “youthening” of STIs among women is worrisome.

The number of women with syphilis is greater than that of men, whereas gonorrhea is more commonly found in men than in women.

3. HIV/AIDS Incidence among Women

From 1988 to September 1, 2004, 287 HIV-positive cases were reported in Armenia, of which 272 were citizens of Armenia. 210 of the HIV-positive cases are men (77.2%), and 62 are women (22.8%), 4 of whom have been diagnosed to have AIDS. In 4 of the HIV-positive cases, HIV was diagnosed during pregnancy, including one case in each of 1998 and 1999 and 2 cases in 2002. During 2002, 41 HIV cases were reported, which made it the year with the largest number of reported HIV cases. 4 of the HIV-positive women have died. 4 cases have been diagnosed in children (1.5%). The vast majority (78.7%) of the HIV-positive cases are in the age group 20-29.

Table 1

HIV/AIDS Incidence among Women

Year	Number of HIV-Positive Cases
1990	0
1991	0
1992	0
1993	0
1994	0
1995	0
1996	8
1997	7
1998	4
1999	9
2000	6
2001	3
2002	8
2003	17
Total	62

Source: Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health

Table 2

**HIV/AIDS Incidence among Women, Age Groups
1996-2003**

Age Group						
0-4	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
1	2	12	16	16	9	6

Source: Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health

60 of the HIV-positive women were infected heterosexually, one was infected by blood, and the other one had perinatal infection. As for the 4 HIV-positive children, all of them had perinatal infection, and 2 of them have died.

Table 3

**HIV/AIDS Incidence among Women by Place of Residence
1996-2003**

Place of Residence	Number
Yerevan	32
Lori	9
Gegharkunik	5
Shirak	6
Ararat	5
Syunik	2
Aragatsotn	1
Armavir	1
Kotayk	1
Total	62

Source: Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health

However, this statistics on HIV/AIDS does not reflect the real incidence of the pandemic, which is over 10-fold greater than the reported data. In other words, according to some estimates, there are about 2,800-3,000 HIV-positive cases in Armenia.

The following measures are being undertaken by the country to protect women's reproductive health:

- Reiterating the priority of reproductive health, including safe motherhood issues, and developing national programs;
- State support to encourage protection of motherhood and reproductive health care, developing additional measures, increasing the volume of free state-provided health care, improving access to health care, enhancing legislation on state allowances to promote an increase in the birth rate, increasing the rate of natural growth, reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies, and looking after the health of pregnant women and infants;
- Reviewing the skills of health professionals and training programs designed for them, and improving their training and competence evaluation arrangements;
- Improving the quality of ob/gyn care, implementing state-of-the-art perinatal assistance techniques, and improving the facilities in maternity hospitals;
- Carrying out scientific research in obstetrics, perinatology, and reproductive health;
- Developing and implementing a system for continuously raising public awareness on safe motherhood, STIs, pre-cancerous conditions of sexual organs, healthy

- lifestyles, and safe sexual behavior;
- Improving monitoring systems for regular screening and assessment of the reproductive health situation;
 - Improving the system of birth registration and perinatal mortality reporting by means of strengthening the legislation, and implementing new WHO definitions for live-birth, stillbirth, and other aspects;
 - Implementing a system of social, psychological, and physical preparation of pregnant women;
 - Further emphasizing the role and importance of primary health care as a type of health care that is more accessible to the public than other health services, and continuously implementing and developing programs to improve women's health;
 - Implementing continuous measures to monitor and improve the quality of health care, and providing high-quality health care to families;
 - Providing mothers and children with the necessary volume of free health care within the frameworks of state-guaranteed programs;
 - Developing highly-qualified infant care and emergency health care services;
 - Preventing mother-to-child ("vertical") HIV transmission and implementing measures to improve the quality of health care provided to pregnant women and children;
 - Ensuring safe motherhood, implementing programs to improve prenatal care and fetal diagnosis, and providing high-quality perinatal care;
 - Implementing continuous screening of the nutrition of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and children, and carrying out food security programs;
 - Epidemiological screening of infertile marriages and undertaking measures to address the discovered causes; and
 - Implementing programs to reduce and prevent discrimination and violence against and trafficking in women.

Reproductive Health Improvement Objectives by 2015

- Reducing maternal mortality by 50% (the average three-year rate of mortality should not exceed 20 per 100,000 by 2015);
- Reducing child mortality by at least 30% to no more than 10‰ in 2015 by means of decreasing the perinatal component;
- Reducing the number of underweight and premature newborns by at least 20%, to not exceed 6% by 2015;

- Reducing the frequency of fetal development anomalies to at least 5-7% by 2015;
- Reducing cancers of the reproductive tract (breast and cervical cancer) by at least 30%;
- Reducing the abortion rate by at least 30%;
- HIV screening in at least 90% of the pregnant women by 2015;
- Reducing anemia by 50% by 2015; and
- Reducing infertility by at least 30%.

VIII. Women and Violence

1. Preventing Violence against Women

One of the problems currently faced in Armenia, which requires attention, is sexual and physical violence against women and girls, as well as the compelled restriction of a number of their rights and freedoms.

Studies carried out by the Armenian Police during 2001-2003 have suggested that 52, 51, and 55 women per annum, respectively, suffered obvious violence in Armenia during the period in question.

The following statistics merit attention.

A number of crimes against juvenile girls were reported in Armenia during the period from 1998 to 2002:

- Sexual violence against individuals under 16 or girls who have not reached maturity: 11 cases in 1998, 16 cases in each of 1999 and 2000, 22 cases in 2001, and 8 cases in 2002; establishing a de-facto nuptial relationship with a person who has not reached nuptial age or maturity: 2 cases in 1998, 6 cases in 1999, 3 cases in 2000, 5 cases in 2001, and 8 cases in 2002.

Commercial sex workers are most often the targets of violence. This phenomenon has recently become widespread in the country due to the deterioration of social and economic conditions and the excessively liberal nature of laws in respect of CSW exploiters and organizers. Another important reason is the lack of an efficient system for moral and sexual upbringing of adolescents and the youth.

The Armenian Police is engaged in everyday work to prevent and discover violence against women. A key role in this area belong so the Juvenile Division of the Criminal Intelligence Department of the Armenian Police: its activities are targeted at juvenile girls, with a special focus on the protection of their rights.

In view of the importance of this issue, the 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia approved by the Government on April 8, 2004 contemplates the following measures to prevent violence against women:

- Screening different spheres of social life to discover violence cases and to examine their causes;
- Developing and implementing in statistical reports a system of indicators of violence;
- Harmonizing the national legislation with the international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia;
- Organizing comprehensive training and awareness-raising courses for law-enforcement officers, health professionals, educators, and social workers who deal with victims of violence against women; and
- Creating specialized services in the respective institutions of cities and marzes (regions) to address the consequences of violence.

2. Trafficking in Women

The social and economic conditions in the country have created a favorable climate for irregular migration and exploitation of humans. Young women and girls are especially prone in this context. The victims of trafficking are mostly divorced women who either are involved in commercial sex work or are socially vulnerable.

The primary destination countries for citizens of Armenia are the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. There is also a negligible flow towards some European countries. Armenia has no diplomatic relationship with Turkey. In 2002, Armenia signed a mutual legal assistance agreement with the UAE.

Trafficking in human beings—as a separate crime, was prescribed and introduced in the new Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (effective from August 1, 2003). This law applies only to crimes committed after the aforementioned date. Crimes committed prior to this date, which effectively contained elements of trafficking, were charged under articles on pimping, but were referred to as “foreign migration pimping” for reasons of statistical clarity and differentiation from the traditional forms of pimping.

Armenia has been the country of origin in the majority of human trafficking cases involving Armenian citizens. However, in a case solved in 2003, the territory of Armenia was used for transit by a criminal group comprising Georgian citizens who used forged Georgian passports to smuggle to the UAE Uzbek citizens. In a case solved in 2004, Armenia was the destination country for a criminal group trafficking citizens of Uzbekistan.

Decree 591-A of the RoA Prime Minister dated October 14, 2002 provided for the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Commission led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was designed to study and present to the RoA Government recommendations on trafficking and smuggling of humans from Armenia. As a result of its activities, the

Commission developed a Concept Paper on Prevention of Smuggling of and Trafficking in Human Beings from the Republic of Armenia and the 2004-2006 National Action Plan on Prevention of Smuggling of and Trafficking in Human Beings from the Republic of Armenia. These documents were approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia under decree 58-N dated January 15, 2004.

The National Action Plan is based on three principles: prevention, prosecution, and protection. It comprises several sections, including legislation and enforcement, screening, public awareness, protection and assistance, and experience sharing.

In March 2004, the RoA Government and UNDP signed an agreement to implement a project called “Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings: Capacity Building Support and Victim Assistance”.

Within the frameworks of this Project, the RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Armenia Country Office of the USA-based UMCOR NGO have jointly signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

Activities under the Project are underway. In September 2004, a training course was organized for the staff of Yerevan district social services and employment centers. In October and December, similar courses were held for the social services and employment centers of Armenia’s regions. The background of the problems and the National Action Plan were presented. The role and importance of their services in fighting the problems was clarified, and the potential for collaboration was discussed.

IX. Women and Armed Conflicts

As a consequence of the Karabagh conflict, over 360,000 refugees were deported to Armenia from Azerbaijan during the period from 1988 to 1992. In chronological terms, the influx of refugees virtually coincided with the Spitak Earthquake of 1988, which affected over 40% of Armenia’s territory. 58 villages were fully destroyed, 21 cities and villages were seriously damaged, and over 530,000 people lost shelter. Thus, a country with a population of 3.7 million was left with very little time to provide housing to about 1 million people.

As a consequence of the bombing, over 13,000 houses were seriously damaged in 170 villages near the border with Azerbaijan. 78 educational institutions and 62 health institutions need renovation and rehabilitation. 515 kilometers of water mains, 724 kilometers of irrigation infrastructure, and 575 kilometers of roads have become dysfunctional. Numerous agricultural and industrial facilities, as well as social and economic institutions cannot operate. Thus, the infrastructure of the borderline regions has been completely paralyzed.

About 192,000 IDPs are currently residing in the Republic of Armenia in temporary dwellings, or with their relatives or friends.

In terms of collaboration with international humanitarian and refugee relief organizations, one of the core objectives of the Armenian Government is to provide relief to refugees by means of increasing the volumes of housing construction, providing employment, and addressing social and legal protection issues. The Armenian Government is trying to optimize conditions for refugees and to facilitate their naturalization. However, the naturalization process is not an end in itself and should be accompanied with provision of housing and jobs for refugees. UNHCR is providing a great deal of assistance in this area.

To date, 62,000 refugees have acquired Armenian citizenship. Parallel to granting citizenship, it is appropriate to provide refugees with housing and jobs. The naturalization process has been streamlined to the extent possible. A refugee may acquire citizenship simply by presenting an application. Women are slightly above 63% of refugees, which exceeds the share of women in the total population of the country (52%).

Notwithstanding the dire social and economic conditions in the country and the persevering blockade, the Armenian Government has been working from very early on to solve the problems of refugees and to facilitate their integration.

The adoption of Armenian citizenship by refugees is considered a key factor of their integration.

Implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention implies incorporation in the national legislation and enforcement of the respective international standards. In March 1999, the RoA National Assembly adopted the Law on Refugees, which was drafted on the basis of close cooperation between the permanent committees of the Parliament and UNHCR. Most of UNHCR's suggestions were incorporated in the draft law. The Law regulates documentary procedures concerning the refugee status, defines the notion of a refugee, and addresses the issue of temporary shelter provision. It also addresses problems concerning the outflow of refugees from the country.

During the last decade, changes in the number of refugees and the structure of the refugee community, including the emigration of a considerable share thereof (at least 15-20%, whilst the vast majority—about 11% of the refugees left Armenia during 1994-1996), have marked the social, demographic, and gender peculiarities of the refugee community in comparison to locals. With the aim of studying these peculiarities, and in view of the inadequacy of official statistics on refugees, UNDP and the UNHCR Armenian Country Office jointly implemented a representative sampling survey in 1999, which revealed a gender misbalance among refugees, especially those who have not settled down. The gender breakdown was as follows: settled refugees—44.9%

male and 55.1% female, non-settled refugees—39.4% male and 60.3% female. The survey suggested that as a consequence of the unfavorable conditions and the “desertion” of some of the men, a considerable share of the refugee women has no option but to assume the family burden and responsibilities. Thus, the social, demographic, and gender aspects of the conditions of refugees are far more complicated than those of locals. Therefore, adequate solutions need to be incorporated in an effective state policy on refugee integration.

X. Women and the Environment

Problems emerging during the last several decades, such as a reduction in resources, the gradual decline of natural systems, and hazards caused by emission, leakage, and pollution, have deteriorated fragile ecosystems.

With the aim of integrating with the European Family, the Republic of Armenia has managed in just a short period of time to accede to numerous international conventions on the environment and to sign related legal acts. Women have a key role to play in the development of sustainable and environment-friendly consumption structures and the sound management of natural resources.

A key issue examined under the Convention on Biological Diversity is biological safety. The adoption of the Protocol on Biological Diversity has been a crucial step towards supporting the use of contemporary safe methods of biotechnology and preventing the hazardous impact on human health and the environment.

The problem of vehicle emissions in large cities of Armenia is worrisome, as it jeopardizes the health of people, especially women, with all the implications for their labor activities.

In order to address this problem, a Concept Paper on Reducing Hazardous Vehicle Emissions was drafted and adopted in the form of Protocol Decision number 40 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated October 14, 2004. An Action Plan on Reducing Hazardous Vehicle Emissions will be developed in 2005 in furtherance of the Concept Paper.

In 1999, the Republic of Armenia ratified the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. In keeping with the spirit of the Convention, the country is engaging in monitoring and assessment, with women’s active involvement, of emerging, imported, exported, and transit waste and the activities of industrial enterprises operating in this field.

In order to harmonize management of chemical substances and waste with the international standards, it is necessary to improve the national legislation by introduc-

ing provisions on proper surveillance of such substances and waste.

A Law on Waste was drafted and adopted in order to define the policies of the state on waste recycling.

With the aim of regulating waste recycling, including the importation of hazardous waste into and its exportation from the Republic of Armenia, and diminishing unlawful movement of such waste, the following acts have been enacted or ratified:

- RoA Minister of Environmental Protection Order number 96 dated August 10, 1999 on Approving the List of Documents on Declaration, Notification, and Removal of, and the List of Hazardous Features of Regulated and Unregulated Waste designated under Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 97 dated December 8, 1995;
- Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 97 dated March 2, 2000 on the Honoring of Commitments under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal;
- Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 121-N dated January 30, 2003 on Approving the Procedure of Recycling, Treatment, Storage, Movement, and Placement of Hazardous Waste in the Republic of Armenia;
- Prime Minister Decree 46-N dated February 5, 2004 on Approving the Composition and By-Laws of the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Licensing Activities Connected with the Recycling, Treatment, Storage, Movement, and Placement of Hazardous Waste in the Republic of Armenia;
- Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 874-N dated May 20, 2004 on Approving the List of Hazardous Wastes in the Republic of Armenia; and
- Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 1093-N on Amending Government of the Republic of Armenia Decree 97 dated December 8, 1995 and Approving the List of Hazardous Waste Forbidden in the Republic of Armenia.

The draft RoA Law on the Fundamentals of the National Water Policy (approved by the RoA Government, currently pending before the National Assembly), which was drafted by the Water Resource Management Agency of the RoA Ministry of Environmental Protection provides in Article 6(15) on “the Principles of the National Water Policy” that, in addition to the principles laid down in the RoA Water Code, water resource management shall be carried out in accordance with the following principles: transparent and participatory management of water resources and water systems, as well as gender mainstreaming, public awareness on management, and supporting the participation of women in this process.

Starting from 1995, the RoA Ministry of Environmental Protection has intensified activities aimed at involving women in the design, approval, and implementation of projects financed by GEF.

In respect of paragraph 253(c) of the Action Platform adopted during the 4th

World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, a project called “Developing Sustainable Use of Medical Herbs in the Caucasus Eco-Region” has been implemented since 2002 [with WWF financial support]. In the frameworks of this Project, a production company by the name “Busabuj Nana” (Armenian for “Herb Treatment Nana”) was created in the Gegharkunik Marz, which uses its own experimental plots to produce, supply, and process a variety of herbs as a ways of mitigating man-caused pressure on natural ecosystems and fostering poverty reduction. Most of the employees of the company (with the exception of one) are women.

In 2002, the Republic of Armenia National Action Plan to Combat Desertification was adopted in the frameworks of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 13 women (31% of the total number of participants) took place in the drafting of the National Action Plan. In at least 50% of the activities (seminars, hearings, and meetings), women were no less than 50% of the participants.

The majority of the Armenian State Hydro-Meteorological Service (“Haipethidromet”) employees are women. They have recently become increasingly more involved in reforming and developing hydro-meteorological activities.

The number of women is especially high in the meteorological stations. Units such as the weather forecast, climate, meteorology, agro-meteorology, and hydrology regime and forecast divisions are staffed exclusively by women.

The Armenian counterparts in various international projects are women. They actively participate in the provision of hydro-meteorological and climate information.

Over 350 women currently work in this system (over 60% of the staff). 170 of them have university degrees. 50 of these women are staff managers, and 65 are specialists.

To the extent possible, the Armenian State Hydro-Meteorological Service ensures the participation of women working in this system in international fora, training courses, experience sharing events, and the introduction of the international best practices.

Under a newly-introduced market economy, it is a priority for Armenia to enact legislation to protect the environment and to conserve biological diversity (air and water basins, land, and forests), to increase eco-safety, and to predict and absorb possible eco-risks, all of which together will facilitate improved health for women and the next generation.

XI. Women and the Mass Media

The mass media play a crucial role in shaping the conscience of society and, in particular, building a female role model.

Though the mass media do cover women's issues, they fail to present to an adequate degree the problems faced by women, the real difficulties women encounter in their lives, and the obstacles to women's fully-fledged participation in social life. The mass media do not sufficiently cover women's contribution to social, political, and cultural life. The way in which the mass media present women's issues is sometimes tainted by rejection and humiliation.

Television content, films, soap operas, and various shows, which are full of low-aesthetic value images that humiliate women's dignity, often preach violent and uncivilized methods of settling family and social conflicts, and foster moral degradation and the instilment of socially-unacceptable ethics, have a negative impact.

In various ads, the woman is often presented as a commodity, though arts and the mass media are called upon to build positive male and female ideals and to overcome negative stereotypes. Much has to be done by television stations, among others, which should not forget to emphasize the peculiarities and difference of women and men.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia has planned a number of steps to overcome the problems in this field, including the following:

- Ensuring effective coverage of women's issues and the broadcasting by public mass media of shows and content aimed at building male and female role models;
- Facilitating coverage of women's issues in private mass media;
- Fostering the shaping of male and female models in the conscience of society and improving women's standing; and
- Monitoring the mass media, the Internet, and spiritual-cultural institutions for presentation and dissemination of information infringing upon women's dignity.