



Evaluation of ODIHR gender programme work in  
Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia

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# **EVALUATION OF ODIHR GENDER PROGRAMME WORK IN KYRGYZSTAN, AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA, AND GEORGIA**

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## EVALUATION OF ODIHR GENDER PROGRAMME WORK IN KYRGYZSTAN, AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA, AND GEORGIA

### *Short description of the Gender Programmes, Objectives and Tasks set by ODIHR*

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Gender Programme has operated since 2000 in the South Caucasus and Central Asia with the goal of promoting gender equality, women's leadership and participation in the decision-making process, the use of gender expertise to inform decisions, and efforts to combat domestic violence. In difficult conditions, the programme has had a powerful impact in increasing the role of women in public life, helping to stimulate coalition building among women's groups, contributing to awareness raising on gender equality through gender education and improving the response to violence against women. This summary overview provides a synopsis of these achievements, along with cross-cutting recommendations on next steps, while the full text of the evaluation spells out our observations and recommendations in greater detail, country by country.

The ODIHR Gender Programme became operational in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) in 2000, following the decision by the ODIHR management to engage actively in promoting democratization initiatives in these countries. Given the political situation in Central Asia in 2000, Kyrgyzstan was the logical choice for the ODIHR Gender Programme's activities because it was the most democratic country in the region. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan provided a base from which it was possible to reach out to other Central Asian countries, if an opportunity for such an activity would arise. All three of the Caucasus countries provided substantial opportunities for the ODIHR's engagement. At that time, the only OSCE country mission was in Georgia, with no programme activities related to gender equality or women's participation. With regard to the countries of the Balkan region, it was deemed that the ODIHR's added value would not be considerable given the role and resources that the OSCE's large field missions had in each of these countries.

The ODIHR Gender Programme pursued four key goals in its work in the four countries:

- Increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote equality of rights and opportunities;
- Promoting women's leadership and political participation and supporting exchange of best practices across the OSCE region;
- Fostering national expertise development and integration of gender-equality aspects into national policy-making;
- Strengthening awareness, capacity and transfer of lessons-learned among law enforcement and civil society in combating domestic violence.

## *Analysis of general principles of the methodology applied by ODIHR*

The Gender Programme has developed an innovative and original methodology for achieving its goals. Before launching this programme, the ODIHR and the OSCE had never engaged in the implementation of gender-equality programmes. This gave the ODIHR the freedom and possibility to start activities that were based on the needs identified locally, at the same time taking the advantage of gaps and lessons learnt through the experiences of other agencies working on the ground in these countries. The approach adopted has been a key ingredient in achieving the results that the programme has produced.

A key point is that the strategy is based on a process, not a pre-determined recipe of what works and what does not. The process described below generated different forms of work in each of the four countries, which reflected the bottom-up, localized calibration integral to the process. The overall process, however, remained constant, making it possible to plan for long-term initiatives.

This strategy involves conducting pre-programme assessment trips, working with local partners and helping them to build networks, developing local expertise, expanding the level of knowledge on gender equality of local partners, bringing in international experts to increase local capacity, exchanging experience among countries through the creation of an expert panel, and developing a media campaign to lobby for further changes. The following discussion will analyze each component of the methodology in greater detail.

### PRE-PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT TRIPS TO THE COUNTRY AND ITS REGIONS

The ODIHR Gender Programme defines strategies for working in each country based on the local conditions. Before starting to work in a particular country, ODIHR Gender Programme staff traveled there to talk to public officials and civil society representatives to identify what issues were of greatest concern to local women and to map out the existing state agencies and civil society groups that were interested in trying to address these issues. The purpose was to determine where best to focus ODIHR's limited resources and ascertain which strategy would be most effective in achieving the goals that corresponded with the OSCE commitments and the local needs. The trips also provided the Gender Programme staff with a sense of the overall political and cultural context in which they would be working and a good understanding of what other international agencies were doing or not doing.

The concerns identified together with local partners were the key component in the process of prioritizing activities within the programme. For example, in each of the countries where the ODIHR undertook the initial assessment, the people who were interviewed and consulted identified the issue of women's underrepresentation in governance, lack of cooperation among women's NGOs and domestic violence as the issues that needed the most attention. The urgency of addressing the latter came up

during informal conversations where the interlocutors felt most free to talk about what their real concerns were rather than in more formal interviews. Deciding to work on domestic violence was a timely choice for the ODIHR Gender Programme, which also succeeded in putting this issue on the agenda of the organization in general (through participation in the Informal Working Group on Gender Issues in the Secretariat, organization of the HD Seminar on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women in May 2002 and the adoption of the Ministerial Council Decision in 2005 on the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence).

At the outset of the programme, the ODIHR identified priority areas where its involvement was necessary, as well as identified potential partners to work with. This process involved a series of seminars and training workshops whereby all existing NGOs working on women's issues were invited to participate and those who demonstrated the necessary potential, real commitment and engagement were selected as long-term partners to implement further programme activities. In Kyrgyzstan, this initial session brought together a wide range of women from grassroots organizations, including from rural areas. In Azerbaijan, this meeting involved women from the capital who identified a strong need to reach out more to the regions. Overall, these meetings were important because they helped ODIHR establish a working relationship with a partner, or set of partners, in each country with the initial goal of immediately expanding outreach to as many new participants as possible who might be involved in the project. Typically, these were women who had not been engaged in any activities that were organized or funded by international agencies. The rationale behind this decision was based on the observation made by the ODIHR during the initial assessments – that an overwhelming majority of NGOs who declared to be working on women's rights and gender equality issues across these countries in reality were the successors of the Soviet Union's women's committees, bringing along the same culture of government-affiliation, corruption and isolation from the real necessities of the state and its people. For these reasons, the ODIHR encouraged the engagement and development of new grassroots teams and civil society organizations, who could bring about the new generation of leaders into this field with the 'right' perspective on current issues in the field of gender equality and women's participation and dedication to address them through their commitment and actions.

For example, in Georgia during its assessment trip the ODIHR met with approximately 20 NGOs working at the grassroots level on such issues as assisting women IDPs to become organized and voice their concerns in a concerted method, helping disabled women find jobs or assisting women who were caring for disabled children. Other international organizations typically did not pay much attention to these NGOs, instead handing out money to elite-level NGOs whose members spoke English and had the capacity to write convincing grant proposals. The situation in Georgia differed from that in Azerbaijan and Armenia because there were many more such grassroots NGOs functioning in Georgia than the other two countries. Because Georgia had stronger ties to the west than did the other Caucasus countries, and as the

deadlocked Karabakh conflict kept international actors significantly underrepresented in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, there was a lot more international money for NGOs available at that time in Georgia. However, most of that money went to the NGOs that had good ties to the government. These well-connected groups were generally not interested in promoting the rise of the grassroots NGOs, which typically worked invisibly and did not attract the attention of international funders. To best assist the large number of grassroots NGOs working in Georgia, ODIHR designed a strategy seeking to unite these organizations and support their development and viability so that they could serve collectively as an effective force to increase the role of women in Georgia's decision-making process, promote gender equality, and ensure that gender aspects are introduced into Georgian legislation. Moreover, with this practice, the ODIHR avoided a common pitfall of international donor agencies, whereby they chose one NGO and provided exclusive funding to this NGO, often ending in non-transparent management and administration of programmes. In addition, as there were almost no activities to promote democratic decision-making and women's participation in the regions, the ODIHR addressed this need in its programming.

The range of diverse activities adopted by the ODIHR in these countries was dictated at the time of the programme's start by the political and social realities of these countries. In particular, in some countries where joint work with the state authorities was not deemed feasible, the ODIHR chose to work with NGOs with an independent and objective stance; likewise, in situations where women's NGOs were not free to work on all issues, particularly in the field of political and civil rights, or when their engagement would simply mean mere presence with no significant contribution, the ODIHR decided to continue its engagement through focusing its efforts on less politically controversial areas of work, such as prevention of domestic violence (for example, the work with NGOs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs on domestic violence issues, or on gender-education in Armenia).

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS JOINTLY WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

In all cases, the ODIHR programme works directly with local non-governmental organizations in helping them to meet the goals that they have defined themselves and maintains good relations with the state. The ODIHR Gender Programme's main partners are local NGOs because these organizations are typically much more effective at developing and implementing new ideas. Moreover, in times of political instability and staff turn-over in government structures, achieving the sustainability of start-up initiatives is likely to be more successful in partnership with civil society organizations. In addition, the NGOs and expert teams that ODIHR has assisted to develop in these countries continue to enjoy wide public support and recognition because they are not affiliated with incumbent governments and are viewed as objective sources of expertise (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia). They are also well-placed to develop network links with other groups in civil society and key components of the state, such as the



presidential administrations, legislatures, ministries, police units, and other relevant agencies. The local organizations have a keen sense of the local situation and know the best ways to accomplish tasks. This approach was part of the ODIHR's overall rationale for promoting long-term capacity and expertise among national experts.

Relying on local partners makes sense in the conditions of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where there is a widespread public view that the idea of "gender" is largely imported from the West and that it is not appropriate for the local context. Therefore it is extremely important to partner with local interlocutors capable of undertaking initiatives which meet domestic needs. Doing that required basing the ODIHR Gender Programme on the experience and expertise of the local partner organizations.

In Azerbaijan and Armenia, the programme worked with established NGOs focused mainly on a single goal (domestic violence and gender education, respectively). In Kyrgyzstan, the programme took advantage of the relatively freer environment for civil society to support the development of the NGO Agency for Society Technologies, which comprised a strong team of experts with long-standing experience in promoting democratic reforms and civil society development. In Georgia, where there were many women's NGOs operating, the ODIHR Gender Programme sought to build a coalition of existing NGOs that would help the various groups work together.

In Azerbaijan, the programme focused on domestic violence to address the concerns of local activists who defined it as a key issue. ODIHR chose Symmetry, a local NGO, as its main partner because this group was made up of non-politicized doctors who had identified domestic violence as a concern based on the experiences of women victims they met in their day-to-day practices and their own research. The May 2000 National Forum on Domestic Violence that Symmetry and ODIHR organized identified the most effective strategy for moving forward: developing the capacity of the police to handle domestic violence cases. From the beginning, key members of the police's top leadership supported the effort. Working with both Symmetry and the police fit ODIHR's larger role as an international organization that cooperates with both the state and civil society and promotes initiatives that bring the state and civil society closer in addressing these priority issues. While typically groups combating domestic violence establish crisis intervention shelters, such a solution did not make sense in Azerbaijan because women would have difficulty finding out about the shelters and getting in touch with them. Everyone knows how to call the police, but most are reluctant to do so. Improving policing techniques would help overcome this problem.

The ODIHR Gender Programme's main partner in Armenia is the Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE). This group identified gender education as a key need in Armenia through its own research in the mid-1990s. The association currently has more than 600 members in the country and 38 regional branches. The previous experience of the AAWUE staff and their network of relationships with university rectors and high school administrators makes it possible for AAWUE to carry out the gender education programme effectively. The AAWUE's

connections with the education ministry facilitate the programme's work in the context of the centralized Armenian education system, while the ODIHR lends this work gravitas and opens top-level decision makers' doors. The selection of this field of work in Armenia was a result of the ODIHR's initial assessment of the situation and consultations with local partners, including the staff of various academic institutions and civil society organizations, who identified the field of gender education as the one able to achieve tangible results in promoting the understanding of gender equality as a tool for promoting human rights and democratization. They did not see it as an issue imposed by foreign agencies, which would undermine strong family traditions that Armenians cherish and want to sustain together with the democratic principles of modern societies.

In contrast to its experience of teaming with established NGOs in Azerbaijan and Armenia, in Kyrgyzstan, the ODIHR Gender Programme chose to support a new NGO, the Agency for Social Technologies (AST). The benefits of this move were to bring new people into the existing civil society community, complementing the older, Soviet-legacy organizations already functioning. The new group naturally was much more open to implementing fresh and innovative ideas, especially in terms of its media work. ODIHR benefited greatly from its relationship with AST because the group was strongly committed to the gender cause regardless of the constantly changing political environment. Working directly with the government would not have provided that constancy.

As noted above, the ODIHR Gender Programme pursued a radically different strategy in Georgia than it employed in the other countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. In Georgia, the ODIHR Gender Programme did not select one partner to coordinate its activities, but instead works to develop a coalition of 80 women's NGOs that can serve as a sustainable civil society lobby for the increased participation of women in public life. Rather than develop the capacity of a specific NGO, it is working to develop a comprehensive women's movement that can deal with a variety of issues, ranging from raising the number of women in elected office to combating domestic violence. This approach allowed the ODIHR to help develop a coalition of NGOs with a representative and broad-based nature.

While building up NGO capacity, the ODIHR Gender Programme did not neglect establishing strong relations with important state actors, including governments, parliaments, the police, and executive branch agencies that deal specifically with gender issues. Working with both the state and civil society makes the ODIHR programmes much more effective than those of international organizations that focus on one side or the other. Such links facilitate the passage of well-written legislation in the areas of gender equality and domestic violence and improve the chances that the laws will be implemented effectively once they are adopted.

ODIHR's work has been stable over the long term. Once the Gender Programme identifies key partners, it works with them over the course of more than five years to ensure the evolution and continued development of their area of expertise. This kind of long-term commitment gives the local partners and the projects they implement much better chances of succeeding.

By focusing on the long-term development of local expertise, the ODIHR Gender Programme has made its programmes sustainable even without external support. For example, members of the Kyrgyz group now have the ability to provide gender advice at the international level and are currently engaged in various partnerships with other national and international agencies. In Azerbaijan, the police academy will continue training cadets and officers on domestic violence, using their own resources and are working on the possibility of opening crisis intervention centers. This example of cooperation between the police and the NGOs is extremely unique in Azerbaijan's context, as the police are not known for their openness and cooperation with civil society organization, while most of the NGOs are feared by the government as the opposition-satellites. In Armenia, the education ministry has adopted the ODIHR gender courses into the regular curriculum and will continue teaching them regardless of ODIHR funding.

ODIHR does not simply organize one-off events, but builds its activities in a stair-step methodology, where future plans are always based on previous successes and lessons learnt. In the case of Azerbaijan, the on-going support allows Symmetry to build on its past successes through continually expanding its expertise. The additional capacity allows it to take on new projects with the policy academy; it has evolved from training police officers to helping draft and adopt a national plan for achieving gender equality.

By taking a long-term approach ODIHR can work on a variety of different planes simultaneously. For example, in Azerbaijan, at one level, it can provide training for personnel in the police agencies. On a second level, it can help facilitate institutional reforms within the police and other institutions. On a third level, it can help to change laws. On a fourth level, it can provide key contacts within the executive branch to effect real change in the way that state representatives and law enforcement officers behave in implementing the law. And, on a fifth level, ODIHR can provide international prestige to the project and help the local partner establish contacts with international experts in a wide variety of countries.

#### NETWORK BUILDING AS PRINCIPLE OF CO-OPERATION

In each country, one of the most important effects of the ODIHR work was the formation of new networks for instilling the idea of gender equality in the population. In Kyrgyzstan, the programme founded the first and only republican-wide network of

women leaders, “Women Can Do It!” Today this network has great authority among NGOs and state officials as it takes part in a variety of informational, educational, activist, and practical actions and campaigns. In Georgia, the creation of a coalition of women’s NGOs made it possible to strengthen the women’s movement and greatly increase the scale of action for lobbying gender issues, such as the implementation of special measures to increase women’s representation. The formation of a women’s network in Azerbaijan was a rare example of such success since typically such organizations are concentrated in the capital. In Armenia, as a result of the ODIHR programme, the AAWUE brought together a large number of instructors, students, and journalists, all interested in the idea of gender equality. Currently, all of the networks established with ODIHR support have become significant parts of civil society and play a leadership role in the women’s movement.

#### EXPANDING THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER EQUALITY OF LOCAL PARTNERS, RAISING AWARENESS ON THE TOPIC OF VARIOUS STRUCTURES, SOCIAL GROUPS AND INTERLOCUTORS

The ODIHR Gender Programme helped increase the knowledge of its partners on gender equality by using its international standing to help open doors to important state offices and other groups that otherwise would not be available to the local group. In many cases, ODIHR used its national level contacts to complement and expand the grassroots activities of the partner organizations. For example, in Azerbaijan, the ODIHR Gender Programme provided access to important officials within the state police organization, who might otherwise been beyond the reach of the local organization.

In all of the countries, the establishment of regional networks gave rural women access to local government officials in a formal way that they might not have otherwise had. Because of the international OSCE connection, local officials were forced to pay greater attention to the demands of the local groups.

Additionally, the ODIHR and local partner organizations brought together a wide variety of women from different parts of their own countries and from other countries working in the programme. Participants from Kyrgyzstan, for example, travelled to the countries of the south Caucasus. This exchange of people within and across borders helped facilitate a wide exchange of best practices and new ideas among the various participants of the ODIHR programmes. Most visibly, the innovative media techniques first developed in Kyrgyzstan to draw attention to gender issues found similarly receptive audiences in the Caucasus countries as well.

#### INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERS THROUGH INVOLVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

The Gender Programme uses its international network to bring in experienced experts to help its partners build up new skills. Such outside experts have played an important role in making many of the projects work.

In Kyrgyzstan, Estonian media experts helped AST develop public relations strategies that brought the cause of increasing the role of women in the political process to a wide popular audience and played a significant role in making it possible to adopt special measures to increase the number of women in parliament. These experts helped the group move beyond traditional round table discussions and journalist trainings to develop unconventional approaches that attract the attention of journalists and the public, thereby creating public demand and support for gender equality. They helped the local activists portray in effective visual forms the contribution of women to the development of society and the state.

In Azerbaijan, the ODIHR programme helped build up the relationship between Symmetry and the Azerbaijani police force by bringing in police officers from Vienna who successfully implemented an Austrian law on domestic violence adopted in 1997. The police officers were especially helpful because they could talk to their Azerbaijani counterparts as equals.

The foreign experts also played a major role in setting up the various networks and coalitions. The idea for creating the “Women Can Do It!” network in Kyrgyzstan came from the experts of the Estonian women’s training center. Such international advice was indispensable in building the regional networks in Azerbaijan and Georgia as well. Likewise, the invited experts who at the same time served as members of the Austrian Parliament or the Estonian government and NGO community played a strong role in implementing the programme on women’s political leadership.

The Estonian experts have provided significant expertise throughout the development of the programme activities. One of the key reasons for engaging their expertise was their thorough understanding of the on-going political and social processes in these countries. Likewise, they have generated enormous support and interest towards their own experience in the programme countries, as the programme partners can relate to the experiences described by these experts, which are rooted in a shared history from the Communist period and a common understanding of transitions in society.

#### EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION AND THE CREATION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

In addition to the work it does in each of the countries, the ODIHR Gender Programme helps build up the capacity of its NGO partners by bringing its most important leaders from the various countries together periodically for meetings of the Gender Programme Expert Panel. This networking has given the participants valuable experience in making international presentations. Additionally, the panel serves as a forum for exchanging best practices. As a measure of their rising global profile, the panel experts have been invited to participate in important ODIHR meetings, at UN conferences in Geneva, and in the Beijing Plus 10 conference.

The ODIHR Gender Programme Expert Panel provides the opportunity to engage in dialogue between countries that would not be possible otherwise. For example, Azerbaijani experts have an opportunity to work with colleagues in Armenia on gender issues even though those two countries remain embroiled in conflict. The larger dispute between the two countries does not hinder constructive work at the personal level. “We understand each other on a human level rather than the usual politics. This creates a possibility to work together,” according to Symmetry President Kamila Dadashova.

The Armenians viewed the panel as an opportunity to explain what they are doing and to learn about the experiences of activists in other post-Soviet countries. “I know what is going on in all the different countries. This is very helpful in our work,” said Jemma Hasratian, the AAWUE director and a panel member. Programmes that work in other countries can be very effectively transferred across borders. Often, this “east-east” transfer of knowledge is more helpful than “east-west” transfers. “The US is a rich country, but it is very useful to know what is going on in the former Soviet space. US experience is very different from ours,” the panel member from Armenia noted. The panel meetings provide lots of help in negotiating the various political processes of the post-Soviet countries, which helps the local activists develop civil society structures.

#### USING A MEDIA CAMPAIGN AS A TOOL TO LOBBY FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES CONTRIBUTING TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY.

In each of the countries where it works, the Gender Programme is employing unusual and creative public relations strategies that bring the cause of increasing the role of women in the political process to a wide popular audience. The media campaign has been particularly effective in Kyrgyzstan, where it played a significant role in the adoption of special measures to increase the number of women in parliament, and is now beginning to work in the other countries as well.

When Kyrgyzstan’s AST held an innovative March 8 event in 2006 to distribute flowers to male members of parliament, highlighting the fact that there were no women in parliament at that time, prominent and authoritative journalists started to cover gender-related activities. TV broadcasters have little interest in devoting valuable airtime to gender experts speaking at a roundtable convened to discuss women’s issues, but they flock to unconventional public actions taking place in front of the parliament building. After coverage of the March 8 event was broadcast, people talked about it on the bus during their daily commute. Gender issues started to enter their consciousness in a more direct way than traditional methods could achieve. The innovative gender approaches employed by ODIHR and its partners are helping people think in new ways about the problems in their lives.

The innovative nature of this campaign was in its resolve to bring policy-making closer to average citizens through street-actions for awareness raising and in turn, convincing the government members and legislators that responding to women’s needs

is in their interest as elected politicians. These efforts were also successful due to lobbying-skills training that the ODIHR provided to the team of partners in Kyrgyzstan.

In Azerbaijan, the police have welcomed the use of a media strategy to draw attention to the problems of domestic violence because they see it as helping improve their own image as well. Rather than constantly being presented as a repressive or corrupt force in society, the police can show how their work on issues of domestic violence makes them part of the solution for a key problem facing society. Innovative use of the media will create public demand for the state to devote more attention and resources to gender issues.

### *Analysis of the overall impact of ODIHR Programme*

The ODIHR Gender Programme and its partners have had a powerful impact on the societies where they operate. They have raised overall awareness of gender issues, increased state capacity, increased civil society capacity, promoted women's leadership, increased women's political participation, fostered national expertise development, integrated gender-equality aspects into national policy making, improved state and society responses to domestic violence, and promoted the exchange of best practices among the OSCE countries. In doing this, the ODIHR has not followed one single strategy in all countries, but rather has pursued opportunities that would be the most feasible and effective in making step-by-step, incremental but important progress towards promoting equality of rights and opportunities for women and men.

**Increased Overall Awareness of Gender Issues in Society to promote equality of rights and opportunities.** The ODIHR Gender Programme has increased overall awareness of gender issues in the countries where it operates by helping to increase the representation of women in the political system, increasing awareness of domestic violence, and helping build a gender component into the educational system.

Gender issues have started to become a topic of conversation within the societies where ODIHR operates. In Kyrgyzstan, the mentality of many people has changed greatly in recent years. In the past, people were reticent to talk about gender issues, such as bride kidnapping. Now such conversations are becoming more acceptable. For example, people are starting to ask questions about why men should be allowed to kidnap women against their will, whereas they usually took such practices for granted in the past. In Armenia, school children and college students are learning about gender topics, transforming their view of the world and the way that they interact with their families and colleagues. In Azerbaijan, the topic of domestic violence is no longer taboo and victims are increasingly turning to the police for help. In Georgia, the women's movement is coalescing for the first time.

With the help of media experts supplied by ODIHR, the local NGOs have started to reshape the popular conception of gender issues. While in the past, such topics were of little relevance outside of small circles, innovative media strategies have made it

possible to interject them into the broader social discourse by engaging in unusual public actions that attract great media interest.

The project work in Armenia has been particularly successful in changing the way people think. Since ODIHR and its local partner focused on school children and university students there, the impact will be felt for decades to come. By promoting the idea of gender equality through educational programmes at the university and high school level, the ODIHR Gender Programme and its local partner AAWUE equipped young people with the capacity to carry out social change. Between 2001 to 2008 the programme trained a total of 127 instructors in various topics of gender education, gender research, and gender analysis of legislation. The training also taught the teachers how to integrate innovative new interactive teaching methods into their work. Currently, gender courses are taught in 11 Armenian universities as special courses outside the regular curriculum. During the last five years, 4,639 students participated in interdisciplinary and special gender courses.

The programme provides its participants with some of the essential tools required for effective citizenship, such as the ability to engage in critical thinking. Among the key impacts of the programme are that the students have learned the basics of gender analysis and incorporated this approach into their overall studies and thinking. As a result of participating in the course, the students gain a better sense of democratic values, such as gender equality, social justice, social responsibility, and the rights and freedoms of people regardless of sex, religion or age. They also learned to overcome patriarchal stereotypes. The courses taught the students about themselves and their place and potential in society. They provided a forum for boys and girls to interact and discuss life issues and aspirations. Many of the instructors and students we interviewed stressed that the courses helped the females gain greater self-confidence and assert themselves. The students found ways to improve their ability to get along with each other and increase the level of their political and social participation.

The ODIHR/AAWUE high school training programme began in 2002. During the 2007-2008 school year, it sponsored gender courses in 33 classes in 27 schools across the country. Between 2002 and 2008, the high school education programme trained 3,650 students, including 2,072 girls and 1,578 boys. The results at the high school level were even more apparent than those at the college level. Students who took the gender courses gained more self-confidence, grew bolder in expressing their own opinions, and were more open to new ideas. The students became more active in other parts of school life and gained enhanced respect for others. Many of the students discussed what they learned in the course with their parents, spreading their new knowledge and insights among the older generation as well.

In May 2008, the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science adopted a plan to introduce gender topics into a required civics course for all university students, meaning that the gender education programme will be sustainable moving forward. The ministry will also introduce gender topics into other social science courses at the university level, such as history, political science, journalism, and economics. The



ministry is currently considering similar plans for adopting gender topics into the high school curriculum. Now, the courses are taught as an extra-curricular activity.

**Increased Overall Awareness of Gender Issues in State Structures to promote equality of rights and opportunities.** The ODIHR Gender Programme, in coordination with its local partners, has dramatically raised awareness of gender issues among state officials in each of the countries where it works.

In Kyrgyzstan, the 2005 parliamentary elections, in which no women were elected, showed that lack of attention to gender issues had left women glaringly underrepresented in the country's highest political institutions. AST used this situation to mobilize civil society activists and force state officials to pay greater attention to this issue. The ultimate impact was to create greater state capacity to address gender issues.

In Azerbaijan, Symmetry's work to raise awareness on issues of domestic violence brought this issue to the attention of the police, who had avoided the problem in the past. With the constructive, solution-oriented advice of the NGO on how to address the problem, the police gradually came to accept domestic violence as a problem and accepted the need to work with Symmetry and other NGOs to address it.

In Armenia, the lobbying of the AAWUE raised awareness of the importance of gender issues among key members of the Ministry of Education and Science. When key ministry leaders saw that students responded positively to the subject, they became enthusiastic supporters of the project.

**Increased State Capacity to Promote Equality of Rights and Opportunities.** The ODIHR Gender Programme increased state capacity to address gender issues by creating new state bodies with the specific purpose of increasing the role of women in the policy-making process. When Kyrgyzstan's 2005 elections produced a parliament with no women members, ODIHR and AST lobbied for the creation of a special presidential representative on gender issues and supported that office once it was established. During the two years that the office was in existence, it had a powerful impact by helping to ensure that Kyrgyzstan remained committed to secular government and fighting attempts to criminalize abortion and decriminalize polygamy and bride kidnapping. This additional state capacity had further impact when ODIHR and AST worked in coordination with the special representative to put in place special measures designed to increase the representation of women in the parliament. This lobbying was successful, leading to the election of a new parliament in December 2007 with 27 percent women, a vast improvement over the previous parliament, which had no women.

In each of the four countries, the ODIHR Gender Programme and its local partners have worked to put in place key gender-oriented legislation and action plans. Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan adopted legislation guaranteeing equal rights for both sexes in 2003 and 2006 respectively. Kyrgyzstan and Georgia adopted laws on domestic violence in 2003 and 2006 respectively, while Azerbaijan is currently considering such

legislation. All four countries have in place plans defining their gender policies.

The ODIHR Gender Programme has also expanded state capacity by helping to increase the ability of the state to work effectively with civil society groups, thereby increasing the effectiveness of both. In each of the countries where it works, ODIHR and its partners have built strong ties linking the state and civil society at both the national and regional levels. In Kyrgyzstan, AST worked with the special representative of the president to the parliament for gender issues to provide the women's movement with the opportunity to influence policy making at the highest levels. The result of this influence was the introduction of special measures for increasing female representation in the parliament and ensuring that gender issues were considered for important legislation. In Armenia, AAWUE used its extensive ties in the education ministry to build up a gender education programme across the country. In Azerbaijan, in the area of domestic violence, civil society and government work better together now than at any time in the past. NGO Symmetry and the representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Police have developed a viable partnership, which is key to the future sustainability of work against domestic violence in Azerbaijan. Based on this partnership, they are now reaching out to members of parliament in order to shape new forms of legislation. The ODIHR intervention in this area has opened doors for additional kinds of work as well. For example, in Azerbaijan, where the ODIHR has worked together with the NGO Symmetry to provide training to doctors on providing assistance to victims of domestic violence, these programme partners have now engaged authorities in the justice system to address the issues of torture and violence in the penitentiary system.

### **Increased Civil Society Capacity to Promote Equality of Rights and Opportunities.**

The ODIHR Gender Programme has enhanced civil society capacity in the four countries by helping to develop individual groups where they were needed and establishing coalitions among existing groups where such groups existed but did not work together well.

The establishment of AST created a new generation of women's groups in Kyrgyzstan. Whereas many leaders of the existing groups had been part of the Soviet establishment, AST brings together innovative scholar/activists who can take advantage of new media techniques to win much greater popular support for the gender cause. In Azerbaijan and Armenia, ODIHR's efforts have expanded the capacity of existing NGOs to use their government contacts to achieve real substantive change for women. In Georgia, the programme has begun the difficult process of uniting disparate women's groups to work in support of their common interests.

In all the countries where it operates, ODIHR has set up extensive networks of women that reach into the most remote rural areas. In Kyrgyzstan, the Women Can Do It! network, with its eight resource centers, is now a brand name. Its members are highly visible in social, party, and state structures. ODIHR and AST have transferred new skills to NGO members, such as the ability to carry out a variety of research and gender

monitoring exercises allowing them to examine electoral campaigns, the social and economic situation in the regions, and mass-media products. Additionally, democratic principles of intra-network interaction and horizontal communications have been established, fostering the development of stable civil society organizations moving forward. Similar, though less developed, networks function in each of the three South Caucasus countries as a result of the ODIHR programme.

In Georgia, the coalition of local NGOs established with ODIHR Gender Programme support has produced results in a number of areas, including the 2006 local elections, the 2008 parliamentary elections, special measures to increase the presence of women in the parliament, domestic violence, and work in the regions. The coalition organized a country-wide effort in the 2006 local elections that helped women across Georgia win political representation despite the difficult circumstances of the elections. The results of the 2008 campaign were disappointing, with only 6 percent of the new MPs being women, but the campaign demonstrated extensive public support with a petition campaign that collected 32,000 signatures calling on the government to adopt special measures to increase the number of women in parliament. This successful petition campaign provided a real boost to the coalition's efforts at visibility, but also demonstrated significant growth in organizational ability. In the area of domestic violence, the coalition has provided extensive training to doctors and policemen, who are on the frontlines in dealing with the victims, and has helped set up a network of crisis centers and a shelter. In the regions, the coalition is working with locally-based groups in all parts of Georgia (except the separatist areas), assisting them in their campaigns to encourage greater female participation in political life and to address domestic violence.

Since the OSCE is a multi-lateral international organization, its support can help empower local actors within their own communities. As a representative of the OSCE, ODIHR programme staff have access to important public officials and can open doors for local partners. This kind of access to state officials gives the local partner something that it would not be able to achieve using its own resources.

**Promoted Women's Leadership.** The ODIHR Gender Programme has promoted women's leadership in all the countries where it works. The combined efforts of the ODIHR Gender Programme and AST have given Kyrgyz women a platform that enables them to take on more leadership roles in society. Kyrgyzstan's Women Can Do It! leadership network has branches across the territory of Kyrgyzstan and operates eight resource centers. This network is one of the few non-governmental organizations that effectively reaches out to the grassroots level of Kyrgyzstan's villages. The network has a demonstrated impact by increasing the number of women who play leadership roles in local council elections and win public office.

In an innovative way to increase the role of women in public life, ODIHR provided 40 micro grants to women in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, giving them funds to address specific local problems, such as repairing a leaking village water supply system.

The purpose of these grants was to make accessible to women funds that would usually only be available to men. The success of the projects demonstrated to local residents that women could accomplish concrete goals and, accordingly, helped many of them win election to local office.

In Armenia, the ODIHR/AAWUE alliance has provided training courses to a variety of women political and NGO leaders, helping them expand the capacities of their organizations and offices. Likewise, the gender education programme is training a new generation of women who will soon rise up to start taking on more of these leadership roles.

**Increased Women's Political Participation by Helping Elect More Women to National and Regional Legislatures.** The ODIHR programme has helped elected a significant number of new women to public office. Due to the temporary affirmative action gender quotas in Kyrgyzstan's electoral law, the representation of women in parliament grew from 0 to 27 percent following the December 2007 elections. Kyrgyzstan now belongs to the category of countries where progress in the field of political representation of women is advancing most quickly, according to the Inter-parliamentary Union. ODIHR and AST, in alliance with the special presidential representative and a coalition of activist women's groups, deserve some of the credit for these successes since they were able to secure the adoption of quotas assuring women a place in the parliament. Changes are taking place at the regional level as well. Kyrgyzstan's Women Can Do It! network trained rural women to compete in the 2004 local elections and helped them increase their representation in local councils to 19 percent from 14 percent in the previous elections.

Interest in such special measures is now growing in other countries. In Georgia, the women's coalition has collected more than 30,000 signatures in support of such measures for the Georgian legislature and the proposal was due to be discussed in the fall 2008 legislative session.

**Fostered National Expertise Development.** As noted in the methodology section, the ODIHR Gender Programme promotes expertise development among its partner organizations by working with them over the long term and bringing in international experts to provide training that would not otherwise exist in the countries where it works. The impact of this expertise development has been profound, particularly in the areas of media training and developing relations with the police force to address domestic violence. The new knowledge gained through participation in the ODIHR activities has helped each of the partner groups expand the breadth and depth of their activities. The impact has been to raise awareness of gender issues among the larger population, particularly the need to include women in representative bodies, and among state bodies, notably in terms of mobilizing their will and capacity to address discriminatory practices in public and private spheres and implement steps for combating domestic violence.

**Integrated Gender-Equality Aspects into National Policy-Making.** ODIHR's work has helped expand the role that gender plays in the policy-making of the four countries where it operates. ACT and the women's network have helped secure the adoption of numerous pieces of legislation that promote the cause of gender equality. Kyrgyzstan adopted a National Action Plan for achieving gender equality 2002-6 and a second plan for the period 2007-2010. ACT and the women's network helped shape the progressive law addressing the problem of domestic violence that Kyrgyzstan adopted in 2003. Additionally, at the behest of the women's movement, on March 22, 2006, President Bakiyev signed a decree seeking greater gender parity in the government by ensuring that at least 30 percent female representation in central and local government decision-making bodies. The groups ensured the retention of Kyrgyzstan's status as a secular country in the constitution, blocked efforts to legalize polygamy and bride kidnapping, and worked to ensure that abortions remained legal.

The impact of ODIHR and AST's work in Kyrgyzstan goes beyond changes in legislation. Now gender groups provide expertise on key pieces of legislation. AST and approximately 20 groups are involved in the process of providing legal gender expertise to the newly elected female members of the parliament. Through the Alliance for Women's Legislative Initiatives they created, they offer advice on drafting laws, setting up standards to be incorporated in legislation, and training staff in the parliament and the Justice Department. In Azerbaijan, ODIHR and its partners are lobbying to secure a law on domestic violence that will clearly spell out the role of the police. In Armenia, ODIHR and AAWUE have secured changes in the country's college curriculum to include gender training for all students and are working toward a similar goal at the high school level. In Georgia, the women's coalition is working toward the establishment of an executive branch office that deals with gender issues in the expectation that it will serve as a focal point for future legislative initiatives.

**Improved State, Society Response to Issues of Domestic Violence.** In Azerbaijan, the ODIHR Gender Programme and its local partner Symmetry have had enormous impact by changing the way that the country's police address issues of domestic violence. The police went from avoiding direct involvement in domestic violence cases to training current officers and new recruits how to best intervene to help victims and punish perpetrators.

Initially, the programme provided training to key officials at the top of the Interior Ministry. It then spread this training to Azerbaijani Police Academy employees. On the basis of that successful experience, ODIHR and Symmetry worked with police academy instructors to develop a seminar course for the academy's 200 fifth-year students. The introduction of this new instruction subject matter marked a significant change for the academy because for the first time in its history, representatives of the police and NGOs conducted lessons for future police officers jointly. Based on this experience, the Academy set up a legal clinic, which provides a wide range of advice to families.

The impact of these courses is not limited to the capital. In 2005, ODIHR and Symmetry organized training sessions for 25 regional police chiefs. During 2007-2008, Symmetry and the Police Academy followed up on the 2005 trainings for regional police chiefs, by providing trainings for 600 regional police officers.

In Azerbaijan, victims of domestic violence are now starting to turn to the police with greater frequency. The police themselves are working to develop their own training courses, going far beyond the initial sessions sponsored by ODIHR and Symmetry. The police are improving the quality of the data that they gather about domestic violence so that they have a better picture of the problem's scale; in the past there had been no reliable information on this topic.

**Improved Exchange of Best Practices Through the OSCE Region.** Through the creation of the ODIHR Gender Programme Expert Panel and travel programmes that bring activists from one country to another, the ODIHR Gender Programme has facilitated the exchange of best practices among countries where it works. Most visibly, this exchange is taking place in the transfer of the innovative media techniques developed in Kyrgyzstan, which can have applications in the South Caucasus region as well. These techniques are raising the profile of gender issues in a variety of contexts. Our recommendations encourage more efforts in this direction.

### *Recommendations for overall ODIHR programming on gender equality*

Each of the country sections of this report includes individual recommendations for the particular countries. Here we provide a broader set of general recommendations.

**Continue to give a uniform ODIHR method and objectives the flexibility to take very local form.** One of the key distinguishing features of the ODIHR Gender Programme project work is that, while maintaining a uniform set of objectives and methodology, it took a different form in each country. In Kyrgyzstan, it emphasized women's political representation, in Azerbaijan – domestic violence, in Armenia – gender education, and in Georgia – coalition building among existing women's groups. Nevertheless, despite the local variety, the projects all remained true to the objectives and were ultimately quite successful overall. It is extremely unusual for a multi-lateral, international organization to pursue such a context driven vibrantly multi-faceted program of implementation on the ground. Continuing to allow the ODIHR staff to pursue the organization's goals in as innovative a manner as possible will definitely facilitate the overall organization's ability to move forward efficiently and effectively. Giving each of the country projects the freedom to focus on locally-defined activities made it possible for each to achieve the largest impact possible.

**Do not be discouraged by the need to take a long-term approach.** Another defining feature of the ODIHR Gender Programme work was its ability to stick to its project work over the long term. Improving the life of women in the Caucasus and Central Asia is a goal that can only be achieved over the course of years. Real progress will not come quickly. Therefore, there is little to be gained from simple, short-term programs. The Georgian experience is a prime example. The Gender Programme spent many years trying to build a coalition of women's NGOs that could effectively increase women's participation in Georgian politics. This effort had its greatest payoff in 2008, when the coalition was able to mobilize itself and gather more than 30,000 signatures calling for the adoption of special measures to increase the representation of women in Georgian politics. If ODIHR had not stuck with its local partners over the many years it took to develop the coalition, it would not have achieved this key result.

**Expand Creative Media Work.** One of the most distinctive elements of the ODIHR gender programming is its sophisticated and locally rooted approach to media relations as a tool to generate public demand for positive change in gender relations. This is in stark contrast to the usual stale bureaucratic box ticking approaches of most international donor media campaigns. To support the existing female political leaders and to stimulate the election of more, it is vital that ODIHR continue its uniquely creative media work to generate public demand for greater gender equality.

A key lesson learnt from ODIHR's creative media campaigns is that one unusual action gets more attention than many academic roundtable discussions. Good results come from working to help local partners identify themes and public events that will arouse the most popular interest and gain widespread media attention. The central challenge in this media work remains leveraging the elevated public interest into focused action steps.

**Making trade-offs is a necessary part of the program work and should be handled strategically.** All the Caucasus and Central Asian countries present extremely difficult working conditions. There are no simple answers on how to ensure gender equality. Accordingly, it is necessary to make a variety of trade-offs in developing the programs. For example, in Armenia, the ODIHR Gender Programme chose as its main partner a local NGO whose leader already had a long and successful career in the country's Communist Party establishment, climbing her way up through the ranks of the education ministry. Working with this group as a key partner meant effectively denying ODIHR resources to a new generation of NGO activists who potentially could propose a variety of innovative programs in the gender area. However, ODIHR's chosen partner was able to use its extensive ties in the education ministry as a way of advancing an innovative new gender curriculum in Armenia's universities and high schools, taking advantage of networks that a younger group simply would not be able to access. This new curriculum brought Armenia's rising generation new ideas about gender equality, but also taught them basic techniques in critical thinking. Ultimately, the trade-offs necessarily made here in working with an old-line group will have enormous pay-offs

for generations of children to come, and as these girls and boys mature into new generations of activists in Armenian public life.

**A continued focus on advancing women in politics is essential.** The ODIHR programme has facilitated measureable success by increasing the number of women in political life in the target countries. Without on-going efforts, however, these past gains could be overturned. Kyrgyzstan's December 2007 elections raised the number of women in Kyrgyzstan's parliament from zero to 24. The presence of women in the parliament is a major accomplishment, but one that also poses several risks. Many members of society now look critically at the role these female deputies are playing. If the new female MPs do not perform well, the special measures ensuring female representation could be removed in the next reform of the electoral system. Therefore, it is necessary to show society the concrete benefits of these parliamentarians' work. Many of the new female deputies were not active in Kyrgyzstan's women's movement and are not aware of gender issues. Having helped secure a female presence in parliament, the ODIHR and its local partner must continue providing support to the new members of parliament by helping them conduct gender analyses and write gender-sensitive laws. One potential downside to these efforts is that the women members of parliament are working within an increasingly authoritarian political system. As insiders, they may be blamed for the failings of the system and the problems that it creates. However, the activists believe that it is important that people see that women are involved in the process of trying to improve the situation.

**Work especially to increase the proportion of women in public office at the local and regional level.** Among the members of the various women's networks established with ODIHR support in the four countries, there is great demand to continue training female candidates at the local level to ensure greater representation of women in local and regional legislatures. This effort will be vital to the network's efforts to continue building relationships with state authorities across the region, to bring female leadership to the community level, and to develop the next generation of women leaders.

**Develop additional opportunities to bring together state and non-state actors to encourage synergistic impacts.** Unlike most other international organizations and international NGOs, the OSCE is well placed to bridge the gap between governments and NGOs in the countries where it works. Bringing together state and non-state actors makes it possible for local groups to mobilize enormous resources to achieve goals defined by society. The Gender Programme's work in Azerbaijan best demonstrated how state and society can work together to address the issue of domestic violence. In Azerbaijan, the state is the only group that has sufficient resources to mitigate the problem, whether in providing police support to victims of domestic violence or through establishing shelters to help them. However, the police were reluctant to intervene in such cases. ODIHR's local NGO partner was able to provide Azerbaijan's law



enforcement officers with the kind of knowledge and training that made them feel confident in helping victims of domestic violence. Through the ODIHR intervention, the police are now playing a more positive role in Azerbaijani society as demonstrated by the growing awareness of the problem of domestic violence and the adoption of increasing useful tools to deal with it. ODIHR helped in this situation by developing strong local networks, bringing together people – NGO activists and police officers - who ordinarily would not view each other as partners.

**Expand already strong efforts to work outside national capitals.** In all four countries where the ODIHR Gender Programme operates, it pays considerable and sustained attention to working with local groups in cities and villages that are far from the centers of power. This approach is almost unique among international actors in gender programming and makes a great deal of sense because limited resources can go much farther in these peripheral areas of general resource poverty. Moreover, working in the regions better ensures that ODIHR projects address local concerns and helps ODIHR and local partners to develop stronger networks over time. Of course, the cost of such work is that ODIHR must make a long-term commitment to its local partners because it takes a considerable amount of effort to launch and nurture regional networks. Nevertheless, such efforts will be vital to ODIHR's ability to continue building relationships with state authorities across the region, to bring female leadership to the community level, and to develop the next generation of women leaders.

Among the members of the various women's networks established with ODIHR support in the four countries, there is great demand to continue training female candidates at the local level to ensure greater representation of women in local and regional legislatures. This effort will be vital to the network's efforts to continue building relationships with state authorities across the region, to bring female leadership to the community level, and to develop the next generations of women leaders.

**Expand Research and Evaluation Activities.** Many of our interlocutors made clear that there is simply not enough information available about the gender situation in any of these four countries. Expanded research efforts would help to better inform decision makers about how best to advance gender sensitive policies and bolster the instructional efforts in the universities and high schools.

Likewise, the project overall would benefit from doing a better job of monitoring the changes that it achieves over time. In most cases, the project managers currently have useful anecdotal evidence suggesting that their work is having a powerful effect, so it would be fascinating to examine their results in detail with a more comprehensive study that tracks all these changes systematically. Gathering this kind of data would also aid calibration of the existing programmes and potentially replicating them elsewhere. Additionally, these high-powered efforts would help identify future opportunities for the programme.

## KYRGYZSTAN

### *Executive Summary*

ODIHR and its local partner, the Agency for Social Technologies (AST), have made considerable progress in promoting the cause of gender equality in Kyrgyzstan. Their activities have focused on building a national women's leadership network, increasing the representation of women in politics, developing and promoting gender expertise, and developing innovative ways to use the media to promote gender goals.

The Women Can Do It! leadership network, which AST created with ODIHR support, has branches across the territory of Kyrgyzstan and operates eight resource centers. This network is one of the few non-governmental organizations that effectively reaches out to the grassroots level of Kyrgyzstan's villages. At the national level, when the 2005 elections produced a parliament with no women members, ODIHR and AST worked to increase the representation of women in politics by lobbying for the creation of a special presidential representative on gender issues and supporting that office once it was established. The efforts of the program then helped secure the adoption of special measures that ensured representation for women in the national parliament. Once the women were in office, ODIHR and AST worked to improve the quality of the legislation that the country's leaders adopt. Likewise, ODIHR and AST are using innovative new media techniques to draw the attention of society to the problems of women.

The ODIHR and AST programs in Kyrgyzstan have had a powerful impact on society. They have raised overall awareness of gender issues and created greater demand for gender equality, changed key state structures, helped increase the representation of women in national and regional parliaments, built civil society capacity, helped secure the passage of key legislation and official acts that support the gender cause, such as the national plan for the achievement of gender equality, developed local expertise, launched efforts to improve the portrayal of women in the media, and provided a model for neighboring countries. These achievements provide evidence that the ODIHR Gender Program has made sustainable changes in Kyrgyzstan.

### *Main Report*

#### **1. Background for the ODIHR program**

The following section lays out the situation in Kyrgyzstan in 2000, when the ODIHR Gender Program began its work in the country. Section 6 describes the ODIHR Gender Program impact.

Kyrgyzstan has a strong civil society compared with other Central Asian countries. The 1999 legislation governing civil society is relatively liberal. An initiative group of only 10 people is required to register a public association, while one person can register a public foundation. The number of groups rose from 81 in 1994 to over 2,600 in 2000, according to registrations with the Ministry of Justice. The organizations are involved in various spheres of social life: human rights, overcoming poverty, ecology, the rights of women, among others. The effectiveness of the organizations depends on their source of financing (generally foreign), the presence of qualified staff, ties with external partners, and relations with the authorities. The majority of NGOs are concentrated in the capital and regional centers. Despite the quick growth in the numbers of NGOs, they still have little influence on the political agenda and decision-making bodies.

The overall attitude of the state toward the NGOs at the end of the 1990s was pragmatic observation. Bureaucrats reacted negatively to the activities of human rights NGOs (especially in the area of elections), while their practical work in the addressing social problems was well received. Typically, the state adopted a rhetorical approach regarding women's NGOs: supporting them in public speeches, but taking few actions to actually help them.

Political parties, like NGOs, only began to develop once Kyrgyzstan achieved independence. The main type of party, existing at that time in Kyrgyzstan, was a collection of a few groups around specific leaders, who did not have a clear and sustainable social base. They did not address questions of gender equality in their party work.

Gradually, the democratic rule of first President Askar Akaev transformed into authoritarianism – he consistently expanded and strengthened the powers of the president, conducted elections with significant violations, and watched as corruption grew.

## ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT REGARDING GENDER ISSUES

The World Bank classifies Kyrgyzstan as a low income country, with two-thirds of the population living in rural areas, and this situation has a strong impact on the lives of its women. Over 40 percent live in poverty, though the situation has started to improve in recent years. The country's women tend to live much longer lives than the men. However, according to the UNDP's gender empowerment measure (GEM), Kyrgyzstan in 1999 had an indicator of 0.457.<sup>1</sup> This figure shows that Kyrgyzstan's women play a very

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2000/2001*, Bishkek, 2001, p. 69.

small part in the country's economic and political life. Women in the country often lack a stable source of income and control over spending the family budget.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the average salary for men and women is growing: in 1996 women's salaries were 73 percent of men's, while in 1999, the spread expanded to 64 percent.<sup>3</sup> Property is also a gender issue in Kyrgyzstan since land is mostly inherited by male members of the family.<sup>4</sup>

Women's health is a major problem. The maternity death rate is catastrophic and the highest in the Central Asia region. More than half of the country's pregnant women suffer from anemia.

Despite the overall poverty, some women are becoming more active in setting up stores and other forms of small business. Society is beginning to accept this as normal and to respect it. As a result, these women have more money and are freer. Café and restaurant owners report that women are making up an increasing part of their clientele.

Women's roles in Kyrgyzstan are traditionally highly circumscribed in public and private life. There are deeply-rooted stereotypes about women that are often perpetrated through the media. Patriarchal views are expressed in terms of illegal, but widely practiced, polygamy, marriage at a young age, and high levels of violence against women. Women throughout Kyrgyzstan's society must deal with these problems on a day-to-day basis.

Patriarchal attitudes affect almost all aspects of women's lives. Researchers have also pointed out that incidents of bride kidnapping are increasing, particularly in the southern parts of the country.<sup>5</sup> Typically, in these cases, young women are forced to marry against their will, usually with the justification that such practices are part of Kyrgyz tradition. However, recent research has shown that this practice was not common in the pre-Soviet era.<sup>6</sup>

Kyrgyzstan presents a complicated context for promoting the cause of women's rights. Women are very poorly represented in the country's key decision-making bodies. The patriarchal nature of Kyrgyz society, with its impact on everything from employment opportunities to property rights, makes it difficult for women to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Programma razvitiya Organizatsii Ob"edinennykh Natsii (PROON), Assotsiatsiya "Diamond," Tsentri sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh issledovaniy "Sotsekonik," *Problemy feminizatsii bednosti v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike*, Bishkek, 2007, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2000/2001*, Bishkek, 2001, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Gul'zhamal Sultanalieva, Member of Parliament from the Communist Party, April 1, 2008. See UNDP, State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, *Access of Men and Women to the Natural Resources of Kyrgyzstan*, Bishkek, 2007. For a discussion of land issues, see the section on "Women's Rights to Land" in *Alternative Report to CEDAW Committee (2004)*, Bishkek, pp. 121-3.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Medina D. Aitieva, Instructor, Sociology Department, American University of Central Asia, April 2, 2008, Human Rights Watch, *Reconciled to Violence State Failure to Stop Domestic Abuse and Abduction of Women in Kyrgyzstan*, September 2006, p. 89 and Russell Kleinbach, Mehrigiul Ablezova and Medina Aitieva, "Kidnapping For Marriage (Ala Kachuu) in a Kyrgyz Village," *Central Asian Survey* 24:2, June 2005, pp. 191-202, [http://faculty.philau.edu/kleinbachr/2004\\_study.htm](http://faculty.philau.edu/kleinbachr/2004_study.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Russ Kleinbach and Lilly Salimjanova, "Kyz ala kachuu and adat: non-consensual bride kidnapping and tradition in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey* 26:2, June 2007, pp. 217 - 233.

equal status with men. The growing influence of Islam is currently facilitating the wider spread of these patriarchal views.

#### POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND KEY GENDER INDICATORS BEFORE THE START OF THE PROJECT

Women are under-represented in Kyrgyzstan's decision-making and governance structures, particularly in national and regional legislatures and the increasingly important political parties. Women made up 6.7 percent of the members of the national parliament following the 2000 elections; 4.76 percent following the 1996 elections; and 7.4 percent following the 1990 elections.<sup>7</sup> In 2000, in the city councils, women made up 12.6 percent (54 women of 429 deputies); in the village and aul councils, 14.9 percent (947 women of 6342 deputies).

Women's share in leading administrative positions does not exceed 30 percent, while women make up less than 20 percent of the people who own their own enterprises and farming plots.

The women of Kyrgyzstan are extremely active in civil society organizations, which helps increase their role in the life of the country. At the same time, many view this situation as a result of the failure to use their full potential in the state or business.

Within the civil service, the general situation is that the higher the position, the fewer women.<sup>8</sup> Rising in the Kyrgyz political system often requires paying one's own way. Since there are very few women with important positions in big business, it is difficult for them to succeed in politics.<sup>9</sup> Most women entering the labor force go into low-paying jobs.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING, IN PARTICULAR:

- Availability/absence/potential of *key state structure* responsible for the issues of improving women's situation and achieving gender equality

The formation of the basic institutions of gender policy began in 1996. In March 1996, the state created a State Committee under the auspices of the government on the affairs of families and women. In 1998, this committee gained responsibility for youth issues as well. It created working groups along the lines of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), a Council for the legislative gender expertise, and a Consultative Council of representatives from civil society.

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<sup>7</sup> The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Swedish International Development Agency, and The United Nations Development Program, *Gender Analysis of the Local and Parliamentary Elections (2004-2005)*, Bishkek, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Zul'fiya Aitieva, Agency for Civil Service Affairs, Bishkek, April 2, 2008. See also Agenstvo Sotsial'nykh Tekhnologii et al., *Gendernyi analiz kadrovoi politiki v Kyrgyzstane na primere Ministerstva ekonomiki i finansov Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, Biskek: UNDP, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Olga Filippova, Expert, Economic and Social Policy Department, Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, March 27, 2008.

On 31 July 1998, the president created a National Council under the auspices of the president on gender policy with the goal of achieving equality for women in society, preserving the institutional structure in Kyrgyzstan for women's affairs, giving a new quality to the question of gender development, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Ayalzat national program, reducing poverty among women, and coordinating the activities of women's non-governmental organizations and the further development of cooperation with international organizations.

The president abolished the State Committee in December 2000 for a variety of reasons. Among them was optimizing the government administration and reducing the number of agencies and state services. The growing influence of the presidential administration, with its greater concentration of political, administrative, and symbolic resources, had great significance for this decision. The desire to increase the power of the state agency responsible for implementing gender policy led to the decision to create the council under the president's auspices.

No less important in the transfer of gender issues from the government to the presidential administration was the adoption of a new approach, moving from "women in development", which focused on women as recipients and consumers of state programs, to "gender mainstreaming" as formulated in the BPA. The distinguishing feature of this approach was moving away from the segregation of gender in the social sphere and the adoption of an "all-inclusive" institutional mechanism. However, at that time, the government staff did not have the necessary qualifications for implementing a comprehensive gender approach in practice.

- Responsibility of *other state structures*, sectoral ministries and authorities to introduce gender mainstreaming, and also accountability of the *state administration and local self-governments in the regions* and their role in advancing gender equality

Before the State Commission was abolished, it set up branch offices in Kyrgyzstan's regional capitals. In most cases they were disbanded, but in a few, they continued on under the auspices of the governors (as in Osh).

In the ministries and agencies, there is an office responsible for gender questions. Usually it is staffed by one person who has a variety of other responsibilities so they cannot focus solely on gender issues. In reality, this means that due to a lack of time, weak incentives, and the absence of material and moral support, gender questions do not receive the attention that they deserve.

There is no unified hierarchy responsible for the implementation of gender policy in local government, however, in several oblasts there remains a staff person responsible for gender issues. They complement the Coordinating Councils on gender policy at the local level, where, under the leadership of the deputy governor for social questions, NGO representatives try to influence local policy.

At the level of local government bodies (*aiyl okmotu* and TOSs in the cities), in most cases the Women's Councils are responsible for gender policy, coordinating this social duty with the work of the responsible secretary in the local government. In several raions, such as Nooken Raion in Jalalabad Oblast, the local administrations provide help, usually in the form of office space. Usually in each oblast administration, three employees, paid from the local budget, work for the Council of Elders, while the Women's Councils do not receive such support.

- Availability of *National Action Plans* on achieving gender equality

Kyrgyzstan adopted the National Program "Ayalzat" for the period 1996-2000. It was based on the principles of the BPA and focused on improving the situation for women. Although the government included funds for the program in the budget, actual financing for the program amounted to no more than 30 percent of the funds that had been budgeted. A variety of ministries, agencies and local governments were responsible for actually implementing it.

Gradually a transformation in approach is occurring, as Kyrgyzstan moves away from a policy focusing on women as recipients and consumers of state programs to gender mainstreaming. The distinguishing feature of this approach was moving away from the segregation of gender in the social sphere and the adoption of an "all-inclusive" institutional mechanism. Kyrgyzstan adopted two subsequent plans on the basis of this new approach, one covering the period 2002-2006 and one for 2007-2010.

- Responsibility of *legislative authorities (parliaments)*, their monitoring function in the process of tracking progress in gender equality issues. Availability/absence of special laws on gender equality.

Following the fourth international UN conference on the situation of women, in 1996 the Kyrgyzstan parliament placed a special accent on achieving international standards in addressing the problem of guaranteeing women's rights and achievements by ratifying the four UN conventions directly related to women's issues: "Convention on the political rights of women," "Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages," "Convention on the Nationality of Married Women," and "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women."

There was no special law on gender equality in the republic at the beginning of the ODIHR program. It was adopted later – in 2003 and in 2008, AST experts and members of the Women's Network will develop and lobby the adoption of a new version of the law "On state guarantees for equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women."

The parliament did not conduct any special hearings on the state's implementation of its responsibilities in providing gender equality in the period before 2000. Likewise, the legislature did not conduct any serious gender analysis of its legislation.

- Evaluation of the potential of *researchers and gender experts*, including representatives of the academic sector, who provide gender analysis and recommendations for political decision making and revision of state programs

At the end of the 1990s, only a handful of universities taught gender courses. Today, there are approximately twenty such courses.<sup>10</sup>

The expert potential, including that of women's NGOs before 2000, was extremely low. There were only a few experts who were familiar with the different approaches to achieving gender equality and had the necessary skills of strategic planning to overcome the existing systemic barriers. There effectively was no system for preparing gender experts. NGO leaders could generally only find gender training through seminars, conferences, and study tours organized by international organizations. The implementation of the ODIHR program addressed these deficiencies in a significant way.

- Conditions for *non-governmental organizations and lobbyist groups* to impact the political process

Until 2000, the work of women's NGOs was concentrated largely in the social and cultural spheres. At that time, they were just beginning to address such issues as creating crisis centers for women and children and countering violence. Until the beginning of the AST project backed by ODIHR, women's organizations practically did not address the problem of women's political leadership. The defining characteristics of women's organizations at that time were the poor understanding of network interaction, the small number of powerful organizations in the regions, and the insufficient number of resource organizations for women's social organizations. Moreover, in the third sector itself, women's NGOs were outsiders.

It was obvious that to increase access to policy-making circles, the women's movement needed a wide social base. AST and ODIHR figured that women's councils working under the aegis of local governments could mobilize that social base using a well-developed network that extended to practically all villages in the country. However, the leaders of these women's councils had a "Soviet" conception of gender equality, so using these women's councils required providing the leaders with specialized support and training.

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<sup>10</sup> Data from special research on academic gender education in Kyrgyzstan. See the site: <http://www.edugender.org.kg>.



Political parties and powerful human-rights organizations did not then focus on questions of gender equality.

- *Mass media* and tradition of covering gender issues

Before 2000, Kyrgyzstan's media often presented stereotypically patriarchal views of the traditional role of women and men. The average person did not support the idea of gender equality, especially in the family, and patriarchal views dominated at all levels. Most viewed feminism negatively. Educators did not disseminate gender concepts adequately while radical Islamic views were growing within society. At the same time, the state's commitment to gender concepts were nothing more than declarations. On the other hand, the women's movement had little ability to influence the media since it could not present itself and its cause -- neither journalists nor the population understood the language of gender experts.

Additionally, since journalists did not consider reporting on gender issues a prestigious task and editors had no interest in the topic, journalists generally presented a pre-conceived and critical account of women's groups' activities.

The dominant type of information broadcast in the media on gender addressed questions of violence, human trafficking, and prostitution, which does not facilitate a positive image of women. Competitions and training programs for journalists are not popular and do not produce sustainable results. Since gender topics are not popular, the journalists who cover these topics are marginalized within their publications. The material that is published tends to be one sided, with sexist approaches and language. Radical Islamic values tend to strengthen the traditional gender roles found in the media. This tendency was most obvious in the Kolomto series of broadcasts on GTRK. The series was taken off the air because it violated human rights, but the show returned after March 2005.

Kyrgyzstan's information policy contradicts the idea of equality and women's political leadership. It does not adequately show women participating in management, rather the media makes it difficult for many to visualize the contribution of women to the development of the state and society. At the beginning of the ODIHR Gender Program's work, it was necessary to counteract the effort of the conservative forces to strengthen traditional roles and devalue the contribution of women to society's development with an effective, long-term PR strategy.

- *International organizations and institutions* in the country working on gender issues

In the period before 2000, only a small number of international organizations provided support to Kyrgyzstan's women's organizations. Among these coordination was weak and the choice of projects often took place without taking into account the opinions of the locals.

In conjunction with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform, at the end of 1995 the UNDP office in Kyrgyzstan created the Women in Development program to coordinate work. In 1999, the UNDP renamed the project as “Gender and Development.” The UNDP office provided financial, informational, and consultative assistance to both state and non-governmental organizations. The UN Population Fund carried out a project to protect the reproductive rights of women.

The International Organization for Migration’s “Countering Human Trafficking” project had a gender component, concentrating on combating trafficking, the exploitation of women-migrants, and defending their rights.

One of the Mercy Corps International projects provided credits to women. The project “Food for work,” carried out in rural areas also provided aid to women.

Hivos supported the opening of the first crisis centers in Kyrgyzstan, as well as research and publications on gender issues. It also carried out special projects on defending the rights of minorities, including the rights of workers in the sex industry.

The Soros-Kyrgyzstan Foundation carried out four special projects to support women: crisis centers in the regions to prevent violence against women and children; health and reproductive rights of women; education; and universal access – financial support for informational study trips for women.

Since its opening in 1996, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has carried out projects to increase the role of women in politics, particularly conducting sociological research and training seminars in the regions and international conferences on the topic of Women in Politics. In these activities, it included experts who later worked together to form AST. Since 2000, ODIHR and AST have worked together to carry out these activities within the framework of the long-term project “Women’s leadership, defending rights, and creating a network.”

## **2. Analysis of why ODIHR chose its specific direction of work in Kyrgyzstan and also why it selected AST as a Partner. Impact.**

In contrast to its experience in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, the ODIHR Gender Program in Kyrgyzstan chose to support the initiative of a group of experts, united in a new NGO, the Agency for Social Technologies (AST), rather than to work with the dominant women’s organizations at that time, whose leaders had a Soviet conception of equality and to a large extent monopolized the gender sphere. The benefits of this move were to bring new people into the existing civil society community, complementing the organizations already functioning. The new group naturally was much more open to implementing fresh and innovative ideas, especially in terms of its media work. ODIHR benefited greatly from its relationship with AST because the group was strongly committed to the gender cause regardless of the constantly changing political atmosphere. The ODIHR Gender Program played an active role in strengthening AST, particularly in terms of joint strategic planning and the choice of optimal means to resolve the existing problems.

The ODIHR Gender Program's first step in Kyrgyzstan was to choose the Agency for Social Technologies (AST) as its local partner. ODIHR staff held meetings with many women's NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan, including the Center to Help Women and other well established organizations. The leaders of these organizations were typically older women who had participated in the 1995 Beijing conference. The ODIHR staff recognized that the AST leaders were younger, more dynamic, and had new ideas about what to do. Research conducted in Kyrgyzstan during the 1990s, showed that the local women's movement was weak, had only a small number of active groups, and wielded no authority or influence over the political agenda.<sup>11</sup> Kyrgyzstan's most prominent women had emerged from the Soviet-era Communist Party elite and had no connection to activist women's groups and were not gender sensitive. A survey of the field documented an urgent need to involve new people in the women's movement, especially at the local level.

The issue of women's political leadership, despite its urgency, was not the focus of the women's movement before the initiatives of the AST team. The meeting and joint strategic planning of ODIHR and AST, which turned into long-term partnership, made it possible to raise the question of women's political participation to the national level.

In the first place it was necessary to identify and unite new women-leaders in all parts of the country. To identify such women, AST solicited interested women to write a short essay describing their ideas about developing women's leadership. The group received 140 responses and chose 36 from among them. These women then met near Lake Issyk Kul and together there came up with the idea to establish a network of women across Kyrgyzstan. The network would allow the members to work on their own local problems while tapping into a much broader array of contacts and resources.

Building on these experiences, AST began to develop as a way to organize the new network of regional women. Once the network was started, the four key individuals who went on to found AST in 2000 and register it in 2001, Mira Karybaeva, Gulnara Ibraeva, Zulfiya Kochorbaeva, and Vladimir Korotenko, began to drive around the country together presenting various trainings. Each of the members brought different skills to the group.

Building on this experience and the subsequent development of the women's network, AST and ODIHR began to put in place a systematic training methodology and develop manuals for their participants. The combination of grounded academics and young NGO activists in the group made it possible for them to get across cutting edge gender concepts in ways that the trainees could understand. Moreover, AST started to expand the number of topics in which it provided training. In addition to gender issues, AST members began to address topics such as establishing new NGOs, developing and implementing projects, and raising funds. By the time AST registered in 2001, it was

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<sup>11</sup> These studies included: "Analysis of the political culture of women of Kyrgyzstan" (with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation); "Educational concept of NGOs" and "Information Handbook for the NGOs of Kyrgyzstan" (supported by the UNDP project "NGO capacity evaluation in Kyrgyzstan"); and "Resources of political behavior of women of Kyrgyzstan" and "Reproductive rights of women" (Dutch Foundation HIVOS and the Diamond Association).

already a team that had been through some tough experiences, having traveled extensively and building up close personal relationships. The group is still together after eight years and could continue to exist even without ODIHR funding, though ODIHR remains a key partner.

ODIHR's strategic choice of a NGO as a local partner allowed it to produce positive results. In 2000, Kyrgyzstan was a unique mix of an inherited Soviet regime, clan power, and individuals who held public office more for their personal ties than for their professional qualifications. Public officials then had little awareness of gender issues, thinking mainly in terms of meeting international commitments in formal terms.<sup>12</sup> Few had a strong commitment to the issue. Moreover, the state was extremely uncoordinated, with power divided among the federal executive, the national parliament, and regional groups. At the same time, there was constant turnover in personnel, making it very difficult to coordinate with state officials who would only be in office for a short time. Only local groups that were dedicated to the cause could make the state address gender issues. The key for ODIHR's success was to work with people who really cared about the issues, rather than just supporting a plan on paper.

### **3. Analysis of methodology used by ODIHR in the country. Impact.**

What distinguishes ODIHR's work from that of other international organizations is its long-term nature, innovative use of experts and the media, program flexibility, expertise and capacity building, and sustainability. The achievement of these outcomes testifies to the soundness of the ODIHR Gender Program methodology.

ODIHR's role on the ground in Kyrgyzstan has evolved over time. During the initial stages of the project, Ilse spent a lot of time in the country. The members of AST found it important to have her input during the planning stages of their activities, especially with Kyrgyzstan's changing political situation, elections, and other developments.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, ODIHR staff attended most of the events organized by AST during the first years. Over time, however, the need for personal visits became less pressing. Now she makes regular visits over the course of the year. In between, ODIHR and AST are in frequent contact by telephone and e-mail. Additionally, the key people now get together in other countries for meetings of the ODIHR Experts' Panel, which provides a chance to make plans. Additionally, members of AST have established good working relationships with the experts hired by the ODIHR and consult them for advice directly by phone or e-mail.

In the case of Kyrgyzstan, which under Akayev had a generally free atmosphere for NGOs, the ODIHR Gender Program did not need to use the authority of the OSCE with the authorities to lend political weight in support of the local group's activities. In Azerbaijan, by contrast, ODIHR did need to serve as a political weight, effectively lobbying to get things done with the government. However, as AST begins to expand its

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Vladimir Korotenko, Expert, Agency for Social Technologies, Baku, May 12, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mira Karybaeva, Expert, Agency for Social Technologies, Baku, May 12, 2008.

capacity to address the issue of domestic violence in Kyrgyzstan, ODIHR will have to intervene more directly with the government to ensure state participation in the project. Although such support was not necessary in setting up a women's network or in working to increase the role of women in politics, it will be required in convincing Kyrgyzstan's police forces to devote resources to the issue of domestic violence.

Several features of the ODIHR Gender Program work distinguish it from the work of other international organizations working in the area. First, ODIHR project work is more long-term. Many of the current projects in Kyrgyzstan were launched in 2000 and are still on-going. Likewise, ODIHR has long stuck with its partner, continuing to work with AST as it matures. In contrast to programs that try to spread a small amount of resources around to a variety of groups, focusing limited funds on one group is an effective way to create a mature and talented contributor to civil society.

Second, the ODIHR Gender Program makes innovative use of experts and the media. In Kyrgyzstan, ODIHR has brought in a wide range of targeted experts to provide vital advice that is not available inside the country. This advice helped build up the women's network and increase women's participation in politics. Each year ODIHR and AST worked out what kind of experts were most needed depending on what was happening in the country. For example, on issues of gender budgeting in the public sector, ODIHR brought in an expert from Ireland and one from Russia. These experts provided two different approaches that proved to be very helpful in the Kyrgyz context.

In terms of increasing women's participation in local councils and the national parliament, a feisty Austrian politician, who had risen from being a housewife to her local city council, the Austrian parliament and ultimately the Assembly of the Council of Europe, proved to be very effective because she spoke to ordinary women as an equal. Most crucially, the Estonian media experts Marek Reinaas and Henri Kasper helped AST develop public relations strategies that brought the cause of increasing the role of women in the political process to a wide popular audience and played a significant role in making it possible to adopt special measures to increase the number of women in parliament.

Third, the ODIHR Gender Program as a whole and the projects it supports work with a methodology that provides considerable leeway for flexibility over time as conditions change. The projects that are adopted and implemented are based on extensive discussion between ODIHR and AST. As the projects evolve out of extensive discussion, they can be adjusted to new situations and circumstances. This practice contrasts with the UNDP, for example, which typically adopts a working plan in advance and then is not in a position to introduce changes in the plan even if that original plan is no longer suitable because circumstances changed.

A fourth component of the ODIHR Gender Program is building up the expertise and capacity of its local partners. Part of the way that ODIHR has built up this internationally-capable expertise is through the convening of its ODIHR Gender Program Expert Panel, which brings together key partners from the countries where the Gender Program operates. Participating in this panel has helped the activists learn

about best practices in other countries. For the Kyrgyz participants, it has provided a useful training ground for making presentations at the international level that can be put to good use at home and abroad.

The unique skills developed by the AST staff members in providing gender equality and democratization trainings have given them the ability to provide advice to a variety of important groups. For example, Kyrgyzstan's Presidential Administration gave AST a contract to train administration staffers in practical aspects of achieving gender equality in economic policy. Additionally, the AST staff now work as experts in a variety of countries around the world. Demand for their services has been growing, as many other international organizations request their support. For example, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has hired AST to work with the Crimean Tatar population on Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Additionally, AST has provided human rights and gender training to employees of Kazakhstan's Civil Service Agency, including in its regional network of centers scattered across the country. That effort proved so successful that AST now works with the Kazakh agency on an annual basis. In fact, such offers now exceed AST's capacity to fulfill them. As a result, AST is now in the difficult position of having to turn down many proposals.

Finally, building up this expertise helps to make the ODIHR projects sustainable over time even if ODIHR reduces the financial support that it provides. Thus, even though the proportion of ODIHR project money is going down in AST's overall revenues, income from expert services is increasing.

#### **4. Short description of activities: what actually has been done, in which regions of the country, and with which partners**

Despite the difficult political, economic, and social context in Kyrgyzstan, ODIHR and AST have been able to make concrete gains in achieving their goals of increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote the equality of rights and opportunities, to develop women's leadership and political participation, and to foster the development of national gender expertise and the integration of gender-equality aspects in national policy-making. They have accomplished these goals by building a national women's leadership network, increasing the representation of women in politics, developing and promoting gender expertise, and developing innovative ways to use the media to promote gender goals.

##### **BUILDING A WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP NETWORK (2000-2008)**

As a first step in building a national network of women's leaders, AST, with ODIHR support, held a series of workshops in each of Kyrgyzstan's seven regions. Women from the local communities were invited to the workshops and then, upon returning home, organized small meetings in their own communities, where they could share the knowledge that they received at the workshops. On the basis of these

experiences, each of the women wrote a brief essay about the results of their gatherings. These essays were circulated among all the partners and to the AST office. In November 2000, all of the approximately 60 women who had completed this task were invited to a national workshop on “Women’s Political Leadership.” These women -- leaders working in NGOs, government agencies, political parties, and the media -- united into the women’s network “Women Can Do It!” with the purpose of expanding opportunities for women in Kyrgyzstan and promoting a gender agenda in politics. While covering all regions of Kyrgyzstan, the network particularly targets women in rural communities.

The Women Can Do It! network engages in a variety of concrete activities. These include education and outreach to increase the role of women in politics; supporting women-led infrastructure development projects in local communities; and operating a network of eight resource centers across the country.

#### INCREASING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

In 2004, the network actively trained women candidates to participate in the municipal elections. This work helped to nearly double the number of women in local councils so that following the elections, 19 percent of the deputies were women.

Between 2001 and 2005, the network carried out more than 200 workshops, reaching more than 4,500 women. Many of these workshops featured foreign experts brought in by ODIHR to provide the kind of advice that was not otherwise available in the country. For example, Vera Lengsfeld, a member of Germany’s Bundestag and Edeltraut Gatterer, a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of Europe, presented their personal experiences of entering politics; Reet Valing and Ane Hion (NGO experts from Estonia) taught members of the women’s network leadership skills, including self-presentation.

To expand its outreach, the network published a newsletter between 2001 and 2005. Now the network has shows on central television which it uses to communicate with an extensive audience. At the regional level, there are a variety of different media outreach activities. Members of the network in Jalal-Abad, for example, work with the local television station to produce shows that address gender issues for both the local Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.<sup>14</sup> They have also run contests in the newspaper to reward the best articles about gender issues. Network members in Karakol host a radio talk show that focuses on gender-related issues.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

With ODIHR support, the network implemented 40 infrastructure projects in local communities, such as setting up a small fruit processing plant in the village of Bulan Sogotu, installing street lights in Zhetioguz, and building a room for mothers and

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dil’bar Chokoeva, Dean, Jalal-Abad State University, March 28, 2008.

children at the Naryn bus station. These projects helped to improve the network's relationship with local authorities and provided tangible evidence that women can materially improve their local situation. None of them cost more than about 1,000 euros.

In addition to the concrete benefits they provided to local communities, the main result of these projects was that they helped strengthen the network. The projects were not a goal in themselves, but meant to facilitate the network's larger objective of increasing the role of women in public life. For a female candidate to win election to local or national office, it was not enough to be a good woman and say the right things. In conditions of decaying infrastructure, voters were ready to support individuals with a demonstrated ability to get things done.

Therefore in the year before the 2004 elections, the network gave small grants to women who wanted to be candidates. The idea was to demonstrate that women could find resources to address pressing local problems. Once the women launched the project, members of the community would pitch in with their own money and labor. Through these efforts, the women became known in their communities.

In Naryn, a woman named Ainura organized a project to reconstruct the local water supply system. The pipe system was in ruins, forcing people to carry water from far away. In the winter, leaking water froze into treacherous ice fields on the roads. With the spring thaw, the water streamed into people's cellars. The local community did not have the resources handy to address the problem. Ainura agreed with the head of her village to use money from the network to replace the pipes. The total cost was 600-700 euros for the material. The local authorities provided the workers to do the digging and the village residents put the dirt back themselves.

This small scale project gave women like Ainura access to resources that they would have not have had otherwise. Usually men have access to such funds since they are the incumbent office holders. This effort was not a long-term strategy because ODIHR simply does not have the resources to address all the problems that exist in Kyrgyz villages. However, the project served a purpose by demolishing the stereotype that woman cannot accomplish anything. With only a small outlay, the project showed that women could fix troublesome problems and helped them gain greater visibility for their efforts.

Subsequently, Ainura won election as a member of the local council and rose to the rank of deputy speaker. In office, she proved to be more capable than some of the men in mobilizing resources for the local community. In particular, she had more experience in writing grant applications. She knew how to define her community's problem and make a compelling argument for support. The men lacked experience in writing such applications. However, Ainura was the only woman among the 19 members of the council. While the members used her potential to build relations with the community and write applications, she could not always influence the council's decision-making process.



The network opened its first four resource centers in 2005. In addition to providing the women with access to various sources of information, the centers provide a place to meet and give the network a physical presence.

The Jalal-Abad Women's Resource Center is one example of the success of this effort. The Center had its roots in the Jalal-Abad Association of Women Leaders, which was established in 1997. The previous year had been the "Year of the Woman" in Kyrgyzstan. However, when the year was over, all the women who had been appointed to positions of power were removed from these posts. Seeking to recover from these losses, 32 local women banded together, united in the belief that the women had been removed from power unjustly. They toiled for many years as part of the network, working to increase the role of women in public life. The Resource Center was opened in 2006. Now the Jalal-Abad Center has approximately 4,000 visitors a year. Half of the key activists involved with the center are young people, which is a reflection of the center's focus on youth.

The Center has close ties with the oblast administration and often brings many problems that affect the daily lives of women to the attention of administration officials.<sup>15</sup> The Center has also worked closely with the Jalal-Abad city administration, particularly seeking to place more women in city jobs.<sup>16</sup> The city council has one female member who is a prominent banker in the city. The council recently decided to add a staff member to deal with gender issues and has three staff members focused on helping children. The Women Can Do It! network was important in changing the atmosphere in the city in order to make these changes possible. The women's groups have managed to establish good relations with the authorities, whereas human rights organizations have not been so successful. In addition to ODIHR funding, the center receives support from the city council and raion administrations.

One of the areas where the city administration is starting to work with women is in purchasing land. The city recently began holding auctions to sell land, announcing tenders 2-3 months in advance of the sales. The city tries to help women purchase this land, in particular, by addressing questions of gender equality in regard to local tax policy.<sup>17</sup>

The Jalal-Abad network has built a database of women leaders in the region. Whenever there is a job opening in the regional government, the women encourage the authorities to consult their list as well as the usual lists of job seekers in order to fill this position. The governor has said that this is a good idea, but the current system does not

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Umsunai Kadyrkulova, Head of the Social Department, Jalal-Abad Oblast Administration, March 28, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Sanam Narmatova, Deputy Head of the Jalal-Abad City Administration for Social Issues, March 28, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Sanam Narmatova, Deputy Head of the Jalal-Abad City Administration for Social Issues, March 28, 2008.

allow him to do such things. Currently, most jobs are distributed through connections or through bribes. In those cases where someone pays a bribe to get the job, they must then collect bribes in order to pay back the original investment. The women's network is continuing work to change these practices.

The Jalal-Abad women's group was very active in trying to elect women to office in the 2004 municipal elections. Since 2000, this region has had no women mayors. In the elections in the oblast there were 21 women candidates overall, but only one woman won a seat. She was an elderly woman who had ten children and a long history of contributing to the community by organizing the construction of a school and a bridge. Voters were willing to accept her, but not young women who were not married.<sup>18</sup>

Not only is the group active in the regional capital, but it is working throughout the oblast. For example, in the Aksi Raion, the oblast administration has set aside a room that women can use for their network activities. There is a strong need to develop more activities in the countryside, where there is little support for gender issues and it is very difficult for women to overcome local barriers. Therefore, it is very important to have coordinated actions in the capital and in the regions.<sup>19</sup> It is also important for women in the countryside to show that they can solve concrete problems, such as improving water supply, building day care centers, improving roads, etc. In some cases, affiliates of the center have provided direct aid, giving a cow to a destitute family. They have also collected and distributed clothing for women and children. However, this work frequently generates more requests for aid, which cannot always be fulfilled.

One of the key activities of the Jalal-Abad center has been working with the women who participated in the March 2005 revolution. Although men organized these events, women made up as much as 80 percent of the protesters who came out on the streets. During the demonstrations, the Center organized food to be distributed to the protesters. After the events were over, the Center offered training to 150 rural women who had already been mobilized. Many were disappointed that the March events did not bring real change to their lives. Before the trainings, the women were generally discontent with their lives and thought that replacing the president would improve their situation. After the trainings, the women became much more specific in their complaints. For example, they then began to focus on addressing such problems as tuberculosis, rural poverty, and gender stereotypes among families. After the training, the women often said that they could not implement what they learned because their husbands would not let them. Accordingly, the Center is now developing a plan to work with men and improve their attitudes. They are also interested in focusing on children, since that is often where problems start.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Zhanna Saralaeva, Director of the Jalal-Abad Women's Resource Center, and activists from the center, Jalal-Abad, March 28, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Chynara Zhusupova, MO "Aris" and the member of the Women Can Do It! Network, March 28, 2008, Jalal-Abad.

Another way for the Center to reach out to women is by working with college students who study in Jalal-Abad. Many of the students are rural women who come to the city for five years and then return to their villages. On the Day of Open Doors, the Center sent the students to meet with prominent local women who could serve as role models. After the visits, the students were asked to write essays about their experiences. Some were interested in following these leaders; while others were not. This project is repeated every year on April 24. In another program involving young people, the center organized students to assist street children. The experience of organizing the support helps the students gain a taste for volunteering and organizational work to do similar things in the future on their own.

The Jalal-Abad Resource Center has become part of the city's environment. "After ten years, people accept us for what we are. We have become a normal part of society," according to Director Zhanna Saralaeva.

Other centers have become involved in a variety of activities. In Talas, the local center worked with the ecological group BIOM to install solar water heaters in a local birthing house. The solar power is extremely helpful because often businesses and residences in Kyrgyzstan face power shutoffs.

The Women Can Do It! network is one of the only organizations that reaches out deep into Kyrgyzstan's regions. The local branch of the UNDP considers it an important key partner.<sup>20</sup> UNDP staff describe AST as one of the only groups that has the capacity to work at the grassroots level across the country. The UNDP also praises ODIHR for providing institutional support for the network. Many international funders only provide project support, making it extremely difficult for NGOs to function effectively.

#### INCREASING THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

At the national level, ODIHR and AST have worked to increase the representation of women in politics by lobbying the adoption of a special presidential representative on gender issues and supporting that office once it was created. During the two years that the office was in existence, it helped to ensure that Kyrgyzstan remained committed to secular government and fought attempts to criminalize abortion and decriminalize polygamy and bride kidnapping. ODIHR and AST also worked in coordination with the special representative to put in place special measures designed to increase the representation of women in the parliament. This measure was successful, leading to the election of a new parliament in December 2007 with 27 percent women.

#### SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT ON GENDER ISSUES

The February 2005 parliamentary elections produced no women parliamentarians, delivering a strong shock to the country's women's movement. The previous parliament

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Nurgul Asylbekova, UNDP Country Programme Gender Coordinator, April 2, 2008.

had 6.7 percent women. The women's groups considered it necessary to have female representation in the parliament in order to ensure high quality legislation addressing women's issues. The lack of women in parliament presented the danger that the deputies would adopt new laws without taking into account their impact on both sexes.

To prevent such a situation, ACT experts, along with other women's NGOs, met with President Bakiev in May 2005. During the discussion, ACT proposed the creation of the post of Special Representative of the President on gender development to the parliament (Jogorku Kenesh). Bakiev accepted the proposal as a good one and quickly set up the position and appointed Anara Niazova, a former NGO activist, to carry out these duties.

During the two years that the office existed, the special representative worked to introduce legislation supporting women's causes and provided gender analysis of bills being considered in parliament.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the Special Representative concentrated her attention on several issues of concern. The preamble of the January 15, 2007, Constitution did not include a clause requiring that the state be secular. Likewise, Kyrgyzstan's Ombudsman sought to criminalize abortion in some circumstances and the Ministry of Justice and the Ombudsman proposed bills decriminalizing polygamy and bride kidnapping. Reactionary members of society and some Islamic groups provided strong support for these causes. However, the women's movement, in coordination with the Special Representative, was able to include an affirmation of Kyrgyzstan's secular status in the constitution adopted in October 2007 and rebuffed the efforts to criminalize abortion and decriminalize polygamy and bride kidnapping. Through these efforts, the special representative and activist groups prevented Kyrgyzstan's society from moving backwards in its gender relations and helped preserve rights for the country's women.

Unfortunately, now the situation is growing more complicated and the ODIHR Gender Program and AST will have to work harder to have a direct impact on policy. The president abolished the post of special representative in 2007, when Kyrgyzstan instituted gender quotas that would guarantee women representation in the parliament. However, Niyazova now serves as a deputy to the president's representative to the parliament. Unfortunately, she has little staff support and therefore her influence is limited. Moreover, gender is now only one of many issues that Niyazova handles, so it does not play as prominent a role as it should.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the women's movement is losing ground in terms of the institutional structure within the executive branch.

To make up for these setbacks, Niyazova stressed the importance of strong ties with NGOs for her work.<sup>23</sup> When she is planning her activities, she starts with

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Anara N. Niyazova, Deputy Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, March 27, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Rozetta Aitmatova and Munara Beknazarova, Women's Support Center, Bishkek, April 2, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Anara N. Niyazova, Deputy Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, March 27, 2008.

discussions with AST, Soros-funded organizations, the OSCE, and the Center for Gender Research, among others. The women's NGOs are the main drivers of this work and through Niyazova can influence state policy. Kyrgyzstan's three latest constitutions have all declared equal rights for men and women. These constitutional clauses make it easier to insert gender issues into other legislation and helped facilitate the adoption of the quotas.

ODIHR and AST's efforts to revive an executive branch office devoted to gender rights are extremely important because, while Kyrgyzstan has a strong framework of rights, few are actually implemented. For example, the president's National Council on Women, Families, and Gender Equality is not part of the state structure and has no mechanism to implement its recommendations. The Council was established in 2001 and replaced the government's National Commission on Women's Issues. In 2007, the Council's Secretariat was abolished and its functions were transferred to the combined Economic and Social Policy Department of the Presidential Administration. Previously, the office for gender equality was a separate part of the presidential administration. Now it is just one division within the combined Economic and Social Policy Department. Within this department, economic issues naturally take priority and gender issues have much less importance. Accordingly, women's issues find little support within the presidential administration.<sup>24</sup>

Parliament adopted a new version of the law on gender equality at the beginning of June 2008. The law more fully describes mechanisms for guaranteeing gender equality and the responsible state organs; expanded the spectrum of special measures, and described unacceptable forms of discrimination, including hidden discrimination. This new law is the only one that had been examined in public hearings in all regions of Kyrgyzstan thanks to the support of AST and the Women Can Do It! network.<sup>25</sup> More than 700 people participated in the discussions.

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION TO INCREASE FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

With no women in the parliament after the February 2005 elections and extensive pressure to pass policies inimical to women's interests, AST and its colleagues recognized the strong need to adopt temporary special measures aimed at increasing the presence of women in the parliament. Kyrgyzstan's decision to reform its electoral system, switching after the 2005 elections from single-member district elections to pure proportional representation, created an opportunity to adopt such measures. International experience has shown that proportional representation is more likely to increase the number of women representatives in parliament than single-member districts. In any given district, a man is more likely to win election, but when voters are presented with a list of men and women, the outcome will more likely be a greater

<sup>24</sup> Interview with ACT members, Bishkek, March 26, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Administratsiya Prezidenta Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki, *Godovoi otchet o deyatel'nosti spetsial'nogo predstavatelya Prezidenta Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki v Zhogorku Keneshe po voprosam gendernogo razvitiya*, Bishkek: UNDP, 2006, p. 7.

number of women representatives. However, without clear quotas, in Kyrgyzstan's conditions, such results would not be automatic. The top positions on the party lists would naturally be occupied by powerful party insiders who were uniformly men. Spots lower down were frequently provided to individuals with high personal wealth, and therefore were not typically available to women. Kyrgyzstan has an international obligation to take affirmative action to accelerate progress toward the establishment of equality between men and women since it ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997.<sup>26</sup> Efforts of the special representative and the lobbying of public organizations led to the insertion of the following clause into the 2007 constitution: "In the Kyrgyz Republic, men and women have equal freedoms and rights, as well as equal opportunities for their implementation."

Once the proportional representation electoral system was in place, AST and its allies began advocating for the adoption of quotas to ensure that women figured among the candidates included on party lists running for parliament. Working with the special representative, a special gender-focused study group was able to promote the inclusion of Bolot Malybaev and Alexander Orkhov into the group that was then writing Kyrgyzstan's electoral law. This study group had examined the experience of 81 countries that have used quotas in a temporary way to increase the number of women in parliament. Sixty-one of these countries used voluntary systems in which the parties gave one in two or three spots to women. However, the group deemed that such a voluntary system would not work in Kyrgyzstan because the level of awareness and readiness for such gender equality among political party leaders was not high enough. Only one party (Moya strana) of the 104 registered parties had used such practices in the past. More suitable for Kyrgyzstan were the mandatory electoral quotas used in 32 countries. Actually booking seats in parliament for women, as practiced in 14 countries, was considered undemocratic and therefore inappropriate.

Once AST and its allies decided on introducing quotas for the party lists, they ran into stiff resistance from politicians, MPs, and other decision-makers who had little interest in this type of affirmative action since it would upset the status quo. The activists decided that the best way to influence the key decision-makers would be bringing the problem to the attention of the public through the media. However, journalists seeking the largest possible audience were not interested in the usual kind of education programs about gender themes. Thus, it was necessary to depart from the traditional methods and concentrate on carrying out a media campaign that would attract voter interest.

This campaign employed a wide number of unconventional methods to promote the gender quotas. On March 8, 2007, International Women's Day, the women's groups stood in front of the parliament and gave flowers to the male deputies as they entered the building. This action gained wide media coverage since typically women receive

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm>

flowers on March 8. The need to give the flowers to men pointed up the absurdity of having a parliament with no women. Other events included picketing at the parliament with the slogans “Polygamy – No! Secular Kyrgyzstan – Yes!” and an action calling for moms in politics on Protection of Children Day, June 1. The “Zebra” action helped to popularize the concept that every third candidate on the party lists would be a woman.

The Women’s Resources Centers in the regions also played a major role in this process. For example, the Jalal-Abad women’s group organized many meetings in support of introducing the quotas.<sup>27</sup>

Thanks to these innovative and unusual campaigns, the media began to devote space to the themes of women’s political participation and the contribution of women to the development of society, emphasizing the need for quotas. Articles appeared in *Slovo Kyrgystana*, *Kyrgyz Tuusu*, MSN, *Vecherniy Bishkek*, *De facto*, some oblast and raion newspapers, and the Internet sites AKIpress, 24-kg, Fergana.ru, and Tazar. The popular television shows Maidan, Political Bureau (5<sup>th</sup> Channel), Point of View (NTS), and Open Kyrgyzstan (GTRK) also covered this topic.

During parliamentary hearings to discuss the special electoral measures, 16 of 18 speakers supported the quotas. The “Women Can Do It!” network mobilized citizens who inundated members of parliament with letters, telegrams, and faxes. Simultaneously, members of the working group met with key members of the parliamentary committees, members of the presidential administration, and other policy makers. AST played an active role in the Steering Committee of the NGO Forum of Kyrgyzstan and helped move the women’s issue to a top priority of the entire NGO movement.

Finally, on September 5, 2007, the steering committee, including AST representatives, met with President Bakiev and informed him about the third sector’s consensus that it was necessary to implement special measures to support the election of women. The result was the inclusion of gender quotas in the electoral code. The social pressure was important to influence the policy makers, but it took a decision from Bakiev to make the quotas actually happen.<sup>28</sup> In any case, the women benefited from the highly centralized political system in which the top leader was willing to give them some support. The text of the law now reads: “When forming the list of candidates, the political party is obliged to take into account representation of no more than 70 percent of persons of the same gender, thus a difference of sequence in the lists of candidates of women and men who have been put forward by political parties should not exceed three positions.”

Ultimately as a result of the new requirement, five of the leading parties included 10 of the women from the network and its partners on their lists. In the December 16, 2007 snap parliamentary elections, 24 women were elected to the 90 seat parliament

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Zhanna Saralaeva, Director of the Jalal-Abad Women’s Resource Center, and activists from the center, Jalal-Abad, March 28, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Cholpon G. Abdullaeva, Member of Parliament, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Youth, Gender Policy, Physical Culture, and Sport, March 27, 2008.

(27 percent), including 19 from the Ak Jol party of power, 3 from the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, and 2 from the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. Cholpon Baekova was elected vice-speaker of the parliament and 5 of the 12 committees have women among their top leaders, including a number of committees which in the past were considered men's domains. Leila Sydykova is chairperson of the Committee on defense, security, law and order, and judicial and legal reform.

The new women parliamentarians are not popular in all constituencies. One woman journalist working for a relatively free on-line news agency in Jalal-Abad said that the women deputies were not close to the people who had elected them. She claimed that the use of party lists simply allowed party leaders to include the women that they wanted in parliament. Those who pay more money are placed higher on the list and real community organizers are at the end of the lists. The women in the parliament from the party in power were not well respected in society. This woman expressed hope that the next elections would put real women organizers in the parliament.

Even with 24 women in the parliament, little has changed in the overall political situation. As the people who care about gender issues constantly repeat: "Now we must move from quantity to quality." Many of these women deputies are doctors and teachers, but were not active in the gender movement. They were not gender sensitive or aware of gender issues.

The new female deputies are now becoming interested in gender issues and are seeking advice from the women's NGOs. AST is now working with an alliance of other groups to train the new members in gender issues. This is important work that should be continued in the future (as discussed in the recommendations below).

#### DEVELOPING GENDER EXPERTISE

In addition to ensuring that women are represented in Kyrgyzstan's decision-making processes, ODIHR and AST are working to improve the quality of legislation that the country's leaders adopt. A presidential decree currently requires that legislation pass through gender, anti-corruption, ecological, and legal expertise and analysis. This decree is very important for the women's movement because it opens the door for women activists to provide advice to the lawmakers.

AST and approximately 20 groups are involved in the process of providing legal gender expertise. They offer advice on laws, setting up standards to be incorporated in legislation, and training staff in the parliament and the Justice Department. Many of the members of parliament are not lawyers, so they appreciate the advice.<sup>29</sup> For good and effective legislation to be adopted, it is necessary to create the proper environment for it. The activity of the NGOs is creating this environment, according to Niyazova.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Anara N. Niyazova, Deputy Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, March 27, 2008.



Nevertheless, despite the work of the groups, there is little gender expertise throughout the government and legislature. The quality of bills and the laws adopted by parliament is often very low. While parliamentary staff checks to be sure bills do not violate the constitution or other laws, they often do little more. Frequently, there are no competent people who can figure out how much a bill will actually cost if it is adopted as a law and implemented. This problem exists for all topics and many current staff members would benefit from additional training.

Currently all important decisions are made in Bishkek and most of the country's expertise is concentrated in the capital.<sup>30</sup> Regional experts can help with the implementation of laws in specific districts of the country, but they have little influence over actual decision-making. For example, local governments receive their budgets from Bishkek and have little influence over how money is spent. Only the Bishkek city council has the ability to elaborate and approve its own budget.

Given this situation, there are lots of opportunities for AST and other women's organizations to provide gender trainings for law makers in Bishkek and throughout the rest of the country. This kind of work will have a strong payoff since it will directly influence the types of laws being adopted.

#### USING MEDIA TO PROMOTE GENDER GOALS

ODIHR and AST are using innovative new media techniques to draw the attention of society to the problems of women. They no longer rely on traditional roundtable discussions or journalist trainings to attract popular interest in the gender cause. Rather, drawing on the advice of Estonian media experts Marek Reinaas and Henry Kasper, they have started to develop unconventional approaches that attract the attention of journalists and the public, thereby creating public demand and support for gender equality.

The media in Kyrgyzstan frequently portray women in a negative light. The most important outlet is the State Television and Radio Company (GTRK). Its television network is the only one that reaches all parts of the country and broadcasts primarily in the Kyrgyz language, taking into account local specifics. It was the country's most popular source of information in 2007. Currently the leadership of this television network promotes a sexist policy of broadcasting since there are almost no shows devoted to women's issues.<sup>31</sup> The image of women usually presented is that of a homemaker. In addition, shows like Kolomto/Ochag promote traditional and radical religious values on gender-related issues. For these reasons, the Unified Action Platform of Women's organizations and the National Action Plan for achieving gender equality for 2007-2010 focus on the promotion of gender equality on this network as a key factor of success.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Oleg Semenenko, Human Dimension Officer, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Centre in Bishkek, March 27, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Gulnara Ibraeva, Director, Agency for Social Technologies, Bishkek, April 2, 2008.

To counter these negative trends in the media, ODIHR, AST and their allies are working on innovative ways to encourage the media to portray in effective visual forms the contribution of women to the development of society and the state. At first, AST tried to lure journalists to traditional seminars, where gender experts would sit around a table and discuss gender issues. In the early part of the decade, the journalists would come to these events and photograph the people sitting around the table. Now there are lots of round table discussions and it is hard to attract journalists to them because they understand that readers have little interest in such material.

AST has also worked directly with a variety of journalists, providing them with training on how to write about gender issues. Frequently, participants in such training sessions would promise to cover gender topics and then would do nothing. Sometimes they would write an article, but only if they were somehow paid to do so. Typically, the journalists who attended such sessions only ranked in the second or third tier of their profession. The stars were writing about politics, celebrities, and other topics that grab headlines. Gender topics did not fall into this category.

The Estonian experts stressed that it was necessary to do things that would attract journalists. In that case, the media would work for the NGO. People would start to pay attention to the group's actions because it was doing something unconventional. When AST held the innovative March 8 event to distribute flowers to male members of parliament, prominent and authoritative journalists started to cover gender-related activities. TV broadcasters have little interest in showing experts speaking at a roundtable, but they will show unconventional public actions taking place in front of the parliament building. After coverage of the March 8 event was broadcast, people talked about it on the bus during their daily commute. Gender issues started to enter their consciousness in a more direct way than traditional methods could achieve. The innovative gender approaches are helping people think in new ways about the problems in their lives.

As part of its larger media strategy, during October 2007 and March 2008, AST helped organize special television broadcasts of a show called *Kypchytkych* on the country's main television network and the establishment of a gender-related newspaper column (*Nezhenskaya tema*) in *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, a Russian-language newspaper. These broadcasts and articles have dealt with the most pressing gender topics such as bride kidnapping, women in politics, relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, education, and fatherhood. These substantive media efforts provide useful content for viewers and readers after the innovative public events arouse greater interest.

## **5. Difficulties/challenges in achieving the results**

As noted above, Kyrgyzstan does not present an easy atmosphere for promoting the idea of gender equality. To achieve the significant successes as a result of using innovative strategies of lobbying, preparing the necessary change actors (creating and strengthening the women's network), and the realization of long-term and systematic

activities, AST and ODIHR had to overcome patriarchal elements in society, which are constantly growing under the influence of Islamic influence.

Political instability, the transition of authorities, and an inability to accurately predict the development of the political situation in the country complicated the work of AST. However, by reacting quickly and using the particular features of the situation (such as the failure of a single woman to win election to the parliament), AST gained additional resources and the ability to increase its lobbying.

Nevertheless, the rejection of the democratic gains, the growing authoritarianism and the simultaneous worsening of conditions for the work of NGOs create great difficulties at the current stage. The centralization of power produces mixed results for the women's movement. If women's groups can win the support of the president, he can issue decrees in support of women's causes. In some cases, of course, the actual implementation of these decrees is less than optimal because the people carrying them out are not competent in gender issues.<sup>32</sup> According to the October 2007 constitution, the president appoints regional leaders. Since these jobs are high paying, they almost all go to men. Of the eight governors, there is not one woman. Overall, the centralization of power reduces the power of local government and therefore reduces the ability of women to influence important issues at the local level. Under the previous system, in which regional leaders were directly elected by their constituents, women were able to exert more leverage over them because they had a stronger voice in the electoral process.

Despite these difficulties, there are examples of women in important positions in Kyrgyzstan's politics<sup>33</sup>, nevertheless, it is generally hard for women to enter the political sphere.

To overcome these difficulties, there must be an extensive consolidation of the women's movement, an expansion of its social base, an increase in the number of women's supporters working in civil service and a strengthening of the cooperation with the state apparatus in resolving various gender issues.

## 6. Results and impact in Kyrgyzstan

The ODIHR and AST programs in Kyrgyzstan have had a powerful impact on society. They have raised overall awareness of gender issues and created greater demand for gender equality, changed key state structures, helped increase the representation of women in national and regional parliaments, built civil society capacity, helped secure the passage of key legislation and official acts that support the gender cause (such as the national plan for the achievement of gender equality), developed local expertise,

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Olga Filippova, Expert, Economic and Social Policy Department, Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, March 27, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Women have served as state procurator, finance minister, minister of education, ambassador to the US and Canada, foreign minister, Supreme Court chair, editor of *Respublika* newspaper, head of the academy of sciences, and other prominent posts.

launched efforts to improve the portrayal of women in the media, and provided a model for neighboring countries. Since these achievements dramatically improved the conditions in Kyrgyzstan from when the program began, as described by the first section of this report, they provide evidence that the ODIHR Gender Program has made sustainable changes in Kyrgyzstan.

The impact of the ODIHR/AST program is demonstrated in the following areas:

**Increased overall awareness of gender issues in society.** Gender issues have started to become a topic of conversation among members of Kyrgyz society and there is now greater demand for gender equality. The ODIHR/AST effort has contributed to this new trend, but it is just one component in a much larger process. The mentality of many people has changed greatly in recent years.<sup>34</sup> In the past, people were reticent to talk about gender issues, such as bride kidnapping. Now such conversations are becoming more acceptable. For example, people are starting to ask questions about why men should be allowed to kidnap women against their will, whereas they usually took such practices for granted in the past.<sup>35</sup>

Even as this progress is being made, changes in society are coming slowly and there are contradictory trends. While some groups are making progress, others are slipping back into traditionalism. On one hand, it is possible to argue that women are making more decisions. Society has more confidence in women to solve problems. Women in villages are starting to become more active. On the other, however, frequently everything depends on the political will of the leadership. Many leaders are opposed to the word “gender.” They see it as an attempt by women to take power. For many women in the regions, the political situation remains largely unchanged. Women have a long way to go in overturning such traditional attitudes.

**Established state structures devoted to gender equality.** AST and its partners have built strong ties to promote gender equality in linking the state and civil society at both the national and regional levels. Helping to establish the office of the special representative of the president to the parliament for gender issues and then working with Anara Niyazova, who held this position, provided the women’s movement with the opportunity to influence policy making at the highest levels. The result of this influence was the introduction of special measures for increasing female representation in the parliament and ensuring that gender issues were considered for important legislation.

Arranging these various campaigns, including lobbying in support of the affirmative action quotas, helped consolidate the women's movement and make it into a real force, which can ensure that politicians take its opinions into account. Even in the

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Saltanat N. Barakanova, Director, The Migration Fund under the State Committee for Migration and Employment of the Kyrgyz Republic, March 27, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Medina D. Aitieva, Instructor, Sociology Department, American University of Central Asia, April 2, 2008.

increasingly authoritarian conditions of today's Kyrgyzstan, officials in the presidential administration, members of parliament, regional, and city officials all confirmed that they benefit strongly from the work of AST and the network. Moreover, thanks to the authority and recognition of the Women's network locally, the interests of women and gender issues are integrated into the local political agenda.

**Helped increase the representation of women in politics.** Due to the temporary affirmative action gender quotas in the electoral law, the representation of women in parliament grew from 0 to 27 percent following the December 2007 elections. Kyrgyzstan now belongs to the category of countries where progress in the field of political representation of women is advancing most quickly, according to the Inter-parliamentary Union.<sup>36</sup> ODIHR and AST, in alliance with the special presidential representative and a coalition of activist women's groups, deserve some of the credit for these successes since they were able to secure the adoption of quotas assuring women a place in the parliament.

Among the women elected to parliament were leaders like Galina Kulikova. She has been active in the women's movement for ten years and has close ties with many of the NGOs working in this area. Her office continues to maintain close relations with AST and its allies and provides a channel for AST to influence the adoption of laws that support women's causes. Kulikova was formerly a leader in the Moya strana party, but now that party has joined the Ak Jol ruling party. A similarly sympathetic deputy is Gul'zhamal Sultanalieva, who represents the Communist Party. She has extensive experience working on gender and related issues at the grassroots level in Naryn. Many of the other female deputies were not previously members of the women's movement and therefore will need to be encouraged to address women's issues.

The appearance of a significant number of women in parliament stimulated the creation for the first time of a high profile Committee on Youth, Gender Policy, Physical Culture and Sport, which today plays a key role in forming the legal basis for the state policy on gender equality. Other committees and the parliamentary staff are responsible for conducting gender expertise of the legislation and monitoring on behalf of the parliament the implementation of the gender legislation and international obligations.<sup>37</sup>

Currently women head Kyrgyzstan's Constitutional and Supreme Courts. Women's representation in the executive branch is growing: today five of Kyrgyzstan's ministers are women. The women hold not only typical "women's" posts such as the minister of education and science, labor and social development, but also the minister of finance, chair of the State Committee on Migration and Employment, and even a deputy

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Parliamentary resolution from 18 January 2008 N. 75-IV on the confirmation of Standards for conducting specific types of expertise of bills in Kyrgyzstan's parliament and Law "On the order for carrying out monitoring functions of Kyrgyzstan's parliament" from 13 August 2004, no. 121, which was updated on 31 July 2007.

prime minister's post. Overall, women hold 17 percent of the higher administrative posts in the civil service.<sup>38</sup>

Activities of the network at the regional level have also contributed to positive outcomes. Results of elections to local representative bodies in October 2004 produced an increase in the proportion of female deputies to 19.4 percent of the total number of local deputies. This figure marks a strong improvement since the representation of women in these bodies was 14 percent after the 2000 elections.

**Expanded civil society capacity.** The establishment of AST created a new generation of women's groups in Kyrgyzstan. Whereas many of the previous groups had been part of the Soviet establishment, AST brings together innovative scholar/activists who can take advantage of new media techniques to win much greater popular support for the gender cause.

AST and ODIHR have set up a new network of women that reaches across the country and into the most remote rural areas. The Women Can Do It! network, with its eight resource centers, is now a brand name. It involves many people and is highly visible in social, party, and state structures.

Likewise ODIHR and AST have transferred new skills to NGO members that make this work possible. In particular, members of the Network have acquired the ability to carry out a variety of research and gender monitoring exercises allowing them to examine electoral campaigns, the social and economic situation in the regions, and mass-media products. Additionally, democratic principles of intra-network interaction and horizontal communications have been established, fostering the development of stable civil society organizations moving forward.

**Helped win the adoption of pro-women legislation.** ACT and the women's network have helped secure the adoption of numerous pieces of legislation that promote the cause of gender equality. The Constitution now includes separate articles, guaranteeing the equal rights and opportunities of men and women. Kyrgyzstan adopted a National Action Plan for achieving gender equality 2002-6 and a second plan for the period 2007-2010.<sup>39</sup> ACT and the women's network helped shape the progressive law addressing problem of domestic violence that Kyrgyzstan adopted in 2003. Additionally, at the behest of the women's movement, on March 22, 2006, President Bakiyev signed a decree seeking greater gender parity in the government by ensuring that at least 30 percent female representation in central and local government decision-making bodies.

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<sup>38</sup> According to Kyrgyzstan's Agency on the affairs of state service. Results of the research "Gender Analysis in the Sphere of Government Service" conducted in the framework of the "Democratic Management" project sponsored by the presidential administration, the government, and the UNDP, with the support of the Swedish Agency for International Development through its "Increasing the role of women in the civil service and politics" program, Bishkek, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> *Natsional'nyi sovet po voprosam zhenshchin, sem'I I gendernomu razvitiyu pri prezidente kyrgyzskoi respubliky, Natsional'nyi plan deistvii po dostizheniyu gendernogo ravenstva v Kyrgyzskoi respublike na 2002-2006 gody*, Bishkek: UNDP, 2002.

The groups ensured the retention of Kyrgyzstan's status as a secular country in the constitution, blocked efforts to legalize polygamy and bride kidnapping, and worked to ensure that abortions remained legal.

Of course the adoption of legislation or other official acts does not always change the situation on the ground. In the case of domestic violence, unfortunately, law enforcement and government officials have not incorporated the law into their everyday duties.<sup>40</sup> The national action plan for 2002-6 was largely unfulfilled.<sup>41</sup> There were no mechanisms for implementing this plan, nor were there sufficient budgetary resources. The performance criteria were extremely formal.<sup>42</sup> The second plan for the period 2007-10 is considerably shorter than the first and has many fewer activities. However, in contrast to the first plan, the second is tied to the larger national development plan and therefore may produce more practical results. Activists recognized these limitations and therefore are continuing to focus efforts on carrying out practical actions.

**Developed local expertise.** The ODIHR Gender Program developed the expertise of AST to work in a variety of areas through its long-term partnership with the organization. Additionally, it brought in a variety of international experts that provided it with practical advice on topics ranging from developing a media strategy to building networks in rural parts of the country.

**Reshaping the media environment.** With the help of media experts supplied by ODIHR, AST and its allies have started to reshape the popular conception of gender issues. While in the past, such topics were of little relevance outside of small circles, AST has found ways to interject them into the broader social discourse by engaging in innovative public actions that attract great media interest.

**Serving as a model for groups abroad.** The experience of Kyrgyzstan's women's network serves as a positive model both inside the republic and abroad. Women's groups in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine have benefitted from AST expert capacity and the experience of its network. In particular, women's groups in these countries have begun to adopt some of the innovative media techniques pioneered by the Kyrgyz.

## 7. Recommendations

The foregoing analysis leads to a number of recommendations for improving and extending the work of the ODIHR gender program and AST moving forward. These recommendations can be grouped into the following categories: assisting the new female members of parliament, continuing work to increase the proportion of women

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<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch, pp. 19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch, pp. 7-8.

<sup>42</sup> For an analysis of the implementation of the first plan, see *Natsional'nyi plan deistvii po dostizheniyu gendernogo raventva v Kyrgyzskoi respublike na 2007-2010 gody*, Bishkek, no date.

elected to public office, expanding media work, and integrating the Gender Program's successful work in other countries into its Kyrgyz program.

**Assist the new female members of parliament.** The December 2007 elections raised the number of women in Kyrgyzstan's parliament from zero to 24. The presence of women in the parliament is a big gain, but one that also poses several risks. Many members of society now look critically at the role these female deputies are playing. If the new female MPs do not perform well, the quotas ensuring female representation could be removed in the next reform of the electoral system. Therefore, it is necessary to show society the concrete benefits of these parliamentarians' work. Many of the new female deputies were not active in Kyrgyzstan's women's movement and are not aware of gender issues. Having helped secure a female presence in parliament, the ODIHR and AST must continue providing support to the new members of parliament.

AST and other groups have taken the first steps in working with the new women-parliamentarians by establishing the Women's Legislative Initiative Alliance, a coalition of members of parliament and NGOs that was launched on March 7, 2008. This group is working on developing procedures for providing gender expertise of bills; implementing the new Law on gender equality; having the parliament monitor the observance of the 30 gender indicators included in the Country Development Strategy; ensuring that the government is in compliance with international and national obligations; and allocating and monitoring planned budgetary funds for the implementation of the National Action Plan for achievement of gender equality for 2007-2010. All of these tasks will take considerable time and resources.

One potential downside to these efforts is that the women members of parliament are working within an increasingly authoritarian political system. As insiders, they may be blamed for the failings of the system and the problems that it creates. However, the activists believe that it is important that people see that women are involved in the process of trying to improve the situation.

**Continue work to increase the proportion of women in public office at the regional level.** In 2000, women won 14 percent of the seats in regional legislatures. In 2004, they raised this proportion to over 19 percent. Among the members of the network, there is great demand to continue training female candidates at the local level to ensure greater representation of women in regional legislatures.<sup>43</sup> This effort will be vital to the network's efforts to continue building its relationship with state authorities across Kyrgyzstan's regions.

**Expand media work.** To support the existing female legislators and stimulate the election of more, it is vital that ODIHR and AST work hard to generate public demand for greater gender equality through an innovative media campaign. If the women in

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Chynara Zhusupova, MO "Aris" and the member of the Women Can Do It! Network, March 28, 2008, Jalal-Abad.



parliament are to make advances for gender causes, they will need to have a strongly supportive public environment.

In creating such an environment, a key lesson learned from past work is that one unusual action gets more attention than 10 academic roundtable discussions. Good results come from identifying themes and actions that will arouse the most popular interest and therefore gain widespread media attention.

**Integrate ODIHR's successful experience from other countries in Kyrgyzstan.** The ODIHR Gender Program has run successful programs in the areas of domestic violence in Azerbaijan and Georgia and education in Armenia. ODIHR should try to use these programs as models for developing similar programs in Kyrgyzstan. Likewise, ODIHR should continue its practice of trying to export the positive Kyrgyz experience to other countries.

## AZERBAIJAN

### *Executive Summary*

In Azerbaijan, the ODIHR Gender Program has focused on combating domestic violence and building a regional women's network. The program has set up an innovative relationship with the Azerbaijani police academy that trains new recruits and seasoned officers in techniques for addressing domestic violence. ODIHR brought the full range of its tools to bear, providing assistance at the local, national, and international level through limited financial support, opening doors to important officials inside Azerbaijan to its local partner, and providing contacts to gender experts and activists in other countries. ODIHR's work has been stable over the long term.

The program has produced several measureable results. The state and civil society work better together in fighting domestic violence than ever before. The program has enhanced the capacity of the local NGO and the state, giving them resources to achieve self-defined goals that are in line with the Gender Program objectives. Victims of domestic violence are now starting to turn to the Azerbaijani police with greater frequency. The program has enhanced expertise as the police themselves are now working to develop their own training courses, going far beyond the initial sessions sponsored by ODIHR. Likewise, the police are improving the quality of the data that they gather about domestic violence so that they have a better picture of the problem. Additionally, the program has created the possibility for new legislation since the police are now actively engaged in preparing a law on domestic violence that will clearly spell out their role in addressing the problem. The ODIHR/Symmetry program is likely to be sustainable in the long term since the police academy will continue training cadets and officers on domestic violence using their own resources and are working on the possibility of opening crisis intervention centers.

The Regional Women's Network has also made a contribution. So far, the network has created opportunities for women to practice mutual support and collectively discuss common problems. The various regional branches have also built up valuable networking capacity with their local administrations and other groups. This network will play a role in helping to expand the efforts to combat domestic violence in the regions outside Baku.

### *Main Report*

#### **1. Background for the ODIHR program**

The following section describes the overall context in Azerbaijan in 2000 (with more recent information added in some places to show the trend line). Section 6 of this report shows the impact of the ODIHR Gender Program in the area of domestic violence, where it concentrated most of its effort.

## GENERAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

Azerbaijan presents a difficult operating environment for ODIHR's Gender Program because of the increasingly authoritarian regime. The Azerbaijani government strictly limits freedom in the political sphere and power is concentrated in the hands of a small elite that is not accountable to the population. The current president took over the country upon the death of his father Heidar Aliyev, who passed away in 2003. Azerbaijan's leaders currently benefit from a massive influx of wealth thanks to the development of the country's oil deposits and the recent construction of pipelines carrying these resources directly to rich European customers. The government quashes most opposition party activity and controls most media content.

Within this context, there is often an antagonistic relationship between the authorities and NGOs in Azerbaijan. State officials habitually view NGOs as part of the political opposition and, in the worst case, part of a Western-financed effort to overthrow the government. The officials often do not trust any group that they did not control directly.

## CULTURAL CONTEXT REGARDING GENDER ISSUES

Society and family life place enormous limitations on what women can do, especially in the regions beyond the capital Baku. Women typically have difficulty finding jobs at the top of the business sector. In particular, there are few women at high levels in the oil industry, which generates most of Azerbaijan's income. Now there are about 15,000 women working in the industry, down approximately 6,000 over the last ten years, and the vast majority of these are at the middle and lower levels.<sup>44</sup> Women are more likely to be unemployed than men and have more difficulty gaining access to credit. Women likewise are largely cut off from private property, since men own 90 percent of the assets in the country.

The situation does not look positive moving forward because fewer females are receiving a complete education and illiteracy levels are rising. In some cases girls are not allowed to finish their education because their labor is needed to support their family or their parents require them to marry at a young age. The problem is particularly significant in rural areas and in southern parts of the country which are heavily influenced by their proximity to Iran. Data from the State Statistics Committee for 2004/2005 show that girls made up 47.8 percent of students in general education schools, while boys were 52.2 percent.<sup>45</sup> Fewer women are going to university. Men now make up 53 percent of the students in higher education.

A growing problem is in the field of women's health. The use of selective abortions by families who would prefer a son over a daughter is on the rise. Birth rates

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Solmaz Gadzhieva, President, Women Oil Workers, April 26, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Symmetry and Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation, *CEDAW: Alternative Report, Azerbaijan 2001-2005*, p. 50.

in recent years show a boy:girl ratio of 53:47.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, official figures severely underreport the incidence of child mortality in the country. The government figures are much lower than those gathered by UNICEF. Public officials likely have reason to hide the truth since some of the deaths may have been the fault of hospitals providing inadequate care for the mothers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women can be reluctant to visit a doctor in the absence of a male family member. If a male escort is not available, the woman may simply not seek the care. They may also fail to seek aid in cases that male family members deem shameful – such as domestic violence, sexually-transmitted diseases, or for complications in pregnancy.<sup>47</sup>

A significant obstacle for the development of gender initiatives is the prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes, strict standards of socially-acceptable behavior for both sexes, a great fear of violating public opinion, and the small number of international organizations and programs working to support the idea of gender equality. In these conditions, the work of gender activists demands that they be bold and prepared to endure criticism from society. In most regions, society looks extremely negatively on women visiting cafés or restaurants without male escorts. That such evenings are possible in some regions (in Gakh, for example, women can go out in large groups made up exclusively of women) is viewed as a great achievement of emancipation and a sign of “civilization,” and “Europeanization.”

Some of the problems come from the “frozen conflict” with Armenia over the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, which comprises 20 percent of Azerbaijan’s internationally-recognized territory. The social consequences of the war have been immense, with close to 800,000 refugees and internally displaced persons, about 10 percent of Azerbaijan’s population, fleeing the fighting. These refugees place a huge strain on the country’s social programs and the problems of female refugees tend to be more acute than those facing other members of society.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence aroused the greatest concern among women activists. In 2000, victims of such violence typically were afraid to seek aid beyond the confines of their family and, even if they were interested in outside help, often do not know where to turn. The vast majority did not consider calling the police for help. At that time, the police were reluctant to intervene in what they considered personal matters.

Violence affected 37 percent of the women polled by Symmetry, ODIHR’s partner in Azerbaijan, during the mid-1990s, with 90 percent of attacks taking place in domestic situations. Until recently, however, the topic was taboo in both public and private

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<sup>46</sup> Symmetry and Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation, *CEDAW: Alternative Report, Azerbaijan 2001-2005*, p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Khadija Ismayilova, chief trainer, International Center for Journalists, April 25, 2008.

discussions. There are two deaths or disabling injuries a week as a result of domestic violence.<sup>48</sup>

Azerbaijan has never adopted a law specifically dealing with domestic violence.<sup>49</sup> The State Committee for Family, Women, and Children's Issues prepared a bill to combat and prevent domestic violence, but the parliament has yet to approve it, citing a number of flaws in the text. However, many police representatives and NGO activists have submitted constructive criticism in order to prepare a more acceptable version.

#### POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND KEY GENDER INDICATORS BEFORE THE START OF THE PROJECT

Currently women have little access to political power and are poorly represented in the country's most powerful political offices. Likewise, there are few women in positions of economic power.

The Azerbaijani constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women and there is legislation to ensure these rights in accordance with Azerbaijan's international commitments. For example, in 2006, the parliament adopted a law "On Ensuring Gender Equality." Nevertheless, gender disparities are widespread in Azerbaijani society and the ratification of numerous international accords on this issue has not improved the status of women in the country.

In practice, women play a very small role in Azerbaijan's public life and decision-making processes.<sup>50</sup> This gender disbalance is starkly visible in the composition of the country's top political offices. All of the ministers in Azerbaijani cabinet are men and only three deputy ministers are women. The only woman in the government leads the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children's Issues. All regional governors are currently men. In the parliament elected in 2005, females make up 13.4 percent of the members (15 deputies), down from 40 percent in the 1992 elections.<sup>51</sup> Azerbaijan uses a single-member district electoral system, which usually reduces the chances for women to be elected. Among the more than 2,000 women candidates in 2005, only about 200 were female. Women are likewise poorly represented in other public offices.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING, IN PARTICULAR:

- Availability/absence/potential of the *key state structure* responsible for the issues of improving women's situation and achieving gender equality

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mehriban Zeynalova, Chairman, Temiz dunya Social Union Clean World, April 26, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> S. Alieva, "Byt kak istochnik nasiliya," December 29, 2007, <http://zerkalo.az/rubric.php?id=28664>.

<sup>50</sup> For statistics, see UNDP Azerbaijan, *Azerbaijan Human Development Report 2007: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*, Baku: UNDP, 2007, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Symmetry and Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation, *CEDAW: Alternative Report, Azerbaijan 2001-2005*, p. 41.

In the area of gender in Azerbaijan, the key player within the government is the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children's Issues. This committee was established in February 2006<sup>52</sup> as the successor to the original Committee on Women, which had been set up in 1998. To work effectively with the state on gender issues, ODIHR must have good relations with this committee. However, working exclusively with this committee would prevent ODIHR from taking advantage of the dynamism represented by NGOs like Symmetry. Accordingly, the ODIHR Gender Program tries to strike a difficult balance between the two sides and make sure that they can work together as partners.

- Responsibility of *other state structures*, sectoral ministries and authorities to introduce gender mainstreaming, and also accountability of the *state administration and local self-governments in the regions* and their role in advancing gender equality

In the federal ministries and agencies, there is an official responsible for gender questions, however, these duties are in addition to the official's main work and therefore are unpaid. In the regions, there are no officials who jobs clearly define their responsibility for advancing gender equality goals.

- Availability of *National Action Plans* on achieving gender equality

Azerbaijan adopted a National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for 2007-2011 in 2006.

- Responsibility of *legislative authorities (parliaments)*, their monitoring function in the process of tracking progress in gender equality issues. Availability/absence of special laws on gender equality.

In 2006, the parliament of Azerbaijan adopted a law on "On state guarantees of gender equality" and discussed a "Law on violence" in its first reading. However, the parliament has not created a regular procedure of hearings where the government can present reports explaining how these laws are being implemented.

- Evaluation of the potential of *researchers and gender experts*, including representatives of the academic sector, who provide gender analysis and recommendations for political decision-making and revision of state programs

Overall, the analytical skills and knowledge base of the gender experts we met in Azerbaijan was quite high. The researchers seemed to have a particularly good feel for

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<sup>52</sup> UNDP Azerbaijan, *Azerbaijan Human Development Report 2007: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*, Baku: UNDP, 2007, p. 18.

the problems and concerns of the population. However, they often seemed to have poor, or non-existent, relations with each other and little influence in the halls of power, since there was no one there interested in their work or advice.

- Conditions for *non-governmental organizations and lobbyist groups* to impact the political process

In the face of stiff government repression, civil society is weak in Azerbaijan and offers few opportunities for women to influence policy. There are approximately 2,100 non-governmental organizations in the country, many of which place women's issues at the top of their agendas.<sup>53</sup> However, there is no mechanism for coordinating the work of these organizations, particularly in lobbying issues of common interest. Most NGOs operate in Baku, with considerably less activity in the regions. The women's movement has been getting weaker over time, according to Solmaz Gadzhieva, the head of the NGO Women Oil Workers.<sup>54</sup> She noted that while there is money to address some specific issues, such as human trafficking, the overall situation in general has not improved.

By 2008, the authorities were in the process of changing the way that they worked with NGOs and conditions remained extremely treacherous for the non-governmental organizations. In the beginning of the year, the president set up a special state foundation that would make grants to NGOs. The organization will have one million manat (about \$250,000) to distribute from the 2008 budget.<sup>55</sup> In countries such as Russia, such state foundations are controversial because they are seen as effective ways for the government to control what non-governmental organizations do. Observers in Azerbaijan all agreed that the key question about the foundation would be its criteria for distributing grants. Most observers felt that the foundation would favor funding non-controversial social projects or groups that support the current authorities, while human rights organizations or other groups critical of the regime would be denied access to support.

To receive funding from the new foundation, NGOs will have to reregister with the state. The NGOs have to register in one of eight categories, one of which is for women's groups.<sup>56</sup> (Other categories include ecology, human rights, etc.) There are 29 groups in the gender category. To register in the gender category, however, a group will need to show that it is working with the committee. Observers said that this was an effort by the committee to control all the work that is being done in the gender area. At

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<sup>53</sup> H. Kaan, Nazli, "Azerbaijan," in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2008*,

[http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh\\_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Azerbaijan-final.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Azerbaijan-final.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Solmaz Gadzhieva, President, Women Oil Workers, April 26, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Azay Guliyev, Member of Parliament and president of the National NGO Forum of Azerbaijan, April 24, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> The grant decisions will come from the board of the new foundation. This board includes representatives from the presidential administration, Justice Ministry, Finance Ministry and one representative from each of the NGO categories. Each of the eight categories of NGOs nominates three potential members of the board. From these three, the presidential administration chose one to actually sit on the board. Guliyev also said that experts would be involved in the grant-making process. He expected that 15 grants would be made.

least one NGO has stopped working with the committee because it had decided that the committee is not an “action organization.” While maintaining a critical attitude, however, these activists did point out that now the committee functions much better than it has in the past.

- *Mass media* and tradition of covering gender issues

Media in Azerbaijan currently do a poor job of discussing gender issues in a sensitive manner. The topic of domestic violence only entered the media about two years ago and currently journalists devote very little attention to issues like domestic violence. Media typically only show a few statistics or focus on scandalous stories, usually from a stereotypical point of view, likely to draw wide attention. Often, the media will focus on a few particular cases without really talking about the problem in its larger social context, explaining its overall negative impact on society. An independent television producer we met during the process of conducting the evaluation described the media’s portray of women as “disgraceful.”<sup>57</sup> There is a lot of coverage of women, but it sends all the wrong messages. Often the language used to describe the topic of domestic violence is stigmatizing. The level of professionalism among the journalists is very low. Frequently, the journalists include their own opinions, which often are not helpful in addressing the issues of domestic violence, but nevertheless are influential in society. Most importantly, the stories do not provide any direction for people who would like to take action to address these issues. In particular, the media does a poor job explaining where people can turn for help if they need it.

Making an impression through the media is not always easy. Alena Myasnikova, a journalist for the Russian-language newspaper Zerkalo ([www.zerkalo.az](http://www.zerkalo.az)), has written several investigative articles on the human trafficking industry in Azerbaijan, though with little effect. She claimed that she does not see any difference after the adoption of the law prohibiting trafficking and associated crimes.<sup>58</sup> Thanks to the efforts to combat trafficking, people talk about the subject more frequently, there is a new specialized branch of the police to deal with the problem, more trainings for the police are being held, including sessions on the difference between prostitution and trafficking, and there are more raids aimed at arresting traffickers. However, the brothels are still operating and the ones in Baku are usually staffed with girls from the regions. The conditions for the girls are often worse than in the past. Owners typically pay a bribe so that the authorities will leave them alone. Myasnikova claimed that the government usually ignores newspaper articles on this topic if it thinks that it would not be able to win a slander suit against the author or if filing a case against the paper would simply draw more attention to the issue. “This is good for me [as a journalist], but not good for the overall situation,” Myasnikova said, noting that she is free to write about the problems women face, but that little is done to address the situations that she describes.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Boyukagha Mammadov, Chairman, 215KL Independent TV Company, April 25, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Alena Myasnikova, journalist for the newspaper Zerkalo, April 26, 2008.



ODIHR, Symmetry and their allies will have to work hard to ensure that their media campaign on domestic violence does not meet the same fate.

- *International organizations and institutions* in the country working on gender issues

Very few international programs work in Azerbaijan addressing gender issues. All external actors face great difficulties given the circumscribed political space in the country.

The United Nations Population Fund is active and mostly works with state agencies in conducting research on the serious health issues facing the country. In contrast to ODIHR, this UN agency has not devoted much effort to working with civil society organizations.

For more than a decade, the UNDP has been provided money for research on gender issues in Azerbaijan. Most recently, in 2007, the UNDP published *Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges* based on a survey conducted in 2005. It provides a comprehensive overview of employment, education, health, family, violence and social situations in the country.

The US government has provided some aid to establish resource centers for women's groups working in the regions outside of Baku.

Groups like the International Center for Journalists are actively training journalists in the techniques of investigative reporting. While gender is not the primary focus, several of the journalists have investigated health issues of direct importance to women.

George Soros's Open Society Institute began a "women's program" in Azerbaijan in 1998. However, in 2004 the Soros organization made the strategic decision to reduce its funding for gender projects and was in the process of spinning off the existing organizations when we visited. It was not clear that the organization based in Azerbaijan would be able to survive without Open Society Institute support.<sup>59</sup>

## **2. Analysis of why ODIHR chose its specific direction of work in Azerbaijan and why it selected Symmetry as its partner. Impact.**

The ODIHR Gender Program began to focus on the issue of domestic violence after a 2000 assessment mission found that this was a key issue for activists in the countries where the program planned to work. In deciding how the ODIHR Gender Program should work in Azerbaijan, Ilse met with over 20 Azerbaijani NGOs. These organizations were typically either pro-government or anti-government. Ultimately, Ilse chose Symmetry as her program's main partner because Symmetry distinguished

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ulviyya Mammadova, International Women's Program Coordinator, OSI-Assistance Foundation Azerbaijan, April 25, 2008. See also [http://www.osi.az/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=782&Itemid=191](http://www.osi.az/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=782&Itemid=191).

itself from the other NGOs by focusing on the problem of domestic violence and avoiding political issues not directly related to this topic. Although ODIHR plays a political role in defending human rights, it did not want to get involved in the domestic politics of the countries that it is helping to meet their international commitments.

Kamilla Dadashova, a medical doctor, and her colleagues from the medical profession established Symmetry in 1994 and Dadashova has been the president of the organization since 1998. In the course of her medical practice, Dadashova and her colleagues came across many female victims of domestic violence, including even pregnant women. In one unforgettable case, one of their patients immolated herself because she felt that she had nowhere to turn. In another, a woman's in-laws threw her out of the family's house, blaming her for the fact that her three children were born with birth defects. The victims often trusted their doctors since the intimacy of the doctor-patient relationship meant they could not hide their bruises from the physicians. The women would confide in their doctors about the violence even when they did not feel comfortable talking about the subject with anyone else.

After being directly confronted with this difficult problem, the doctors decided that they had to do something to help their patients, particularly since the topic of domestic violence was so sensitive the victims often did not want to seek help on their own for fear of exposing family secrets and bringing shame on themselves and their relatives.

The group's first step was to conduct research to ascertain the extent of the problem, with a grant from the UNDP Gender in Development project. The research, conducted in 1995, showed that 37 percent of the survey respondents claimed to be victims of violence and that in 90 percent of the cases the violence took place within the family. The women were victims of violence at the hands of close relatives, including their husbands, members of their husband's families and sometimes brothers or other male relatives. Since young wives typically go to live with their husbands' families, mothers-in-law often figured as a prime source of problems for the young women.

The publication of these results in the local media caused a sensation in Azerbaijan, with some commentators even accusing the group of discrediting the country through their efforts. In the mid- and late-1990s, the police did not publish any data about crimes against women in the family. The silence was the result of several factors. Many of the victims and the people around them simply accepted the violence as a normal part of life and did not see any reason to take action. Public officials typically felt constrained in their response because they felt that there were social and legislative limits on how much they could interfere into what were generally considered "private family matters."

When Symmetry appealed for support to the ODIHR Gender Program, its leaders wanted the general public to learn more about domestic violence. In particular, they wanted to sponsor a National Forum on Domestic Violence and bring in international experts, so that government officials and NGO activists from all over the country could participate and gain a greater understanding of the issues. Symmetry's plans fit in well

with the ODIHR's strategy of raising awareness, building local capacity, and developing national expertise. The Forum, entitled "Say No to Violence," took place in May 2000. The ODIHR Gender Program was key to providing the financial support for organizing the Forum and network links to bring in two experts from Canada and facilitate the participation of 150 participants. In addition, ODIHR wrote an official letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that made possible the participation of government officials.

This conference determined that the best way for Symmetry to move forward in its efforts to prevent domestic violence was to build strong relations with the police. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Vugar Alekperov, a key member of the top police leadership, participated in the conference and strongly supported involving his agency in this issue. Alekperov pushed Symmetry to work with ODIHR and develop the program further.

The ODIHR Gender Program decided to work with police on domestic violence because it felt that it could make an important contribution in this area by bring state and civil society actors together. Such an approach was not self-evident from the beginning.

Part of ODIHR's task was to convince state officials that NGOs were making a valuable contribution to society and that they could cooperate effectively with state institutions. In meeting with state officials, ODIHR brought Symmetry colleagues along and worked to make the two sides comfortable with each other. ODIHR program staff sought to show the public officials that talking about domestic violence was not simply criticizing the local situation. The ODIHR presence helped to demonstrate that such violence takes place in all countries and that Azerbaijan could improve its image more by addressing the problem effectively than trying to cover it up.

One typical method for addressing domestic violence is to set up intervention and crisis centers. However, such centers will not work if there is no willingness on the part of the victims to call the police. Victims only know about the existence of centers and their phone numbers if they have seen advertising for them. Everyone knows how to get in touch with the police. However, many women would not call the police because they would not expect to get help from them. Because of the stigma attached to domestic violence, only 5.2 percent of men and 8.2 percent of women acknowledged that a woman could call the police in the case of domestic violence, according to a UNDP survey conducted in November 2005.<sup>60</sup> The vast majority of the respondents in this survey thought that appealing for outside help would violate their privacy and unnecessarily reveal family secrets. In this situation, ODIHR could provide political leverage by formally and informally encouraging the police to play a larger role in combating domestic violence and devoting some of their resources to the issue. Outreach efforts by the police could then increase the chances that victims of violence would be willing to seek their help.

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<sup>60</sup> UNDP Azerbaijan, *Azerbaijan Human Development Report 2007: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*, Baku: UNDP, 2007, p. 70.

The ODIHR Gender Program's strategy was first to strengthen the NGO Symmetry's capacities, then to improve the way that the police addressed the problem, while building a cooperative relationship between the NGO and the police and improving overall state-civil society relations in this area. At the beginning of the 2000s, ODIHR's democratization section had a very small staff, no more than 20 people, and only modest resources, amounting to just tens of thousands of dollars for program work. Even if it had wanted to, the Gender Program simply could not fund shelters, hotlines, or other services commonly used to address domestic violence. The program chose to work on the police response because it was the most effective way to deal with the situation since it provided victims with immediate assistance. If the police force became interested in the issue, then later it would be possible to mobilize the resources needed to establish crisis centers and other forms of aid for the victims.

As a multi-lateral organization, ODIHR provided Symmetry with financial resources, contacts within the international expert community, and access to important officials within its own government that it could not achieve on its own. Symmetry itself is very small. There are only three permanent employees in addition to the president and vice president and two support staff. The rest of the activists are volunteers or are hired for specific programs. Symmetry did not want to focus its work on women, but sought to make the topic of domestic violence a wider issue. Since ODIHR worked on broader questions of democracy and human rights, it provided a valuable platform for Symmetry.

Over the course of its existence, the program conducted training sessions in the police academy for new recruits and senior officers, who took part in programs to increase their professional qualifications. Analogously, the program also provided training for a large number of police commanders and officers working in a wide number of Azerbaijani cities beyond Baku.

### **3. Analyses of the methodology used by ODIHR in the country. Impact**

Working with both Symmetry and the police fit ODIHR's larger role as an international organization that cooperates with both the state and civil society. While typically groups combating domestic violence establish crisis intervention shelters, such a solution did not make sense in Azerbaijan because women would have difficulty finding out about the shelters and getting in touch with them. Everyone knows how to call the police, but often are reluctant to do so. Improving policing techniques would help overcome this problem. To realize these plans, the ODIHR/Symmetry program brought in police representatives from Vienna, who successfully implemented an Austrian law on domestic violence in 1997, to train Azerbaijani police in Baku, regions throughout the country, and new recruits in the police academy.

The ODIHR strategy is in contrast to the UN's strategy in Azerbaijan. The UN mainly works with state organizations and its main partner for gender issues is the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children's Issues. Working with the state

agencies is often not the most effective approach and a UN official indicated that his agency could achieve more if it developed stronger ties with civil society groups. “Whatever field we work in, we need to include more NGOs. We need to have both sides represented,” he said.<sup>61</sup>

Simply working with NGOs is not an option either. The state must play a major role in addressing the issue of domestic violence because it is necessary to involve the police into this issue. Victims need to turn somewhere for help and the police is the logical choice.

In fact, the police themselves can benefit greatly from working in the field of domestic violence. When police provide help to victims, it shows that the state is protecting its citizens from violence. Many members of Azerbaijani society view the police as corrupt and avoid contact with them since they are perceived as more likely to cause problems than to help. By providing concrete aid in domestic violence situations, the police can make a start toward cleaning up their public image. Part of the reason that the Azerbaijani government was willing to address domestic violence was that it wanted to show something positive in the area of state-society relations. The authorities latched onto the domestic violence topic as an area where they could show some progress.

Maintaining good state-society relations is also crucial in the field of legislation. Currently, Azerbaijan is working on adopting a law to address domestic violence. Key lawmakers, such as Bakhar Muradovoi, vice-speaker of the parliament, stress the need to work with NGOs because otherwise it would be difficult to implement this law and other socially-important laws without their participation.<sup>62</sup>

#### **4. Short description of activities: what actually has been done, in which regions of the country, with which partners**

ODIHR and Symmetry worked in close cooperation with the police to address the issue of domestic violence.

##### TRAINING THE POLICE

The May 2000 National Forum (described above) was crucial because it provided a good first experience of state-NGO cooperation and forged the initial contacts between Symmetry and the police. The conversation at the first session developed a series of recommendations on how to establish crisis centers. Symmetry circulated these proposals to state officials and social activists. However, members of the NGO worried that these proposals would not move forward because there was no good way to integrate the centers into the larger state system. Women needing help would not necessarily be able to find the centers and access their resources.

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Farid Babayev, Assistant Representative, United Nations Population Fund, Baku, April 25, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Bakhar Muradovoi, Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, April 24, 2008.

At that point, ODIHR and Symmetry decided that the best strategy was to work directly with law enforcement officials. Since Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Alekperov had already expressed interest, it was possible to start at the top. This approach was important, first of all, because it would show that domestic violence was a crime like any other. Additionally, it showed members of the broader society that they could work with police and draw the state in because domestic violence was not just a family problem, but one that required outside intervention.

It was important to train the police to bring family violence problems outside of the family. Family relations in Azerbaijan are very strong and various family members frequently intervene into the affairs of other family members. Typically, outside the capital, a young wife would come to live with their husband and his family. Often family members would accompany women for their doctor's appointments, in which case it was very difficult for those who had endured violence to speak about the problems that they had faced.<sup>63</sup>

After police representatives attended the first meeting, Symmetry made effective use of ODIHR resources to build up its contacts with the police. The NGO did not try to lecture the police officers about gender issues and women's rights. Rather, the ODIHR Gender Program brought in a series of international experts. These contacts were all set up through the Ministry of Internal Affairs International Department.

After meetings with several deputy ministers, as a first step, ODIHR used its resources to set up high-level training sessions for the chiefs of the Baku Raion police departments. Initially, the police were very hesitant to become involved in the issue of domestic violence. They feared that their intervention would simply lead to divorce and destroy the families that they were trying to help.

To make the trainings effective, ODIHR and Symmetry brought in Austrian police who work on domestic violence in their own country (Christian Strasser, Heinz Dboech, and Karl-Heinz Dudek) and who could talk to the Azerbaijani police as colleagues. Austria adopted a law on domestic violence in 1997 and was successful in implementing it. The Austrian experience was helpful because the Austrian police representatives were able to discuss how they dealt with domestic violence in their country. A combination of the Austrian police experience and personal stories about victims of domestic violence from Symmetry members won over the Azeri police and they became more interested in addressing the problem.

Naturally, working closely with the police entailed risks. When Symmetry began its cooperation, other NGOs criticized the group, pointing out that the police were beating up women on the streets participating in political demonstrations at the same time that they were discussing domestic violence at the roundtables. Symmetry responded by arguing that if you simply yell at the police and criticize them, you will not be able to establish a good relationship with them. Most police generally think of NGOs

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Raji Najafgulyev, April 23, 2008.

as members of the political opposition. Since Symmetry was made up of doctors, it was able to establish a technical relationship that was not overtly political.

#### BRINGING IN THE PROSECUTORS

After first spreading awareness that domestic violence was not just a problem in Azerbaijan, but throughout the world, and sensitizing the police, the next step was to work with the prosecutors. Once the police began to focus on the issue of domestic violence, they all said that they were willing to help, but warned that the prosecutors would not take action against any of the men that the police had identified as perpetrators.

ODIHR helped bring the prosecutors into the process by adding its political weight in requesting their participation. Trainings for employees of the prosecutors' offices and courts of Baku City took place in 2002.

#### REACHING OUT TO NEW GROUPS

Subsequently, the head of the Azerbaijani Police Academy invited Symmetry and the ODIHR Gender Program to provide trainings for Academy employees. These trainings took place in 2003-2007. For the first time in the history of the academy, representatives of the police and NGOs conducted lessons jointly. The trainings were widely covered by state and independent TV channels. Once the director of the police academy was convinced of the value of the training on domestic violence, he wanted to extend it to the new police academy recruits and into the regions outside the capital city of Baku. In 2005, training sessions were held for 25 regional police chiefs.

Accordingly, in 2006, Symmetry, its academic advisors, and the Austrian police experts put together a curriculum about response to domestic violence for the academy. The resulting textbook, entitled *Law Enforcement Bodies and Domestic Violence*, provided an overview of domestic violence as a violation of human rights and described the anatomy of domestic violence. The key sections offered practical advice for police officers in responding to domestic violence situations, including step-by-step procedures for police dispatchers and responding officers.<sup>64</sup>

Now the academy includes domestic violence training in raising the qualifications of police officers who have long since graduated from the academy, but return for mandatory continuing professional education to improve their policing skills. As a confirmation that this approach was working, the Minister of Internal Affairs began to talk about the issue of domestic violence in his public speeches describing the work of the ministry to other members of government and members of the general public.

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<sup>64</sup> Symmetry, *Pravookhranitel'nye organy i domashnee nasilie: Rukovodstvo po bor'be s domashnim nasiliem dlya pravookhranitel'nykh organov* [Law Enforcement Agencies and Domestic Violence: A manual for combating domestic violence for law enforcement agencies], Baku 2006.

As a way of institutionalizing these successes, ODIHR and Symmetry set up a working group that included Symmetry, prosecutors, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Police Academy, the Baku police, and police from the regions. This working group created a forum for actors in the same law enforcement system who did not ordinarily talk to each other. At first members of the NGO and police sat separately at the sessions. However, when ODIHR invited the working group to Austria in 2006, the different groups mixed and worked together well. In Gratz, the group viewed an intervention center the city had built to address domestic violence problems. The working groups now develop proposals to strengthen the work against domestic violence and assist the development of the project. Working group research showed that the police were receiving more requests for assistance in domestic violence cases beginning in 2004.

All this work began to pay off in 2007, when Symmetry and Police Academy trainers conducted the first pilot seminars for 200 fifth-year students of the Police Academy. Vienna police academy trainers monitored the training sessions and offered suggestions on how to improve them. By 2008, the trainers had produced improved visual aids for the students to increase their ability to understand the material. The Azerbaijani police also visited the Vienna police academy and learned about role playing techniques to improve the teaching style of the trainers. A second round of training for fifth-year Academy students took place in 2008.

Additionally during 2007-2008, Symmetry and the Police Academy followed up on the 2005 trainings for regional police chiefs, by providing trainings for 600 regional police officers. These sessions focused on legal tools for combating domestic violence, the importance of intervention centers, and ways to increase cooperation between NGOs and the police in increasing the population's trust in the police.

Based on this experience, Alekperov set up a legal clinic in the Academy, which provides legal advice to families. In the absence of an intervention center in Baku, it makes sense to have legal advice come from within police.

## **5. Difficulties/challenges in achieving the results**

As noted above, Azerbaijan presents an extremely complex environment for conducting ODIHR's Gender Program. The state has little trust in NGOs, particularly those sponsored with foreign money, so it is difficult for these organizations to work with the authorities. Moreover, Azerbaijan is a Muslim country and patriarchal attitudes toward women are extremely strong through all elements of society.

In conditions of centralized power, the women's movement could make gains by gaining the attention of top officials. In the broader context, it has not been able to do this. However, within the police force, there are powerful individuals who are interested in changing the way that the police operate and Symmetry has been able to work with them.

Change in a conservative organization such as the police, embedded within a conservative society, will take a long time. Accordingly, ODIHR and groups like



Symmetry that seek to make a difference must be prepared to maintain their programs over the long term and implement changes gradually, building on past successes over time.

#### PROMOTING EFFECTIVE CHANGE INSIDE A POLICE ORGANIZATION

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, ODIHR and Symmetry have been able to promote change inside the Azerbaijani police force. The key to their success is that they brought to bear the appropriate forces for dealing with change in a closed organization. These levers included working with a sympathetic insider while effectively communicating from the outside.

Police organizations are generally closed and function in a hierarchical top-down manner. Orders come from top commanders and their subordinates must implement them. As a result, the people on the bottom only feel that they are serving their commanders. They do not necessarily feel responsible to society.<sup>65</sup>

Change within a police organization comes about through communication with the outside. Such change can take place in a variety of ways. First, there can be orders from above to implement changes. Second, police-to-police contacts can be very effective. A third potential source of communication is from working with NGOs, assuming that the NGO is able to gain the police's respect. The ODIHR project in Azerbaijan effectively brought all of these to bear. One of the leaders of the Azeri police, Alekperov gained respect for Symmetry as an organization that could provide services to the police which they could not perform themselves. The Azeri police also appreciated dealing with Austrian police trainers since they were able to share common understandings and terminology unique to law enforcement officers.

It was also important that the police leadership in Azerbaijan maintain good connections with the lower level rank-and-file members of the force. The situation is totally different in Russia, for example. There, one finds a group of high level officers that is extremely well informed on human rights issues. Yet these individuals have no connection with the rank-and-file policemen who actually implement policies in Russian communities. So, no matter how many training sessions are provided to the high level officers, nothing changes on the ground. Police institutions in Russia are like any institutions. They only change as much as they are forced to. There is no one forcing Russian police to change and they are now very powerful, so they have no incentive to change. The situation in Azerbaijan is different because the top level officers are in contact with the rank-and-file and are willing and able to influence the way that they behave. They want to improve the image of Azerbaijan's police within society and therefore have incentive to change police behavior.

The Azerbaijani police are happy with the new model of policing in the area of domestic violence because they feel that it is helping to improve their image in society.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Karl-Heinz Grundboeck, Deputy Head of the Vienna Police Academy, Baku, April 24, 2008.

They are not simply using their power to arrest criminals. Rather, in the area of domestic violence, police see their first job as protecting the victims of violence. They help the victims and society as a whole by using their power to arrest the perpetrators. By conceptualizing their task as protecting the victim, the police are able to set aside concerns that they are intervening into private family matters and likely provoking a divorce through their intervention.

The adoption of new methods in the police academy is a long-term process. Even when successful models are borrowed from abroad, they are not always implemented with the same effect. Now, for example, the Austrian police are introducing a new kind of training technique where the cadets view videos of different situations and then have to reenact them. In this role playing, sometimes they play the police officer, sometimes the victim, sometimes the person who calls the police. By playing the victim, they learn to think about issues from the victim's point of view. The role playing makes them change their behavior because they are able to see things from different perspectives. The Azeri police academy had adopted this technique, but instead of having the policemen (there are no women cadets) play the role of the victims, they recruited the cleaning lady in the academy to take on this role. Karl-Heinz Grundboeck, the Deputy Head of the Vienna Police Academy who has provided training in Baku and observed these sessions, suggested to his colleagues that they involve the police officers as victims, so that they get a better feeling of what it is like to play this role. ODIHR decided not to push for hiring women police officers because then whenever domestic violence issues came up, they would be assigned as a "woman's issue" and likely marginalized. The ODIHR Gender Program believes that it is better for the men to deal with these issues so that they will receive priority consideration.

## **6. Results and impact in Azerbaijan**

The program has produced a number of concrete results that are changing the situation in Azerbaijan as it relates to domestic violence. First, the work of ODIHR and Symmetry has started a culture shift as victims of domestic violence are turning to the Azerbaijani police with greater frequency. Second, ODIHR's work has created new civil society capacity. Third, the program work is developing new expertise to address domestic violence since the police themselves are starting to change their behavior in a variety of ways, such as preparing their own police academy courses on domestic violence. Fourth, the program helped create new state capacity as the police are also improving the quality of the statistics they collect about this problem. Finally, the program has encouraged the police to work to improve Azerbaijan's legislation in dealing with domestic violence. The fact that social attitudes are starting to change and that the police are now taking action on their own to address domestic violence strongly suggests that the impact of this program will be sustainable over the long term.

**Promoted culture shift in attitudes toward domestic violence.** The work of ODIHR and Symmetry has begun to change the way that Azerbaijani society thinks about domestic violence. Women are starting to feel more comfortable appealing to the police for help, though the number of appeals is still likely to be much smaller than the actual number of incidents of domestic violence. Police are just beginning to keep statistics in this area, and in 2007, the first year for which there is relatively systematic data, they received 8,000 appeals for assistance from domestic violence victims.<sup>66</sup> While there is no concrete data from earlier periods, this number seems to be a lot higher than was the case in previous years.<sup>67</sup>

**Created civil society capacity.** The ODIHR/Symmetry program has enhanced civil society capacity in Azerbaijan. Not only has ODIHR increased the capacity of its local partner, it has improved the ability of the state, in the form of its police force, to work in close coordination with a non-governmental organization. The closer relationship between the civil society actor and the state allow them both to perform tasks that they could not achieve on their own in the area of domestic violence.

**Created new expertise through changed police behavior.** As a result of the project, members of the Azeri police force have begun to change their behavior in a variety of ways. For example, the police academy is working to develop material for other training courses addressing domestic violence besides the ones directly supported by ODIHR and Symmetry. While the Austrian officers helped the Baku police academy set up classes for the fifth-year students, the Azerbaijani instructors introduced this topic at the first-year level on their own as a way of preparing the cadets to address the topic throughout their police education. The local officers also took the lead in devising courses to train seasoned police officers in how to address domestic violence situations.

**Expanded state capacity to address domestic violence.** The law enforcement agencies are starting to keep better statistics about domestic violence. In the past, the police did not collect statistics about domestic violence; now they are beginning to collect this information. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done in the area of improving the quality of this data. Cases of domestic violence frequently are classified as other kinds of crime, so they do not appear in the official statistics. In Austria, every time police are called to a house, it is recorded, providing a useful record of where potential problems are. Azerbaijan is now starting to keep this kind of data as well, so the police will eventually have a better sense of where the violence is concentrated. Thanks to the state's increasing resources from the booming oil economy, the police

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<sup>66</sup> Presentation at the "Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan: Role of the Police – Roundtable Discussion on the Development of the Draft Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence," Police Academy, Baku, April 24, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> According to Ministry of Internal Affairs data in the CEDAW alternative report for 2001-2005, there were 4,397 crimes committed against women in 2005 and 28.4 percent of these (1,249) were domestic crimes. This police data reflects murders and serious injuries.

stations are now being equipped with computers and access to the Internet. Regional police forces are setting up their own educational programs. Additionally, the police are collecting a database of places to go for help.

**Spurred police lobbying for legislative change.** Another result of the project is that the police are now lobbying for changes in Azerbaijan's legislation to make it more effective in addressing domestic violence. For example, Alekperov is now drafting provisions for the law on domestic violence to define the role of the police. Earlier drafts of this bill did not explicitly address the police.

## 7. Recommendations

There are two basic possibilities for the ODIHR Gender Program's future work in Azerbaijan. First, since the methodology has proven effective in the area of domestic violence, it may be possible to repeat this kind of work in a different subject area. Since the Gender Program has successful experience working in the fields of gender education and increasing the role of women in politics in other countries, it may be possible to take on similar tasks in Azerbaijan. We would strongly encourage the ODIHR Gender Program to pursue those goals if it has the resources available to do.

A second possibility for future work would be to build on the success in the domestic violence area by deepening the already successful work in this area. The ODIHR Gender Program has clear plans for its future activities in Azerbaijan and we strongly support these as a successful outline of what could be accomplished.

ODIHR and its local partner can continue their work on domestic violence in four ways. First, Symmetry plans to continue working to ensure the passage of a law addressing domestic violence. Second, it hopes to work with the police and other state offices in setting up crisis intervention centers. Third, the group will work with the authorities to put together a national action plan to address domestic violence. Finally, the ODIHR Gender Program plans to develop a media strategy that will educate the public about the issue of domestic violence and thereby generate greater demand to do something about it.

Symmetry started to work with the police in order to get the support of the state in addressing the problem of domestic violence. The most important objective was to be able to provide the victims of domestic violence with an alternative to simply going out into the street. Symmetry and their police colleagues now say "We have accomplished the first goal, which was raising awareness of this issue among the police. Now we need to take the next step, which is to create a mechanism to solve the problems."

In particular, the group wants Azerbaijan to adopt a law dealing specifically with domestic violence. While some argue that a special law on domestic violence is not necessary because there are other laws that already address the issues of violence in Azerbaijani society, the police officers working with Symmetry do not agree with this conclusion. They see domestic violence as a complex crime. They want the law to

specify exactly when they should intervene. The law is also important because it would authorize budgetary support for the crisis centers.

Once a domestic violence law is adopted, Symmetry and the police academy will have to provide training on how to implement it. A key change is that now the police and NGOs are working together in order to improve the country's legislation. Before this project, there had not been this kind of cooperation in the area of domestic violence between civil society groups and elements of the state. Once the laws are adopted, there are greater chances that they will be enforced because of the existing on-going cooperation between the groups and state.

Even with the enhanced cooperation, organizations could spend all their resources working with individual women. A more useful alternative is to build sustainable institutions that can support a much wider range of women if they need assistance. Symmetry argues that the state should set up shelters that can provide direct aid to the victims of domestic violence. One of the clear outcomes of the ODIHR program is that the police are now working on creating their own centers. OSCE cannot fund these institutions, though it might provide partial initial start up money. However, there are good indications that state funding can fill the gap. The alternative of non-state shelters and crisis centers make less sense by themselves in Azerbaijan because they are not part of the larger system and women would have difficulty accessing their services. An additional benefit of establishing the intervention centers is that they would institutionalize ties among the various actors already working on the issue of domestic violence and provide a concrete focal point for their activities. There is strong support for the creation of state-sponsored intervention centers, especially from the parliament's vice speaker Bakhar Muradovoi, who suggested in an interview that it would be possible to fund them from the new state foundation for NGOs.<sup>68</sup>

These centers will not be designed to take women out of their families as sometimes happens in the West. They simply will not have the resources to provide temporary housing for victims and then set them up in new apartments and jobs. Rather, the women will stay with their families. The centers will be able to provide short-term immediate help if necessary, but will focus on offering counseling services and referrals to other state services. Part of the centers' contribution will be that they can provide assurances to the police that by intervening in domestic violence situations they are not breaking up families.

A national action plan on these issues would provide the opportunity to put all the pieces in place. Police Colonel Mehrab Tukanov, Chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' International Cooperation Department, asked ODIHR to prepare such a plan in a meeting on April 25, 2008. Tukanov cited the existing human trafficking action plan as a model and noted that an intervention center for domestic violence could replicate the success of the trafficking intervention center. The government adopted the anti-

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Bakhar Muradovoi, Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, April 24, 2008.

trafficking plan in 2004. In 2005, the government passed anti-trafficking legislation and prosecuted 190 people. Prosecutions increased in 2007.<sup>69</sup>

A key element in ODIHR's forward planning is developing and implementing a media strategy. The police themselves are deeply interested in developing such a strategy. During the meeting with Tukanov, he said that police need to improve their image with the public to show that police work on domestic violence is not simply interfering in a family's private life. He suggested a wide-ranging campaign that would include televised talk shows and a variety of other public fora.

An effective media campaign would serve several purposes. It would create public demand for the state to devote more attention and resources to gender issues. The police are interested in a media campaign because they would like to improve their image and build confidence among people to work with them. They want to show that they protect people, doing more than simply arresting bad guys. Additionally, the police want to show that domestic violence in the family is the same as violence on the street, thereby providing an informal legal education for the population. Since the police themselves are interested in the media campaign, there is great urgency in launching it in the near future.

The strategy is to influence media rather than rely on the journalists writing about gender issues. The goal is to place gender experts prominently in the media to counter the numerous misrepresentations there. The journalists will follow when they see that there is demand for this kind of material. Typically, however, ODIHR and Symmetry do not expect journalists to discuss gender issues intelligently. Therefore, sometimes the program puts inserts into newspapers or buys a weekly column to distribute accurate information to the public.

Currently there is no media plan in place for Azerbaijan. ODIHR will need to train Symmetry and the police team on how to write articles to get prominent attention in the media. Then they will develop a month-by-month media plan. To achieve maximum impact, it would be optimal to have gender experts represented in the media as frequently as possible. Among the key plans are to develop visual materials on domestic violence and a documentary about the issue.

A successful media campaign will produce concrete results. In particular, ODIHR and Symmetry hope to get better programs and data from the police. Better relations with the population will make it easier to work more effectively. Such public attention to the issue will help prevent domestic violence and create new areas for additional work.

In an interview, the parliament's vice speaker Bakhar Muradovoi strongly supported the idea of a media campaign to raise awareness of the domestic violence issue. She suggested using the theme "Family without violence. Society without violence." She also argued that while women could play a major role behind the scenes, it would be better if men took the lead in combating domestic violence in public. If

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<sup>69</sup> Shahin Abbasov, "Dangerous Divide," *Transitions Online*, February 12, 2008.

women are the main advocates of combating domestic violence, it will be seen as a “women’s issue” and quickly marginalized, she claimed. If men take the lead, they are much more likely to be able to convince other men to change their behavior. In contrast, issues categorized as “women’s topics” remain unresolved, she said.

## **Appendix: The Azerbaijan Regional Women’s Network**

In addition to the work on domestic violence, the ODIHR Gender Program in Azerbaijan has also developed a Regional Women’s Network, which has chapters in at least 16 regions across the country. This network started out as a separate project, but is now evolving in a direction that will allow it to support the cause of addressing domestic violence.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

ODIHR started the regional network in 2001. As a first step, ODIHR worked in coordination with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to bring together political party women in March 2000. The two organizations held a preliminary seminar to identify the key groups working in Azerbaijan. It was very difficult to bring the opposition and pro-government parties together because they had had little contact with each other. Representatives of the government party even yelled at ODIHR program staff because they did not want to sit together with their opposition counterparts. However, after the initial sessions, the various sides began to build more of a sense of community with each other. ODIHR then selected five of the participants in the initial sessions as a core for its initial work in setting up the regional network. At that point, the NDI representative left Baku and his replacement had no interest in continuing the project.

The five women ODIHR selected included Hijran Huseynova, who subsequently was appointed as the chairman of the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs, and Solmaz Gadzhieva, president of the Women Oil Workers NGO. All five women identified working in the regions outside of Baku as a key priority. At that time (around 2001), many of the international organizations focused their work in Baku while leaving the great demand for assistance outside the capital unmet. The group split the map of Azerbaijan into five pieces and each of the five women went to her assigned region of the country and identified women who were likely to be capable of pulling together a group of local friends and colleagues who could talk about women’s issues in their areas. This initial group covered most of the regions.

Following the field work, ODIHR gathered in Baku a group of about 40 women that it had identified as potential leaders for a training exercise with Polish experts. The purpose of the session was to see who among the women was able to discuss difficult issues and therefore would be able to lead regional groups in their areas. After a second training with a smaller group, the regional women went home and organized meetings

with women in their hometowns. ODIHR then invited all the successful women back for another meeting in the capital. Out of the 27 who accepted the task of trying to set up a group, 23 came back. (In Georgia, 100% of the women came back.)

The leaders of the network in each region invited colleagues to become part of the network.<sup>70</sup> In regions where the leader was a high-level official in the regional government, the other members also came from similar positions. In regions where the leader did not have such status, the members could be unemployed young women and public sector workers, such as teachers and medical workers. Usually, the members of the network were colleagues, neighbors, or relatives of the leaders. In closed traditional societies like Azerbaijan, this strategy is the most effective.

In Barda region, for example, the network had a powerful group: 31 women who were constantly in touch with other women from the network. The group became extremely active during the 2005 elections when the women joined the campaigns of female candidates running for the national parliament. Typically, these candidates were local women who had moved to the capital but still ran for office from their region.

The Regional Women's Network is divided among groups that support the incumbent government authorities and those who work with the political opposition. In some regions there is a significant split between the pro-government and opposition parties and NGOs. The groups working with the opposition are mainly concentrated in the Belokhany, Khachmaz, and Khudat regions. In the other regions, the Women's Network groups generally cooperate with the authorities. In general, local governments strictly control the work of NGOs in the regions. Accordingly, it is extremely difficult to register regional initiative groups as NGOs. Local NGOs only exist in a few regions (such as the Union of Single Women in Khachmaz Raion) and they typically have very specific goals that do not touch on political questions. The majority are focused on charity work and the creation of groups that provide mutual psychological support. In order to carry on the work, ODIHR had to write to all the governors and explain what the women involved in the regional network were doing.

Organizing women in the regions proved to be a difficult activity because of the traditional male-dominated culture there and the relatively small amount of space for women to engage in autonomous activities. Many of the husbands wanted to see what their wives were doing in the hotels at these training sessions. Some of them even showed up during the discussions, which caused problems. Many of the women in Azerbaijan have arranged marriages. Accordingly, network participants frequently claim that the real target of their work is their children, who will be brought up differently and then have much greater say in defining their major life choices. After the training sessions, the women continued to work with their local groups. Over time, ODIHR set up a system where women in the various regions could visit each other. This

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<sup>70</sup> This section draws in part from a more detailed analysis of Azerbaijan's Regional Women's Network prepared in 2006. See Gul'nara Ibraeva, Mira Karybaeva, Zul'fiya Kochorbaeva, "Otchet po resul'tatam analiza deyatel'nosti Regional'noi Zhenskoi Seti Azerbaidzhana," unpublished manuscript.



aspect of the project helped establish links between the various regions where there were none before.

ODIHR paid these women a monthly fee of \$30 to work in the network. This sum was a substantial amount of money in the regions at the time. The women also received the prestige of being involved in an international program.

At one point, ODIHR sought to provide small grants of \$300 to the regional women's groups so that they could carry out a concrete project for their region, similar to the social projects in Kyrgyzstan. However, this idea did not work. The women simply did not have the autonomy in their local areas to do this kind of work (arranging for the installation of a streetlight or reroofing a school, for example). The regional women said that they preferred to conduct more meetings instead. As a result, the network continued to exist by organizing gatherings for new people and then training them in various leadership techniques.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The regional network is providing assistance as Symmetry and its affiliates working on domestic violence training are going into the regions to train police and other groups. Likewise, ODIHR and Symmetry plan to provide domestic violence training for the network. Working with the OSCE already has raised the prominence of many women in the network: they are included in other local projects and sought for advice on gender issues. In many areas, the police view them as useful experts.

The women in the regions already have experience in assisting victims of domestic violence and are well positioned to expand Symmetry's work. The head of the Belokany branch of the network, for example, helped a young woman who had returned from Russia with tuberculosis and a young child suffering from diabetes.<sup>71</sup> At first her mother-in-law would not let her live in the house that the woman's husband had built while he remained as a laborer in Russia and she was sick. The mother-in-law even brought another son to live in the house. However, the network intervened and was able to help the woman take possession of the house and even worked out a state allowance for the sick child. People often appeal to the resource center the Belokany members established using funding from a variety of sources because they do not know where else to appeal for aid. The office received 150 applications during the last two years (2007-2008). The situation was very similar in neighboring Zakataly, where women activists said that many of the local women had very little information about their rights and possible ways to get help. In Zakataly, the activists said that it would require a lot of education before a village woman were willing to summon the police to help address a case of domestic violence.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Interviews at the Belokany Women's Resource Center, April 28, 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Interviews with members of the Women's Regional Network in Zakataly, April 29, 2008.

## KEY IMPACT OF THE NETWORK SO FAR

Given the difficult political environment in Azerbaijan, the results of the women's network were not nearly as demonstrative as those in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, the network made clear advances. Under conditions in which relatives and society placed strict control over women's lives, the project expanded the opportunities for women to create a network of mutual support, practice such support, collectively discuss common problems, and increase their self-awareness. The network's discussion and joint work helped the participants identify the structural character of gender problems and activated women in the joint search for solutions and changes in the situation. In several regions, participating in the network helped women gain the authority and experience to secure important jobs in the regional administration.

## ARMENIA

### *Executive Summary*

The ODIHR Gender Program has worked in Armenia from 2001 to 2008 in the following areas:

- Institutionalizing gender education in the universities and high schools;
- Integrating a gender component into state policy by conducting gender analyses of legislation, increasing the level of gender knowledge among legislators, civil servants, leaders and activists in social organizations and political parties, and journalists.

This program trained specialists to teach in universities and high schools and they used their expertise to train students in their home institutions. Between 2001 and 2008 the program trained a total of 127 instructors in various topics of gender education, gender research, and gender analysis of legislation. Currently, these instructors teach gender courses in 11 Armenian universities as special courses outside the regular curriculum. During the last five years, 4,639 students participated in interdisciplinary and special gender courses. Likewise, between 2002 and 2008, the high school education program trained 3,650 students, including 2,072 girls and 1,578 boys.

In recent years, the program has conducted five seminars for the members of the Armenian National Assembly and their staff. Other beneficiaries of this training included key staff in the ministries, regions, city administrations, and districts of the capital Yerevan. Overall there were 150 participants in these programs. The participants learned about the doctrine of equal rights and opportunities and mechanisms for realizing these goals in Armenian conditions. Four sessions of the Women's Leadership School trained 130 women from political parties and NGOs.

The ODIHR and AAWUE program will have a long-term impact on Armenian society. First, the project helped to increase awareness of gender issues by teaching students the basics of gender analysis and incorporating this approach into their overall studies and thinking. It also has increased awareness among state officials. Second, the program made a strong contribution to the ability of Armenian women to exert leadership roles in Armenian politics and society. Third, the program influenced the adoption of gender sensitive legislation. Fourth, it greatly enhanced the level of expertise among university and high school instructors and spread much of this expertise to the young generation. Thanks to its contribution to Armenian society, there are clear signs that the program will be sustainable over the long term. The Ministry of Education and Science has now included gender into its core curriculum at the university level and is considering plans to do so at the high school level as well.

## *Main Report*

### **1. Background for the ODIHR program**

The following section describes the overall context in Armenia in 2000 (with more recent information added in some places to show the trend line). Section 6 of this report shows the impact of the ODIHR Gender Program in the area of gender education and integrating a gender component into state policy-making, where it concentrated most of its effort.

#### GENERAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

The transformational processes which began after Armenia declared its independence in 1991 shaped the socio-economic and socio-political environment in the country. The transition to market relations and democratic reforms took place in the difficult political-economic conditions of war and blockade leading to the impoverishment of the population, a sharp drop in fertility, migration, the presence of refugees, and other negative consequences.

The current stage of progress is characterized by the transition from stabilization to development and the creation of the pre-requisites for making the country competitive. According to official data, during the last six years, GNP grew an average of 12.2 percent annually at a time when 80 percent of the GNP is in the private sector. In 1999 GNP per capita was \$485; by 2007 it had reached \$2,100 per capita. In 1999, 56 percent of the population was on the edge of poverty, while by 2005, the proportion of people living in poverty dropped to 39 percent, with 7.2 percent living in extreme poverty.

The country faces a high degree of social polarization, an extensive black market, an unstable national currency, and corruption which is a serious obstacle for further development. The minimum wage in the country is approximately \$50 a month and the average pension \$30, while the minimal basket of goods required for survival is \$75. According to the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), Armenia today occupies the 80<sup>th</sup> position in the world.<sup>73</sup>

#### CULTURAL CONTEXT REGARDING GENDER ISSUES

Armenia presents an exceptionally difficult atmosphere for conducting gender programs because of the strong patriarchal values in society and the slow progress of democratic political reform. In these conditions, women have made little political or economic progress in recent years.

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<sup>73</sup> UN Human Development Index, 2006.

Money and power are deeply intertwined in Armenia, with women excluded from both. The underrepresentation of women in the public sphere is a reflection of the fact that political office is often a way to secure economic wealth in Armenia, as in most other post-Soviet countries. Therefore, men crowd out women seeking to hold public office, abandoning the Soviet practice of reserving one-third of the seats in the formal, but powerless, state institutions for them. Likewise, very few women are able to obtain high-paying jobs.

Long-held patriarchal customs work to keep women from playing a prominent role in Armenian society. Property is often held by men and passed to male family members, so women lack the legal basis to manage family assets on their own, limiting opportunity for women to grow as entrepreneurs or to accumulate wealth. Moreover, women are expected to avoid any kind of activity that could potentially damage their reputation.

There is extensive discrimination against women in Armenian society, but often it is not seen as such because of the widely-held gender stereotypes about the role of women in society.<sup>74</sup>

Within the job market, women are often relegated to low-paying positions, particularly in traditional areas for female work, such as schools and healthcare. Overall, women make up 80 percent of the education system employees, but are essentially not represented at decision-making levels and therefore have little say over education policy. Only one university rector in the country is a woman. At the high school level, where salaries and prestige are lower, most principals are women. Likewise, there are very few male high school teachers.

Despite some positive indicators in the education field as discussed below, there are also some alarming signals. For example, there are some signs that the number of girls (and boys) dropping out of primary education is increasing.<sup>75</sup>

Armenian women make up 52 percent of the population, yet they comprise 58 percent of the individuals who have higher education in Armenia.<sup>76</sup> Although many women may graduate from universities, the labor market is not developed enough to provide jobs for them all and many go unemployed or are not able to fully utilize the skills they have developed. Women are cut off from participation in the system of governing and decision-making. Accordingly, their intellectual potential is only minimally used in the development of society.

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<sup>74</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 43-44.

<sup>76</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 17.

Women occupy few positions of political power in Armenia and have little influence over the state's decision-making process. Currently, the only woman among the 17-member cabinet is the minister of culture. Only two of the 65 deputy ministers are women. Of the ten regional governors, just one is a woman, and of the 17 deputy governors, again just one is a woman. In the parliament, 12 of the 131 members are women. Armenia's electoral law requires that political parties include 15 percent women on their party lists, but they are not required to include any of these women in the parliament. Accordingly, the current parliament, elected in 2007, includes only 9.2 percent women.<sup>77</sup>

Only 2 percent of the country's mayors are women following the 2005 elections. Even in rural areas where many of the men are working abroad leaving women to head many households, men tend to sit in the local councils while women are excluded. Women typically lack the money required to compete in politics.

The Governor of Shyrak, Lida Nanyan, the only female governor in Armenia, reported that there are no challenges to women in Armenian politics and cited herself as an example of the success that is possible if only women stood up and made an effort. She acknowledged, however, that many women fail to make that effort.

In Lory region, very few women are interested in running for office and the governor's staff is conducting research on why this is the case.<sup>78</sup> Women are also underrepresented in the civil service at both the federal and regional level.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING, IN PARTICULAR:

- Availability/ absence/potential of *key state structure* responsible for the issues of improving women's situation and achieving gender equality

The Armenian state does not address gender issues in a comprehensive manner. No existing agency has laid out or implemented an anti-discriminatory or gender equality policy or tried to coordinate states bodies in this area.<sup>79</sup> The Deputy Minister for Women's Issues in the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, a position that was established in May 2002, and the Division on Family, Women's and Children's Issues in the same ministry are not adequate for the task.

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<sup>77</sup> Association of Women with University Education Gender Studies Center, "Women's Political Participation in the 2007 Parliamentary Elections of the Republic of Armenia: Analytical Overview," OSCE: Yerevan, 2007, [http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2007/11/27913\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2007/11/27913_en.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Lory Governor, Vanadzor, Armenia, May 23, 2008.

<sup>79</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 25-6.

- Responsibility of *other state structures*, sectoral ministries and authorities to introduce gender mainstreaming, and also accountability of the *state administration and local self-governments in the regions* and their role in advancing gender equality

Armenia has no unified state policy for achieving gender equality at the local level. Local public officials sometimes take the initiative on gender questions, depending on local resources, information, and opinions.

Thus, for example, the governor of Lory was not particularly gender sensitive, but the local AAWUE women felt that they could work with him and that he would ultimately support their initiatives. He had only been in office for a few months when we visited and had already shown signs of progress in supporting gender issues. During our meeting, after hearing about research in Kyrgyzstan examining the number and position of women in civil service positions, he ordered his assistant to conduct a gender survey of the civil service in Lory to determine the representation of men and women at various levels and across occupational categories.

- Availability of National Action Plan on achieving gender equality

On April 8, 2004, the government of Armenia adopted a “National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing their Role in Society, 2004-2010.” Although the plan itself is in line with international norms, it lacked the financial and logical mechanisms for actual implementation.<sup>80</sup> Few of the goals it outlined have been achieved. The Armenians had hoped for funding from international sources, but these did not materialize.

There is very little information available about gender issues in Armenian society so the state lacks the kind of analysis it needs to make well-informed policies in this area.<sup>81</sup>

- Responsibility of *legislative authorities (parliaments)*, their monitoring function in the process of tracking progress in gender equality issues. Availability/absence of special laws on gender equality

Parliament has not yet passed a law guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for both sexes. This law is required for Armenia to meet its international obligations. Parliamentarians rejected past drafts of the law because these texts were not well prepared. These earlier drafts had not benefited from public discussions, parliamentary

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<sup>80</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 13-4.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Gyulnara Hovhannisyan, Director, Ministry of Labor and Social Issues' National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Yerevan, May 19, 2008.

hearings, or expert input.<sup>82</sup> The UNDP is now funding a working group headed by the Armenian Association for Women with University Education that will provide expert advice on how to improve the bill so that it can be adopted.

- Evaluation of the potential of *researchers and gender experts*, including representatives of the academic sector, who provide gender analysis and recommendations for political decision-making and revision of state programs.

The potential of the gender specialists and researchers in the country is quite high. Traditionally, Armenian society has greatly valued education and this respect has a strong influence on questions of human rights, gender, and other related humanitarian fields.

- Conditions for *non-governmental organizations and lobbyist groups* to impact the political process

Civil society in Armenia is extremely weak and the women's movement has little impact. Currently there are about 700 NGOs active in the country, with about 60 of them focused on women's issues. There is not enough coordination among women groups to press for issues of importance to the women's movement.<sup>83</sup> As a result, the fractured efforts at advocacy are not putting ideas on the political agenda. Women often lack a sense of why they should participate in NGOs and parties to become involved in political life. Poverty, the migration of the intelligentsia, and a focus on small-town life has led to a growing conservatism in society. Even potentially powerful outside actors, such as the Armenian diaspora, have only a weak influence on gender issues.

Armenian women's NGOs have divided up the key areas of activities (women in politics, human trafficking, domestic violence, gender education, etc.) amongst themselves and rarely work together to form a broader women's movement.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the Women's Leadership Schools make a contribution to building up a larger women's movement among NGOs and political parties.

- *Mass media* and traditions of covering gender issues

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Alla Bakunts, Demographic Governance Portfolio Analyst, United Nations Development Program, Yerevan, Armenia, May 20, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Birgitta Wistrand with the assistance of Armine Mkhitarian, "Women empowerment and cooperation in Armenia with a focus on the Syunik region," An assessment report prepared for the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Yerevan, Armenia, 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Observation of the OSCE staff in the Yerevan office. This observation was repeated in a discussion with members of parliament from the Heritage Party, which is in opposition to the government. May 21, 2008.



The media does little to promote gender equality and often reinforces existing negative gender stereotypes.<sup>85</sup> There is little free media in Armenia, with most coverage favoring the state.<sup>86</sup> Typically, journalists are women and the editors are men. Even if the female journalists are interested in gender issues, they have trouble convincing their editors to accept stories with a gender angle.<sup>87</sup>

- *International organizations and institutions* in the country working on gender issues

A variety of international organizations have long been active in Armenia addressing women's issues. Before the ODIHR Gender Program began working in the country, the UNDP and SIDA had organized a program to promote women's political leadership. UNDP also sponsored research in Armenia, publishing a statistical handbook "Women and Men in Armenia" in 2004.<sup>88</sup> In 2005, the UNDP and SIDA also began producing a newsletter on gender issues in Armenia and the rest of the South Caucasus. These projects developed out of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Open Society Institute in Armenia worked to promote gender studies, leadership development, gender approaches to politics, documentary film making, and action against gender based violence. While this project was active in the early part of the decade, it has faced a drop in resources more recently, following a global change in George Soros's strategy.

The US has paid particular attention to human trafficking in Armenia, a strong priority of the Bush administration.

Analysis of these programs showed that ODIHR could play an important role in Armenia by focusing on the topic of gender education.

## **2. Analyses of why ODIHR chose this direction of work in Armenia and also why ODIHR selected this partner. Impact.**

The ODIHR Gender Program determined the main direction of its work in Armenia on the basis of its analysis of the context of development in the country at the beginning of the program and the results of an evaluation conducted by the OSCE mission in Yerevan in 2002. The main conclusion of this work was the need to focus on gender education as the top priority. Additionally, it was important to include youth as key beneficiaries of

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<sup>85</sup> Armenian Association of Women with University Education, *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Armenia in 2002-2007: Alternative Report*, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 15-6.

<sup>86</sup> See Anna Walker, "Armenia," in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, [http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh\\_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Armenia-final.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Armenia-final.pdf).

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Sven Holdar, Democratization Officer, and Tsovinar Harutyunyan, Senior Democratization Assistant, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office in Yerevan, May 21, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.undp.am/?page=2004Publications>.

the gender programs. Another reason to focus on questions of education was that UNDP and SIDA were already implementing programs on women's political leadership in the country.

These research projects showed that the main obstacle to increasing women's participation in political and social decision-making was the prevalence of gender stereotypes. The research also showed that Armenia's system of higher education continued to hold on to a conservative model of preparing specialists and did not provide gender-sensitive socialization or a civics-based education.

Gender education is very important in developing an individual's personality and that is why it is important to integrate gender issues into university and high school curricula, according to research conducted by the Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE).<sup>89</sup> The key is to form the personality in early years because it is much harder to work with adults whose personalities have already been shaped. For adults, these programs provide an opportunity for resocialization into an evolving society. Focusing on children can be much more effective.

The ODIHR Gender Program chose the AAWUE as its main partner in Armenia because the association had identified a cause consistent with ODIHR's goals, gender education, and offered effective leadership under President Jemma Hasratian. Hasratian is the kind of person who can motivate others to action. Thanks to her previous work, she has high-level connections in the education ministry and can easily call on Armenia's most important leaders on this topic. As the head of her own NGO, she also has the organizational capacity to cooperate effectively with international funders.

Hasratian founded the AAWUE in 1995. In 1996, the association set up its Center for Gender Research and began to examine such topics as the role of women in politics, women's political participation, and expectations among women from NGOs.

The Association currently has 600 dues-paying members across Armenia. Many other women are associated with the organization, but cannot afford to pay the dues so they are not formally members. The group has 38 branches in the regions and works like a network. The size and organizational maturity of the association set it apart from most other NGOs in Armenia, which tend to have only a few members and lack the regional reach of AAWUE. The association is part of the international Association of Women with University Education, based in Geneva. In addition to ODIHR, the organization has a variety of international partners, such as UNDP, the Open Society Institute, and others. It runs three gender studies centers.

Working with the AAWUE provides several benefits to ODIHR. First, Hasratian has high-level connections within the existing educational establishment. Most university rectors and secondary school administrators have great respect for her and are eager to work with her. By working at the top, AAWUE is able to change educational policy in the center and then work with regional groups to ensure that these policies are

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<sup>89</sup> On the importance of education in determining support for gender equality in the workplace, home, and political sphere, see Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, especially chapter 2.

implemented on the ground. Second, since she has established her own NGO, she has the management and budgetary capacity to work as a partner with international funding agencies. Foreign partners typically prefer to fund professionalized NGOs because these have the administrative capacity to meet the donors' needs in terms of transferring funds, developing and implementing budgets, and filing project and financial reports.<sup>90</sup>

### **3. Analysis of methodology used by ODIHR in Armenia. Impact.**

Taking into account the centralized nature of the educational system in Armenia (as in the rest of the former Soviet Union), ODIHR found it necessary to secure the approval of the Ministry of Education in order to officially introduce a gender education program and then work with the university and high school teachers across Armenia on actually teaching these courses in the classrooms.

The program has evolved considerably over time and now will be able to survive even without support from outside Armenia. As a first step, ODIHR and AAWUE provided training to university instructors and secondary school teachers in the basics of teaching gender education, creating a cadre of high-caliber instructors who can impart this material to their students. This training not only focused on the substance of the courses, but helped spread interactive teaching methods, such as the use of debates, roundtable discussions, and role-playing, which are not currently widespread in the Armenian educational establishment. Next, the program launched pilot projects at the university and secondary school levels that gave students access to special gender courses outside the normal curriculum. Based on the success of these initial classes, the project spread to a much larger number of universities and schools. Having demonstrated that gender education could have a positive impact on the students, ODIHR and AAWUE successfully lobbied the education ministry in spring 2008 to include gender education into a key required civics class and into history, political science, journalism, and economics courses where it was relevant. The ministry is currently considering similar changes to the high school curriculum. Looking forward, the key challenge will be implementing this new material across all universities and schools, making it available to all of Armenia's students.

The impact on the students is strong, especially among the younger secondary school students, as it increases their level of self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-assertiveness, according to anecdotal evidence. Likewise, the students' families are affected as well as they bring home many of the concepts and approaches and share them with other family members.

The gender courses offer the additional value of aiding the democratization of Armenian society by giving the students the capacity for critical thinking, helping them develop the tools to question existing relationships and probe for ways to make things

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<sup>90</sup> Armine Ishkanian, "The Personal Political? The Development of Armenia's NGO Sector During the Post-Soviet Period," Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, Spring 2003, p. 7.

better. The innovative teaching methods strengthen students' confidence and provide them with experience in openly debating and advocating their own point of view.

ODIHR provided several forms of assistance to the AAWUE that enabled the association to achieve tasks that it otherwise could not realize alone. These contributions included flexible, demand-driven funding, an influential partner in lobbying the central government, and the ability to interact with women in other countries working on similar gender issues. In short, ODIHR does not simply give money to organizations in Armenia, but works with them as a partner. In the cases of some donors, Hasratian noted, "you can write a letter to them and they give you money." ODIHR provides more assistance than just financing. A key characteristic of the ODIHR Gender Program is that Ilsen travels frequently to the country. Some other funding agencies do not maintain a sustained presence in Armenia.

The first of ODIHR's contributions is that it provided the financial resources that allowed the AAWUE to enact the recommendations it developed based on its own research: that it was necessary to provide gender education in Armenia's universities and high schools. Most importantly, ODIHR's gender program has allowed its Armenian partner to define the problem and the methods used to address these problems locally and in ways that are sensitive to the local context. The gender program was not imposed from outside according to a set of ODIHR's evolving priorities or just another in a shifting set of funding priorities. ODIHR stuck with the program long enough for it to become established and then ready to be taken over by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science working with the AAWUE and instructors. Of course, as long as Armenian NGOs remain dependent on outside funding, there is always the danger that they will have to follow the whims of the outside funders.<sup>91</sup> However, in cases like gender education, where gender topics can be integrated into Armenia's already functioning educational system, the prospects for sustainability and local ownership are much higher than in other areas traditionally funded by outside agencies. Armenia already has a well developed educational system, part of its Soviet legacy, and it is only necessary to integrate a gender component into this system.

Second, ODIHR's intervention bolstered AAWUE's contacts in the education ministry to give the project greater institutional weight because it had the backing of an international funding agency in addition to the support of local women. Since ODIHR is connected to the larger European system of international organizations, it helps Hasratian be heard within the ministry. Thanks to the ODIHR support, the ministry's leaders can more easily see that working with AAWUE is in their interest. Unlike other international organization and foundations, the ODIHR can give a project political weight, since its primary mandate focuses on larger questions of democratic institutions and basic human rights. The fact that ODIHR backs the gender program shows that it is a serious and substantial contribution to Armenian society.

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<sup>91</sup> See the discussion in Armine Ishkanian, "The Personal Political? The Development of Armenia's NGO Sector During the Post-Soviet Period," Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, Spring 2003, p. 27.

Third, ODIHR offers the women active in Armenia an opportunity to travel to other countries and trade experiences with colleagues abroad. The ODIHR panel of gender experts was particularly helpful in this regard. The panel brings together the activists from the Caucasus and Central Asia, giving the Armenians an opportunity to explain what they are doing and to learn about the experiences of activists in other post-Soviet countries. “I know what is going on in all the different countries. This is very helpful in our work,” Hasratian said.<sup>92</sup> Programs that work in other countries can be very effectively transferred across borders. Often, this “east-east” transfer of knowledge is more helpful than “east-west” transfers. “The US is a rich country, but it is very useful to know what is going on in the former Soviet space. US experience is very different from ours,” Hasratian noted. The panel meetings provide lots of help in negotiating the various political processes of the post-Soviet countries, which helps the local activists develop civil society structures.

#### **4. Short description of activities: what actually has been done, in which regions of the country and with which partners**

##### UNIVERSITY TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The first step in setting up the gender education program in the universities was winning the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science. AAWUE was able to convince the deputy minister that establishing a gender education program was worthwhile by demonstrating to him that it would help Armenian universities integrate into the wider European system by assisting them meet the requirements of the Bologna Process. Since facilitating this process was part of his job assignment, he was grateful for the help that AAWUE could provide. Through its previous research and training programs, the association had established a large expert community, which was crucial in convincing the ministry that it was capable of carrying out large-scale work within Armenia’s education system. These experts have gained a prominent position in Armenian society, for example, participating in television shows with members from the ministry and providing additional points of view.

Once he was on board, the deputy minister then sent a letter to each of the university rectors explaining that the ministry supported the introduction of gender education into the teaching process. As noted above, AAWUE President Jemma Hasratian knew many of the rectors from her previous employment in the ministry, where she coordinated their work. This past relationship made it easy for Hasratian to convince the rectors to facilitate the project. Once they received the letter, they provided high level support. Nevertheless, it was up to AAWUE to take care of all the details and make the program actually work.

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Jemma Hasratian, May 21, 2008.

The AAWUE started its university education program by training university professors in the substance of this topic and the best teaching methods available for getting across the key concepts to students. The association held four two-week seminars from 2001 to 2008 that trained a total of 127 instructors in various topics of gender education, gender research, and gender analysis of legislation. The courses also offered instructional techniques in gender education, such as interactive teaching methods. The instructors for the workshops particularly drew on Russian experts from Moscow and St. Petersburg since scholars in these cities had made advances in the gender field and many of the Armenian instructors spoke Russian.

Starting with the 2001-2002 school year, the AAWUE began introducing gender education courses into Armenian universities. Currently the courses are taught in 11 Armenian universities. During the 2007-2008 school year, the program supported 10 interdisciplinary courses, such as “The Basics of Gender Knowledge,” “Gender and Politics,” “Gender and Culture,” and “Gender Equality and the System of Human Rights,” and 16 special courses, including “Gender and Journalism,” “Gender Problems in the History of Contemporary Political Thought,” “Gender and the Economy: Legal Aspects,” and “Gender Aspects of Ethno-cultural Processes.”

During the last five years, 4,639 students participated in interdisciplinary and special gender courses.

In order to ensure high quality programs and coordinate the work of both the university and high school gender instructors, the Association established resource centers in Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor. These centers work to help institutionalize gender education by conducting seminars and other types of activities for the instructors, including individual support. The center directors occasionally observe courses and offer recommendations on ways to improve instruction.

As the courses evolved from year to year, the AAWUE held two national symposiums to promote exchanges between instructors (one each in 2003 and 2004) and the resource centers hold two sessions a month for gender instructors and instructors of other topics at both the university and high school levels. The instructors sought to use innovative teaching approaches that turned the students into active participants in the process of creating new knowledge. These methods contrasted dramatically with the typical approach used in Armenian universities and schools. Under the old system, teachers typically lectured the students, who were required to take extensive notes on what they were told. The most effective methods proved to be interactive ones, including discussions without the active intervention of the teacher, debates, role-playing, psychological tests, modeling various case-studies, flipcharts, brainstorming various gender ideas, and working in small groups.

The AAWUE laid out the conceptual framework for the gender courses and set standards for them. It also drew up syllabi for 20 basic gender studies courses and special courses on gender topics. To support these courses, it produced manuals, teachers’ guides, and collections of scholarly articles. For the high school level, the

association prepared a textbook, recommendations on teaching methods, gender education standards, and a syllabus.

Each year the students who have participated in gender studies courses prepare essays and papers, the best of which are published in a collected volume. Annually between 130 and 150 students write such papers, with about 1,000 produced since 2001. The participants in the national conference meet with members of parliament and prominent social and political activists, giving the students a chance to present their ideas and discuss them with Armenia's leaders. Many students continue to come to the annual gender conferences even after they graduate, demonstrating that they remain interested in the project.

The courses won high praise from the students. The members of our evaluation team met with several sets of university instructors and students in Yerevan (Northern University), Gyumri (State Pedagogical Institute) and Vanadzor (State Pedagogical Institute). Overall, the instructors and students claimed the following results from the courses:

- Several girls said that the courses helped them gain self-confidence and assert themselves. "With gender education, we learn how to realize ourselves in society," was a common theme.
- Many students felt that the courses helped people get along with each other.
- Several instructors pointed out that the women who took the course frequently become better students, more active in politics, and were able to find work faster than those who did not.
- Journalists in the town of Gyumri noted that they liked to work with university students who had been through gender education because they were much more willing to go out and interview people without fear. "These students are willing to fight until the end to get the information that they needed for their articles."<sup>93</sup>

The college students said that they liked the course because "it is the only course about me" and "I am learning about myself." The course provided a useful place for the male and female students to interact and learn better how the other thinks. One female student said that the course helped the male students reduce their stereotypes. At the same time, the females were more openly exposed to the males' opinions. A number of the females said that it was interesting to delve into male psychology and explore the way that men think. One female student appreciated the opportunity to present papers at a conference. Another said that the course helped her identify new themes for journalism.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with journalists in the city of Gyumri, May 22, 2008.

The next step is to further integrate gender education into the overall curriculum so that the content and methodology is not one that is taught to a group of select students, but is made available to all students. In May 2008 meetings with Ilisen and Hasratian, the ministry said that it would now integrate gender education into a required civics course and make sure that gender issues are also addressed in history, political science, journalism, and economics courses. The new curriculum was introduced at a meeting of the rectors in September 2008 and Hasratian plans to review the content of the courses as the implementation process proceeds. According to the current plan, the universities where the pilot programs took place will adopt the new curriculum first and then other universities will join in.

AAWUE representatives in the regions outside Yerevan are optimistic that they will be able to further expand the gender curriculum at the university level. With support from the ministry, these hopes are not unrealistic, but it will take a long time and lots of convincing to move the project forward. The rector of the Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute, Vardevan Grigoryan, a former member of parliament, demonstrated in an interview that he was generally supportive of the gender project, but that he continued to hold relatively traditional views (during an interview he told us that family is the most important thing; within the family, the woman's role is larger than the man's; time spent at work takes away from the family).<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, he was proud of the accomplishments of his institute's students in the annual nation-wide conferences. He showed visitors with pride the students' gender essays that had been published.

#### HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The AAWUE first introduced gender education into secondary schools in the 2002-2003 school year. The program began with a set of pilot projects to see if the high school students would absorb the gender studies material.

To launch the program, the AAWUE set up a competitive process to select the most capable and motivated teachers and provided them with training in gender studies. In the first year of the program, the association provided training to six teachers. Following the initial success of the program, the association then provided training for 36 school teachers for the 2004-2005 academic year.

Initially, the program provided the students with 32 hours of training over the year, one hour per week. The courses looked at the basics of gender knowledge, discrimination, law, human rights, and various aspects of gender equality. Teachers typically prepared courses for their own school or for a small handful of schools. The courses were all focused on teaching the students greater civil responsibility through

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Vardevan Grigoryan, Rector, Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute, Gyumri, Armenia, May 22, 2008.



knowledge of gender equality, rights, and the equal participation of men and women in society.

During the 2007-2008 school year, 27 schools across the country taught gender courses in 33 classes. At the end of each half year, several classes get together to engage in round table discussions of the topics learned. In 2007-2008, the classes all conducted an exercise in which they elected a president, along the lines of the national presidential elections held in February 2008. The students also discussed what would happen if a woman were elected president of Armenia.

Between 2002 and 2008, the high school education program trained 3,650 students, including 2,072 girls and 1,578 boys.

Currently, the courses are taught to select students as an additional topic outside of the usual school time. Teachers typically identified a high performing group of students for the course, assuming that they would be more interested in participating than the average or below average students. The children who took the course were often the object of envy among the other kids who were intrigued by what they heard of the topic and teaching methodology. Given this pre-selection process, it would be hard to compare the students who took the course to their peers who were not exposed to it. While the students who took the gender course may have performed better than their peers as a result of the additional instruction they received, such a result might only reflect the fact that these students were higher achieving in the first place. Nevertheless, these students and their teachers both reported improved performance in school as a result of taking the course. Many students reported putting critical thinking skills developed in the gender course to good use in other courses.

The team of evaluators visited several schools and met with the administrators, teachers, and students. Overall, the students were extremely enthusiastic about the program and bombarded the evaluation team with numerous questions. The students and teachers cited the following benefits from the gender courses:

- Students gain more self-confidence, are more bold in expressing their own opinions, and are more receptive to new ideas.
- Students who take the course are more active in other classes. They have begun to develop their critical faculties in ways that other students have not.
- Girls who take the gender course are much more active in student council than their peers.
- The students said that the courses taught them about themselves and helped them to overcome stereotypes.
- Boys and girls are more respectful towards each other and toward others. “We studied the double burden of women and both boys and girls wanted to help their mothers,” one teacher said.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at School no. 7 and other schools in Yerevan, Armenia, May 20, 2008.

- The girls change faster. They quickly learn what their rights are and are more active and interested in defending those rights. The boys have more difficulties changing their opinions.
- In Vanadzor, students who went through the gender courses were more likely to find good jobs in the region even though there is extensive unemployment there.
- Female students who go out into the workplace are better equipped to deal with misogyny when they encounter it and to overcome male bosses who try to block their career prospects. These young women can identify misogyny for what it is and devise strategies to deal with it.

Many of the teachers we met said that they now have added gender content to all the courses that they teach, for example in literature, history, etc., and that they are introducing the interactive methodology in all of their courses. One teacher noted that “the day when we could simply give a forty minute lecture is over.” Now the high school students particularly enjoy debates and other opportunities for discussion.

#### MOVING FORWARD AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL: PUTTING GENDER ISSUES INTO THE TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM

AAWUE, the ODIHR Gender Program and the high school teachers involved in the gender education program are now preparing a proposal to the ministry so that the gender education course can be integrated into the regular high school curriculum. (Currently the courses are taught after the regular school day as an extra-curricular activity.) The most likely way to integrate this topic into the curriculum is to include it as a section on gender in the already existing civics course. One teacher in Yerevan told us that there are sections of the civics textbook that are largely incomprehensible and could easily be replaced with more interesting subject matter. So far there is no agreement on paper, but these proposals are likely to move ahead.

Through the gender education, Hasratian and her colleagues sought to increase women’s political activities. Research showed that many public officials and civil society activists were unfamiliar with gender concepts and often had little practical sense of what “gender” was. Accordingly, they identified a need to provide training for them as well as for the young people. The result was the establishment of leadership schools.

#### ACTIVITIES OF THE LEADERSHIP SCHOOLS

In order to increase the impact of its gender education work in universities and high schools, AAWUE decided to provide gender education leadership training to members of NGOs and political parties through Women’s Leadership Schools. These schools work to make the overall women’s movement in Armenia more coherent and effective. The graduates of the schools have successfully lobbied policies of interest to all women with the Armenian government.

The AAWUE decided to open Women's Leadership Schools after determining that its work on gender education in the universities and high schools would not be sufficient to affect change in society. A more direct approach was necessary. After successfully setting up its gender education programs, AAWUE decided to establish the leadership schools to teach members of its AAWUE network in the regions and other NGOs about how best to provide gender training. Working with other NGOs would greatly expand the reach of the program. Also, the association recognized that it had to reach out to political parties if it expected to accomplish system change through the parliament. Accordingly, it decided to teach party activists how they could incorporate gender awareness into their work.

Beginning in 2003, the AAWUE has provided training sessions that bring together female members of political parties and NGOs in its Women Leadership Schools. The association has trained 130 women in four sessions that each included 48 hours of class time. About one-third to one-half of the participants are members of the AAWUE. The others are from political parties, including opposition parties. Typically, the NGO women are involved in working on gender education programs in the regions. The leadership sessions focused on political, legal, economic, and social issues and provided practical advice on organizing social-political activities. These sessions sought to help the participants spur greater political and civil involvement among women, increase women's influence on internal party politics, and improve the ability of NGOs to affect policy-making processes.

The organization works equally with the government and the opposition. "They [the government] might not like us, but they have to respect us. I can't imagine only working with the government. We need to actively participate in political life," Hasratian said. The association's research showed that Armenian society was not against women's participation. "In fact, the number of people who support women is growing. People are sick of men's violence."<sup>96</sup>

#### LOBBYING FOR SPECIAL MEASURES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

The AAWUE is working to increase the requirement to include women on political party lists from 15 percent to 25 percent. The group had advocated the 25 percent level from the start, but was only able to achieve 15 percent before the 2007 elections. Now they are pushing for the zebra approach as in Kyrgyzstan to ensure that the women elected on the party lists will actually have seats in the parliament. Under current rules, there is no requirement that women elected must enter the parliament and many women on the list simply give up their seat in favor of a man. The Armenian women learned about the experience of their Kyrgyz colleagues in pushing for these kinds of special measures through their joint participation in the ODIHR Expert Panel. The transfer of this experience shows how the countries can learn from each other.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Jemma Hasratian, May 21, 2008.

Electing more women to parliament will change the quality of policy making. Ararat Marz Deputy Governor Samvel Minasyan stressed that education reform moved ahead so quickly, in part, because the female parliamentarians were pushing this issue.<sup>97</sup> He also claimed that women played a critical role in abolishing the death penalty in Armenia.

## 5. Difficulties/challenges in achieving the results

Naturally, there are risks in promoting the spread of gender education and it is not clear that Armenia's policy makers or educational administrators will accept this approach. At both the university and high school level, students like gender education because it is taught in a different style. Rather than sitting through a formal lecture, students engage in a variety of interactive methodologies. They like the subject matter because it gives them a chance to talk about their own lives or topics like politics. Unfortunately, however, some education administrators fear innovation. It creates a problem when teachers impart civil values to their students. Then the young people start to question the traditional way of doing things and demand further innovations. In Armenia's authoritarian political system, the schools are not currently teaching critical thinking. They typically act as one way streets, where the students passively take in what the instructor tells them. In the current political environment, the country's policy makers do not want to encourage the kind of critical thinking that the gender courses facilitate. Students who do receive this kind of education may decide that they have no place to put their new skills to work in Armenia and simply emigrate to find better opportunities elsewhere.

Despite the obvious benefits of exposing a much larger group of students to gender education, there is some risk involved in moving the gender course from a special activity for a select group of students to one that is taught in the core curriculum. Many of the currently trained gender teachers are not civics teachers and they fear that the some of the important gender elements may get lost in the transition to the more general course and the less-trained teachers. Accordingly, it is important to prepare a high quality high school textbook to be sure that there are uniformly good levels of instruction.

Most high school teachers and students agreed that even if the course becomes a part of the curriculum, the after school discussion club is an important extra-curricular activity and should remain as a free-standing activity. Another idea would be to organize a series of lectures and let the students question the speaker at the end of the talk. This approach would bring some of the gender ideas to a wider audience.

Luckily, ODIHR and AAWUE have powerful friends to help overcome these problems. The Ministry of Education and Science is strongly supportive of the program. Many projects fail, but the kids like this project a lot, according to Narine Oganessyan,

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Ararat Marz Deputy Governor Samvel Minasyan, Aratashat, Armenia, May 20, 2008.

who leads the Directorate of General Education Schools in the ministry.<sup>98</sup> Typically, it is extremely difficult to convince teachers to provide extra instruction outside of their normal workday, even if they receive extra income for doing so. But in this case, the teachers were happy to be involved, Oganessyan said. An increasing number of schools want to set up similar projects in their own facilities. Oganessyan credits the organizers for doing a very good job in the making their program attractive to young people. She also pointed out that the program was affordable and did not place an undue burden on the ministry's budget.

Oganessyan has personally participated in some of the courses and wants to expand the program as part of a general effort to raise the level of tolerance among Armenian school kids. She thinks that it is important now for the state commission responsible for developing textbooks to include gender material into the basic civics text used for Armenian schools. The ministry is also looking at ways to improve the training of the teachers who will, in turn, train their colleagues to teach these courses.

Finally, a key problem for the women's movement in Armenia is a lack of concrete information about the roles and situation of men and women in Armenian society. AAWUE tried to address this problem by conducting two training sessions for members of the parliament in office from 2003-2007, designed to teach them techniques of gender analysis. These courses focused on collecting qualitative information, understanding gender tendencies in the economy, and using this knowledge as an instrument for understanding social processes. These seminars provided an important opportunity for state officials to cooperate directly with a NGO, often for the first time. The heads of several parliamentary committees sat through the sessions for the entire day, demonstrating that they found the material useful for their work.

## **6. Results and Impact in Armenia**

The ODIHR and AAWUE program will have a long-term impact on Armenian society. First, the project helped to increase awareness of gender issues by teaching students the basics of gender analysis and incorporating this approach into their overall studies and thinking. It also has increased awareness among state officials. Second, the program made a strong contribution to the ability of Armenian women to exert leadership roles in Armenian politics and society. Third, the program influenced the adoption of gender sensitive legislation. Fourth, it greatly enhanced the level of expertise among university and high school instructors and spread much of this expertise to the young generation. Thanks to its contribution to Armenian society, there are clear signs that the program will be sustainable over the long term.

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Narine Oganessyan, head, Directorate of General Education Schools, Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Armenia, May 21, 2008.

**Increased awareness within civil society.** The ODIHR/AAWUE gender education curriculum greatly raised the awareness of the thousands of students who participated in the course to promote gender equality and this greater awareness will later have institutional consequences. In particular, the students gained a better sense of democratic values, such as social justice, social responsibility, and the rights and freedoms of people regardless of sex, religion or age and incorporated this approach into their overall thinking.

The courses taught the students about themselves and their place and potential in society. They provided a forum for boys and girls to interact and discuss life issues and aspirations. Many of the instructors and students we interviewed stressed that the courses helped the females gain greater self-confidence and assert themselves. All students grew bolder in expressing their own opinions and were more open to new ideas. The students found ways to improve their ability to get along with each other and increase the level of their political and social participation. They learned how gender can influence their ability to receive an education and pursue their professional careers; they also have a sense of how it shapes their roles in the family and society at large. The students learned how to recognize and overcome gender stereotypes and how to research and analyze the methods used to legitimize the current gender order. The students gained familiarity with the key international treaties on gender issues and learned about the rights of women as a specific kind of human rights. Many of the students discussed what they learned in the course with their parents, spreading their new knowledge and insights among the older generation as well.

Of course, the impact very varies from place to place and person to person. As a consequence of the gender education program, Hasratian said “We expect results, but not right away. Some students become gender sensitive. Many do not. If they change, they will think in different ways. Each teacher in the universities has different results. The outcome depends on skill of the teacher, the students, the region where they live, and the association’s ability to create an environment to support these issues.”

While the ODIHR/AAWUE gender programs have produced good results, it is too soon for there to be a visible impact on the gender situation in the society as a whole. While the number of people aware of gender issues is growing visibly, this group is only a small proportion of the larger population. Therefore a considerable amount of work remains to be done. Producing results at the societal level will take generations.<sup>99</sup>

However, there are some signs of change. In order to win votes from the public, some presidential candidates in Armenia’s February 2008 presidential elections began to use “gender” and related terms to increase their popularity. Additionally, the Rule of Law Country Party stressed the role of women in political life as one of its main campaign themes. These party strategies reflect a growing popular demand for greater attention to gender issues.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Vladimir Osipov, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, and Law, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, and Expert, AAWUE Center for Democracy and Peace, Yerevan, Armenia, May 21, 2008.

**Increased awareness among state officials.** In the past, state officials would resist any gender ideas as anathema. Now they are more involved in the dialogue. However, there is still much more work to be done in this area. Typically, high level officials order their subordinates to address gender issues, but bureaucrats typically fulfill the formal requirements without working to implement the gist of the programs. They pay attention to gender because their superiors tell them to do it.

**Contributed to the ability of Armenian women to play leadership roles.** Going beyond the universities and high schools, the leadership schools instruct women who are working in civil society organizations political parties and can influence gender issues in the parliament as well as the larger political sphere. The sessions focused on political, legal, economic, and social issues and provided practical advice on organizing social-political activities. Many of the graduates of the schools have gone on to be influential members of the community and have achieved some success in passing gender sensitive legislation.

The leadership school improves the way that the participants think about each other and provides ways for them to work together. Usually, the participants come to the sessions strongly advocating their own political point of view or concrete project ideas. Through the session discussions, they learn to compromise together and find ways to coordinate their activities. Additionally, the participants gain the ability to view their specific problems within a much larger context. For example, one graduate told us said that she gained a much stronger understanding of domestic violence from her participation in the school. She had initially approached the problem as an individual based on her training as a psychologist. But now she sees the issue in a much larger social context. Many of the school's graduates have gone on to set up their own NGOs.

One indication of the schools' success is the high demand among women to attend the sessions. The schools are held on an irregular basis, depending on when the AAWUE can find funding for them. Between sessions, the group gathers a long list of women who would like to participate in the next session when funds become available.

As with the university and high school education programs, the graduates of the course frequently claim that it helped improve their self-confidence. One women journalist graduate in Artashat said that in the past she would hold back when business transactions were being conducted in her office. Now she has much more confidence in her judgment and speaks out more frequently. People respect her and accept her decisions.

Women active in political parties said the knowledge they gained from the course helped them rise within the ranks of their organizations. In fact, in some cases, party leaders have become angry that their rank-and-file women are taking the gender courses because these women start to express their own opinions. This kind of resistance is an indicator of success. Typically, women do much of the day-to-day party work and are expected to take orders from the men at the top of the organization. Party leaders do not like having their approach questioned. "I think that over time, as we

move forward, we will meet with ever growing resistance. Increasing resistance is not an indicator that the gender situation is terrible here, but a clear sign that things are starting to change for the better,” one activist said.<sup>100</sup>

**Influenced the adoption of gender-sensitive legislation.** A key example of the school’s impact is the increased cooperation among women working in NGOs and political parties in joint lobbying efforts for issues of importance to women. This increased cooperation has helped to mitigate the lack of unity among the various Armenian women’s groups in pushing for common goals.

Joint lobbying efforts have begun to pay off in some instances because the graduates have successfully influenced government policy. For example, one of the graduates who eventually became deputy minister initiated the adoption by the government of the “National Program for Improving the Situation of Women and Increasing their Roles in Armenian Society” during the period from 2004-2010. Unfortunately, although the plan was adopted, she was not able to secure financial support for it. When she left the ministry, her replacement did not continue pushing to fund the plan. Now a third person has taken the job and is working to streamline the original plan and secure funding for implementation of its core elements.

Additionally, in May 2008, the Armenian government adopted its general program for the period 2008-2012 and for the first time declared an explicit commitment to gender equality (“with the goal of achieving the consolidation of society, building a social state and instilling a socially just policy, the government will work to achieve gender equality, based on equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women in the social, political, and economic spheres.”) This declaration came about through the urging of some graduates who are members of the women’s council in the ruling Republican Party, which controls nearly half of the seats in the parliament.

The school has also had an impact on Armenia’s electoral law. Before the 2007 parliamentary elections, Armenia amended its electoral law to increase the requirement for political parties to include women on their party lists from 5 percent to 15 percent. Ultimately, 10 percent of the women included on these lists were graduates of the leadership school. Moreover, after the election, for the first time in 15 years, the parliament elected a female deputy speaker.

**Increased overall level of expertise.** Through the AAWUE’s training and research programs, it has created a cadre of instructors prepared to teach gender issues at the university and secondary school levels. The Association now runs numerous programs in universities and schools throughout Armenia. In particular, the universities are now training their students to be citizens. Through gender education, they are beginning to equip the students to participate effectively in a democratic society. Thousands of students have incorporated the ideas and methods of gender analysis, greatly improving

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<sup>100</sup> Opinion expressed at a meeting of AAWUE gender activists, Yerevan, Armenia, May 21, 2008.



their critical thinking abilities and their knowledge of legal rights and the skills and confidence to demand that they be implemented.

**Produced evidence of sustainability.** In May 2008, the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science adopted a plan to introduce gender topics into a required civics course for all university students beginning in fall 2008, meaning that the gender education program will be sustainable moving forward. The ministry will also introduce gender topics into other social science courses at the university level, such as history, political science, journalism, and economics. The ministry is currently considering similar plans for adopting gender topics into the high school curriculum. Currently, the courses are taught as an extra-curricular activity. By integrating the gender courses into the regular curriculum, the ministry assures that it will use its own funding for such projects.

## 7. Recommendations

### IN THE EDUCATION SPHERE:

The obvious next step is to move the gender education program at the university and high school level from being special courses taught outside of ordinary class time to ones that are integrated into the standard curriculum. Making gender education a permanent part of the curriculum would ensure that the program is fully self-sustaining and provide a permanent impact on Armenian youth and the future of Armenian society. The most logical way to do this would be to support efforts to overcome the challenges for implementing the new university curriculum and getting gender into the civics curriculum at the high school level.

As gender enters the regular curriculum, it is crucial that the courses begin at as young an age as possible. By far, the most common recommendation we heard from teachers and students was that gender education should begin at a much earlier age so that it is deeply ingrained into young people's consciousness. Many teachers suggested beginning with age-appropriate lessons in the first grade. The instructors consistently said that it is much easier to educate younger kids than to re-educate older ones. If the courses begin early, the schools will be well placed to follow up in later grades with more sophisticated material. Most teachers said that the earlier the intervention, the larger the impact on society.

It is likewise important to maintain the after-school discussion clubs at the high school level. These activities have sparked a large amount of interest and excitement among the students. The children really enjoyed the opportunities they had to discuss issues related to gender, participate in debates and roundtables with other students, and have a chance to express their own points of view. Continuing all kinds of extra-curricular activities that promote these interactive educational methods will provide large payoffs in the future.

#### IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE:

As the educational work starts to take on a life of its own, ODIHR and AAWUE could consider building up the Women's Leadership Schools. There is great synergy between the educational work and the practical tasks of turning gender ideas into real policy through the actions of NGOs and political parties. As the students who have been exposed to gender ideas leave university and high school, they will be looking for ways to act on what they have learned. Channeling this energy and enthusiasm into NGOs and political parties would be an effective way to help them convert their ideas into actual improvements for society. In this sense, the leadership schools would serve as a continuation of the education program.

#### IN THE RESEARCH SPHERE:

Many of our interlocutors made clear that there is simply not enough information available about the gender situation in Armenia. Expanded research efforts would bolster the instructional efforts at the university and high schools. Additionally, this research could help to better inform decision makers about how best to advance gender sensitive policies.

#### IN THE MEDIA SPHERE:

The best way to boost and reinforce the educational efforts would be to launch a media campaign based on the idea that "gender equality is part of a modern society." The campaign would use innovative techniques to promote greater acceptance for women playing a larger role in society. Such an effort would assist the education program and pave the way for renewed efforts to increase the role of women in politics.

#### IN TERMS OF EVALUATION:

The project overall would benefit from doing a better job of monitoring the changes in the students, over the course of the school year and then for several years after graduation. Similar techniques should be applied systematically with the leadership school, where the annual reunions are an ideal venue for longitudinal work. The project managers currently have useful anecdotal evidence suggesting that their work is having a powerful effect, so it would be fascinating to examine their results in detail with a more comprehensive study that tracks all these changes systematically. Gathering this kind of data would also aid calibration of the existing programs and potentially replicating them elsewhere. Additionally, these high-powered efforts would help identify future opportunities for evolving the project.

## GEORGIA

### *Executive Summary*

In Georgia, the ODIHR Gender Program methodology led to a different program strategy from the other countries where it has worked. There it developed a coalition of 80 women's NGOs rather than working with one specific group. Despite the achievements of the Rose Revolution, conditions for promoting gender equality in Georgia are extremely difficult, particularly since the state does not have an executive branch agency devoted exclusively to this goal. In these circumstances, the coalition can ultimately become a sustainable civil society lobby for the increased participation of women in public life across a range of issues, from raising the number of women in elected office to combating domestic violence.

ODIHR has made an impact in Georgia by helping to strengthen the organizational coherence of the women's movement by establishing and developing a new coalition of women's NGOs. Additionally, it has helped maintain the representation of women in Georgian politics, mobilized public support for special measures to increase the presence of women in the parliament by gathering petitions with more than 30,000 signatures, and built capacity to address domestic violence.

On August 7, 2008, one month after we visited Georgia to conduct this evaluation, Georgia launched an attack on the capital of the separatist South Ossetia and Russia responded with a military campaign that included attacks on undisputed Georgian territory. The fighting brought extensive economic destruction to Georgia and further destabilized the political situation. On August 26, Russia unilaterally recognized the independence of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As Georgia seeks to recover from these events, focusing on rebuilding its military, reconstructing the economic infrastructure it lost during the conflict, and aiding the new surge of refugees, the political space for addressing women's issues may be dramatically reduced. On the other hand, the crisis may provide an opportunity, if women's groups can move quickly to show that they can play a vital role at this difficult time.

### *Main Report*

#### **1. Background for the ODIHR program**

The following section lays out the situation in Georgia in 2000, when the ODIHR Gender Program began its work in the country. In some cases, more recent information is included to show the trend line. Section 6 describes the impact of the ODIHR Gender Program.

## GENERAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

Like the other countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Georgia provides a difficult context for ODIHR's Gender Program. As in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, women play a small role in decision-making bodies in the executive and legislative branches. However, Georgia stands out since it does not have an executive branch agency designed to address gender issues. Accordingly, without a focal point, it is very difficult for civil society to organize and influence official gender policy. Since the Rose Revolution, there has been a marked decline in civil society activity.

## CULTURAL CONTEXT REGARDING GENDER ISSUES

Georgia's traditional and patriarchal culture serves as a barrier to the advancement of women. Like its South Caucasus neighbors, Georgia fits an overall model in which low levels of economic development correlate strongly with traditional attitudes toward gender roles for women and men.<sup>101</sup> Like other countries in the region, many in Georgian society hold strongly traditional views, with women's sexual behavior being held up to much greater scrutiny than men's.<sup>102</sup>

Neither the Eduard Shevardnadze nor Mikheil Saakashvili governments devoted much political will to addressing issues of gender equality in Georgia.<sup>103</sup> Accordingly, critical observers have suggested that official gender policies seek to improve Georgia's international image and accelerate European integration rather than actually improve the situation of women.<sup>104</sup>

## POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND KEY GENDER INDICATORS

Women traditionally have little representation in Georgia's most important political offices. The parliament elected in 2004 had 9.4 percent women; its 1999 predecessor had 7 percent, and the 1995 parliament had 6.4 percent.<sup>105</sup> In the 1998 local elections, women won 14 percent of the seats, but this number dropped to 12 percent in the 2002 elections.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 32.

<sup>102</sup> Lia Sanikidze, et al., *The Reality: Women's Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 21, [http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality_ENG.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> This was one of the main conclusions of Lia Sanikidze, et al., *The Reality: Women's Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 4, [http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality_ENG.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> Sanikidze, et al., p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, "Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006," Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, "Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006," Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 19.

In March 2008, Georgia had only one female minister and no women governors.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, there were no female mayors.<sup>108</sup> Following the snap May 2008 parliamentary elections, women make up just 6 percent of the members of parliament (though these numbers may change depending on whether various opposition members continue to boycott the parliament and decide to sit out by-elections planned for September 2008).

DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING, IN PARTICULAR:

- Availability/absence/potential of *key state structure* responsible for the issues of improving women's situation and achieving gender equality

The state gender offices set up in the past produced little impact and were subsequently abolished. President Shevardnadze established the State Commission for the Elaboration of a State Policy for the Advancement of Women on February 20, 1999. This body adopted several policy documents, but had little influence and ceased to exist after the Rose Revolution.

On June 28, 2005, the Georgian government established the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality within the Ministry of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. This office was abolished at the end of 2006 and State Minister of Reforms Coordination Kakha Bendukidze took over the gender equality portfolio, a move that many women activists criticized. When Bendukidze's ministry was abolished in March 2008, the gender equality office disappeared along with it and there were no further plans to create a new one.<sup>109</sup>

Several women's groups are working to establish an effective state office for gender policy and hope to set up an inter-ministerial organ under the office of the prime minister that would be in a position to give recommendations to all ministries. The relevant minister or deputy ministers would then have to address all key issues.

Currently, there are no executive branch offices whose primary job is to address gender inequality. The absence of a state agency focused on gender issues makes it difficult for the government to formulate a coherent gender policy and for civil society to provide input for such a policy.

- Availability of *National Action Plans* on achieving gender equality

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<sup>107</sup> Vasil Gonashvili, *Constitutional Aspects of Gender Equality*, Tbilisi: UNDP project "Gender and Politics in the South Caucasus," 2008, p. 37.

<sup>108</sup> In May 2006. Tamar Sabedashvili, "Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006," Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 19.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Lela Bakradze, National Programme Officer, United Nations Population Fund, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

The Georgian state has paid little attention to gender issues and did not have a coherent policy in place when ODIHR began its activities. On July 24, 2006, the parliament adopted the State Concept on Gender Equality.<sup>110</sup> Although the document did not have legal force, it was considered as a policy framework for the executive branch. The parliament approved a national Action Plan for 2007-2009 in 2007, which called for the creation of a new Inter-Ministerial Commission on Gender Equality. The growing protests against the Saakashvili government in the summer of 2007, culminating in the street demonstrations of November and the subsequent crackdown, halted progress on gender issues. Unfortunately, the action plan is not being implemented.<sup>111</sup>

- Responsibility of *legislative authorities (parliaments)*, their monitoring function in the process of tracking progress in gender equality issues. Availability/absence of special laws on gender equality

The parliament has performed poorly on the institutional front to promote women's causes. In 2004, then parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, the only woman among the three key leaders of the Rose Revolution, established an ad hoc consultative body on gender equality, the Gender Equality Advisory Council under the Speaker of the Parliament, that included MPs and NGO representatives. This advisory council stopped functioning with the expiration of the parliament's term at the beginning of 2008 and a new one has not been set up since the May 2008 elections. Nevertheless, George Tsereteli, deputy speaker of the new parliament elected in May 2008, told us that the advisory council would continue its work moving forward and that it was "crucial" for gender work.<sup>112</sup> Despite his assurances, it remains unclear if the council will be more effective in the future than it was in the past. One observer, who requested anonymity, noted that the establishment of the parliamentary advisory council was a "classic case of ghettoizing an issue." In effect, establishing the council provided an excuse for doing nothing about gender issues.

- Conditions for *non-governmental organizations and lobbyist groups* to impact the political process

In 2000, the situation in Georgia differed from that in Azerbaijan and Armenia because there were many more grassroots NGOs functioning in Georgia than the other two countries. Because Georgia had stronger ties to the west than did the other Caucasus countries, there was a lot more international money for NGOs available at that time. However, most of that money went to the NGOs that had good ties to the government. These well-connected groups were generally not interested in promoting the rise of the

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<sup>110</sup> Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, Department for Statistics, *Women & Men in Georgia: Statistical Abstract*, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Natia Cherkezishvili, Programme Analyst, UNDP Georgia, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Deputy Speaker George Tsereteli, Parliament of Georgia, Tbilisi, July 10, 2008.

grassroots NGOs, which typically worked invisibly and did not attract the attention of international funders.

Following the Rose Revolution, many NGO leaders went to work for the government and there was a notable decline in civil society activity.<sup>113</sup> These leaders now apparently fear that NGOs will create a viable opposition to replace them and therefore have not set up stable channels of communication that would link state agencies and NGOs. Evidence for such conclusions include a briefing by the Georgian government on July 7, 2008, letting foreign donors know that future technical assistance should be provided in “direct response to government requests” and should focus on infrastructure, such as roads and sanitation.<sup>114</sup> The government discouraged projects “which eventually attain policy dynamics of their own.”

The absence of a coherent state structure to deal with gender issues makes it difficult for civil society to promote women’s advancement since there is no obvious partner on the state side.<sup>115</sup> In fact, the lack of a state partner is a problem across a range of issues for civil society because the state has little capacity to deal with civil society input.

Moreover, within the broader civil society, women’s NGOs are often marginalized. The women’s groups themselves are not united and there is little dialogue on gender issues between the state and civil society. In 2007 there were 200 registered women’s NGOs, though not more than 80 were functioning.<sup>116</sup> Even on specific issues, such as domestic violence, international donors like the United Nations have had difficulty organizing NGOs interested in addressing the problem.<sup>117</sup>

Political parties also have minimal impact on the decision-making process, which tends to be highly personalized. Within the parties, men hold the vast majority of the leadership positions and there is little interest in promoting women’s issues or increasing the representation of women in the leadership bodies.<sup>118</sup> While formally acknowledging the importance of gender issues, party leaders stress that their focus is on solving broader economic and social problems. On average, women make up 30 percent of party membership, but usually perform low-level jobs within the parties.<sup>119</sup>

Against this broader political context, women’s groups have made progress in such specific areas as domestic violence and human trafficking. Domestic violence is a prevalent problem in society that, until recently, has gone largely unreported and unattended by the medical community and law enforcement agencies. Various

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<sup>113</sup> Ghia Nodia, “Georgia” in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2008: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*, [http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh\\_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Georgia-final.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Georgia-final.pdf).

<sup>114</sup> Glenn Kessler, “Georgian Democracy A Complex Evolution,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 2008.

<sup>115</sup> Ghia Nodia, “Georgia” in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2008: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*, [http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh\\_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Georgia-final.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fdh_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Georgia-final.pdf), p. 233.

<sup>116</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, “Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006,” Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Tamar Sabedashvili, UNIFEM Gender Adviser for Georgia, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

<sup>118</sup> T. Abramishvili et al., *Gender Monitoring and Analysis of Political Parties of Georgia 2005*, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 99.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Tamar Abramishvili, International Center for Education of Women, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008.

estimates say that the problem affects 5 to 31 percent of Georgian families.<sup>120</sup> In May 2006, the Georgian parliament adopted a law on eliminating domestic violence and providing protection and support to its victims.<sup>121</sup> While the law does not directly criminalize domestic violence, it provides for social services and shelter for victims, protective and restrictive orders, child safety, prevention programs, and outlines police duties, among other provisions.<sup>122</sup> Georgia adopted an action plan on addressing domestic violence in 2007. In 2006, Georgia also adopted a law against human trafficking. Unfortunately, the state has not shown sufficient political will in implementing the law on domestic violence<sup>123</sup> and has not provided sufficient funding to implement its measures.<sup>124</sup> There are very few resources to address the problem.

- *Mass media* and tradition of covering gender issues

The Georgian media does not view questions of gender equality as important, thanks largely to the patriarchic values widespread in society and the widely held traditional gender stereotypes. Accordingly, ODIHR considered it important to support journalist groups interested in promoting the ideas of equality through the mass media. In the coalition, one of the key themes was devoted to the media. The results of ODIHR's work in the media are among the most visible.

- *International organizations and institutions* in the country working on gender issues

Georgia differs from the other countries where ODIHR works because Western funders have provided much more extensive funding for NGOs working in the country. These NGOs played a vital role in the Rose Revolution. After the revolution, however, many of the NGO activists went to work in the government and many of the international grants followed them there.

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<sup>120</sup> Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the Institute for Policy Studies, *Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Georgia: An Assessment of Current Standings of Law and Practice*, Tbilisi, December 2006, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Passing this law was not easy. See the discussion in Lali Nikolava, "Blizorukost': kak u nas obsuzhdalsya Zakon o domashnem nasilii," in *Zhenshchina i grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, Tbilisi: GenderMediaKavkaz, 2006, pp. 101-4.

<sup>122</sup> For more information on legal measures for prevention and combating domestic violence, please see Report on the monitoring of the use of legal protection mechanisms under the Georgian law on domestic violence, prepared by the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Tbilisi, 2007, available at <http://www.stopvaw.org/sites/3f6d15f4-c12d-4515-8544-26b7a3a5a41e/uploads/Monitoring.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Interview with George Chkheidze, director, and Irma Aladashvili, head of the women's program, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Tbilisi, July 10, 2008. See also Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the Institute for Policy Studies, *Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Georgia: An Assessment of Current Standings of Law and Practice*, Tbilisi, December 2006, p. 2 and Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, *The Monitoring of Using Legal Protection Mechanisms with respect to the law on "Preventing of the Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of the Victims of the Domestic Violence" (September 2006-June 2007)*, Tbilisi: ABA Rule of Law Initiative, 2007.

<sup>124</sup> Lia Sanikidze, et al., *The Reality: Women's Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 22, [http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermil/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality_ENG.pdf).



International organizations working in Georgia all face similar problems in that their efforts are simultaneously a blessing and a curse. In some cases, when locals cannot get something done, international organizations can succeed. At the same time, international activity is a curse because it takes attention away from locals. International generosity can hurt local political processes by intervening and preventing actions from developing spontaneously. Nevertheless, under current conditions, such problems are unavoidable.

Georgian NGOs are typically reliant on foreign funders and currently have few prospects of being able to tap into domestic sources. Accordingly, it makes sense for foreign funders like ODIHR to intervene and provide Georgian citizens with the capacity to organize coherent groups that can then work together to achieve commonly-defined goals. The provision of expert advice and targeted financial support helps give the locals the ability to figure out for themselves the best way to address the country's problems.

## **2. Analyses of why ODIHR chose this direction of work in Georgia and also why ODIHR selected this partner. Impact.**

### STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

In Georgia, the ODIHR Gender Program methodology led it to use a different program strategy than it employed in the other countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. In each of the other countries, the program partnered with established NGOs that had a clear focus. In Georgia, the ODIHR Gender Program did not select one partner to coordinate its activities. Instead, since there are many grassroots NGOs operating in Georgia, ODIHR works to develop a coalition of NGOs that can serve as a sustainable civil society lobby for increased participation of women in public life. Rather than develop the capacity of a specific NGO, it is working to develop a multifaceted women's movement that can deal with a variety of issues, ranging from increasing the number of women in public office to combating domestic violence.

When the ODIHR Gender Program conducted a survey of the local scene in Georgia in 2000, it found approximately 20 NGOs working at the grassroots level on such issues as helping disabled women find jobs or assisting women who were caring for disabled children. Other international organizations typically did not pay much attention to these NGOs, instead handing out money to elite-level NGOs whose members spoke English and had the capacity to write convincing grant proposals.

To best assist the large number of grassroots NGOs working in Georgia, ODIHR designed a strategy seeking to unite these organizations and support their development and viability so that they could serve collectively as an effective force to increase the role of women in Georgia's decision-making process, promote gender equality, and ensure that gender aspects are introduced into Georgian legislation.

The first goal was to build up the overall capacity of Georgian NGOs, greatly expanding the range of NGOs that had access to international funding. An integral part

of this effort was supporting people who had an idea to do something, while eliminating groups that existed mainly to make money. Part of this process was helping the grassroots NGOs reach the international level, particularly with the ability to write effective grant proposals.

The second goal was to promote greater cooperation among Georgia's NGOs. The groups existing at that time did not work well together. ODIHR's focus was to get beyond the idea that women's groups could not get along. In an effort to promote the best possible kind of cooperation, ODIHR does not favor one group over another in Georgia, trying to treat all equally.

The third goal was to improve the ability of NGOs to work effectively with the state. Uniting the disparate women's groups into a cohesive force would give them much greater credibility in the eyes of the authorities.

The coalition of women's groups can achieve more working together than the individual members can achieve on their own. The common goal is to increase the role of women in Georgia's policy-making process across a number of issues, from increasing the number of women in representative institutions to combating domestic violence. Working together gives the groups an authority that individual groups have difficulty mustering on their own.

### **3. Analysis of methodology used by ODIHR in the country. Impact.**

The ODIHR Gender Program's attempt to build a coalition of women's groups in Georgia is an effort to get past some of the major problems facing the gender field in the country. In Georgia, as elsewhere, there tends to be a few powerful NGOs that try to monopolize all the grants.<sup>125</sup> ODIHR sought to develop the coalition instead of supporting one NGO to provide a way for a much larger group of less visible NGOs outside the elite to combine their efforts in an attempt to achieve the common goal of increasing the role of women in politics. Naturally, bringing together a variety of groups with their own particular interests is bound to be a messy process and one that will not achieve results quickly. In addition to the broader interests of the women's movement, each of the individual groups has its own particular interests. In these conditions, some level of disagreement among the groups was inevitable. Nevertheless, the goal is worthwhile since a well-organized women's movement would be a more effective advocate for change than a motley collection of NGOs.

The coalition has started to build a name for itself as an organization that can carry out specific tasks. Most importantly, by combining efforts, the members achieved their greatest accomplishment to date: gathering more than 32,000 signatures in support of special measures to increase the representation of women in the Georgian parliament. This achievement showed that the coalition members have real organizational ability and serves as a strong base for moving forward. Moreover, it

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Irakli Vacharadze, Programme Coordinator, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

shows that the coalition is more than just the sum of its individual parts in the sense that it was able to accomplish something that the individual members could not have achieved on their own.

Critics of the idea of building a coalition of NGOs argue that the coalition is wracked by internal conflict, leading many groups to suspend their participation and giving the overall enterprise a bad reputation. The critics also point out that the coalition members have few concrete common interests and that the coalition was established by the ODIHR from the outside, rather than at the request of the groups themselves. While such criticisms deserve attention, they miss the fundamental point that the multiple challenges that Georgian society faces in transferring public priorities to the policy sphere justify the support of ODIHR in building local capacity to organize and set priorities among diverse, but inter-twined, stake-holders. There is little public discussion of policy and not all groups are able to participate in the public discourse that does take place. In fact, the very purpose of the ODIHR intervention is to give Georgian groups the capacity to articulate their top priorities and then support means to redress them. This process will neither be quick nor straightforward. Nevertheless, ODIHR has demonstrated a long-term willingness to stick to the project of building the organizational capacity and infrastructure of Georgian civil society.

The coalition has a long history of internal fights, with some describing it off the record as “disorganized,” “dysfunctional,” a victim of “personality conflicts,” and “lacking internal democracy.” Many groups have stopped participating in coalition activities and some observers say that they are turned off by the political battles inside the coalition. Members of one group described the coalition as useful because it introduced them to a variety of new groups, but ultimately there was too little progress and the problems inside the coalition outweighed the benefits, so the group stopped participating in coalition activities. In this sense, the coalition has encouraged a perception that it is ineffective in some quarters, with many serious people saying that they do not want to be associated with it.

Partly, this internal fighting results from the intense competition among the member NGOs as they seek funding for their specific projects from the same pool of international donors. The leaders of the various NGOs that are part of the coalition often claim that the funders should provide their specific group with greater support. Likewise, they criticize international donors for funding projects that employ different methodologies than their own, questioning the value of such work. For example, in the area of combating domestic violence, some groups see the most useful approach as working in close cooperation with the police, while others emphasize the importance of doctors in addressing the problem.

While the consequences are naturally unpleasant, it is not entirely fair to blame the NGOs for simply pursuing their own self interest. In some ways, the competition among the NGOs is a result of the behavior of the donors. As one observer pointed out,

“Unhealthy competition among donors for areas of work and resources has created unhealthy competition among the NGOs.”<sup>126</sup>

Another common criticism is that the coalition members do not have concrete general interests beyond the very abstract goal of advancing the cause of women. The groups making up the coalition often have few common interests because they are all at different stages of organizational development. Some of the new groups benefit greatly from networking opportunities provided by the coalition so that they can meet other players and learn the basic skills of organizational development. Other groups are already mature, so merely networking and learning rudimentary organizational skills is not interesting for them.

One possible way for the coalition members to work together would be for them to unite efforts and jointly seek funding.<sup>127</sup> However, again, when the different groups are at different stages of development, the more mature groups are more likely to be able to obtain resources from donors, while newer groups are at a disadvantage in the competition for access.

Another line of cleavage was that representatives of Tbilisi and regional members often did not see eye to eye. Regional women frequently saw their Tbilisi colleagues as too arrogant and uninterested in their specific concerns.

One possibility is that the Georgian women’s movement is simply not ready to form a coalition. According to the analysis of Tamar Sabedashvili, ODIHR decided to create the coalition from the outside and then drove the women’s groups to cooperate. The idea for a coalition did not come from below and left alone, the women’s groups would not have sought to form one. Sabedashvili argues that setting up the coalition was a mistake since, she claims, it is impossible to consolidate women’s groups

*“merely through top-to-bottom approaches i.e. international donor/development organizations’ import of priorities, conditions and tools to local groups. Such an approach in this case is detrimental, as actors locally learn to comply with the demands of international donor organizations instead of finding the resources and strength to first look around and identify their own context-specific priorities.”<sup>128</sup>*

*The top-bottom approach was the main cause of tension, Sabedashvili argued in meeting with us.<sup>129</sup>*

To some extent, this criticism is not fair. One reason why a top-down intervention in Georgia is necessary is that there is little discussion of key problems facing women in Georgian society and the media. As a result, groups have difficulty organizing and working toward common goals.<sup>130</sup> The key is to raise the level of

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<sup>126</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, “Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006,” Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 39.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Ia Verulashvili, President of the Women’s Center, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008.

<sup>128</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, “Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006,” Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 41.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Tamar Sabedashvili, UNIFEM Gender Adviser for Georgia, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with George Chkheidze, director, and Irma Aladashvili, head of the women’s program, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, Tbilisi, July 10, 2008.

participation so that all the different groups have the ability to express their points of view. Building a coalition of women's NGOs is one small way of accomplishing this goal.

#### **4. Short description of activities: what actually has been done, in which regions of the country, with which partners**

##### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COALITION

Since its establishment in 2000, the coalition has evolved through two distinct phases. Initially, the coalition had a purely horizontal structure to emphasize the creation of a movement rather than any one specific NGO. This structure ultimately proved ineffective. Following the 2006 local elections, the coalition members elected a Coalition Council of 11 individuals to provide more coherent leadership. This council is just beginning to work, so its ultimate effectiveness has yet to be seen.

ODIHR established the Coalition of Women's NGOs ([www.wcg.org.ge/eng](http://www.wcg.org.ge/eng)) in 2000 and it currently has 80 groups as members. The coalition initially developed as separate groups in the capital city of Tbilisi and in the regions. In Tbilisi, the coalition evolved between 2000-2004 through a series of regular meetings organized by different groups within the coalition on a rotating basis, and trainings, seminars, and summer schools for coalition development.

Initially, the coalition was set up on a purely horizontal basis and divided into seven thematic working groups. These included:

- Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building
- Politics
- Education
- Healthcare
- Economics
- Media
- Environment

With the emphasis on developing a movement rather than privileging any particular group, the coalition did not have a leadership body to guide its actions.

Ultimately, however, this structure proved unworkable. In particular, after campaigning to elect women to local councils in the October 2006 elections, the coalition members realized that they needed to create a governing body to provide more structure for the coalition and better distribute resources among the members. With only horizontal ties and no formal leadership structure, the organization lacked direction and effectiveness. Members felt that their contribution to the coalition's efforts were not equal, resulting in strained feelings and arguments.

In March 2007, the coalition set up an ad hoc working group to prepare advice on how to make the coalition function more effectively.

One year later, on March 18, 2008, the coalition approved the plan put forward by the working group and voted to establish a Coalition Council, whose 11 members will be in office through the end of 2009. The meeting also introduced membership fees (with the amount determined by an organization's experience and success; new organizations pay less but still enjoy full member privileges). With the new structure in place, the ODIHR Gender Program leadership feels that the members are now starting to work together better as a team.

The reforms adopted in March 2008 also defined the strategy of the coalition more clearly. The main theme of all coalition efforts is that equal opportunity should be part of Georgia's democratic development. In particular, the coalition is focusing on the topic of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in Georgian society. Moving forward, the coalition will address these goals in five areas:<sup>131</sup>

1. Monitor government programs to ensure that they are transparent and accessible;
2. Work with political parties as a way to ensure that special measures (quotas) are included in Georgia's electoral law and law on parties to increase the representation of women in parliament, on party lists, and in party leadership positions;
3. Gain voter support for women's causes by working with them through NGOs, media, academics and regional programs;
4. Train new members of parliament on gender issues; and
5. Work to create an executive branch agency that will address gender issues.

During the initial four years, the Tbilisi women made clear that it was necessary to work in the regions. Accordingly, as the Tbilisi group developed, ODIHR also supported the establishment of the Regional Women's Leadership Network, bringing together 22 women's organizations from 11 regions of Georgia (excluding the conflict areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and this group joined the larger coalition in August 2004. Most of the women in the regional coalition represent indigenously-developed organizations rather than local branches of Tbilisi-based organizations. These groups are more likely to focus on local priorities and their human capacity will tend to stay in place even as priorities change in Tbilisi.

The coalition sought to build productive ties between the Tbilisi-based groups and those working in the regions. ODIHR provided trainers to help develop the regional network and these meetings usually included one representative from the Tbilisi groups who could describe to their regional counterparts what was going on in the capital. To the extent that it made sense and was possible, Tbilisi-based groups worked with

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Charita Jashi, professor, head of the Association "Gender for Social-Economic Development," Tbilisi, July 11, 2008.

regional groups, especially as they first started out, and developed mentoring relationships with them to help them build up their capacity.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Beyond working in Tbilisi, the ODIHR Gender Program is active in the regions by supporting a wide variety of activities. The coalition members outside Georgia's capital work on local issues dictated by the needs of their regions with resources shaped by their ability to raise funds from international and local sources. The relationship between these groups and the local authorities depends on the specific conditions. Nevertheless, the groups have managed to establish themselves as important parts of their local communities, raise the profile of local women candidates, establish relations with the local authorities, and serve as ombudsmen, helping victims of domestic violence obtain the services that they are entitled to receive.

In addition to its nation-wide activities in such things as the elections and combating domestic violence, ODIHR has supported activities specific to 11 discretely defined regions outside the Georgian capital. This network, registered in April 2008, does not include Tbilisi representatives so that it can focus on the specific needs of the regions. The network includes two representatives from each of the regions. All of the regional organizations are simultaneously members of the larger coalition, and thus have projects that are coordinated with Tbilisi and projects that are separate from the capital. Since the regions have interests that are different from those in the capital, it makes sense to address them separately.

ODIHR supports small-scale community projects in all 11 regions. Among these projects are:

- Efforts to increase the awareness of vocational education opportunities for women;
- Community meetings among local authorities and women's organizations in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kvemo Kartli regions;
- A series of trainings on women's leadership skills and political participation in Kakheti, Guria, Racha, and Imereti
- and a community-based initiative in upper Svaneti to identify and address cases of bride kidnapping and domestic violence.

The regional chapter in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, neighboring Tbilisi, is involved in a range of activities, funded by ODIHR and a host of other international donors, including: setting up a center to combat domestic violence, monitoring local prison conditions, supporting female candidates in local and national elections, and

publishing pamphlets portraying successful women in the area.<sup>132</sup> From ODIHR, the group has received training on women's rights, domestic violence, increasing the role of women in decision-making, and techniques for increasing the activities of women during the elections. In this region, the local women had managed to elect 15 percent to the local government council in 2006, slightly better than the average in the country as a whole.

The Mtskheta group has now established itself as an important member of the community. Local officials respect its work and consult with it when they must address gender issues. Ordinary citizens appeal to the group to help them obtain state services when they are not able to figure out how to work the system themselves. For example, the group provides direct aid to victims of domestic violence. In one case, the Mtskheta group provided legal support for a victim in obtaining her share of her family's property through the courts from her husband's family. The Mtskheta group has also set up a hotline and receives victims in its office. In addition, they provided two days of training to local patrol police, after which they built up good relations with them. In this way, the group serves as an unofficial ombudsman between the state and society. It helps state officials understand gender issues and helps individual members of society navigate the state's aid systems.

Nevertheless, despite these accomplishments, ODIHR's work in the regions faces considerable challenges. While ODIHR's local partners are generally free to conduct their activities as they see fit, they have very few opportunities to influence public policy and little impact on its content. At the regional level, as at the national level, there is no responsible agency in the local executive branch to deal with gender issues. In September 2005, the local government in Mtskheta set up a Gender Equality Service at a time when other regions were also creating similar offices. However, an administrative reform at the end of 2006 dictated the abolition of these offices across the country in an effort to reduce the number of government employees and streamline management. According to women we interviewed in Chokhatauri, a small village in western Georgia, these services were not used because currently there is not enough demand for them in society.<sup>133</sup> They were set up artificially and therefore were not able to have a big impact. In Mtskheta, there is one female civil servant who remains interested in gender issues, though this topic is not part of her official duties. Since there is no one specifically to address with their concerns, the women activists claim that they need to rely on the good will of the authorities to get things done.<sup>134</sup> Local government officials, from the presidentially-appointed governor to his subordinates, generally express support for gender causes (especially when elections are approaching), but typically do not follow up on these declarations with financial support. For example, the group in Mtskheta had

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Tamar Maisuradze and Khatuti Kariauli, representatives of the Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition, Mtskheta, Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region, July 7, 2008.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Maia Gogoladze, Manana Jincharadze and other representatives of civil society in Chokhatauri, July 8, 2008.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with a local government official in Mtskheta, July 7, 2008.



sought additional state aid for mothers with many children and single mothers, but no funds were forthcoming to help them. In Chokhatauri, the women activists said that they had trouble working with the local government because it was so disorganized.

Building ties with the local government and parliamentary representatives from the regions will be important moving forward. Currently, the Mtskheta group does not have a program to work with the woman council members once they are elected. Likewise, the group in Chokhatauri has no relationship with the women who were elected to the national parliament.

Despite these difficulties, it is crucial that ODIHR continues working with indigenous NGOs in the regions outside of Tbilisi. It is often the case, in Ajara for example, that local NGOs cannot compete with organizations that come in from Tbilisi with outside funding from international donors. These Tbilisi-based organizations set up regional branches that have a lot of funding for one or two projects. However, when these projects are over, the Tbilisi-based groups usually pull out of the region, without leaving behind any regional capacity. Accordingly it makes much more sense to work with local groups that will stay in the region even after current project funding runs out because these indigenous groups are the ones most interested in building up local capacity.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, ODIHR might lift the artificial two groups per region limit since some regions boast several groups that could play an active role in the coalition.

## ELECTIONS

The coalition actively participated in Georgia's 2006 local elections and 2008 parliamentary elections. The October 5, 2006 local elections were important because they were the first elections held on democratic principles after the 2003 Rose Revolution. Likewise, the campaign was the first collective effort by the members of the coalition to support women in local elections.<sup>136</sup> In these elections, ODIHR brought in experts from South Eastern Europe who provided knowledge on how to increase the number of female elected officials by backing women candidates and working with political parties. During the campaign, women from the coalition organized a series of public awareness events, meetings with women candidates and political party leaders, and information seminars with voters in 11 regions of the country. The coalition provided training to 160 female candidates across the country, offered mentoring for the candidates with current office holders, and gathered all the participants together after the elections to assess what had been accomplished and prepare future actions.<sup>137</sup> The coalition could not provide gender analyses of the party programs as these were not available. In these efforts, the coalition working group had the additional support of

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Sveta Logua and Sopiko Lafia, representatives of the Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition in Batumi, Ajara, Georgia on July 8, 2008.

<sup>136</sup> Group Women in Politics, "Simultaneous Campaign of the Coalition of NGOs Working on Women and Gender Issues," unpublished manuscript, no date.

<sup>137</sup> Group Women in Politics, "Simultaneous Campaign of the Coalition of NGOs Working on Women and Gender Issues," unpublished manuscript, no date.

the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and Heinrich Boll Foundation.

Overall, 197 women (11.36%) were elected as members of district and municipal councils from a total of 1,734 councilors. In the 1998 local elections, women won 14 percent of the seats, but this number dropped to 12 percent in the 2002 elections.<sup>138</sup> Although the proportion of women in office decreased over time, these results were considered relatively favorable after the abolition of village-level councils, which had been considered relatively more accessible to women, and the establishment of higher level representational units. Typically, the bigger the administrative units, the fewer women elected as women generally do better in smaller electoral districts.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, the president held the elections as early as legally possible, which made it more difficult for the women to organize. Round tables held after the elections served as a catalyst for building relations between the newly elected officials and the members of the coalition. Nevertheless, more work could be done to build up these relationships.

The May 2008 parliamentary elections took place in unusual circumstances. After violently suppressing street demonstrations in November 2007 and destroying the broadcast equipment of the most opposition-minded television broadcaster, President Saakashvili called snap presidential elections for January 5, 2008. On that day voters also approved a referendum moving parliamentary elections up from fall 2008 to May. These events took the coalition by surprise and forced them to hastily organize their campaign effort.

In the 2008 campaign, the coalition members held a number of press conferences that gave an expanded platform to individual groups. Within this framework, ODIHR provided expert advice on methods for developing public information and media campaigns on gender equality and efforts to integrate gender issues into political party platforms. During the March-May period, the coalition ran a large-scale campaign to promote increased women's participation. In taking the campaign to the street, the coalition borrowed some of the techniques first developed by AST in Kyrgyzstan, for example, letting women put their face in small billboards that depicted a male body with a ponytail. These actions gained wide visibility for the coalition's activities and generated excitement among the women's groups in the regions.<sup>140</sup>

Nevertheless, the outcome of the elections was disappointing since women won only 6 percent of the parliamentary seats and the new MPs were generally not associated with the women's movement. However, despite this setback, the women took great pride in demonstrating strong public support for special measures to increase the number of women in parliament.

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<sup>138</sup> Tamar Sabedashvili, "Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006," Tbilisi 2007, [http://georgien.boell-net.de/download\\_ru/Gender\\_and\\_Democratisation\\_eng.pdf](http://georgien.boell-net.de/download_ru/Gender_and_Democratisation_eng.pdf), p. 19.

<sup>139</sup> Lia Sanikidze, et al., *The Reality: Women's Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 17, [http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermail/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermail/alltickers/fr/att-0915/Reality_ENG.pdf).

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Tamar Maisuradze and Khatuti Kariauli, representatives of the Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition, Mtskheta, Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region, July 7, 2008.

During the 2008 campaign, in addition to backing female candidates, the coalition organized a signature collection effort designed to build and demonstrate public support for temporary special measures to ensure greater female representation in the parliament (quotas). The current Georgian electoral law does not discriminate by sex, but it also does not provide any guarantees that equality will be achieved.<sup>141</sup> The coalition announced that it had gathered more than 32,400 signatures at a May 2, 2008, press conference, well above the 30,000 required to place an issue on the parliamentary agenda. If adopted, the proposal would require that the sexes divide the seats in parliament 50:50. The coalition members stated that they had proposed such a number as an initial bargaining position, and would be happy with a 25 percent quota. Relevant parliamentary committees are likely to begin discussing this proposal in Fall 2008.

The very fact that the coalition was able to gather so many signatures was an excellent indication of its growing organizational power. The coalition members had made numerous attempts to achieve this goal since 2000, including with the backing of female members of parliament, but none had been so successful in demonstrating substantial public support.<sup>142</sup>

The idea to gather signatures in support of the special measures developed spontaneously among the coalition members as they were preparing for the snap parliamentary elections.<sup>143</sup>

The issue of special measures (quotas) is very controversial in Georgia. International Center for Education of Women (ICEW) research conducted on the issue showed that it might be a useful way to quickly increase the number of women in parliament.<sup>144</sup> Quotas can be effective where there are enough qualified and willing women to fill the spots created for them. However, there were several risks involved in proposing such measures in the Georgian context. In conditions of imperfect democracy, the government could use the quota system to install less than desirable women in office. Quotas are often top-down directed, even if pushed from below. The problem is that top party leaders pick which women they want on their lists and these women may not necessarily be connected to the women's movement. Additionally, there is little support for the idea among Georgia's current leaders. One foreign observer who follows Georgian politics closely told us that the overriding philosophy in Georgia is "libertarian

<sup>141</sup> Vasil Gonashvili, *Constitutional Aspects of Gender Equality*, Tbilisi: UNDP project "Gender and Politics in the South Caucasus," 2008, p. 37.

<sup>142</sup> No author, "Increasing Women's Participation in Democratic Processes: Activity Report," and interview with Natia Cherkezishvili, Programme Analyst, United Nations Development Programme, Tbilisi, July 11, 2008. For an account of the early efforts to achieve quotas, see Polina Milaradovich, "Monolog o kvotakh," in *GenderMediaCaucasus, Zhenshchina na vybory*, Tbilisi: GenderMediaCaucasus, 2004, pp. 9-15, and Lali Nikolava, "Shturmovat' parlament," in *Ibid*, pp. 149-52.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Tamar Abramishvili, International Center for the Education of Women, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008.

<sup>144</sup> T. Abramishvili et al., *Gender Monitoring and Analysis of Political Parties of Georgia 2005*, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 104.

rather than liberal.”<sup>145</sup> The government members largely oppose quotas, saying that the state should not determine gender proportions in the parliament. Georgian political parties also currently do not accept this idea. According to an analysis by the respected political scientist Ghia Nodia, “all parties agree that introducing quotas for increasing the role of women in politics is not the way to make progress.”<sup>146</sup> To ensure that the quotas have a chance of being adopted, and to build on the momentum that the women generated during the parliamentary campaign, the coalition will need to devote a lot of effort to lobbying this initiative through the parliament in the fall. The real challenge and opportunity will be to follow up on the legislative process that has now been initiated.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ODIHR has focused some of its resources in Georgia on combating domestic violence, providing assistance to several different groups working in this area. These groups take different approaches to addressing the problem, with the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia (AVNG) cooperating closely with the police, while the Women’s Center emphasizes work through the medical profession. Both groups have trained a large number of professionals in their respective areas.

ODIHR provides expert assistance and funding to the AVNG, which organizes a variety of activities in both Tbilisi and the regions. AVNG organizes training sessions for Georgia’s police to give them the skills they need to deal with domestic violence cases. The group runs a shelter in Tbilisi, 10 regional crisis centers, and works with a network of approximately 400 people to provide a wide variety of legal and psychological services to victims.<sup>147</sup> In the regions, the group brings together local women’s rights activists with local government representatives from rural areas to organize training sessions on implementing Georgia’s 2006 domestic violence law. AVNG receives support from a variety of sources, including the Open Society Georgia Foundation, US embassy in Georgia, TASO Foundation, UN Population Fund, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, and the British embassy, among others. The Tbilisi headquarters provides some fund-raising help to the regional groups which are also registered separately so they can each raise money on their own.

With support from ODIHR and several other funders, the AVNG has built a strong relationship with Georgia’s police and has trained over 150 police officers about how to intervene in cases of domestic violence. In Tbilisi, the group works with Levan Matchavariani, the deputy head of the Tbilisi City Patrol Police, Main Division. Since the police reforms carried out by Saakashvili after the Rose Revolution, the police chief lists

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<sup>145</sup> Background interview in Tbilisi, July 10, 2008. This observer was not aware that the coalition had submitted more than 32,000 signatures in support of quotas.

<sup>146</sup> Ghia Nodia and Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *The Political Landscape of Georgia: Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects*, Delft: Eburon Delft, 2006, p. 178.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Nato Shavlakadze and Eliso Amirejibi, Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008 and see the website: <http://avng.ge/aboutus.htm>.

the force's ability to address domestic violence as a serious criterion in evaluating police performance. During the last two years, the police have intervened in more than 500 cases of domestic violence in Tbilisi and they have never been called back a second time to the same family.<sup>148</sup> Matchavariani attributes this success to a new police program in which a psychologist visits the families after the first police intervention to monitor positive evolution in the family relationship. After the police are initially summoned to a house, the psychologist visits once a day or once every few days. As conditions improve, his visits become less frequent. As a result, the victim feels that she (and in a small number of cases, he) has outside support, while the perpetrator understands that an outsider is monitoring the situation. Currently, every police group in Georgia has some members who have been trained in domestic violence issues. ODIHR has helped these processes by providing funds for training in the regions and support for Georgian police to visit their peers in Austria.

In addition to the police training, AVNG runs the only functioning domestic violence women's shelter in Tbilisi as well as regional crisis centers with ODIHR support and provides counseling via phone and consultations on legal, medical, and psychological aspects of domestic violence. ODIHR helps support AVNG's shelter with expert advice on victim rehabilitation and the development of legislation related to victim protection and rehabilitation issues. The program has created working groups of experts that promote improvements to domestic violence legislation and policy.

In an assessment, the UNDP gave AVNG high marks for its achievements, particularly those sponsored by ODIHR:

The United Team of Trainers, initially trained with support of OSCE/ODIHR, is well prepared to conduct trainings on domestic violence and human rights. These trainers could serve as a good source of information on these topics for the general public and different professionals dealing, or having exposure to the cases of domestic violence.<sup>149</sup>

Moving forward, AVNG would like to amend the law on domestic violence, which needs to be updated. Additionally, the group seeks to further develop its internal capacities in a variety of areas where ODIHR is well positioned to help. AVNG wants greater capacity to advertise its services to the population and to find other donors. Likewise, the group would like to train judges on issues of domestic violence and develop the crisis center. ODIHR can assist here through help in the lobbying process and providing expert advice. Currently, AVNG leaders estimate that Georgia is dealing

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Levan Matchavariani, the deputy head of the Tbilisi City Patrol Police, Main Division, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008.

<sup>149</sup> UNDP, Assessment Report on the Activities of the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, November 2006 available at: <http://avng.ge/aboutus.htm>.

with only 10-20 percent of the problem and they hope to address the currently unmet needs.

In addition to its work with AVNG, ODIHR supports awareness raising and capacity building among medical professionals to effectively identify and address health-related effects of domestic violence. The Women's Center, a member of the coalition composed of medical school professors and practicing doctors run by Ia Verulashvili, has set up a curriculum to train new doctors on domestic violence diagnosis and treatment. The curriculum helps doctors screen, assess, and document cases of domestic violence. It also makes them aware of the legal issues and community resources available for domestic violence victims. The group produced two training manuals, *Domestic Violence: The Health Sector Responds* and *Medical Aspects of Domestic Violence*, which also help doctors develop techniques for talking about domestic violence with their patients even when representatives of the husband's family accompany the patient during her medical exams. Since this program is certified by the academic licensing board, doctors can take the course as part of their required continuing education. During 2007-2008, 120 doctors participated in the training workshops in Tbilisi.

It is important that doctors provide this training to other doctors, according to Verulashvili.<sup>150</sup> Otherwise, the doctors might conclude that the woman's victimization is not their problem. That would be unfortunate because domestic violence contributes to numerous medical problems, including infertility, underweight newborns, and high maternity death rates, among others.<sup>151</sup> Therefore Verulashvili argues that doctors must play a prominent role in addressing domestic violence. While many women may be reluctant to call the police, they will seek medical help, giving doctors an opportunity to intervene, she notes.

The Women's Center cooperates with AVNG and Tbilisi's domestic violence shelter, providing medical advice when necessary. It also helps train the police in the basic techniques of forensic medicine.

Verulashvili argues that Georgia's 2006 law on domestic violence is not implemented as well as it should be and the key now is to work with the government to ensure that it adopts effective programs. Verulashvili sees the next step as a greater public awareness campaign that would inform the members of the public that they can obtain initial assistance regarding domestic violence from their doctors. Once doctors identify the problem, it is up to social workers to follow up. Verulashvili complains that international funders like the UN have devised their own set of programs that do not take into account local concerns such as her own.

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Ia Verulashvili, President of the Women's Center, Tbilisi, July 9, 2008.

<sup>151</sup> See I. Verulashvili and M. Mzhavia, *Medical Aspects of Domestic Violence*, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 102.

## 5. Difficulties/challenges in achieving the results

For ODIHR, working with so many different NGOs created extensive administrative problems. Rather than coordinating with and transferring money to one organization, ODIHR had to work with numerous different groups across the country. Ultimately, this burden proved too great. Accordingly, the regional network registered as a legal entity in 2007 and the overall coalition registered in 2008 so that ODIHR could transfer financial support to the two registered networks and the network organizations could then pass on money to the individual NGOs.

## 6. Results/Impact in Georgia

ODIHR has made an impact in Georgia by helping to strengthen the organizational coherence of the women's movement by establishing and developing a new coalition of women's NGOs. Additionally, it has helped maintain the representation of women in Georgian politics, mobilized public support for special measures to increase the presence of women in the parliament by gathering petitions with more than 30,000 signatures, and built capacity to address domestic violence.

**Built civil society capacity by strengthening the women's movement.** By helping to build up a coalition of women's NGOs, ODIHR has made many contributions to increasing the role of women in Georgia's public life. The coalition has started the difficult process of combining the strengths of various women's NGOs in pursuit of broad goals backed by all members of the women's movement. It has demonstrated organizational ability in collecting more than 32,000 signatures to increase the number of women in the Georgian parliament, built the capacity of individual member groups, sought to cooperate with state bodies, expanded out into the regions beyond Tbilisi, and has brought new women into the movement.

The work of the coalition helped the individual members to build their capacity. Each of the individual groups involved were able to network with other organizations in Georgia and abroad, learn about what other groups were doing, and define a niche for themselves that would be complementary to existing NGOs. The individual members also gained experience working on internationally-funded projects and hopefully can extend that experience to other funders and other project areas.

Beyond networking and project experience, the groups have learned new skills which have helped them obtain new forms of work. For example, in Mtskheta, researchers associated with the coalition developed an effective methodology for polling the population to determine popular attitudes. Now the local government hires the group to do surveys determining popular attitudes toward local government programs.

The coalition has built up local NGO capacity at the regional level and developed network ties among the various NGOs working across Georgia's regions. Beginning with

its efforts in 2001, ODIHR was the first international organization to work in all of the Georgian regions, including places like the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region, which, because it is near Tbilisi, is often overlooked in favor of the conflict regions or those in the western part of the country. Now there are trainers in all regions of Georgia who can serve as a resource to other women.<sup>152</sup> The various regional groups are increasingly known around the country among other activists and, likewise, have built up a network of contacts in the other regions. They are often able to exchange experience and ideas. For example, the Mtskheta group did an analysis of local waste management practices. Subsequently, they shared the results of the study with other regions throughout the country, facilitating an exchange of best practices.

In addition to their growing national presence, the regional groups are well known within their own communities. Local people know that the coalition members are working on gender issues. Now ordinary people often appeal to them for all sorts of help with rights violations. In this sense, the local groups act as ombudsmen, helping ordinary citizens to understand their rights and to work their way through the local government to obtain the services that they need and are entitled to. As trained lawyers and doctors, the members of the local groups provide citizens with legal or medical advice. In many cases, the citizens do not know how to formulate their requests so that they will be effective and the women's NGO helps them make clear what they want. Teaching people to communicate with the authorities is often a first step in getting them into a position to be able to help themselves.

In regions like Mtskheta-Mtianeti, the local women's group built up valuable expertise in the gender area and provides this information to local government officials to help inform their decision-making processes. Local government officials now ask for help in designing projects. The women's groups respond by providing a working plan in which they are able to prioritize problems and then deal with them. In this sense, the groups are much more active now than they were in 2001 and they have better communication with the local government. ODIHR trainings have taught the groups how to express themselves and, accordingly, they are able to get better results from the local government in the case of individual claimants.

Finally, the ODIHR-sponsored trainings on women's rights encourage previously inactive women to play a greater role in public life. The trainings helped activists identify women in their areas who were interested in doing more work. Prior to these trainings, such women had often played no public role and had mainly only been involved in their family life. These women took their first steps into active life with the support of ODIHR.

**Maintained political representation for women.** The coalition organized a country-wide effort in the 2006 local elections that helped women across Georgia win political representation despite the difficult circumstances of the elections. The elections filled

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with women activists in Chokhatauri, Georgia, July 8, 2008.



11.36 percent of the seats with women. Although the proportion of women in local public office continued to decline, this result was considered reasonably good because it came immediately after the authorities had abolished the lowest-level elective bodies, depriving women candidates of the chance to win public office where they had the greatest advantage. The results of the 2008 parliamentary campaign were disappointing, with only 6 percent of the new MPs being women.

**Mobilized public support for special measures.** The coalition took advantage of the difficult situation for women candidates to mobilize support for special measures to increase the number of women in parliament, an accomplishment that energized the coalition's efforts. In collecting more than 32,000 signatures in favor of special measures, the coalition demonstrated its strong institutional capability.

**Built capacity to address domestic violence.** In the area of domestic violence, the coalition has provided extensive training to doctors and policemen who are on the frontlines of the problem and has helped set up a network of crisis centers and a shelter.

## **7. Recommendations for the future**

During the course of our research, we considered a variety of proposals regarding the future of the coalition. Ultimately, it makes the most sense at this point to continue working with the coalition and trying to build on its recent successes.

**Build on the coalition's success.** One can imagine a number of ways for the ODIHR Gender Program to move forward in Georgia. One possibility would be to now pick an NGO partner as it has done in other countries where it works and concentrate its limited resources on that one group. Another idea would be to break the coalition up into smaller functional groups, such as its seven initial working groups, and let these groups move forward together. Such an effort would retain the collaborative aspects of the coalition, but focus them into specific issue areas, such as domestic violence, where the collaboration can be developed most fruitfully. Despite the merits of these ideas, however, the most effective route forward would be trying to maintain as many groups as possible in the coalition and build on its success in collecting signatures for special measures to increase the representation of women in parliament.

In the other countries where the ODIHR Gender Program works, it has always had a single partner. In Georgia, there was a large collection of active grassroots NGOs. So instead of focusing on one of them, ODIHR worked to develop a network of the existing organizations, seeking to develop the capacity of several of the individual NGOs and providing a coalition mechanism that would allow them all to pool their efforts in larger common causes. One of the results of this work is that the program has succeeded in building up some strong NGOs. At this point, it may be possible for ODIHR to reconsider its earlier decision not to partner with a specific NGO in Georgia and now

“pick a winner.” The advantage of such a strategy is that it is likely too hard to develop an entire women’s movement with ODIHR’s limited resources. Also finding a partner would help ODIHR concentrate its resources as it does in the other countries, focusing on a project where it can excel. Having facilitated the creation of a few viable NGOs through the coalition is a major achievement in itself, even if many of the NGOs associated with the coalition ultimately are not able to survive on their own. Building on this success, ODIHR could work more closely with one of the NGOs that it has developed. NGOs in the area of domestic violence and media would make logical choices, particularly since spreading limited resources over a variety of topics and organizations does not lead to coherent output.

While the idea of “picking a winner” has its merits, having come this far with the coalition, it nevertheless makes more sense to continue efforts working with it. While the evolution of the coalition has not been easy, ODIHR and the group members have demonstrated a capacity to evolve, particularly by establishing a Coalition Council to give the organization more coherence.

Now that the coalition has a concrete achievement in terms of collecting more than 30,000 signatures for the special measures petition, it has an obvious focal point for developing its activities. On the heels of this success, coalition members can promote the cause of increasing the role of women in the national parliament by coordinating efforts in Tbilisi and the rest of the country to lobby for the special measures. Even if this campaign is not successful, pursuing it aggressively will greatly increase the visibility of the coalition.

**Follow up on the legislative process initiated by the petition.** The most important next step for the coalition is to follow up on its ability to collect 30,000 signatures with an effort to get the parliament to approve special measures to increase the number of women in parliament. If the coalition does not do this, it will lose the momentum that it built up in the first part of 2008.

**Develop a media strategy to raise the profile of the coalition.** Encouraging a public debate about the special measures to increase the representation of women in parliament would put pressure on the president and current members of parliament to pay more attention to this issue. A successful media strategy will therefore be key to making progress across all of the Gender Program’s goals.

**Work with women members of parliament.** Engaging the current women members of parliament will be essential to gaining approval for the special measures. Following the example of AST in Kyrgyzstan, the Georgian coalition could give its newly-elected female MPs useful advice on the benefits of increasing female ranks in parliament as well as practical sessions explaining how to perform gender analysis of legislation and election codes at the national and local levels. The Georgian NGOs face an uphill struggle, however. The female MPs in Georgia are different from their counterparts in

Kyrgyzstan. While several of the Kyrgyz MPs had a long relationship with the women's movement and were generally open to gender training, the women in the Georgian parliament will first need to be convinced that it makes sense for them to spend their time addressing gender issues. Hopefully, the media strategy will develop greater demand for attention to these issues.

**Work harder with political parties.** The coalition should make an intensive effort to work with political parties and provide them with more gender education so that they will start to include more women on their lists on their own. This strategy could be effective even if the effort to adopt quotas goes nowhere. The Georgian women could benefit from the experience of the ODIHR program in Armenia in this regard.

**Focus on 2010 local elections to increase the number of women in public office.** In conjunction with efforts to adopt special measures at the federal level, the coalition can build on its 2006 and 2008 electoral experience to increase the number of women in local decision-making bodies. The coalition members will need to do research on the situation at the local level, identify the best kind of electoral system that will help women in local elections, and lobby special measures designed to increase the representation of women at the local level. It will also need to begin organizing soon to identify viable female candidates.

ODIHR should make a strong effort to support coalition members as they follow up and build relations with women politicians after elections. It is, of course, especially important to build relationships with the winners, but the losers could also be important if it looks like they might have a future in politics.

Additionally, coalition members should assume that the next elections will be snap elections with no time for planning and be prepared for that because holding unscheduled elections seems to be the pattern in Georgia's unpredictable political environment. The coalition should always have a plan in reserve and be ready to move quickly when the snap election occurs.

Part of the local campaign could be to increase women's participation in decision-making processes by decentralizing more power to local levels. Currently, local councils do not control their budgets. Decisions are made at the regional level, rather than at the local level, and then handed down. Women working at the local level want to change the law on local government to decentralize budget power even further. This change will then provide women with greater incentive to become involved in local government work. Tbilisi-based coalition members are assisting in lobbying parliament on these issues, helping the regional groups accomplish tasks that they otherwise would not be able to accomplish by themselves at the regional level.

## METHODOLOGY FOR CONDUCTING THE ODIHR GENDER PROGRAM EVALUATION

### *Executive Summary*

This project addressed two goals. First, after several years of activities, the ODIHR gender program was due for an evaluation that would enable it to take stock of past achievements and define the path forward in the four countries where it has worked: Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Second, the ODIHR Gender Program sought to provide its partners in the four countries with training to conduct evaluations on their own. The Jefferson Institute conducted the evaluation between October 2007 and September 2008 in coordination with representatives of the Agency for Social Technologies (AST), ODIHR's program partner in Kyrgyzstan, thereby using the process of writing the evaluation as an exercise in learning by doing to transfer evaluation skills to the partners. Furthermore, in each of the four countries, the evaluation team provided technique trainings on qualitative evaluation methods to local participants. In implementing the project, the evaluators gathered information about the ODIHR Gender Program from the documents it had produced and other written sources; interviewed ODIHR staff; conducted field visits to Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia to interview ODIHR partners, program participants, and others; and provided evaluation methodology training sessions for ODIHR program partners in those countries. After preparing a draft of the evaluation, the authors met with representatives of the ODIHR Gender Program to discuss its findings and recommendations.

### *Goals of the Evaluation Project*

This evaluation project addressed two issues. First, after more than five years of activities, the ODIHR gender program was due for an evaluation. The evaluation examined the activities conducted and their impact on the countries where they took place (Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia). It also made recommendations for improving project activities moving forward. The evaluation should provide valuable feedback to funders in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the program and highlight areas where further work is needed.

Second, in order to develop the capacity of its partners, ODIHR sought to provide them with the ability to conduct evaluations on their own. This skill will improve the implementation of current projects and allow for improved program management in the future. Accordingly, the Jefferson Institute conducted the evaluation between October 2007 and September 2008 in coordination with representatives of the Agency for Social Technologies, ODIHR's program partner in Kyrgyzstan, so that the process of writing the evaluation would simultaneously transfer evaluation skills to the Kyrgyz group. Additionally, in each of the four countries where the team conducted the evaluation, it provided training sessions in evaluation methods for participants in ODIHR programs.

ODIHR staff identified these issues internally and took the initiative to address them. This project seeks to provide ODIHR staff and partners with the opportunity to reflect on what the ODIHR Gender Program has accomplished so far and how it can move forward most effectively. It also offers an opportunity to sum up past accomplishments to provide useful feedback to donors. A key element of the evaluation is the development of material to inform a broad audience as to how ODIHR gender programs are impacting the societies where they are working.

### ***Implementation***

In implementing the project, the evaluators gathered information about the ODIHR Gender Program from the documents it had produced and other written sources; interviewed ODIHR staff; conducted field visits to Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia to interview ODIHR partners, program participants, and others there; and provided evaluation methodology training sessions for ODIHR program partners in those countries. Our work proceeded along the following schedule:

October 3-5, 2007: Warsaw Evaluation Planning Meetings: In meetings with the ODIHR Gender Program staff, the Jefferson Institute experts began working out the methodology for conducting the training and evaluation sessions. Program staff identified the goals of the program in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia and listed the key program impacts. Program staff described the overall situation in working with funders, other departments of the OSCE, and local partners. Discussions laid out the situation in each of the four countries. We identified the various types of data to be collected, both qualitative and quantitative, and discussed the various advantages and disadvantages of each type.

#### OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 3, 2007: VIENNA WRITING SKILLS WORKSHOP/EVALUATION TRAINING

Jefferson Institute experts provided a detailed training session in how to prepare an evaluation for ODIHR staff members and partners. This training session covered the goals of the evaluation, the structure of the final product, the context in which the program work took place, ways to measure the impact of the program, methodologies for conducting interviews (including identifying the most useful people to interview), methodologies for examining the impact of the program's publicity and advocacy components, and an examination of the recommendations that the evaluation would ultimately produce. Participants in the training session provided examples from their gender work in illustrating the general points about how to conduct an evaluation. There was an extremely fruitful dialogue that united the general aspects of conducting an evaluation and the specific experiences of the ODIHR Gender Program work.

**Day 1:** Jefferson Institute experts met with ODIHR Gender Program staff to map out the details of the evaluation work. They focused on preparing a time plan with proposed activities.

**Day 2:** Jefferson Institute experts met with ODIHR Program Staff and the Kyrgyz partner organization members in order to begin defining a joint methodology for conducting the evaluation. After an introductory session, the Kyrgyz team presented the evaluation they had conducted of Azerbaijani efforts to develop the Regional Women's Network in 2006. Following the presentation, the Jefferson Institute experts provided a critique of the evaluation, identifying its strengths and weaknesses and making suggestions on how to improve this work. All agreed that the 2006 text could serve as a basis for conducting the next evaluation, but the structure will have to be substantially reworked and the content updated.

**Day 3 and 4:** Jefferson Institute experts, ODIHR Program Staff and the Kyrgyz partners began the actual work of the evaluation by systematically going through each of the four countries to be studied and identifying questions that could be asked in terms of measuring the extent of impact in each country. We developed a list of questions (see attached appendixes) specific to the four countries to assess progress in:

- Shifts in social norms
- Strengthened organizational capacity
- Strengthened alliances
- Strengthened bases of support
- Improved policies, and
- Overall impact.

The participants also identified key interview subjects in each country in order to obtain the necessary information in upcoming field visits. We sought out a diverse and representative collection of stakeholders, with emphasis on actors beyond the immediate circle of direct OSCE partners and beneficiaries. Also, we gathered information useful in defining the political context in Kyrgyzstan that is relevant to the development of women's rights there.

#### MARCH 26 - APRIL 3, 2008 : PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN KYRGYZSTAN

JI experts interviewed the ODIHR program staff in Bishkek about the program goals, methodology, and impact. Subsequently, the JI experts met with members of AST. The AST staff laid out their key program activities in working with ODIHR and the main results and impact of these activities. In Bishkek, JI experts interviewed gender experts in the presidential administration, members of parliament, journalists, television executives, professors, activists in various NGOs dealing with gender issues, and members of the Women Can Do It! network. Each of these individuals provided general information on the overall context for gender work in Kyrgyzstan as well as specific information about the ODIHR program and its impact on the local community. Additionally, the JI experts spent two days in Jalalabad to meet with the leadership of the Women's Resource Center in that city as well as many of the local women who use the center. In particular, we met with representatives of the local administration, NGO activists, and journalists in Jalalabad.

#### MARCH 30, 2008 - TRAINING FOR KYRGYZ PARTICIPANTS

JI experts provided a one-day seminar for the members of the Women Can Do It! network in Bishkek. Participants included women leaders from across Kyrgyzstan. The first part of the workshop provided a brief overview of the various evaluation techniques currently employed by the international community. The second part was a practical seminar that helped the women define the overall context of their work, identify ways to measure their results and impact in quantitative and qualitative terms, and then, based on this past experience, lay out recommendations for future work. The seminar drew heavily on the participants' own experiences and therefore provided them with practical advice on how to explain the work that they were doing and present it to state officials, other members of the community, evaluators and potential funders.

#### APRIL 23 - 30, 2008 - PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

JI and AST experts interviewed the ODIHR program staff in Baku about the Azerbaijani program goals, methodology, and impact. The JI and AST experts also met with the leadership of Symmetry, a non-governmental organization that is the ODIHR program partner in Azerbaijan. Since the main focus of the work in Azerbaijan is on working with the police to combat domestic violence, the JI and AST experts met with a variety of police officers and instructors at the police academy who are involved in training Azerbaijani police in how to deal with cases of domestic violence. Likewise, since Symmetry is comprised of doctors, we met with several doctors, who volunteer with the organization to provide training to the police. In addition, to these interviews, the JI and AST experts met with members of parliament interested in domestic violence, representatives of other international organizations, NGO activists dealing with

domestic violence, journalists, other media professionals, and academics. All of these individuals provided us with overall context about the situation with domestic violence and gender issues in Azerbaijan and information about the impact of the ODIHR work there. In addition, the JI and AST experts traveled to the cities of Belokany and Zakataly to meet with the local representatives of the Women's Regional Network there. In addition to meeting with the regional coordinators, we interviewed local academics, journalists, and NGO activists who are working to promote the greater involvement of women in civic life.

#### APRIL 27, 2008 - TRAINING FOR AZERBAIJANI PARTICIPANTS

AST and JI experts made a brief presentation on standard evaluation techniques for leaders of the women's regional network in Azerbaijan. This session included a brief introduction to evaluation techniques and suggestions on how the women could best present their own work and its impact to state officials, members of their community, outside evaluators and potential funders.

#### MAY 19-23, 2008 - PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN ARMENIA

AST and JI experts met briefly with ODIHR Gender Program staff in Yerevan to discuss the goals, activities, and impact of the Gender Program's work in Armenia. We also met with the leadership of the Armenian Association for Women with University Education, ODIHR's program partner in Armenia. In Armenia, the main focus of the program was providing gender education at the university and secondary school levels. Accordingly, in Yerevan, Artashat, Gyumri, Stepanavan, Spitak, and Vanadzor, we met with numerous high school and university students, their instructors, school administrators, and university rectors to discuss the gender education courses and their impact on the students and instructors. Additionally, we spoke to officials in the Ministry of Education and Science who oversee the implementation of the gender education program. Likewise, we met with members of parliament, NGO activists, journalists, and academics who are involved in promoting increased political participation among women in the country.

#### MAY 21, 2008 - TRAINING FOR ARMENIAN PARTICIPANTS

In Yerevan, the JI experts held a training session for members of the Armenian Association for Women with University Education and their colleagues on the basic types of evaluations currently used by international organizations. Since many of the participants had had experience preparing evaluations, the roundtable discussion focused on techniques for measuring program impact in a situation in which the gender equality situation is not improving overall.



JULY 7-11, 2008 – PROGRAM ASSESSMENT IN GEORGIA

AST and JI experts met with a wide variety of women's groups across Georgia who participate in the coalition assembled by the ODIHR Gender Program. These groups focused on a wide range of goals, including promoting the role of women in politics, combating domestic violence, and increasing the role of women in the media. In addition to meeting with women in Tbilisi, we traveled to Mtskheta, Batumi, and Chokhatauri to assess the work of women's organizations in the Georgian regions. Additionally, we met with members of parliament, journalists, and representatives of international organizations to get a sense of the situation in the country.

JULY 11, 2008 – JI EXPERTS PROVIDED A WORKSHOP ON EVALUATION STRATEGIES AND METHODS FOR MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S NGO COALITION COUNCIL

The discussion focused on the methodologies typically used by international organizations. The discussion focused on indicators the participants can use to measure the success of their various projects.

JULY 2008 – JANUARY 2009 – JI AND AST EXPERTS PREPARE THE EVALUATION.

### ***Impact/Results***

Beyond the written report and the evaluation methodology training sessions, the main result of this process has been for ODIHR staff to step back from their day-to-day work to conduct a self-analysis of their project work. The daily work of projects often obscures a clear view of the overall goals of the program and a substantial assessment of how these projects impact the societies where they are taking place. Initiating an internal evaluation has given the ODIHR staff a chance to pause and to systematically reflect on these bigger issues. The evaluation offers a chance to see what works and what does not. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity to think about how to improve the work of the program moving forward so that it will continue to have a significant impact on the countries where ODIHR is operating.

The ODIHR Gender Program involves a large number of projects working across numerous countries. One of the key results of the evaluation work has been gaining a greater sense of how to unify the overall program goals to increase the coherency and impact of the specific projects.

The main achievement of the evaluation training sessions in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia was to assist the participants in thinking systematically about how to prepare an effective evaluation. These sessions were an effective blending of preparing the evaluation of ODIHR's work and learning-by-doing since they provided practical guidance on how the participants could best present their

own work to a variety of audiences, including their own governments, other members of society, potential new donors, and evaluators.

Additionally, the participants learned about the basic elements that must be included in a program evaluation. This process was a transfer of know-how and concrete skills, giving the partners expertise in evaluation work, which they did not possess before. Partner organizations have not conducted systematic evaluations in the past to identify what makes their programs effective. These skills will help them improve the overall work of their projects and ensure that the projects are designed to have the maximum impact on society possible.

### ***Interviews Conducted***

#### ODIHR

- Vladimir Shkolnikov, Head, Democratization Department

#### ODIHR GENDER PROGRAM STAFF

- Tiina Ilsen, Director
- Nana Kalandadze, Gender Officer
- Anna Platonova, Project Officer
- Jolanta Cichocka, Gender Unit Assistant

#### KYRGYZSTAN (MARCH 26-APRIL 2, 2008)

#### **Bishkek**

- Mira Karybaeva, Expert, Agency for Social Technologies
- Vladimir Korotenko, Expert, Agency for Social Technologies
- Gulnara Ibraeva, Director, Agency for Social Technologies
- Zulfiya Kochorbaeva, Expert, Agency for Social Technologies
- Anara N. Niyazova, Deputy Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Cholpon G. Abdullaeva, Member of Parliament, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Youth, Gender Policy, Physical Culture, and Sport
- Oleg Semenenko, Human Dimension Officer, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Centre in Bishkek
- Saltanat N. Barakanova, Director, The Migration Fund under the State Committee for Migration and Employment of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Olga Filippova, Expert, Economic and Social Policy Department, Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Tursunbek Akun, Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Nazgul Tashpaeva, Head, Department for Social Policy, Government staff

- Bybyusara Ryskulova, Director, Crisis Center Sezim
- Taru Kernisalo, Attache, Project Manager, Delegation of the European Commission to the Kyrgyz Republic
- Irina Kozlinskaya, Journalist
- Gul'nara Mambetalieva, Journalist
- Almagul' Dzhumbaeva, National University
- Peter Sondergaard, Resident Country Director, International Republican Institute
- Alisher Mamasaliev, Member of Parliament
- Laina Kulikova, Member of Parliament
- Roza Otunbaeva, Member of Parliament
- Gul'zhamal Sultanalieva, Member of Parliament
- Dinara Oshurakhunova, Executive Director, Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society
- Aida Kurbanova, Program Manager, Association of Civil Society Support Centers
- Ainuru Altybaeva, Chair, Political Council, Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary Political Party
- El'mira Bekbaeva, Ministry of Finances
- Medina D. Aitieva, Instructor, Sociology Department, American University of Central Asia
- Kiyazbek Kekiev, Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Nurgul Asylbekova, UNDP Country Programme Gender Coordinator
- Ernia Kyiazov, Deputy Director, National Television and Radio Company
- Numerous members of the Women Can Do It! Network

## **Jalalabad**

- Zhanna Saralaeva, Director of the Jalal-Abad Women's Resource Center, and activists from the center
- Dil'bar Chokoeva, Dean, Jalal-Abad State University
- Umsunai Kadyrkulova, Head of the Social Department, Jalal-Abad Oblast Administration
- Sanam Narmatova, Deputy Head of the Jalal-Abad City Administration for Social Issues
- Chynara Zhusupova, MO "Aris"
- Numerous members of the Women Can Do It! Network in Jalalabad

## **AZERBAIJAN (APRIL 23-29, 2008)**

### **Baku**

- Kamila Dadashova, President, Symmetry
- Solmaz Gadzhieva, President, Women Oil Workers
- Khadija Ismayilova, chief trainer, International Center for Journalists

- Mehriban Zeynalova, Chairman, Temiz dunya Social Union Clean World
- Farid Babayev, Assistant Representative, United Nations Population Fund
- Bakhar Muradovoi, Vice-Speaker, Parliament
- Karl-Heinz Grundboeck, Deputy Head, Vienna Police Academy
- Bakhar Muradovoi, Vice-Speaker, Parliament
- Boyukagha Mammadov, Chairman, 215KL Independent TV Company
- Alena Myasnikova, journalist, newspaper *Zerkalo*
- Asim Mollazade, chairman, Democratic Reforms Party
- Ulviyya Mammadova, International Women's Program Coordinator, OSI-Assistance Foundation Azerbaijan
- Elmira Suleymanova, Ombudsman, Azerbaijan Republic
- Esmer Hajiyeva, Director, Azerbaijan Expert Centre on Mental Health & HIV/AIDS
- Charles S. Rice, Country Director, International Center for Journalists
- Azay A. Guliyev, Member of Parliament, President, National NGO Forum of Azerbaijan
- Farid Babayev, Assistant Representative, United Nations Population Fund
- Malakhat Gasanova, Member of Parliament
- Khidzhran Guseinova, Chair, State Committee for the Affairs of Families, Women, and Children
- Ul'viya Mamedova, Head, Women's Program, Open Society Institute
- Mekhrab Tukanov, Head, Department for International Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Numerous members of the Regional Women's Network

### **Belokany**

- Belokany Women's Resource Center

### **Zakataly**

- Women's Regional Network

ARMENIA (MAY 18-23, 2008)

### **Yerevan**

- Jemma Hasratian, President, Armenian Association of Women with University Education
- Alla Bakunts, Demographic Governance Portfolio Analyst, United Nations Development Program

- Gyulnara Hovhannisyan, Director, Ministry of Labor and Social Issues' National Institute of Labor and Social Research
- Sven Holdar, Democratization Officer, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office in Yerevan
- Tsovinar Harutyunyan, Senior Democratization Assistant, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office in Yerevan
- Vladimir Osipov, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, and Law, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, and Expert, AAWUE Center for Democracy and Peace
- Narine Oganessyan, head, Directorate of General Education Schools, Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Armenia
- Tamara Hovnatanyan, President, ProMedia-Gender NGO
- Larisa Alaverdyan, Member of Parliament
- Zaroui Postandzhyan, Member of Parliament
- Gulnara Oganessyan, Director, National Institute of Labor and Social Studies
- Hermine Nagdalyan, Member, National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Chair, Women's Council of the Republican Party of Armenia
- Boris Makichyan, Rector, Northern University
- Instructors of gender courses and students of the Journalism Faculty, Northern University
- Victoria Rukhkyan, Principal, School no. 7
- 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and teachers at School no. 7

### **Artashot**

- Samvel Minasyan, Ararat Marz Deputy Governor
- Anait Hakobyan, Head, Education Directorate
- NGO representatives
- Teachers and students at School no. 5

### **Gyumri**

- Vardevan Grigoryan, Rector, Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute
- Elena Vardyanian – Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute
- Institute instructors and students who have completed gender courses
- Journalists
- Teachers and students of School no. 29
- Karine Bazeyan, Director, Shyrak Resource Center of Gender Education
- NGO representatives
- Lida Nanyan, Governor, Shyrak Marz

## **Vanadzor**

- Gourgen Khachatryan, Rector, Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute
- Susanna Tumanyan, Vice Rector, Vanadzor State Pedagogical Institute
- Students who have completed gender courses and participate in discussion club
- Lecturers
- Representatives of NGOs, political parties, alumni of the Women's Leadership School, journalists
- Teachers and students of School no. 1
- Nian Oganessyan, Director, Vanadzor Resource Centre for Gender Education

## **Spitak**

- Teachers and students of School no. 6

## **Stepanavan**

- Teachers and students of School no. 2

GEORGIA (JULY 7-11, 2008)

## **Tbilisi**

- Lela Bakradze, National Program Officer, United Nations Population Fund
- Natia Cherkezishvili, Program Analyst, UNDP
- Nino Lagvilava, Gender and Politics Program Officer, UNDP
- Lela Bakradze, UNFPA Program Officer
- George Tsereteli, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Georgia
- Tamar Sabedashvili, UNIFEM Gender Adviser for Georgia
- Tamar Abramishvili, International Center for Education of Women
- George Chkheidze, Director, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
- Irma Aladashvili, Head of the Women's Program, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
- Charita Jashi, professor, head of the Association "Gender for Social-Economic Development"
- Nato Shavlakadze, Anti-Violence Network of Georgia
- Eliso Amirejibi, Anti-Violence Network of Georgia
- Levan Matchavariani, the deputy head of the Tbilisi City Patrol Police, Main Division
- Ia Verulashvili, President of the Women's Center
- Helen Russetskaya, Women's Information Center
- Irakli Vacharadze, Program Coordinator, Heinrich Boll Stiftung
- Maya Kuprava, Single Parents Association

- Galina Petriashvili, Gender Media Caucasus
- Mary O'Hagan, Country Director, National Democratic Institute
- Nino Vardosanidze, Program Officer, National Democratic Institute
- Galina Petriashvili – Association GenderMediaCaucasus
- Members of the Women's NGO Coalition Council

### **Mtskheta**

- Tamar Maisuradze, Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition
- Khatuti Kariauli, Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition
- Local government official

### **Chokhatauri**

- Maia Gogoladze, Manana Jincharadze and other representatives of civil society

### **Batumi**

- Sveta Logua and Sopiko Lafia, representatives of the Women's Regional Network/Women's Coalition
- Natia Surguladze, Deputy Mayor

## ***Kyrgyzstan - Indicators for Measuring Progress toward Goals***

***Goal: Increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote equality of rights and opportunities***

### GENERAL CONTEXT

- How do women lack equal rights and opportunities in the country? How are these inequalities manifested? (Political power? Economic power? Jobs? Religion? Social status?)
- What is the overall context for civil society in the country? (How many groups? How active are they? What issues do they address?)
- What is the state of relations between civil society and the state? (Do officials welcome input from civil society and incorporate it into decision-making? Does the state try to suppress civil society groups?)
- Is there agreement on the nature of the problem regarding gender issues between state and civil society actors? (Do they have similar views on women's rights, opportunities, levels of participation in policy-making, problems with domestic violence? If there are differences, what are the main areas under dispute? How does each side justify their different points of view?)

- Do state officials and civil society actors both see gender issues as being important?
  - How visible are these issues?
  - Do officials and civil society actors take these issues seriously?
  - Are officials and civil society actors willing to devote time to these issues in order to formulate government policy?
  - Are officials and civil society actors willing to devote public money to them?
  - Are there mechanisms of cooperation for state and civil society actors on these issues?
  - Are these issues widely discussed in the media?
  - Are they frequently topics of private conversation? (We will measure these indicators by evaluating the perceptions of the officials and civil society actors that we interview.)
  - Have there been changes in beliefs, attitudes toward women’s issues over time – Is it possible to talk about an evolution of ideas?

## STAKEHOLDERS

### **Educators**

- Are there educational standards for gender issues? What are they? How are they different from other states?
- How has faculty behavior changed after gender programs?
- Has student behavior changed after graduation?

### **Policymakers**

- How many state offices for gender issues have been created? What are they? What is their status and mandate within the government?
- Are the state bodies dealing with gender issues effective (and how)? How have they evolved over time? Can we draw conclusions on the influence (if any) of the organizational structure/staffing/other resource allocation has on the efficiency of the specific government bodies (e.g. large structure in Azerbaijan vs. small body in Kyrgyzstan)?
- What specific types of gender issues are government officials willing to address? What issues does the government actively refuse to address? Does the government invite women’s participation on a variety of issues beyond “women’s issues”?
- What kind of mechanisms for co-operation are there between citizens and officials on gender issues? Do these mechanisms provide changes in policy? Do they affect the way that policies are actually implemented?



## Civil Society Groups

- Number of individuals active in civil society groups (this can only be an estimate, perhaps a percent of the population)
- Number of women's groups and alliances (Are there a few big groups? Or are there lots of little groups? If the latter, would they be more effective if they combined forces?)
- Do these groups have resources to do effective work?
  - Financial?
  - Human capital? Education?
  - Skills/know-how capacity?
  - Contacts with local or national government officials?
  - Contacts with the business community?
  - International contacts?
- What is the trend line? (Are the groups becoming more active or less in the field of promoting gender equality? Are they getting more or less active in other issues too? At which level and with what results? Have they been able to establish new ways of participation in public life and decision-making?)
- Which groups are most active at the national level? (In terms of visibility, effectiveness in changing policies, effectiveness in implementing policies?)
- Which civil society groups most promote gender ideas in the regions? (In terms of visibility, effectiveness in changing policies, effectiveness in implementing policies?)
- How effective is the network (individuals working together) and coalition (groups of organizations working on a variety of themes in working groups-according to national plan sections)? Networks are individual leaders, usually two to a region, and working in all regions. Coalitions are a variety of NGOs who are associated with gender issues working all together or in smaller groups.
- Do attitudes of the people in the program change?
- Behavior change
  - How many other groups have started working on women's issues?
  - How many joint projects between women's and other organizations are there?

## Political Parties

- Do questions asked of political candidates by constituents, political analysts, civil, society group members, and the media during campaigns include gender issues?
- Do parties address gender issues in their party platforms? In their actual activities, e.g. in pre-election events?, in the Parliament?
- Has there been a shift in party platforms on gender issues?

## Media

- Number of articles/shows addressing gender issues in the media
- Change in media content over time – has the media coverage of this issue increased over time? Is the content improved and better informed?
- Has coverage of gender equality related issues in media led to increased public discussion? Are there more TV shows on women in politics?
- What is the public reaction to these shows? (for example, do people who phone into the shows support increased levels of women in politics?)

## LAW-MAKING PROCESS

- Do women's groups have access to the process of drafting laws? In what ways? Are women's groups invited to participate in the law-drafting working groups? State bodies promoting gender equality? Only laws on gender equality or on other issues as well?
- Are gender aspects included into all aspects of law-making? Does gender audit for all draft legislation exist?
- What new policies, laws, etc are there addressing gender issues?
- Is there realistic financing for women's policies? Is any money made available outside of the law-making process?
- Are policies actually implemented, results achieved?
- Are state actions more or less effective at the national or regional level? What are the specific features of state actions at the regional level that are different from the national level?
- Are there changes at the local level in women's participation in public life, such as elections?

***Goal: Promoting women's leadership and political participation and supporting exchange of best practices across the OSCE region***

## GENERAL CONTEXT

- Is there much overall public participation in politics?
- Do women have a prominent or secondary role in society? Do women typically take jobs (doctor, school director) that men do not want and where there is little money and influence?
- Do women play an important part in the political process?
- Is there much exchange of ideas between members of Kyrgyz society and people from other countries? To the extent that these changes take place, do they promote gender equality?

### **Policy Makers**

- How many women are represented in elected offices, at the national and local levels?
- What kind of women were elected? (From which sectors of society? Do they represent different groups? Are they friends of politicians or some other form of insider? How do the trends among female MPs compare to trends among males? Are there any important differences?)
- What kinds of initiatives are raised by women in parliament? (Is it only women's issues, or other topics?)
- Are women included in consultative organizations (National Councils, Governors' committees)?
- Executive branch – female ministers?
- Local legislatures – how many women nominated, how many elected?

### **Political Groups**

- How many women participate in electoral campaigns? What are the roles that they play?
- Are women promoted to important positions within internal party structures? (How many serve as presidents, spokesman, other positions?)

### **Civil Society Groups**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in civil society groups?
- Have women-led organizations evolved over time (both women's groups, groups led by women working on other topics)?
- Are the skills of women leaders in organizations improving? (Has there been an evolution in women's skills from their work in the network?)
- Are there more groups active now than in the past? Women's groups or any groups working on gender-equality issues?
- Has the network of women's organizations expanded? Are there more connections between the women's groups that exist now? More outreach by women's groups to other civil society groups?
- Why is the network sometimes effective, sometimes not?

### **Local Communities**

- Have there been changes in the local community after the establishment of the Women's Network? Please provide data region by region. Look at such factors as: NGOs in better conditions? More organizations? More money? Reform processes

related to gender equality under way? Reform processes with a gender component under way?

### **Academic Institutions**

- How many women leaders are there in academic institutions? (What positions? What questions do they study? Did this profile change from traditional issues to other areas?)

### **Business**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in business (corporations, small business)? And in what sectors of economy are women more present?
- Are women invited to join business clubs?

### **Media**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in the media (media executives, journalists, advertising executives)? In what type of media?

### ADDITIONAL IMPACT ON SOCIETY

- Are women moving into sectors that are traditionally dominated by men?
- Has the number of self-support groups of women been growing? (see data from UNDP household survey)
- Has there been an impact on the level of poverty? (see data from UNDP household survey)

### EXCHANGES OF EXPERIENCES

- Have Azerbaijani, Georgian, Kyrgyz, and Armenian groups benefited from exchanges with each other?
- How has the Estonian experience, media know-how helped?
- What about other types of experience exchange?: Beijing plus 10; Tajik delegation visited Kyrgyzstan to learn about law, then adopted their own law
- What were the results of exchanges? What ideas received?
- Did program participants appear in any international conferences? (e.g. UN panels invited experts to join discussions)
- Do women in Kyrgyzstan get ideas from the OSCE region in other ways than ODIHR programs?

## ***Goal: Fostering national expertise development and integration of gender-equality aspects in national policy-making***

### GENERAL CONTEXT

- What is the overall policy-making environment like? Do policy makers generally receive a lot of advice from outside experts? (Are there many think tanks? Media discussions? Other forums? focusing on important policy issues? And on gender issues in general?)

### STAKEHOLDERS

#### **Policy-makers**

- Is there a requirement for gender analysis of all laws adopted by parliament? (Must all laws be checked by a gender expert?)

#### **Experts**

Please distinguish between the expertise available to the government structures on gender-equality issues and, in particular, on the gender-audit of legislation, on the one hand, and the civil society, on the other hand.

- Who are the experts that check laws? Do they work for the state? Or in civil society groups?
- Does government capacity need to be increased? (In Kyrgyzstan, Vice speaker of parliament now has task of developing expertise)
- What capacity do the experts have to evaluate drafts, laws? Do they have legal education? Do they have background working in the legal sphere? Are they trained in gender? Are there barriers preventing this kind of training? Is their advice spontaneous, intuitive, or it is based on institutionalized training programs? Is there specialization in expertise – for example, focusing on budgets, legal advice?
- Is it always the same people? Or are there larger networks?
- Is the gender expertise spread evenly through the country? Or is it concentrated in the capital?
- Is expertise spread across all sectors? Or, for example, are there many political participation experts, but few in economic issues?
- Are many of the current experts emigrating to find work in other countries?

### POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

- How many parliamentary hearings are there concerning women's issues? Are gender-equality issues raised within the legislature and if so, how often and in what manner?
- How frequently are gender issues included in other hearings?

- How do women's groups participate in drafting legislation?
- Are gender aspects included in national and regional development strategies?
- Is gender incorporated into sectoral programs (such as the labor code)?
- Implementation – Is the government actually implementing the National Gender Program? Or is the Program only being implemented by civil society groups? What is actually being done?
- Do women's experts play a role in monitoring policy implementation?

#### ADDITIONAL IMPACT ON SOCIETY

- Are gender criteria included in the formation of personnel policy in the civil service? Is it being adopted in other parts of the government?
- What is not happening? Are there successes in the sense that activists were able to prevent bad things from happening?
- What might have happened differently without ODIHR programs? For example, in Kyrgyzstan, polygamy might have become the legal norm, there might have been a ban on abortions, the state might have abolished secularism in the constitution, ending separation of church and state.

### ***Azerbaijan - Indicators for Measuring Progress toward Goals***

***Goal: Strengthening awareness and capacity and transfer of lessons-learnt among law enforcement and civil society in combating domestic violence***

#### GENERAL CONTEXT

- How strong are patriarchal tendencies in the society?
- What is the influence of religion?

#### STAKEHOLDERS

##### ***Police***

- How many complaints do the police receive about domestic violence?
- Are the police willing to address this problem? Has the situation evolved over time?
- Do police report on this issue as an indicator of their work?
- How has professional training of police officers changed?
- Do law enforcement agencies cooperate in providing assistance to victims?

##### ***Civil Society Groups***

- How many assistance providers for victims exist?
- What is the quality of aid provided?
- What are the changes over time?

- What types of services are available? Lawyers? Psychologists?
- How do other NGOs incorporate this topic into their work?
- How do medical health providers address this topic?
- Have civil society groups created expertise in this issue?

### ***Media***

- Is there acknowledgement of the problem in the media?
- How does the media deal with this issue? – Is it a criminal case? Do they stress it is not permitted to use violence against women?
- Has the issue moved from one that is discussed in the private domain to one that is now a public issue of discussion?

### ***Policy-Makers***

- How many meetings with officials by society leaders concerned about this problem are there?
- How much lobbying is there for an adequate policy/law on domestic violence?
- Do official institutions work to solve this problem? What is their contribution to this issue?
- Are ombudsmen institutions involved in this issue?
- Have state bodies created expertise on this issue?

### **Policy Output**

- Is there a law dealing with domestic violence?
- Is this issue included in the national development plan?

### **Attitude and Behavior Change**

- Has there been a change in awareness within society at large about these issues?
- Do people have a different attitude toward this issue? Do men no longer feel it is their right to beat women?
- Is there behavioral change among young girls?

***Goal: Increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote equality of rights and opportunities***

GENERAL CONTEXT

- How do women lack equal rights in the country?
- What is the overall context for civil society in the country? (How many groups? How active are they? What issues do they address?)
- What is the state of relations between civil society and the state? (Do officials welcome input from civil society? Does the state try to suppress civil society groups?)
- Is there agreement on the nature of the problem regarding gender issues between state and civil society actors? (Do state officials, civil society actors see gender issues as being important?)

STAKEHOLDERS

**Policymakers**

- Is the State Committee on Issues of Family, Children, Women, with 64 members effective? Does it do more than the 4 members in Kyrgyzstan?
- How many meetings between citizens and officials on gender issues? (Can you estimate their frequency? Is the trend toward more or fewer meetings?)
- Are government officials willing to address questions on gender issues?
- How many state offices for gender issues have been created?
- Does the government invite women's participation on a variety of issues beyond "women's issues"?
- Is gender included in discussions of all policies, not just gender policies?
- Are there changes at the local level in women's participation in public life, such as elections?

**Civil Society Groups**

- Number of women's groups and alliances
- Number of activists
- Do these groups have resources to do effective work?
- What is the trend line? Are the groups becoming more active or less?
- Salience of gender issues – How important and visible is gender in the agenda of issues? Do officials, members of the public take these issues seriously?
- Who in the regions most promotes gender ideas? (For example, in Nakhchivan there is a woman in a power position who promotes change.)
- How effective is the network (individuals working together) and coalition (groups of organizations working on a variety of themes in working groups-according to national plan sections)? Networks are individual leaders, usually



two to a region, and working in all regions. Coalitions are a variety of NGOs who are associated with gender issues working all together or in smaller groups.

### **Political Parties**

- Do questions asked of political candidates include gender issues?
- Do parties address gender issues?
- Has there been a shift in party platforms on gender issues?

### **Media**

- Number of questions journalists ask about gender issues
- Number of articles/shows addressing gender issues in the media
- Change in media content over time – has the media coverage of this issue increased over time? Is the content improved and better informed?
- Is the media setting the agenda on gender issues? Have media articles led to increased public discussion?
- What kind of media do women consume? In Internet?
- Are there more TV shows on Women in Politics?
- What is the public reaction to these shows? (for example, do people who phone into the shows support increased levels of women in politics?)

### **Law-Making Process**

- How many women are involved in drafting laws?
- What new policies, laws, etc are there addressing gender issues?
- Is there realistic financing for women's policies?
- Are policies actually implemented?
- What results have been achieved?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Changes in beliefs, attitudes toward women's issues over time – Is it possible to talk about an evolution of ideas?
- Do attitudes of the people in the program change? For example, one mother-in-law wanted to beat daughter-in-law, but then set up an organization opposing this practice.
- Behavior change
  - How many other groups have started working on women's issues?
  - How many joint projects between women's and other organizations are there?
- Has there been an increase in the number and quality of women's shops in Azerbaijan?

***Goal: Promoting women's leadership and political participation and supporting exchange of best practices across the OSCE region***

GENERAL CONTEXT

- Is there much overall public participation in politics?
- Do women have a prominent or secondary role in society?
- Do women play an important part in the political process?
- Is there much exchange of ideas between members of Azerbaijani society and outsiders?

STAKEHOLDERS

**Policy Makers**

- How many women are represented in elected offices, at the national and local levels?
- Who was elected (From which sectors of society? Do they represent different groups? Are they friends of politicians or some other form of insider?)
- What kinds of initiatives are raised by women in parliament? (Is it only women's issues, or other topics?)
- Are women included in consultative organizations (National Councils, Governors' committees)?
- Executive branch – female ministers?
- Local legislatures – how many women nominated, how many elected?

**Political Groups**

- How many women participate in electoral campaigns?
- Are women promoted to important positions within internal party structures? (How many serve as presidents, spokesman, other positions?)

**Civil Society Groups**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in civil society groups?
- Have women-led organizations evolved over time (both women's groups, groups led by women working on other topics)?
- Are the skills of women leaders in organizations improving? (Has there been an evolution in women's skills from their work in the Women's Network?)
- Are there more groups active now than in the past?
- Has the coalition of women's organizations expanded? Are there more connections between the women's groups that exist now?
- Why is the coalition sometimes effective, sometimes not?

## **Local Communities**

- Have there been changes in the local community after the establishment of the Women's Network? Please provide data region by region. Look at such factors as: NGOs in better conditions? More organizations? More money? Reform processes under way?

## **Academic Institutions**

- How many women leaders are there in academic institutions? (What positions? What questions do they study? Did this profile change from traditional issues to other areas?)

## **Business**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in business (corporations, small business)?
- Are women invited to join business clubs?

## **Media**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in the media (media executives, journalists, advertising executives)?

## **Additional Impact on Society**

- Are women moving into sectors that are traditionally dominated by men?
- Has the number of self-support groups of women been growing? (see data from UNDP household survey)
- Has there been an impact on the level of poverty? (see data from UNDP household survey)

## **Exchanges of Experiences**

- Have Azerbaijani, Georgian, Kyrgyz, and Armenian groups benefited from exchanges with each other? How is Kyrgyz experience used in Azerbaijan?
- What about other types of experience exchange?
- What were the results of exchanges? What ideas received?
- Did program participants appear in any international conferences? (e.g. UN panels invited experts to join discussions)
- Do women in Azerbaijan get ideas from the OSCE region in other ways than ODIHR programs?

***Goal: Fostering national expertise development and integration of gender-equality aspects in national policy-making***

GENERAL CONTEXT

- What is the overall policy-making environment like? Do policy makers generally receive a lot of advice from outside experts? (Are there many think tanks? Media discussions? Other forums? focusing on important policy issues? And on gender issues in general?)

STAKEHOLDERS

**Policy-makers**

- Is there a requirement for gender analysis of all laws adopted by parliament? (Must all laws be checked by a gender expert?)

**Experts**

- Who are the experts that check laws?
- Do they work for the state? Or in civil society groups?
- Does government capacity need to be increased?
- What capacity do the experts have to evaluate drafts, laws? Do they have legal education? Do they have background working in the legal sphere? Are they trained in gender? Are there barriers preventing this kind of training? Is their advice spontaneous, intuitive or it is based on institutionalized training programs? Is there specialization in expertise – for example, focusing on budgets, legal advice?
- Is it always the same people? Or are there larger networks?
- Is the gender expertise spread evenly through the country? Or is it concentrated in the capital?
- Is expertise spread across all sectors? Or, for example, are there many political participation experts, but few in economic issues?
- Are many of the current experts emigrating to find work in other countries?

**Policy-Making Process**

- How many parliamentary hearings are there concerning women's issues?
- How frequently are gender issues included in other hearings?
- How do women's groups participate in drafting legislation?
- Are gender aspects included in national and regional development strategies?
- Is gender incorporated into sectoral programs (such as the labor code)?

- Implementation – Is the government actually implementing the National Gender Program? Or is the Program only being implemented by civil society groups? What is actually being done?
- Do women’s experts play a role in monitoring policy implementation?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Are gender criteria included in the formation of personnel policy in the civil service? Is it being adopted in other parts of the government?
- What is not happening? Are there successes in the sense that activists were able to prevent bad things from happening?
- What might have happened differently without ODIHR programs?

### ***Armenia - Indicators for Measuring Progress toward Goals***

***Goal: Increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote equality of rights and opportunities***

#### GENERAL CONTEXT

- How do women lack equal rights in the country?
- What is the overall context for civil society in the country? (How many groups? How active are they? What issues do they address?)
- What is the state of relations between civil society and the state? (Do officials welcome input from civil society? Does the state try to suppress civil society groups?)
- Is there agreement on the nature of the problem regarding gender issues between state and civil society actors? (Do state officials, civil society actors see gender issues as being important?)

#### STAKEHOLDERS

##### **Educators**

- Are there educational standards for gender issues? What are they? How are they different from other states (there are none in Kyrgyzstan)?
- What kinds of gender programs have been introduced at the high school and university levels?
- Are gender issues now taught in other classes as well or just specific gender courses?
- Was it possible to change the overall curriculum?
- How many instructors have had this training? How many students?
- What evidence is there that views in society changed as a result of this program?
- Will these courses continue to be taught after ODIHR funding runs out?
- How has faculty behavior changed after gender programs?

- Has student behavior changed after graduation?

### **Policymakers**

- Are official bodies set up to work on gender issues effective?
- How many meetings between citizens and officials on gender issues? (Can you estimate their frequency? Is the trend toward more or fewer meetings?)
- Are government officials willing to address questions on gender issues?
- How many state offices for gender issues have been created?
- Does the government invite women’s participation on a variety of issues beyond “women’s issues”?
- Is gender included in discussions of all policies, not just gender policies?
- Are there changes at the local level in women’s participation in public life, such as elections?

### **Civil Society Groups**

- Number of women’s groups and alliances
- Number of activists
- Do these groups have resources to do effective work?
- What is the trend line? Are the groups becoming more active or less?
- Salience of gender issues – How important and visible is gender in the agenda of issues? Do officials, members of the public take these issues seriously?
- Who in the regions most promotes gender ideas?
- How effective is the network (individuals working together) and coalition (groups of organizations working on a variety of themes in working groups-according to national plan sections)? Networks are individual leaders, usually two to a region, and working in all regions. Coalitions are a variety of NGOs who are associated with gender issues working all together or in smaller groups.

### **Political Parties**

- Do questions asked of political candidates include gender issues?
- Do parties address gender issues?
- Has there been a shift in party platforms on gender issues?

### **Media**

- Number of questions journalists ask about gender issues
- Number of articles/shows addressing gender issues in the media
- Change in media content over time – has the media coverage of this issue increased over time? Is the content improved and better informed?
- Is the media setting the agenda on gender issues? Have media articles led to increased public discussion?

- What kind of media do women consume? In Internet?
- Are there more TV shows on Women in Politics?
- What is the public reaction to these shows? (for example, do people who phone into the shows support increased levels of women in politics?)

### **Law-Making Process**

- How many women are involved in drafting laws?
- What new policies, laws, etc are there addressing gender issues?
- Is there realistic financing for women's policies?
- Are policies actually implemented?
- What results have been achieved?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Changes in beliefs, attitudes toward women's issues over time – Is it possible to talk about an evolution of ideas?
- Do attitudes of the people in the program change?
- Behavior change
- How many other groups have started working on women's issues?  
How many joint projects between women's and other organizations are there?

### ***Goal: Promoting women's leadership and political participation and supporting exchange of best practices across the OSCE region***

#### GENERAL CONTEXT

- Is there much overall public participation in politics?
- Do women have a prominent or secondary role in society?
- Do women play an important part in the political process?
- Is there much exchange of ideas between members of Armenian society and outsiders?

#### STAKEHOLDERS

##### **Policy Makers**

- How many women are represented in elected offices, at the national and local levels?
- Who was elected (From which sectors of society? Do they represent different groups? Are they friends of politicians or some other form of insider?)
- What kinds of initiatives are raised by women in parliament? (Is it only women's issues, or other topics?)

- Are women included in consultative organizations (National Councils, Governors' committees)?
- Executive branch – female ministers?
- Local legislatures – how many women nominated, how many elected?

### **Political Groups**

- How many women participate in electoral campaigns?
- Are women promoted to important positions within internal party structures? (How many serve as presidents, spokesman, other positions?)

### **Civil Society Groups**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in civil society groups?
- Have women-led organizations evolved over time (both women's groups, groups led by women working on other topics)?
- Are the skills of women leaders in organizations improving? (Has there been an evolution in women's skills from their work in the Women's Network?)
- Are there more groups active now than in the past?
- Has the coalition of women's organizations expanded? Are there more connections between the women's groups that exist now?
- Why is the coalition sometimes effective, sometimes not?

### **Local Communities**

- Have there been changes in the local community after the establishment of the Women's Network? Please provide data region by region. Look at such factors as: NGOs in better conditions? More organizations? More money? Reform processes under way?

### **Academic Institutions**

- How many women leaders are there in academic institutions? (What positions? What questions do they study? Did this profile change from traditional issues to other areas?)
- Has the ODIHR program increased the role of women in universities?

### **Business**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in business (corporations, small business)?
- Are women invited to join business clubs?



## Media

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in the media (media executives, journalists, advertising executives)?

## Additional Impact on Society

- Are women moving into sectors that are traditionally dominated by men?
- Has the number of self-support groups of women been growing? (see data from UNDP household survey)
- Has there been an impact on the level of poverty? (see data from UNDP household survey)

## Exchanges of Experiences

- Have Azerbaijani, Georgian, Kyrgyz, and Armenian groups benefited from exchanges with each other?
- What were the results of exchanges? What ideas received?
- Did program participants appear in any international conferences? (e.g. UN panels invited experts to join discussions)
- Do women in Armenia get ideas from the OSCE region in other ways than ODIHR programs?
- What is the impact of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Karabakh on women's coalitions?

## *Goal: Fostering national expertise development and integration of gender-equality aspects in national policy-making*

### GENERAL CONTEXT

- What is the overall policy-making environment like? Do policy makers generally receive a lot of advice from outside experts? (Are there many think tanks? Media discussions? Other forums? focusing on important policy issues? And on gender issues in general?)

### STAKEHOLDERS

#### **Policy-makers**

- Is there a requirement for gender analysis of all laws adopted by parliament? (Must all laws be checked by a gender expert?)

## **Experts**

- Who are the experts that check laws?
- Do they work for the state? Or in civil society groups?
- Does government capacity need to be increased?
- What capacity do the experts have to evaluate drafts, laws? Do they have legal education? Do they have background working in the legal sphere? Are they trained in gender? Are there barriers preventing this kind of training? Is their advice spontaneous, intuitive or it is based on institutionalized training programs? Is there specialization in expertise – for example, focusing on budgets, legal advice?
- Is it always the same people? Or are there larger networks?
- Is the gender expertise spread evenly through the country? Or is it concentrated in the capital?
- Is expertise spread across all sectors? Or, for example, are there many political participation experts, but few in economic issues?
- Are many of the current experts emigrating to find work in other countries?

## **Policy-Making Process**

- How many parliamentary hearings are there concerning women's issues?
- How frequently are gender issues included in other hearings?
- How do women's groups participate in drafting legislation?
- Are gender aspects included in national and regional development strategies?
- Is gender incorporated into sectoral programs (such as the labor code)?
- Implementation – Is the government actually implementing the National Gender Program? Or is the Program only being implemented by civil society groups? What is actually being done?
- Do women's experts play a role in monitoring policy implementation?

## **Additional Impact on Society**

- Are gender criteria included in the formation of personnel policy in the civil service? Is it being adopted in other parts of the government?
- What is not happening? Are there successes in the sense that activists were able to prevent bad things from happening?
- What might have happened differently without ODIHR programs?

## *Georgia - Indicators for Measuring Progress toward Goals*

### *Goal: Strengthening awareness and capacity and transfer of lessons-learnt among law enforcement and civil society in combating domestic violence*

#### GENERAL CONTEXT

- How strong are patriarchal tendencies in the society?
- What is the influence of religion?
- How predominant is domestic violence and what are possible contributing influences within the society?
- What is the situation with respect to access to justice in general, whether women face more barriers? What is the status of law-enforcement agencies in the eyes of citizens, e.g. whether they trust the police would contribute to their safety and protection and not vice versa?

#### STAKEHOLDERS

##### **Police**

- How many complaints do the police receive about domestic violence? Has the situation evolved over time and why?
- Are the police willing to address this problem? Has the situation evolved over time?
- Do police report on this issue as an indicator of their work?
- How has professional training of police officers changed?
- Do law enforcement agencies cooperate in providing assistance to victims? (also with NGOs)?
- How does constant change in personnel affect the ability to carry out reform? District police were reformed into precinct police; created friendly ground for mainstreaming domestic violence issues; cooperation intensified at local level, but hard for OSCE at a higher level.

##### **Civil Society Groups**

- How many assistance providers for victims exist?
- What is the quality of aid provided?
- What are the changes over time?
- What types of services are available? Lawyers? Psychologists?
- How do other NGOs (whose primary focus is other than domestic violence) incorporate this topic into their work?
- How do medical health providers address this topic?

- Have civil society groups created expertise in this issue? Have they improved their own expertise or have they assisted in the transfer of expertise in this field to other stakeholders?

## **Media**

- Is there acknowledgement of the problem in the media?
- How does the media deal with this issue? – Is it a criminal case? Do they stress it is not permitted to use violence against women?
- Has the issue moved from one that is discussed in the private domain to one that is now a public issue of discussion?

## **Policy-Makers**

- How many meetings with officials by society leaders concerned about this problem are there?
- How much lobbying is there for an adequate policy/law on domestic violence? Which stakeholders are driving the discussion?
- Do official institutions work to solve this problem? What is their contribution to this issue?
- Are ombudsmen institutions involved in this issue?
- Have state bodies created expertise on this issue? Do the state bodies have the necessary expertise to work on this issue?

## **Policy Output**

- Is there a law dealing with domestic violence? (Yes, our group created it.) Does it create effective framework/remedies for combating domestic violence?
- Is this issue included in the national development plan?

## **Attitude and Behavior Change**

- Has there been a change in awareness within society at large about these issues?
- Do people have a different attitude toward this issue? Do men no longer feel it is their right to beat women?
- Is there behavioral change among young girls?

***Goal: Increasing awareness and capacity of the government structures and civil society to promote equality of rights and opportunities***

### GENERAL CONTEXT

- How do women lack equal rights and opportunities in the country? How are these inequalities manifested, e.g. what indicators and data sources are used?

- What is the overall context for civil society in the country? (How many groups? How active are they? What issues do they address?)
- What is the state of relations between civil society and the state? (Do officials welcome input from civil society and incorporate it into decision-making? Does the state try to suppress civil society groups?)
- Is there agreement on the nature of the problem regarding gender issues between state and civil society actors? (Do state officials, civil society actors see gender issues as being important?) how would these be measured?

## STAKEHOLDERS

### **Policymakers**

- Are the state bodies dealing with gender issues effective (and how)? How have they evolved over time? Could we draw conclusions on the influence the organizational structure/staffing/other resource allocation has on the efficiency of the specific government bodies (e.g. large structure in Azerbaijan vs. small body in Kyrgyzstan).
- How many meetings between citizens and officials on gender issues? (Can you estimate their frequency? Is the trend toward more or fewer meetings?)
- Are government officials willing to address questions on gender issues?
- How many state offices for gender issues have been created? What are they? What is their status and mandate within the government?
- Does the government invite women’s participation on a variety of issues beyond “women’s issues”?
- Is gender included in discussions of all policies, not just gender policies?
- Are there changes at the local level in women’s participation in public life, such as elections?

### **Civil Society Groups**

- Number of women’s groups and alliances
- Number of activists
- Do these groups have resources to do effective work? Financial and human?
- What is the trend line? Are the groups becoming more active or less? Have they adopted new means of participation in public life and decision-making?
- Salience of gender issues – How important and visible is gender in the agenda of issues? Do officials, members of the public take these issues seriously?
- Who in the regions most promotes gender ideas?
- How effective is the network (individuals working together) and coalition (groups of organizations working on a variety of themes in working groups-according to national plan sections)? Networks are individual leaders, usually

two to a region, and working in all regions. Coalitions are a variety of NGOs who are associated with gender issues working all together or in smaller groups.

### **Political Parties**

- Do questions asked of political candidates include gender issues?
- Do parties address gender issues? In their party platforms? In their actual activities, e.g. in pre-election events, in the Parliament?
- Has there been a shift in party platforms on gender issues?

### **Media**

- Number of questions journalists ask about gender issues?
- Number of articles/shows addressing gender issues in the media
- Change in media content over time – has the media coverage of this issue increased over time? Is the content improved and better informed?
- Is the media setting the agenda on gender issues? Have media articles led to increased public discussion?
- What kind of media do women consume? In Internet?
- Are there more TV shows on Women in Politics?
- What is the public reaction to these shows? (for example, do people who phone into the shows support increased levels of women in politics?)

### **Law-Making Process**

- How many women are involved in drafting laws? In what ways? Are women groups invited to participate in the law-drafting working groups? State bodies promoting gender equality? Only laws on gender equality or on other issues? Does gender audit for all draft legislation exist?
- What new policies, laws, etc are there addressing gender issues?
- Is there realistic financing for women's policies?
- Are policies actually implemented?
- What results have been achieved?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Changes in beliefs, attitudes toward women's issues over time – Is it possible to talk about an evolution of ideas?
- Do attitudes of the people in the program change?
- Behavior change
- How many other groups have started working on women's issues?
- How many joint projects between women's and other organizations are there?

***Goal: Promoting women's leadership and political participation and supporting exchange of best practices across the OSCE region***

GENERAL CONTEXT

- Is there much overall public participation in politics?
- Do women have a prominent or secondary role in society?
- Do women play an important part in the political process?
- Is there much exchange of ideas between members of Georgian society and outsiders

STAKEHOLDERS

**Policy Makers**

- How many women are represented in elected offices, at the national and local levels?
- Who was elected (From which sectors of society? Do they represent different groups? Are they friends of politicians or some other form of insider?)
- What kinds of initiatives are raised by women in parliament? (Is it only women's issues, or other topics?)
- Role of the female speaker in parliament – how does this affect the context in positive and negative ways? What does this mean for the women's movement?
- Are women included in consultative organizations (National Councils, Governors' committees)?
- Executive branch – female ministers? (The Georgian government is very loose in terms of gender structure – Does this help or hurt gender issues?)
- Local legislatures – how many women nominated, how many elected?

**Political Groups**

- How many women participate in electoral campaigns? and what are the major roles that they take up?
- Are women promoted to important positions within internal party structures? (How many serve as presidents, spokesman, other positions?)

**Civil Society Groups**

- How does the Rose Revolution affect the women's movement? (The new government wanted contact; these avenues are no longer open: non-immediate issues pushed away; hard for women's groups to be heard)
- What kind of leadership positions do women have in civil society groups?
- Have women-led organizations evolved over time (both women's groups, groups led by women working on other topics)?

- Are the skills of women leaders in organizations improving? (Has there been an evolution in women's skills from their work in the coalition and the network?)
- Are there more groups active now than in the past?
- Has the coalition of women's organizations expanded? Are there more connections between the women's groups that exist now?
- Why is the coalition sometimes effective, sometimes not?

### **Local Communities**

- Have there been changes in the local community after the establishment of the Women's Network? Please provide data region by region. Look at such factors as: NGOs in better conditions? More organizations? More money? Reform processes under way?

### **Academic Institutions**

- How many women leaders are there in academic institutions? (What positions? What questions do they study? Did this profile change from traditional issues to other areas?)

### **Business**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in business (corporations, small business)? And in what sectors of economy are women more present?
- Are women invited to join business clubs?

### **Media**

- What kind of leadership positions do women have in the media (media executives, journalists, advertising executives)? In what type of media?
- What has been the impact of the on-line journal?

### **Refugees/IDPs**

- What has been the impact of separatist regions and IDPs (members of the coalition) in the women's movement and the impact on leadership?
- How successful have IDPs been in voting in local elections?
- How do internal conflicts affect work toward common goals?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Are women moving into sectors that are traditionally dominated by men?
- Has the number of self-support groups of women been growing? (see data from UNDP household survey)



- Has there been an impact on the level of poverty? (see data from UNDP household survey)

### **Exchanges of Experiences**

- Have Azerbaijani, Georgian, Kyrgyz, and Armenian groups benefited from exchanges with each other?
- What about other types of experience exchange?
- What were the results of exchanges? What ideas received?
- Did program participants appear in any international conferences? (e.g. UN panels invited experts to join discussions)
- Do women in Georgia get ideas from the OSCE region in other ways than ODIHR programs?

### ***Goal: Fostering national expertise development and integration of gender-equality aspects in national policy-making***

#### GENERAL CONTEXT

- What is the overall policy-making environment like? Do policy makers generally receive a lot of advice from outside experts? (Are there many think tanks? Media discussions? Other forums? focusing on important policy issues? And on gender issues in general?)

#### STAKEHOLDERS

##### **Policy-makers**

- Is there a requirement for gender analysis of all laws adopted by parliament? (Must all laws be checked by a gender expert?)

##### **Experts**

- Who are the experts that check laws?
- Do they work for the state? Or in civil society groups?
- Does government capacity need to be increased?
- What capacity do the experts have to evaluate drafts, laws? Do they have legal education? Do they have background working in the legal sphere? Are they trained in gender? Are there barriers preventing this kind of training? Is their advice spontaneous, intuitive or it is based on institutionalized training programs? Is there specialization in expertise – for example, focusing on budgets, legal advice?
- Is it always the same people? Or are there larger networks?

- Is the gender expertise spread evenly through the country? Or is it concentrated in the capital?
- Is expertise spread across all sectors? Or, for example, are there many political participation experts, but few in economic issues?
- Are many of the current experts emigrating to find work in other countries?

### **Policy-Making Process**

- How many parliamentary hearings are there concerning women's issues? Are gender-equality issues raised within the legislature and if so, how often and in what manner?
- How frequently are gender issues included in other hearings?
- How do women's groups participate in drafting legislation?
- Are gender aspects included in national and regional development strategies?
- Is gender incorporated into sectoral programs (such as the labor code)?
- Implementation – Is the government actually implementing the National Gender Program? Or is the Program only being implemented by civil society groups? What is actually being done?
- Do women's experts play a role in monitoring policy implementation?

### **Additional Impact on Society**

- Are gender criteria included in the formation of personnel policy in the civil service? Is it being adopted in other parts of the government?
- What is not happening? Are there successes in the sense that activists were able to prevent bad things from happening? 2002- prevented criminalization of abortions; prevented adoption of a poor labor code.
- What might have happened differently without ODIHR programs?