



ARMENIA

COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

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JULY 2015



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Currency Equivalents

as of 13 July 2015

Currency Unit – dram (AMD)

AMD1.00 = \$0.00210

\$1.00 = AMD476.35

Abbreviations

- ADB – Asian Development Bank
- EU – European Union
- GAD – gender and development
- GBV – gender-based violence
- GDP – gross domestic product
- GTG – gender theme group
- NGO – nongovernment organization
- OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- PWDs – people with disabilities
- SMEs – small and medium-sized enterprises
- USAID – United States Agency for International Development

Glossary

- avaganikhorhurd*** – municipal council, the local administration consisting of an elected head of the municipality and 5–15 council members, depending on the size of the community
- marshrutki*** – private minibuses
- marz*** – province (Armenia is subdivided into 11 administrative districts —10 *marzer* and the city of Yerevan)
- marzpet*** – chief executive of each *marz*, appointed by the government, roughly equivalent to a governor
- marzpetaran*** – regional administration or the provincial office of the *marz*, roughly equivalent to a regional governor’s office

Foreword

This country gender assessment is the first such study to be conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Armenia.

After Armenia joined ADB in 2005, an interim operational strategy was developed for 2006–2011, and the first country partnership strategy, for 2014–2018, is being finalized. While the country gender assessment is a stand-alone document that builds upon the experience gained by ADB in supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment in Armenia, it also informs the formulation of ADB’s gender strategy in the country partnership strategy. The country gender assessment highlights key constraints to gender equality in the ADB priority sectors of transport, water supply and municipal services (including solid waste management), energy, and small and medium-sized enterprise development.

Many of the barriers to gender equality encountered in the ADB priority sectors are underpinned by deeper structural disparities in the position of men and women in the economy; their differential access to and control over assets, resources, employment, and social protection; and their ability to influence decision making. For this reason, the country gender assessment also includes a general overview of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Armenia.

The first section of this assessment provides an overview of the current country situation and policy environment in Armenia. The next section describes the gender landscape in Armenia and how the current situation influences development interventions. The themes presented in this section cut across sector boundaries. The topics highlighted represent the primary themes raised during consultations with women in Armenia for this country gender assessment and are also those that are most useful as background for the discussion of ADB sectors. The crosscutting gender issues should be given consideration in any subsequent gender analysis conducted during project design or in monitoring and evaluation processes. The third section is devoted to an analysis of barriers to gender equality in the sectors on which ADB plans to focus under the country partnership strategy. A final section lists both general recommendations and possible entry points for gender mainstreaming in ADB operations.

The country gender assessment does not cover all gender issues relevant to Armenia, nor is it an exhaustive study of those topics that are presented. The analysis and findings presented are those considered most relevant to ADB’s portfolio in Armenia under the new country partnership strategy.

This assessment was carried out using a methodology that included in-country consultations, focus group discussions, and review of secondary sources. Consultations

were conducted in Yerevan with representatives of 26 organizations, including nongovernment organizations, government agencies, and international organizations. The purpose of the consultations was to confirm preliminary findings and identify priorities relevant to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in future projects.

Considerable attention was also devoted to conducting focus group discussions outside of the capital to hear from women about issues facing their communities and their priorities for the development of the country. Focus group discussions were held with female community members in Ashtarak, Berd, Gavar, Goris, and Gyumri—cities and towns of differing sizes, each representing a distinct region in Armenia. Five regional focus group discussions were conducted, one in each location, with the participation of some 75 women (with an approximately equal number of women in each focus group). The focus group participants ranged in age from university students to retirees, and represented diverse professions. The locations of the group discussions were chosen because they have active women's organizations that assisted in identifying stakeholders who had knowledge of local conditions relevant to gender. Many interviewees pointed out that despite Armenia's relatively small territory and population, the *marzer* (provinces) have distinctive characteristics, traditions, and values. Therefore, in selecting the five locations, efforts were made to include a cross-section of regions.

The focus group discussions served several purposes. First, there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data and even information relevant to gender disparities in the sectors that are reflected in ADB's portfolio in Armenia. Sector assessments, reviewed for this country gender assessment, tended to focus on infrastructure issues without differentiating between male and female beneficiaries in needs or impact. Second, women in Armenia have very little involvement in formal decision-making processes in local and national government, and therefore their priorities are not well reflected in policy. However, it was assumed that women do, in fact, have distinct perspectives on the development of their communities and that male leaders may not adequately convey these views. Therefore, the focus groups were used to explore what women think about a number of issues, including infrastructure projects and their priorities for the sectors where ADB operates. The focus group discussions were not intended as a means to contrast the opinions of women and men concerning ADB operational sectors. Indeed, both female and male community members may share many common concerns. Instead, the focus group discussions were a means to provide women with a forum in which to express their opinions about development issues and progress toward gender equality in Armenia.

Before finalizing this country gender assessment, ADB conducted a validation workshop in Yerevan in December 2013. Individuals who had taken part in earlier consultations and focus groups, as well as key government officials and other stakeholders, were invited to review the draft assessment, which was translated to Armenian, and to participate in a discussion of the main findings and recommendations. The workshop generated additional information, clarifications, and further recommendations, which were then incorporated into the final assessment.

The country gender assessment was undertaken independently by ADB, but development partners with expertise in gender and development were consulted throughout the assessment process, during individual interviews, and in the validation workshop. Although the country gender assessment has been prepared primarily for ADB use, it is hoped that the assessment reflects issues raised by the varied stakeholders in Armenia and that it will prove useful to government, civil society organizations, and ADB partner organizations working in gender and development in Armenia.

Executive Summary

Armenia is a country of ancient traditions, but it has also been greatly influenced by events in its more recent past. It has inherited an official policy of gender equality from the Soviet period, which led to important improvements in the legal and social status of women as well as their active participation in the labor market. Since independence, however, conflicting trends have emerged. On the one hand, during the early transition years, Armenian society largely rejected much of what was considered “Soviet” in nature; thus, notions of gender equality were abandoned, and patriarchal views and customs came to the fore. Yet these post-Soviet decades also saw the growth of diverse women’s civil society organizations dedicated to advancing women’s rights and gender equality, and the country has also witnessed the development of a solid legal and policy framework for the protection of equal rights.

Annual assessments of the extent to which men and women are equal in Armenia indicate limited progress in the last 5 years. Although the country has scored consistently high in equal access to education and positive health outcomes for women, this is counterbalanced by a lack of progress in women’s political empowerment and women’s declining access to economic opportunities.

Government policy relating to gender equality has evolved from measures aimed at addressing women’s issues to a more comprehensive view of disparities between women and men. The Concept Paper on Gender Equality and the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan, 2011–2015 provide the basis for national gender policy, which addresses such topics as roles in decision making, the economy, education, health, the media, and gender-based violence (GBV). In 2013, Armenia also adopted the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. In practice, however, women remain disadvantaged in many spheres, and most initiatives, by the government, international organizations, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs), focus on improving the status of women.

The primary institutions responsible for gender policy are the Council on Women’s Affairs (under the Office of the Prime Minister) and the Division of Family, Children and Women’s Issues within the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The capacity of these institutions is limited, but they regularly engage with international organizations and local NGOs. The newly enacted equal rights law calls for the creation of an institution devoted to the articulation of gender equality policy (and monitoring its implementation), and at the time of this assessment, the Council on Women’s Affairs was examining several options, including strengthening the existing institution and broadening its mandate.

Despite the existence of official policy on gender equality, the very term “gender” is not widely understood outside of specific spheres—selected government offices, civil

society organizations, and academia. Many view it as a concept brought to Armenia from elsewhere. The unfamiliar nature of gender terminology partly explains why sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics are lacking in most sectors. Capacity to collect such data is limited to the National Statistical Service and has not been developed in other government agencies.

This country gender assessment provides an overview of several broad gender themes that cut across all development planning. These themes contribute directly to gender disparities observed at the level of Asian Development Bank (ADB) sectors, which are explored in Part III of this assessment. Critical crosscutting issues include the following.

Gender roles and stereotypes. Gender roles and norms have considerable influence in Armenian society, particularly notions about the roles that are “acceptable” for women and men. Despite women’s achievements in many fields, strong perceptions associating women primarily with the private and family sphere are prevalent, and often limit women’s opportunities for self-realization in public life. Gender stereotypes contribute to women’s lower levels of representation in politics, in formal employment, and as business leaders. Men can also be negatively impacted by stereotypes, especially those that portray men as solely responsible for providing for their families financially—norms that are often increasingly difficult to fulfill given the realities of the labor market in Armenia today.

Women’s participation in political and public life. Despite the introduction of a quota system to assist women to enter politics, women’s low level of representation in national government persists. At present, women represent only over 10% of parliamentarians and about 11% of high-level government staff. Women are much better represented in supporting and non-leadership positions in the public sector. Women are also underrepresented in regional and municipal administrative bodies that set priorities locally and that operate at the level of development project implementation. Still, women have made inroads at the level of local government, and their numbers on local councils have increased. This may be because the level of male out-migration from rural villages is so high that women have no choice but to serve on local councils. In any case, women’s engagement in decision making at the community level is an important step toward greater engagement in political office at higher levels and should be further encouraged.

Women play a greater role in civil society than in political office, but their ability to influence policy making by this means is not clear. Some contend that an autonomous women’s movement that could advance a number of gender issues has not developed in Armenia. Weaknesses of women’s NGOs include the difficulties that they encounter, collaborating and forming networks among themselves, and their weak bargaining power with government structures. Still, NGOs provide valuable services to women (e.g., victims of GBV), conduct training programs, support advocacy campaigns, carry out surveys and research, and serve as important gateways for donors to engage with women and girls at the local and grassroots level.

Economic opportunities for women and men. The concept paper on gender equality identifies such critical issues as gender-based discrimination in the labor market, wage disparities between women and men, access to economic resources, and social protection for low-income female-headed households. Specific groups of women (e.g., those with

children and those heading households) are at the greatest risk of extreme poverty. While the number of women with bank accounts has increased, cultural norms still dictate that property is usually inherited by and registered to male family members, and making financial decisions is usually considered a “male” role in the household.

Male and female employment patterns differ. Although women, on average, have a higher level of education than men, their labor force participation rate is lower, in part a consequence of child care and household obligations. A significant proportion of women are engaged in informal work, which leaves them without the protection of the Labor Law (e.g., a lack of maternity or child care leave). Women also represent a larger share of the registered unemployed and tend to spend longer time searching for work. Men are more likely to become unemployed at the end of seasonal work, while women are much more likely to stop working due to family circumstances. Official unemployment figures and patterns may not take into account the large number of men who migrate to other countries for work, and can therefore be misleading.

Of those who are in formal employment, women are overly represented in public sector jobs (e.g., health care and education) and earn the lowest salaries, while men predominate in technical and better-paid fields (e.g., construction, manufacturing, and transport). The gender gap does appear to be closing in wholesale and retail trade, and some industries also show greater gender balance in hospitality and financial services. In addition to this horizontal segregation, the labor market also exhibits vertical segregation, whereby women are underrepresented in upper management. About 67.8% of managers are estimated to be male. In business, the number of female senior managers has declined, from 27% in 2012 to 23% in 2013. One of the most visible consequences of such stratification of the labor market is a large gender wage gap. Women’s average monthly wages represented only 64.4% of men’s in 2012, which gives Armenia one of the largest gender pay gaps in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Labor migration is an overwhelmingly male phenomenon; more than 70% of migrants from Armenia to the Russian Federation and other countries are estimated to be men. There is some indication that migration itself is becoming a “traditional male” occupation. Although little study has been made of the impacts of migration on the “women left behind,” for many families, remittances are known to cover merely the most basic needs; and only a small proportion is invested or saved. Women who do not migrate with their partners generally take on responsibility for running the household and earning extra income. Yet while many women have become de facto heads of households, there has not been a wider shift in gender roles that would result in more women in positions of public leadership.

Gender issues in education. Armenia exhibits gender parity in enrollment rates from primary to higher education, with the only significant deviations occurring when students enter vocational or professional education. Enrollment figures show that girls tend to stay in education for a greater number of years, up to the level of postgraduate education. Boys more often enter vocational education after having completed basic or general education. However, despite women’s high level of educational attainment, this has not resulted in corresponding gains in the labor market.

As with employment, there are clear gender patterns in subjects of study at the postsecondary level. Young women dominate the “traditionally female” areas of study (i.e., education, social sciences, services, and health) while young men are concentrated in technical fields (i.e., energy, transport, and construction). These technical fields generally correlate with jobs in higher-paying sectors, while the humanities lead to work in lower-paid public sector jobs. Among the numerous young women who complete higher education, many do not become employed after graduation, either because their qualifications do not meet labor market demands or because they marry and are expected to take on a family-focused role.

Integrating gender issues into the educational system has been articulated as a priority area for the government, but implementing concrete actions has been slow. Research suggests that teachers often subscribe to (and reinforce) gender stereotypes, while school textbooks at the primary level also reproduce stereotyped depictions of women and men.

Gender-based violence. GBV, especially domestic violence, is one of the most critical issues facing women in Armenia. Surveys carried out by the government and women’s organizations confirm that domestic violence is a widespread problem, affecting anywhere from 25% to 66% of women (depending how broadly domestic violence is defined). Although the government adopted the Strategic Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence, 2011–2015, action has been limited. The lack of a law on GBV, in particular on domestic violence, has inhibited the development of a comprehensive legal and social services response.

Support for victims of domestic violence is provided almost entirely by the nongovernment sector with support from international organizations. While the services such NGOs provide are crucial, they are not sufficient to address the complex needs of victims. The ability of victims to leave violent relationships is further impeded by societal attitudes that tolerate violence in some circumstances, and perceptions that domestic violence is a private family matter. Women’s economically vulnerable position, combined with lack of temporary housing, often prevents them from leaving violent relationships. GBV is a critical barrier to achieving gender equality in Armenia, and it has implications both for women’s economic independence and for the economic well-being of the country as a whole.

Skewed birth sex ratio. The issue of skewed sex ratio at birth in Armenia has been the subject of public debate and research in recent years. Immediately after Armenia’s independence, the sex-at-birth ratio rose from the normal biological ratio (i.e., 102–106 boys to 100 girls) and peaked at 120 male births per 100 female, one of the highest levels ever observed in the world. Since then, the sex-at-birth ratio has oscillated between 114 and 116, and seems to have stabilized at 114 in 2012.

Armenia has all the preconditions that are necessary for this to occur: (i) the availability and accessibility of technology that allows for the prenatal determination of sex and the termination of a pregnancy, (ii) preference for sons based on the notion that it is more beneficial to have male children, and (iii) a decline in fertility and low birth rates that puts pressure on parents to make choices about pregnancy if they want to avoid “additional and unnecessary” births of girls. Rates of sex-selective abortion increase dramatically with the third and fourth pregnancy. Despite the increased attention to sex-at-birth ratios and sex-selective

abortion (especially among women NGOs and international organizations), hard data are still lacking, and there has been a reluctance to discuss these issues at the policy level.

Gender, entrepreneurship, and enterprise development. Private enterprise is an important economic driver for Armenia, and increasing female entrepreneurship, especially developing the economic activity of rural women, is a key priority. Given the lack of formal job opportunities, this is a crucial option for women. In addition to a government program on women's entrepreneurship, many donors, international organizations, and NGOs also have projects supporting women's enterprise development and business training. In fact, of all women-focused projects in Armenia, the majority address a "women and entrepreneurship" theme.

Gender analysis in the area of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprise development is complicated by incomplete statistical data about women and men in the business world. Still, various surveys and studies indicate that women constitute only a small number of start-ups and make up considerably fewer than half of all business owners. Women who are engaged in business tend to operate at the micro and small levels. A number of barriers discourage women from starting and expanding businesses: limited business knowledge, skills (especially marketing skills) and confidence, exclusion from business networks, and the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities with running a business. These factors are also a reason why women's businesses are concentrated in trade, services, and small-scale production, often home-based production. A significant number of women who may technically be considered entrepreneurs are individual business owners who work in handicraft or small-scale food production, provide local services (e.g., hairdressing, tutoring, or guesthouses), or engage in shuttle trade.

Female entrepreneurs face other constraints such as limited access to commercial loans. While there are many options for women to obtain microfinance, in practice, women often cannot access credit because they lack collateral and business experience, or because high interest rates and their aversion to risk deter them from applying. High interest rates and short repayment periods are especially problematic for women who run small agriculture-based businesses. Women say their need is for more advanced and targeted training (e.g., in the legislation that regulates entrepreneurship, taxation, accounting, management skills, and marketing).

While it is generally accepted that women are "allowed" to run micro and small-scale businesses, women who run larger enterprises must have the backing and protection of influential men. Many business negotiations take place in informal context, such as over meals, but in some regions of Armenia it would be culturally unacceptable for a businesswoman to meet a male business partner without a male relative present. Such restrictions may limit businesswomen to interacting only within their own circles. Still, in the family, most female entrepreneurs receive support, especially once they begin to bring additional income to the household. For 2 years, the government has sponsored national awards for female entrepreneurs, an important step toward developing a positive image of businesswomen and promoting their successes to the wider society.

Gender, water supply, and municipal services. Women are the main users of water in households (for preparing meals, cleaning, laundering, bathing children, tending household

gardens and livestock, and other domestic duties), and they also play a major role in collecting, purchasing, and managing water for domestic use. Thus, women are acutely affected by limitations on household water, and projects to improve access to safe water have the potential to bring about time savings and reduced workloads for women. Women in focus groups noted the need to build hygienic sanitary facilities as part of roadside infrastructure projects. They also pointed out that many kindergartens, schools, and maternity hospitals have unsatisfactory water supply and sanitation facilities, and these are locations that predominantly employ, or are oriented toward women.

Although women in Armenia are concerned about water supply and sanitation issues, they have limited opportunities to be involved in formal decision-making processes. Few women in top management of utility companies or in government positions are responsible for resource management. Women in focus groups who raised concerns over their local water supply reported that they are more satisfied with the response they receive from water company helplines than from local authorities. However, they also pointed out that many women may not be aware of their consumer rights or would find it psychologically difficult to make a complaint about poor service. Targeted awareness raising for women about their consumer rights is thus needed.

Compared with construction and transport, women have better representation in jobs related to water supply, sewerage, and waste management—albeit in administrative positions. Women are, however, well represented in civil society organizations concerned with ecology and the environment. Focus group participants consistently raised issues about environmental protection, clean water, waste management, and recycling. Women can be an entry point for promoting behavioral change and “green” practices and should also be formally included in the national bodies that address climate change and environmental policy.

Gender and transport. During consultations for this assessment, women voiced clear priorities and concerns about road rehabilitation and construction projects. Rather than major intercity highways, women expressed greater interest in the development of local and feeder roads that would facilitate their access to formal sector jobs, markets, health centers, and schools. Women mentioned the importance of considering safety features in road rehabilitation and construction projects. Improved roads, especially the creation of roadside infrastructure, could provide women with specific income-generating opportunities, such as selling homegrown products or souvenirs, and providing refreshments and accommodation to travelers.

Women tend to use public transport more than men in Armenia, and they travel more often with children. They expressed dissatisfaction over issues such as limited service, cost of tickets, and the poor condition of bus stops and shelters. Gender-sensitive projects in public transport should consider such issues as the cost and scheduling of various transport options, the safety of female passengers on public transport, and access for passengers traveling with prams or in wheelchairs. The issue of road safety has a particular gender dimension, as men are much more likely to be involved in fatal traffic accidents than women. Prevention and educational programs should engage men specifically about their risk-taking behaviors.

Gender and energy. In energy-poor areas, women must spend time and effort to find alternative fuels. Women reported that they have many labor-saving electrical appliances in their homes, but are often unable to use them because of fluctuations in voltage and electrical outages. Although projects to improve energy supply are thought to have given women more time to spend with their children or to engage in productive activities, there have not been any comprehensive assessments of women's specific energy needs or measurements of the benefits that women receive from energy projects.

Women in focus groups placed particular value on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, but they do not have sufficient social or financial capital to initiate such changes themselves. The use of renewable energy technologies has the potential to create jobs—at present, women represent only 17.3% of employees in the field of “electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply,” but given their interest in renewable energy they could be supported to find jobs in this area.

Recommendations. To address crosscutting gender issues such as stereotyping, women's limited access to economic opportunities, political participation, and gender-based violence and skewed birth sex ratio, this assessment suggests key policy reforms and service delivery improvements that promote nondiscrimination and inclusiveness. The government also needs support for comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of laws and policies on gender. Sector-specific opportunities for gender mainstreaming are also identified in the areas of sex-disaggregated data collection and utilization, participatory approaches for increasing women's role in project design and implementation, and capacity development for executing and implementing agencies.

I. Background and Context

A. Country Situation and Policy Environment

1. Armenia is a country full of contrasts. Although small geographically, it boasts an enviable location between Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Its history spans thousands of years—Yerevan, the capital, predates Rome—and today, Armenia harbors ambitions to become a post-Soviet Silicon Valley. It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that Armenia’s modern identity and openness to Europe in economic expansion and cooperation is, at times, at odds with its traditionalism and desire to preserve perceived national values.

2. The Armenian diaspora is very large, especially in the Russian Federation, the United States, and France. It has been especially influential since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and is likewise divided between West and East. As financial support, along with different ideologies, began to flow into the country from these communities, women still living in Armenia were generally quicker to accept Western values, concepts, and ideas. In the post-Soviet period, especially, women’s flexibility and openness to learning new skills and languages have been admirable. Men in Armenia, on the other hand, have more comfortably adopted patriarchal and traditional values and roles, which are associated with an Eastern influence.

3. This pull from both the West and the East can also be observed at the political level. Armenia has been a member of the Council of Europe since 2001 and has committed to its core human rights principles. In 2010, Armenia also began negotiations with the European Union (EU) over an association agreement, and within this process took steps to harmonize national law and policy with EU principles of nondiscrimination and gender equality.¹ However, concepts of gender are unfamiliar to many in Armenia, and European standards of gender equality are also viewed by some as incompatible with “Armenian traditions.” Many have argued that women’s groups are following a “Western agenda” when they call for greater protection of their rights, despite the fact that Armenia itself has a long history of equal rights for women and men.²

4. The notion that gender equality is antithetical to Armenian values, and even to the traditional family structure, has been raised publicly on several occasions and was widely debated in the late summer of 2013 after the adoption of an equal rights law. Opponents of the law represented a number of groups, including political conservatives, nationalists, and even some leaders of Armenia’s Apostolic Church.

¹ In late 2013, President Serzh Sargsyan announced that Armenia would join the Russian Federation–led Eurasian Union, a decision that was widely seen as a rejection of the EU Association Agreement. Experts note that the economic integration objectives of the EU agreement will not go forward, but the political elements of the Association Agreement could still be negotiated. See T. de Waal. 2013. An Offer Sargsyan Could Not Refuse. *Eurasia Outlook*. <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=52841>

² H. Gevorgyan. 2001. *Gender Issues: Problems and Solutions, Methodology for Gender Education*. Yerevan: Trust Social Work and Sociological Research Center. pp. 34–38.

1. Gender Issues in the Transition Period

5. In addition to its ancient traditions of equal opportunities for men and women, as a Soviet republic, Armenia benefited from an official policy of gender equality that encouraged women's active participation in the labor market and resulted in significant improvements in their legal and social status. Affirmative action in the public and employment spheres yielded positive results such as legal protection of women's rights. Yet gender norms in the household remained largely unchanged, and women in Armenia still experienced the multiple burdens of formal employment; housework; and caring for children, the elderly, and the sick.³

6. The strong equal rights laws of the Soviet period largely explain why women did not build feminist movements as in the West. In addition, the Soviet republics emphasized quantitative aspects of gender equality (e.g., the number of women in the Supreme Soviet) and did not monitor whether gender equality had been achieved in everyday life. The result of this policy can still be seen in Armenia today, where most people state that men and women are equal despite evidence of considerable disparities.

7. The breakup of the Soviet Union was followed by a period in which Armenian society rejected much of what was considered "Soviet" in nature, regardless of whether it had a positive social impact. Thus, when Soviet rule ended, notions of gender equality were abandoned, and "traditional views" and customs resurfaced.

8. Armenia remains a conservative, and, in many ways, closed country. In the years building up to the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the first years of independence, Armenia experienced several devastating events: an earthquake in 1988; armed conflict with Azerbaijan; and the imposition of an economic blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey, which is still in place. The collective memory of the events of 1915 and the unresolved tensions with Turkey and Azerbaijan, still threaten the Armenian identity. The country's stability, in terms of conflict, governance, and the economy, are considered by many to be greater priorities than addressing gender inequalities.

9. Armenia's Christian heritage is also an important part of its national identity and a source of pride. Armenia became the first nation to declare Christianity as its state religion in 301 A.D. Today, some 95% of Armenians consider themselves to be Christians, most following Armenia's Apostolic Church. With independence, the influence of the church increased, and this, too, has led to support for patriarchal values.

10. Before independence, Armenia's economy was based on industry, and the country was dependent on external trade. With borders open to only two neighboring countries (i.e., Georgia and Iran) and lack of investment in industrial enterprises, Armenia's economy has clearly suffered. While many women lost jobs, they are also seen to have become more resilient and adaptable to the changing circumstances. By contrast, men, faced with the loss of jobs in traditional sectors, have left Armenia in large numbers, migrating mainly to

3 It is important to note that during the Communist period, the Communist Party identified the traditional family in Armenia as a "backward institution," and therefore it took measures to dismantle family loyalties and to disrupt family patterns. The effect, according to some scholars, was to produce resentment and resistance that, in turn, had "the paradoxical effect of strengthening family and kinship networks." See A. Ishkanian. 2003. Gendered Transitions: The Impact of the Post-Soviet Transition on Women in Central Asia and the Caucasus. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*. 2 (3-4). pp. 479-480.

the Russian Federation for employment. The lack of “acceptable” local jobs for Armenian men seems to have resulted in men becoming entrenched in those few areas where jobs are available (e.g., politics, business, construction, and industry), leaving women mainly to occupy public sector jobs in education and health care. Further, as perceptions about male and female roles remain strong across generations, these not only limit women’s economic opportunities but also prevent men from exploring nontraditional occupations.

11. A regional survey of attitudes toward gender in the three countries of the Southern Caucasus (i.e., Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) indicated that Armenia and Azerbaijan tend to emphasize more traditional gender roles, and in global terms are often closer in attitude to Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Georgia, meanwhile, is more inclined to aspire to gender equality, and in this sense is closer to countries in Western Europe and the Americas.⁴ However, upon closer inspection, attitudes are more nuanced in Armenia. While most Armenians take a traditional view that men should have priority for jobs when they are scarce, they do not share a perception that education is less important for girls than boys.⁵ Armenia is also one of the few countries in the world where people perceive women to have better lives than men, despite the fact that in actuality, men and women record equal levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with life. Such findings about the state of gender equality in Armenia are not conclusive, but they offer an interesting lens through which to view other indicators of how women and men are faring in their access to a range of opportunities and resources.

2. Gender Equality Indexes for Armenia

12. Indicators of human development, and particularly of the gender dimensions of development, suggest that progress toward gender equality in Armenia has been slow, and that while some fields exhibit positive indicators in equality, others lag behind.

13. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses the Gender Inequality Index to measure the extent to which national development achievements are eroded by gender inequality. It is based on five indicators in the areas of reproductive health, the labor market, and empowerment. Armenia’s 2013 score of 0.325 represents a 33% loss in achievement due to gender inequality. This score is close to the regional average for Europe and Central Asia of 0.317,⁶ and it also represents a rank of 60 out of 149 countries in the 2013 index.

14. In 2014, UNDP introduced the Gender Development Index, which is based on sex-disaggregated data from the Human Development Index. The Gender Development Index is the ratio of the female to the male Human Development Index, and so it takes into consideration gender gaps experienced by both men and women. In 2013, the ratio of Human Development Index values for women and men in Armenia was 0.994, meaning that the gender gap in human development is small but comparable to the gap observed for Europe and Central Asia combined (Table 1).

⁴ Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2011. *How Does the South Caucasus Compare?* 8(48). <http://www.crrccenters.org/20133/E-bulletin>

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 6.

⁶ Under the Gender Inequality Index, zero indicates that men and women fare equally, and there are no losses due to inequality. A score of 1.00 signifies that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions. UNDP. Human Development Reports: Gender Inequality Index. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

Table 1: Gender and Development Indexes for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia

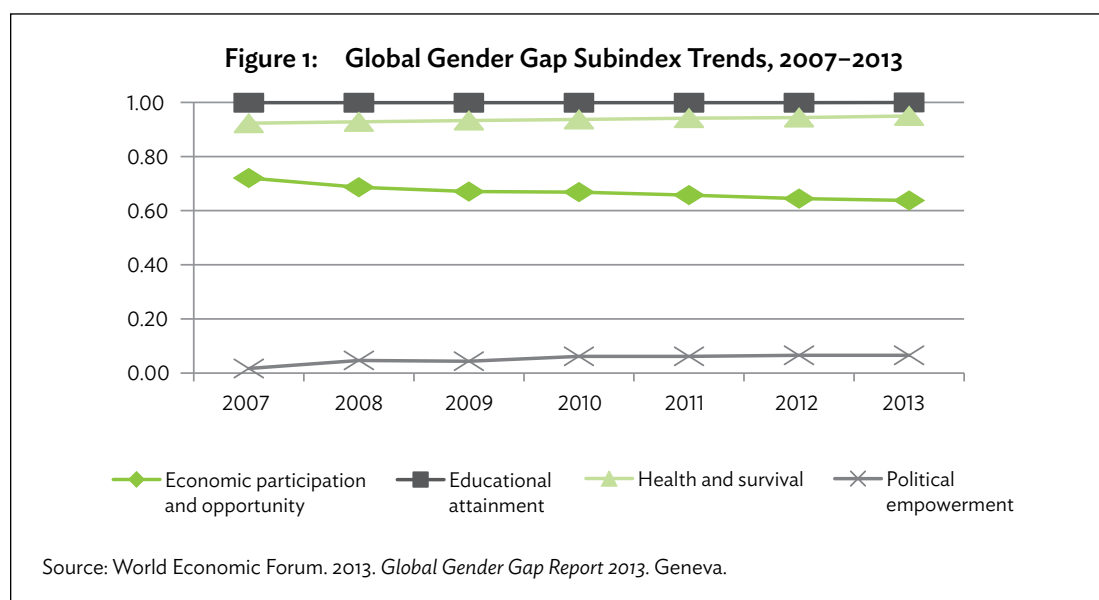
Country	Gender Development Index, 2013		Global Gender Gap Index, 2013	
	HDI Values (female/male)	Value (female–male HDI)	Score (1= full equality)	Rank (out of 136 countries)
Armenia	0.725/0.729	0.994	0.663	94
Azerbaijan	0.723/0.759	0.952	0.658	99
Georgia	0.713/0.758	0.941	0.675	86

HDI = Human Development Index.

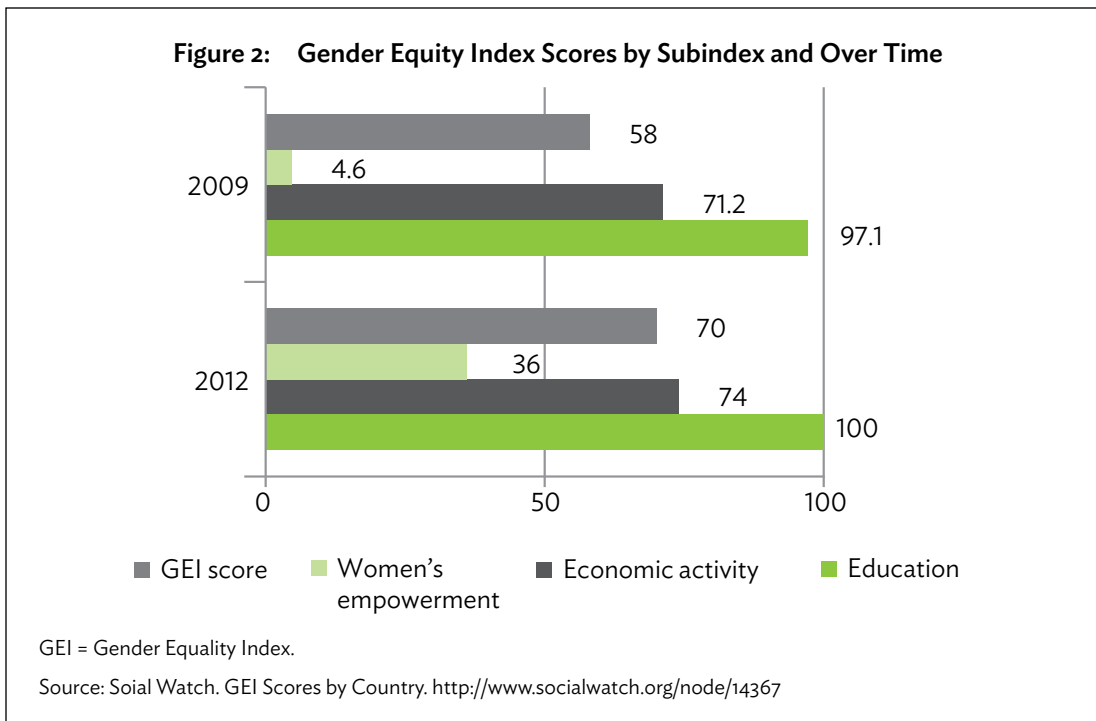
Sources: UNDP. 2014. *Human Development Report 2014—Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*. New York. Statistical Annex, Table 5; World Economic Forum. 2013. *Global Gender Gap Report 2013*. Geneva.

15. The Global Gender Gap Index is used by the World Economic Forum to measure the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In 2013, Armenia received a score of 0.663, indicating little or no progress since 2007, when the country scored 0.665.⁷

16. Scores by subindex reveal where the gender gaps are the most acute in Armenia and in which areas gaps are lessening. The Global Gender Gap Index scores for educational attainment (e.g., literacy rate and school enrollment) and for health and survival (e.g., healthy life expectancy) are high, and this positive trend has continued for a number of years (Figure 1). Yet scores for economic participation and opportunity (e.g., labor force participation; wage equality; and numbers of senior, professional, and technical workers) and political empowerment (e.g., women in the National Assembly and ministerial positions) are lower and offset the other positive indicators of equality. Across time, it is also clear that scores for the economic and political spheres have remained consistently



⁷ Countries are scored on a scale in which 1.00 is the highest (i.e., full equality) and zero the lowest. World Economic Forum. 2013. *Global Gender Gap Report 2013*. Geneva.



lower than scores for the other two dimensions, and in the case of economic participation and opportunity, the World Economic Forum finds that gender inequality has actually increased since 2007.

17. The Gender Equity Index, developed by Social Watch to measure gaps between men and women in three dimensions (i.e., education, the economy, and empowerment), presents a more positive picture of reducing gender gaps in Armenia, but also suggests that positive trends have not been consistent across all dimensions. A comparison of 2009 and 2012 scores shows that the greatest positive developments have been made in women's empowerment, that is, a measure of "gaps in highly qualified jobs, parliament and senior executive positions".⁸ Scores related to school enrollment and literacy rates have remained consistently high, but those for economic participation, a measure of gaps in income and employment, have shown minimal improvement (Figure 2).

B. National Policies and Institutions on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

1. Law and Policy on Gender Equality

18. Armenia is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As mentioned, it has also been a member of the Council of Europe since 2001 and is a party to several regional treaties that reiterate

⁸ The gender gap is assigned a value in each of the three areas from 0, a situation of complete inequality, to 100, perfect equality, and the Gender Equality Index is an average of the three dimensions. Social Watch. Measuring Inequity: The 2012 Gender Equity Index. <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14365>

principles of nondiscrimination on the basis of sex such as the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter. The government has also expressed its commitment to implement the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, 2014–2017.

19. Further, the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia not only ensures the protection of fundamental human rights in conformity with the principles of international law, it also specifically guarantees equal rights to women and men.⁹ Principles of nondiscrimination are included in other laws, such as the Labor, Family, and Criminal codes.

20. In 2013, Armenia adopted the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women,¹⁰ a significant legal development and an important articulation of the government’s commitment to promote gender equality. The law fills gaps that previously existed in legislation such as by defining several key terms, setting forth prohibitions on gender discrimination, describing guarantees of equality in public service, and establishing a national agency on gender equality. However, while the law reiterates commitments under the Constitution and international conventions, it does not create a mechanism by which victims of gender discrimination can assert their rights in court. The passage of the law attracted considerable controversy and debate in Armenia, an outcome that observers had not anticipated (Box 1).

21. State policy relevant to gender equality has evolved from measures aimed at enhancing the status of women to a more holistic view of eliminating disparities between women and men. The National Plan for Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society, 2004–2010 highlighted several areas in which women faced particular problems, such as accessing decision-making roles and formal employment, gender-based violence (GBV), and human trafficking. Yet the plan also retained a traditional view of women as being responsible for family life and having to fit professional, political, and social activities around this role.¹¹

22. In 2009, the government elaborated the Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia,¹² which describes state policy on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women. The paper includes a strategy to address the primary objective of “introducing gender criteria into all spheres of socio-political life” and specific objectives relevant to decision making, economic reform, education and health sectors, and GBV. Significantly, to implement the paper, the drafting of a national action plan and the creation of a national mechanism were requested.¹³

23. The road map for Armenia’s gender policy is the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan, 2011–2015.¹⁴ This plan addresses all areas outlined in the concept paper and identifies specific goals for each sector. While the plan does not define a gender-mainstreaming approach, it does require the integration of “a gender component into the country’s strategic programs of political and economic development and [the introduction of] a

9 Government of Armenia. 2005. Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. Yerevan. Articles 3 and 14.1.

10 Law No. 57. Adopted by Parliament on 20 May 2013.

11 Government of Armenia. 2004. *Republic of Armenia National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society, 2004–2010*. Yerevan. p. 1.

12 Government of Armenia. 2010. *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

14 Government of Armenia. 2011. *Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan, 2011–2015*. Yerevan.

Box 1: Protests Concerning the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in Armenia

In June 2013, the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women entered into force after being passed by the National Assembly, with 108 votes for and 1 against. Soon after the law was passed, opponents of the law launched protests, maintaining that it undermined traditional Armenian values, families, and history.^a Specific objections centered on the use of the word “gender” and its definition in the law as an “acquired, socially fixed behavior of persons of different sexes.” Many believed that the term refers to “gender identity” and was a coded reference to homosexuality.^b Various organizations campaigned against the law, many using social media, with claims that the law would promote homosexuality or was an attempt to impose incompatible Western values on Armenian society.

The combination of anti-European, anti-gender, and homophobic rhetoric that was used to critique the law deliberately distorted the meaning of gender equality. The term “gender equality” had been used in a number of Armenian laws and policies over the years without having received any negative comment.^c As the deputy minister of labor and social affairs pointed out, the definition of “gender” in Armenian law is consistent with model legislation adopted by Commonwealth of Independent States members in 2005.^d

Demands were made to remove the definition of gender from the law, but no amendments have been made. In November 2013, the Council on Women’s Affairs, under the Office of the Prime Minister, issued a statement calling for the full implementation of the law and condemning the harassment of women’s nongovernment organizations that took place soon after the law was adopted.^e The law remains in force, and the necessary regulations are being adopted for its implementation.

The negative reaction to the law demonstrated that concepts of gender equality are not widely understood or supported by the public at large, and also that consensus about the importance of promoting gender equality has not been achieved.^f Some contend that the very heated and public campaigns against the law discredited decades of work by nongovernment organizations to promote women’s rights and gender equality in Armenia.

^a S. Martirosyan. 2013. The “Gender Equality Law” Hysteria in Armenia. *Armenian Weekly*. 20 September. <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/09/20/the-gender-equality-law-hysteria-in-armenia/>

^b M. Grigoryan. 2013. Armenia: Fight against Gender-Equality Morphs into Fight Against EU. 11 October. *Eurasianet.org*. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67620>

^c The “Gender Equality Law” Hysteria in Armenia.

^d National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. Working Meeting in the Committee. 6 November. http://www.parliament.am/news.php?do=view&cat_id=2&day=06&month=11&year=2013&NewsID=6240&lang=eng

^e Women’s Council. 2013. Statement by the Women’s Council under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. 25 November. http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/documents/news/20131125_en.pdf

^f An initiative of the Office of the Armenian Human Rights Defender to introduce an antidiscrimination law in 2012 was also met with criticism. During public debates of the draft antidiscrimination law, “gender issues” were often conflated with the rights of sexual minorities. An early version of this draft law included a prohibition on discrimination based on sexual orientation, which was later removed. Critics characterized this as “harmful to state interests” and national values. See Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. “Anti-Discrimination” Law is Open for Suggestions. 25 March. http://www.pashtpan.am/en/library/view_news/article/956; and *Armenia Digest*. 2013. Armenia Does Not Need the Anti-Discrimination Law. 26 March. [In Russian.] <http://dig.am/church/item/5779-armeniya-ne-nuzhdaetsya-v-zakone-protiv-diskriminatsii---ekspert>

mechanism for a gender expert examination of socioeconomic programs and projects.”¹⁵ Likewise, it anticipates the integration of gender consideration into planning processes and the gradual “application of gender budgeting at various stages of the budgetary cycle.”¹⁶

24. The plan articulates state policy, but it does not designate implementing agencies, detail a budget, or outline how progress will be measured. A 2011 annual report on the plan’s implementation indicated that several activities were either unfunded or financed by international organizations.¹⁷ Some experts contend that the declarative nature of the plan means that it has not resulted in many clear actions to eliminate gender disparities.

2. National Mechanisms

25. To date, the government agencies tasked with implementing the gender policy concept paper have been based on structures created to address women’s issues only. Operationally, the Department of Family, Women and Children’s Issues within the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is the key government agency addressing gender concerns. Its mandate includes studying gender issues, developing state programs, and coordinating and monitoring their implementation.¹⁸ The department has been active in developing government decrees and draft legislation on such issues as social protection for women and domestic violence, and it serves as a co-chair of the United Nations Gender Theme Group (GTG). Still, respondents to this assessment noted that the department’s capacity is limited in the work it can undertake and its ability to coordinate the work of other ministries. It has a very small staff and lacks high-level support. Further, other line ministries do not have staff dedicated to gender issues, such as gender focal points, with whom the department could readily cooperate.

26. The Council on Women’s Affairs, established in 2000 and reorganized in 2009, is an interagency consultative body under the Office of the Prime Minister. It aims to enhance women’s status in all spheres and to provide equal opportunities to men and women. Council members are prominent women from the three branches of government, the business community, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. The council is not permanently staffed, however, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs provides its secretariat functions. Council meetings cover various gender-related topics in support of the Prime Minister’s initiatives such as prizes awarded to rural and urban communities for gender sensitivity. Experts contend that the Council on Women’s Affairs lacks a strategic focus, and a range of issues are discussed but not prioritized (e.g., a meeting occurred in which sex-selective abortion and prizes for female journalists were given equal attention). As of mid-2014, the council was reviewing ways to enhance its effectiveness and improve its capacity to function as a permanent department under the Prime Minister, within the context of developing a national mechanism on gender equality in Armenia.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Government of Armenia. Councils. <http://www.gov.am/en/councils/reports/5/>

¹⁸ Government of Armenia. 2014. *National Review of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in the Context of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015*. Yerevan. p. 2.

¹⁹ Government of Armenia. 2014. *Meeting Held on Enhancement of Effectiveness of Prime Minister-Affiliated Women’s Council*. 16 July. <http://www.gov.am/en/news/item/7435/>

27. Gender is also given consideration in government planning at the *marz* (province) level, and within city planning in Yerevan. From 2011, standing committees on gender issues were established in each *marzpetaran* (provincial government), Yerevan Municipality, and all of the administrative districts of Yerevan.²⁰ The standing committees are tasked with developing annual action plans on gender equality and GBV, detailing activities for their implementation, and introducing local gender policy.

28. Gender experts consulted during this assessment, however, contend that gender is not being meaningfully integrated into local planning processes. Gender mainstreaming is not a required part of the process of drafting 3-year community development programs or budgets at the *marz* level, and most *marzpetaran* have limited knowledge or resources needed to undertake gender mainstreaming. Instead, work that is oriented toward women and children is generally highlighted as “gender projects” in plans. In some cases, gender issues are addressed in local planning through a few stand-alone and women-oriented projects such as celebrations of Women’s Day. Such activities are not designed strategically; they often have no targeted funding, and there is no monitoring of outcomes or impact. Several local administrations also have women’s councils, but this is not a uniform practice, and their effectiveness varies.

29. Experts working on improving gender integration at the local level suggest that because the law on local governance is neutral about gender, the most effective approach to engendering local planning is to encourage greater inclusivity in democratic processes to improve their effectiveness. In addition, the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women calls for developing strategies and programs on gender equality at the regional level, which should improve how national policy is implemented in each *marz*.

3. Donor Coordination on Gender-Related Projects

30. A number of multilateral and bilateral development agencies, international organizations, and private foundations support projects that either have a focus on women or aim to address gender disparities in Armenia. Coordination of these efforts is managed by the United Nations GTG, which includes United Nations country team members, representatives of ministries and state structures, international development organizations and banks, NGOs, think tanks, and independent experts, totaling about 50 members.²¹ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a member of the Armenia GTG. The GTG supports gender mainstreaming in Armenia’s development agenda and in its members’ activities; serves to enhance cooperation and coordination among the government, United Nations agencies, civil society, and other development partners on gender-related projects; and promotes and coordinates gender-responsive development programming by providing a venue for regular sharing of information, tools, and experiences on implementing gender equality projects.²² Although the GTG meets regularly for the purpose of joint planning, a more in-depth discussion of several specific gender issues in Armenia is still needed. The GTG’s role in facilitating dialogue between government and civil society could also be enhanced.

²⁰ *National Review of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in the Context of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015*, p. 3.

²¹ A full list of GTG members can be accessed from: http://www.un.am/res/Gender%20TG%20docs/list_GTG_final_for_website.pdf

²² United Nations in Armenia. Gender Theme Group. <http://www.un.am/en/p/gtg>

31. Civil society, especially women’s NGOs, plays an important role in the protection of women’s rights and in promoting gender equality. Such organizations are located throughout Armenia, and some are represented in the GTG.

C. Data Collection: Statistics and Indicators

32. Sex-disaggregated data can serve as the foundation for gender analysis and assessments by providing an overview of the current situation and identifying differences in the relative status of women and men. Furthermore, gender statistics reveal information “vital to the development of policies and programs promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment...and can contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development overall.”²³

33. The gender equality concept paper highlights the need at the national and regional level to “regularly collect, analyze and disseminate statistical data regarding the participation of women and men in public and social life,”²⁴ and the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan reiterates the goal of improving the collection of and reliance on statistical data and assessments of gender disparities.

34. Armenia has made progress in the collection of and use of gender statistics, but the country also requires further capacity development in this area.²⁵ The National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia has a designated gender focal point and four divisions that are responsible for assisting gender mainstreaming in official statistics. The office annually publishes a compilation of sex-disaggregated statistics, *Women and Men in Armenia*, with the aim of “providing [an] impartial basis for comparing and evaluating progress toward the set goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment.”²⁶ Institutional weaknesses, however, include the fact that there is no strategy or action plan for improving gender statistics, there is no budget for the compilation of gender statistics (*Women and Men in Armenia* is published with donor support), and there is no staff member fully dedicated to mainstreaming gender.²⁷ Further, the *Women and Men in Armenia* compilation primarily focuses on social sector topics such as health, education, employment, and social protection.

35. The National Statistical Service and various ministries also collaborate with international partners and NGOs to conduct surveys and collect data on topics that have a particular gender dimension, for example, the Demographic and Health Survey and studies on domestic violence, family planning and infertility, and informal sector employment. Still, gaps remain in statistical and even gender-sensitive data. For instance, statistical data concerning women’s entrepreneurship or gender-sensitive information relevant to the impact of infrastructure development projects are not routinely gathered, or, if they exist, are not publicly accessible. The lack of these sex-disaggregated data and gender-relevant

23 ADB. 2012. *Gender Statistics in the Southern Caucasus and Central and West Asia*. Manila: ADB. p. 3.

24 *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 9.

25 *Gender Statistics in the Southern Caucasus and Central and West Asia*, p. 24.

26 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*. Yerevan. p. 9.

27 *Gender Statistics in the Southern Caucasus and Central and West Asia*, p. 52.

information presents challenges to strategic planning of development interventions (and in conducting the present assessment).

36. More information about specific groups of women and men is also needed. In its most recent review of compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, there was a lack of information and statistics about “vulnerable groups of women, particularly rural women, single mothers, women with disabilities, refugees, and women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities who often suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, especially in regard to access to employment, health care, education and social benefits.”²⁸

D. Country Gender Assessment Caveats

37. This assessment examines differences between men and women in Armenia. Yet, neither women nor men are homogeneous groups, and the experiences and priorities of diverse groups of men and women should be kept in mind. Factors such as age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, location, disability, and refugee status can all have an effect on the relative status of women and men. Although the population is predominantly ethnic Armenian, there are smaller minority groups of Yezidis, Russians, Kurds, refugees from Azerbaijan, and others.²⁹ Little information was uncovered about gender issues specific to these minority groups, in part because official statistics and reports are infrequently disaggregated in this way. The exception is information about some members of the Yezidi community voicing criticism when the Family Code was amended in 2012 to increase the marital age for women from 17 to 18, the same as it is for men.³⁰

38. The topic of how gender and disability intersect, in access to resources, was raised in consultations for this assessment. In Armenia, there is an approximately equal number of men and women officially certified as disabled (for the purpose of receiving social benefits), although among children with disabilities, boys outnumber girls (boys accounted for 68.5% of children with disabilities in 2012).³¹ People with disabilities (PWDs) face the possibility of marginalization and impediments to accessing basic resources, such as education, employment, and even the use of public services, such as health care and transport. Disability itself is often stigmatized, and PWDs may encounter discrimination. A public opinion poll revealed that the majority of respondents felt that they had a positive attitude toward PWDs, but when speaking about others, the majority felt that the general population has a negative attitude toward PWDs.³² It has also been observed that women with disabilities face double discrimination—based on both ability and gender—in finding jobs, for example. Women are also more likely to be primarily responsible for caring for a child or family member with a disability.

28 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). 2009. Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1. Geneva. para. 36.

29 In the 2011 census, about 98% of the country's population reported their ethnicity as Armenian.

30 In amending the law, the government cited the need to prevent early marriage, especially before girls complete 12 years of compulsory education, and to eliminate gender inequality. Some members of the Yezidi community claimed that the amendment contradicted their traditions, which allow girls to marry at even younger ages. See M. Grigoryan. 2012. Armenia: Ethnic Minority Rejects Marriage-Age Requirement. 20 September. *Eurasianet.org*. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65942>

31 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 55.

32 Civic Development and Partnership Foundation. 2012. *Report on Public Opinion Poll about People with Disabilities and Their Employment*. Yerevan: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Save the Children. p. 31.

II. Crosscutting Gender Issues

39. This chapter provides an overview of several broad gender themes that are also crosscutting with regard to development planning. Disparities in these areas contribute directly to gender issues observed at the sector level. For this reason, it is useful to review the wider gender landscape in Armenia and to consider the influence of these various themes on projects funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and others.

A. Gender Roles and Stereotypes

40. Gender norms, or notions of the “traditional” roles of men and women, exist in every society, and are often accepted as inevitable or natural. The concept paper on gender equality highlights the need to develop “an egalitarian gender culture to overcome patriarchal stereotypes and promote positive public perception of the concept of equal participation of men and women in public administration and other areas of social life.”³³ The Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women prohibits the reproduction of gender stereotypes in the media, education, and general culture.

41. The related topics of gender roles and gender-based stereotypes were referenced many times during consultations for this assessment. Respondents explained that women’s primary roles are centered on family life and caregiving to justify obstacles that women encounter in such areas as starting a business or running for political office. When nine civil society organizations working on women’s issues were asked to identify the primary obstacles to improving the status of women in Armenia, 88% named “cultural beliefs, social attitudes or patriarchal mentality.”³⁴

42. According to prevailing attitudes in society, women and men have distinct gender roles, with women taking primary responsibility for the household, and men engaging in income-earning activities outside of the home. A time-use study confirmed that for the most part, such gender norms hold true. In both urban and rural areas, men spend about 3.0 hours per day more than women in formal jobs. In contrast, women spend up to 4.5 hours more per day on housework and have about 2.0 hours less free time than men per day.³⁵ Regarding child care, women spend on average close to 3.0 hours per day caring for children as a primary activity, as compared with men, who spend 25 minutes on average.³⁶

43. In Armenia, as elsewhere, people may acknowledge or even agree with stereotypes about suitable activities for men and women that they do not necessarily follow. The

³³ *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 4.

³⁴ International Foundation for Electoral Systems. 2013. *Armenian Survey of Women’s Organizations*. Washington, DC. p. 5.

³⁵ *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, pp. 137–138. The time-use survey was conducted in 2008.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

converse is also true—when asked about the acceptability of more flexible gender roles, people may agree in principle but not in practice. A survey of 550 women and men (ages 14 to over 55 years) in Yerevan and several other regions found that an overwhelming majority agreed that it is acceptable for men in Armenia to undertake domestic chores (57% agreeing that “it is acceptable,” and 39% with the qualified answer that “it is acceptable, depending on the type of domestic chore.”)³⁷ When asked specifically about whether men engage in domestic chores, the opinions of women and men differed considerably. Almost one-quarter of respondents (21.8%)—and mainly female (87.5%)—did not think that men who are ready to contribute equally to domestic duties exist at present.³⁸

44. Attitudes about the division of household duties seem to vary by age group. People over 50 years old who took part in the survey were more likely to label certain tasks as exclusively female duties, regardless of whether the woman is also employed, including preparation of meals, washing dishes, and housework.³⁹ The post-independence generation (16–39 years old) appears to believe that spouses should divide household tasks equally, but even then, a significant portion of respondents (16–39 years old) to another survey felt that housecleaning and preparing meals are the wife’s sole responsibility (33.2% and 41.4% of the respondents, respectively).⁴⁰

45. Although the post-Soviet generation may have more egalitarian views about gender roles in the family, research has suggested that, overall, 2 decades since independence “have not marked any significant improvements in the gender attitudes and stereotypes that people have.”⁴¹ Some female interviewees, who are old enough to remember the Soviet period, opined that the young female generation is actually more restricted by social norms than they were themselves in the past (e.g., boyfriends or family members now impose more restrictions on staying out late or visiting friends). Several people commented that gender equality has actually declined since the Soviet period when equality was the official ideology and achieved through quotas. Today, especially outside of the capital, people are said to be reverting to a traditional approach, but one that is, in actuality, more conservative than is observed in earlier Armenian history.

46. Although they may not always reflect reality, stereotypes remain influential in Armenia. For instance, in a survey of 3,200 households, 85% of respondents agreed with the statement that “a man should normally be the breadwinner” (only 14% thought this role should be shared equally and 1% that this was women’s role).⁴² In contrast, when asked who the actual breadwinner is in the majority of families in Armenia, the responses differed considerably: 64% answered “men,” 17% answered “women,” and 17% felt that this role was shared equally.

47. Gender stereotypes present barriers to achieving gender equality, and the impacts of strict adherence to gender roles are specific for women and men. For women, their domestic burdens often leave them with insufficient time for self-education, professional

37 Society Without Violence. 2011. *Keep Me Away From Your Stereotypes: Sociological Survey Analysis*. Yerevan. p. 35.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

39 Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, National Institute of Labor and Social Research, and National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2009. *Report on Aging Survey in the Republic of Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 16.

40 Women’s Support Center. 2013. *Sociological Study on Gender Attitudes and Stereotypes in Armenia*. Yerevan. pp. 32–33.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

42 Caucasus Research Resource Centers–Armenia and UNDP. 2011. *2011 Social Cohesion Survey*. <http://www.crrccenters.org/20598/Social-Cohesion-Survey>

training, or entrepreneurial activities. The widely held expectation that women's primary role is in the domestic sphere reinforces the perception that women lack abilities as political or business leaders, and often holds women back from pursuing available opportunities. Women are only thought to have gained sufficient social capital to start a business or run for local office, for example, when they are in their late 40s and 50s (i.e., after raising children). Several interviewees and focus group participants noted that women often have innovations and "good ideas," but, given their role and status, men put them into action, frequently taking credit themselves.

48. Gender stereotypes also have negative impacts on men. In particular, female respondents to this assessment observed that the expectation that men's primary role is to provide financially for the family is a cause of stress, for example, when men cannot find acceptable jobs locally and then must migrate for work.

49. Changing gender norms and challenging stereotypes are complicated. Some focus group participants drew attention to the fact that there are almost no professional female role models in politics, business, science, or the arts, while during the Soviet period, society could look up to several prominent women in these spheres. The media, in particular, downplays women's role in the public sphere. For example, media monitoring of newspapers and internet sites has shown that men make up 86% of people represented in the media, and that male "newsmakers and 'privileged speakers'" outnumber women by six to one.⁴³ On the other hand, media have also used initiatives to promote information about gender issues and a positive image of women.⁴⁴

B. Women's Participation in Political and Public Life

50. Armenia presents another paradox: women there are highly educated and vote in elections at a slightly higher rate than men, and yet "women's representation in political decision-making, business and economic management, local self-government and in key regional and central units of public administration as well as in governing bodies of political parties is quite low."⁴⁵ This "means that women's potential is not adequately utilized in the fields of public administration, decision-making and economic and socio-political governance."⁴⁶ Focus group discussions highlighted the limited opportunities that women have to influence policy, as they are underrepresented in political office and in decision-making positions.

51. Politics in Armenia is male-dominated, not only in the very low number of women who hold political office but also in the psychology of political institutions. Respondents to this assessment noted that among female politicians, there are few women's champions, the understanding of gender issues is limited, and female politicians are very often "gender blind." As one interviewee put it, "there is no advantage to having women [in these political offices]." Political parties have also not engaged with issues of gender equality or women's rights.

43 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Armenia. 2011. *Factsheet on "Woman's Image in Armenian Media" Study Results*. Yerevan. 9 December. p. 2.

44 Such initiatives include the annual Na/Ne Media Award for journalism on women's issues, supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the British Council, UNFPA, several other organizations, and the publication of women's success stories on the Women Net portal.

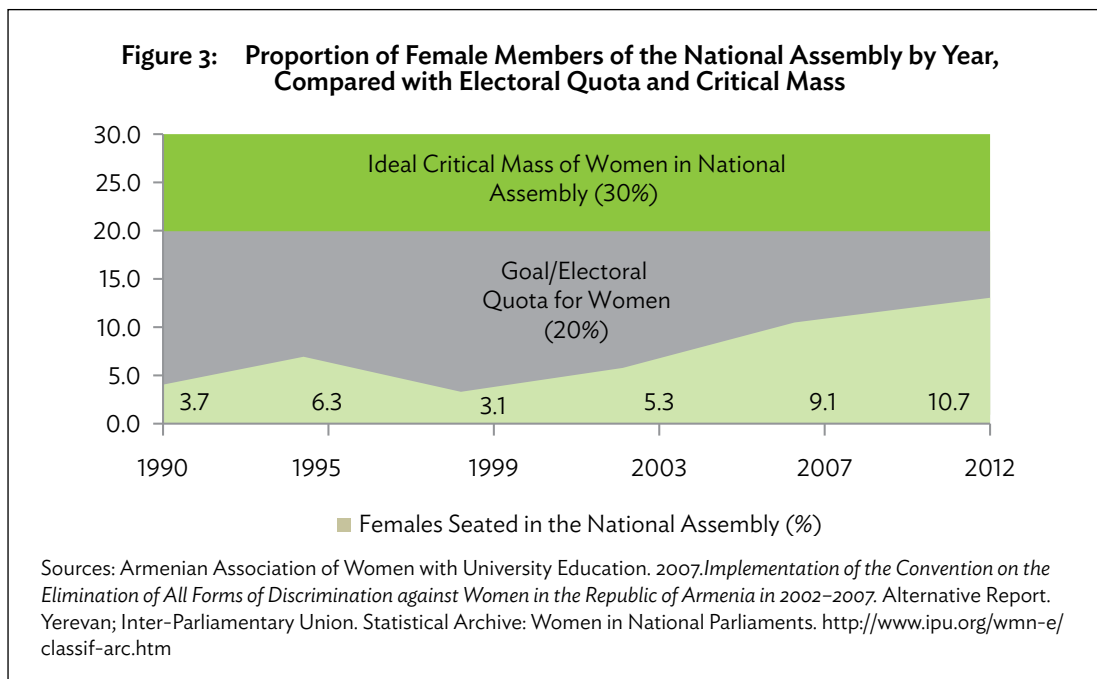
45 Kovaks Social Studies Center and UNFPA. 2011. *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia: Report on Findings of the Sociological Study*. Yerevan. p. 4.

46 Ibid.

1. Women in National Office

52. However, the political sphere is one in which incremental positive change has taken place. The positive indicators in this area can be primarily attributed to the introduction of an electoral quota system used to increase the number of women in the National Assembly. Previous quotas for women on party candidate lists were instituted in 1999 (5%) and 2007 (15%). When the issue of quotas was revisited in 2011, women's nongovernment organizations (NGOs) argued that the percentage should be raised to 30% to ensure a minimum critical mass and that the quota be applied not only to political party lists but also to elected National Assembly members.⁴⁷ The resulting amendment to the Electoral Code stipulates a 20% quota and uses a “zebra principle,” requiring that at least every fifth person on the party list be of the opposite sex to the other four candidates.⁴⁸

53. After the parliamentary elections in 2012, the number of female National Assembly members only increased to 14, representing 10.7% of the 131 seats. Although the use of electoral quotas led to an increase in the number of women in political parties and in the National Assembly, women's representation in the National Assembly has fallen short of objectives with each election cycle and lags behind the European regional average of 23.7%.⁴⁹ Commenting on the results of the 2012 election, the Pro Media-Gender group noted that if the trend of women becoming National Assembly members follows the same dynamic that it has since 1991, “we will need at least 25 years to reach the 20 per cent quota.”⁵⁰ Figure 3 illustrates changes in the number of female National Assembly members



47 *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia: Report on Findings of the Sociological Study*, p. 54.

48 Article 108, Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia, adopted 26 May 2011.

49 Representing the combined averages of upper and lower houses of Parliament. When Nordic countries are excluded, the average falls to 22.4%.

50 G. Mkrtchyan. 2012. Women Fail to Gain Ground in Armenian Election. *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*. 29 June. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/women-fail-gain-ground-armenian-election>

by election cycle since independence from the Soviet Union.⁵¹ The figure also shows the gap between women’s current representation, the goals of the electoral quota (20%), and the critical mass considered necessary to have influence over decision making (30%).

54. The reasons for the failure to obtain 20% female representation are varied. Election monitoring confirmed that initial party lists met the legal requirements, and women made up 22% of candidates across all lists. However, before the election, seven female candidates dropped out of the race “to make way for male colleagues” on the list. The quota also only applies to the 90 seats allocated by proportional representation.⁵² Among candidates running for the 41 remaining seats, fewer than 8% were women (12 of 155 candidates), and of these, 3 female candidates reported no campaign expenditures, suggesting that they were not genuine. Only 9 of the 41 constituencies had female candidates on the ballot.⁵³

55. Women’s representation in nonelected government positions shows a pattern similar to that of the National Assembly. Women make up only 11%–13% of high-level posts but are well represented among presidential and government staff (Table 2).

56. The ministries with the most female staff members (more than 50%) are those concerned with culture, education and science, labor and social issues, the economy, sports and youth, and health care. Women represent fewer than 35% of ministerial staff in the ministries of transport and communication and urban development.⁵⁴

2. Women in Local Government

57. When discussing women’s lack of representation in government positions at the national level, several respondents to this assessment stated that women have, in fact, made greater gains in political office at the local level. However, data revealed that here,

Table 2: Women in the Executive Branch and Government, 2012–2013

Position	Total Positions	Number of Women	Proportion of Women (%)
Ministers ^a	19	2	11.1
Ministers and deputy ministers, combined ^b	80	9	11.3
Highest civil service posts	124	17	13.7
Presidential administration	331	121	36.6
Government administration	302	139	46.0

^aIncludes the Prime Minister and 18 line ministers.

^bIncludes the deputy ministers in the Office of the Prime Minister and in line ministries.

Sources: Government of the Republic of Armenia. Structure.<http://www.gov.am/en/structure/>; and National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*. Yerevan. pp. 150, 153, and 155.

51 The Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia was formed in 1990, with its first convocation the same year. In 1995, the first convocation of the National Assembly took place, followed by the second through fifth convocations (1999–2012).

52 G. Mkrtchyan. 2012. Women Fail to Gain Ground in Armenian Election. *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*. 29 June. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/women-fail-gain-ground-armenian-election>

53 Ibid.

54 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 154. Data are for 2012.

too, women remain underrepresented in the positions that wield the most power and authority, and tend to be most numerous in rural communities and in unpaid positions.

58. Armenia has 11 administrative divisions—10 *marzer* and the capital city of Yerevan (which has the status of a community). The *marzer* are divided into urban and rural communities (915 in total, most of them rural). *Marzpet* (chief executives) are appointed by the President (although the mayor of Yerevan is an elected position). On the other hand, local administration consists of the head of the municipality (roughly equivalent to a mayor) and the *avaganikhorhurd* (a municipal council), which are elected positions. Residents do not directly elect local administrators but vote for political parties to be represented on the *avaganikhorhurd*. The parties then select their leading candidate who will become mayor if the party gains at least 40% of votes.

59. As illustrated in Table 3, there are no female *marzpet* and only one deputy *marzpet* in Armavir Marz, but women comprise more than 40% of government staff in the provinces. Of the women in the Yerevan government, virtually all are employed as municipal staff. There are no female deputy mayors, and only 5 of 65 city council members are women.⁵⁵ Although the Office of the Governor is formally responsible for coordinating the activity of executive offices at the *marz* level, “experience shows that the governor has much more power. Taking into account the financial weakness of the communities, the levers that the governor has, i.e., defining development priorities of the *marz*, distributing grants and exercising financial oversight, give [the] governor strong authority over local administrations.”⁵⁶

60. There are only 22 female mayors in Armenia, all in rural communities. As is the case at other levels in local government, women generally occupy administrative, not decision-making, posts. Further, there is a clear trend in Armenia that women’s participation in local governance varies by the size of the community. Women are best represented in the smallest municipalities with the fewest resources. Of the rural communities that were led by female mayors in 2011 (24 at the time), none had populations of over 2,500.⁵⁷

Table 3: Women in Provincial Government, 2012–2013

Position	Total Positions	Number of Women	Proportion of Women (%)
Heads of <i>marz</i> (<i>marzpet</i>) ^a	10	0	...
Deputy heads of <i>marz</i>	24	1	4.2
Heads of <i>marzpetaran</i> staff	10	2	20.0
<i>Marzpetaran</i> staff	1,297	554	42.7

... = not available.

^a Excluding the mayor of Yerevan.

Sources: Government of the Republic of Armenia. Structure. <http://www.gov.am/en/structure/>; and National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. Women and Men in Armenia 2013. Yerevan. p. 156.

55 *Women and Men in Armenia* 2013. p. 159.

56 H. Mikaelyan. 2011. Women in Local Administration in Armenia. *Caucasus Institute Research Paper Series*. No. 6. Yerevan: Caucasus Institute, UNDP, and Heinrich Böll Stiftung. p. 13.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Table 4: Women in Local Self-Government, 2012

	Position	Total Positions	Number of Women	Proportion of Women (%)
Urban	Mayors	48	0	...
	Deputy mayors	51	1	2.0
	Municipal council members	581	33	5.7
	Municipality staff	2,154	932	43.3
Rural	Mayors	866	20	2.3
	Deputy mayors	536	39	7.3
	Municipal council members	5,310	505	9.5
	Municipality staff	6,492	3,158	48.6

... = not available.

Source: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. Women and Men in Armenia 2013. Yerevan. pp. 157–158.

A review of women’s engagement in local governance by *marz* indicates that the *marzer* that are characterized by strong and average participation of women are those that are “further from the capital and less prosperous” than the others, while those that are better developed and closer to the center of the country have low participation of women.⁵⁸

61. Of elected positions, women are best represented on *avaganikhorhurdner*, but women have still not reached 10% representation (Table 4). *Avaganikhorhurdner* members are not paid (the mayor and mayor’s staff receive salaries), and this is considered a reason for the ineffectiveness of such councils and the lack of value placed on them. In fact, “the head of the community is the head of the executive power [the mayor] who determines expenditure and community development priorities.”⁵⁹ Focus group participants in the cities of Gavar and Gyumri noted that *avaganikhorhurdner* are not, in fact, decision-making bodies. They serve a consultative function, and because members are appointed by heads of local administration, *avaganikhorhurdner* merely approve decisions. Still, many respondents to this assessment emphasized that the number of women on the *avaganikhorhurdner* has been steadily increasing. Comparing data from 2003 to 2013, the total number of women on the *avaganikhorhurdner* in urban areas increased from 3.4% to 5.7%, and on rural councils from 6.9% to 9.5%.⁶⁰ Anecdotal information suggests that despite the fact that the *avaganikhorhurdner* offer limited opportunities for independent decision making, women are becoming more politically active in their communities.

3. Barriers to Women Entering Government

62. The reasons for women’s underrepresentation in governance vary, but some can be attributed to organizational factors, while others are closely related to societal perceptions of women’s roles.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁰ National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2005. *Women and Men in Armenia 2005*. Yerevan. p. 82; and *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, pp. 157–158.

63. Women’s chances of being elected are affected by the infrequency, or sometimes the complete absence, of the rotation of local authorities. Incumbents very often win elections, and thus mayors may hold their posts for up to five terms.⁶¹ Lack of support within political parties also means that women are not put forward as candidates when opportunities arise. As was seen in the 2012 parliamentary elections, some women who were elected later resigned, and their seats were filled by male party members.⁶²

64. In poorer communities, where human resources are limited, strict adherence to traditional gender roles cannot be afforded. If the local administration has few resources, this is a disincentive for men taking local office; conversely, when there are considerable resources at stake, men may actively try to hold political positions for their own gain. As one study noted, “poor highland borderland villages form the majority of women-led communities.”⁶³ The fact that the goal of the electoral quota was circumvented in the 2012 elections was partially explained by the view that a “political position serves as support for one’s business interests, and men are not yet prepared to surrender their posts.”⁶⁴

65. Poor communities in Armenia also face a regular out-migration of men who leave to work elsewhere, and thus women are often required to take on “male jobs.”⁶⁵ Focus group discussions for this assessment about women’s increased participation on the *avaganikhordner* raised a number of sometimes conflicting views. All agreed that in some communities, especially rural villages, there are simply too few men to serve on councils, and women are therefore “pushed into” this role. At the same time, some experts noted that women themselves have become less passive about politics. Whereas they once may have seen a role for themselves in the municipality doing only administrative work, they are now interested in engaging in politics. This attitude may be very dependent on the community, however.

66. Respondents to this assessment, as well as independent research, suggest that socioeconomic factors that are specific to women limit their participation in government. For instance, women lack the resources and opportunities to develop their political skills.⁶⁶ In addition, women’s traditional duties of caring for the household and family are often incompatible with civic or political involvement.

67. Many women also view politics as an ineffective means to bring about change, or they feel that even if they were to participate in political processes, men would ultimately be the decisionmakers.⁶⁷ In consultations for this assessment, women stated that politics is a man’s domain and that they had no interest in a political role, although they also expressed clear opinions about solutions to local issues. Other focus group participants stated that women generally view local councils as corrupt, a means to advance personal interests, and not oriented toward results. Respondents to a public opinion poll ranked the following factors as contributing to women’s passivity in undertaking a political career: women’s primary focus is on family (45%); women’s lack of self-confidence (35%); lack of

61 Ibid., p. 24.

62 Women Fail to Gain Ground in Armenian Election.

63 Women in Local Administration in Armenia, p. 34.

64 Women Fail to Gain Ground in Armenian Election.

65 Women in Local Administration in Armenia, p. 34.

66 National Democratic Institute and Caucasus Research Resource Centers–Armenia. 2010. *Results of NDI Focus Groups on Political Barriers and Opportunities*. Washington, DC: USAID.

67 Ibid.

public trust and confidence in female politicians (33%); no mechanism to assist women to advance in politics (29%); and close relatives (husband or parents) who would have a negative attitude about a woman entering politics (28%).⁶⁸

68. The poll also demonstrated that gender stereotypes continue to play a role in public perceptions about women's suitability for political office. One survey found that while 60.4% of respondents felt "unequivocally positive" about a man taking a political career, only 11.5% felt the same about women. The largest group of respondents (but still only 35%) felt "for the most part positive" about women in politics.⁶⁹ Just under one-quarter (22.4%) felt "indifferent," and 19.2% felt "for the most part negative." When presented with the statement "there is something wrong in the personal life of a woman engaged in politics," 48% of surveyed men and 39% of women agreed that this is the case.⁷⁰ Another survey suggests that women are not associated with the very quality of being a leader. When given the statement "leadership skills are more developed in men," 75.1% of men and 62.3% of women agreed.⁷¹ In a sociological survey, 50.1% of men and 37.4% of women agreed with the statement "politics is no place for a woman."⁷²

69. Still, these findings should not imply that women, in reality, lack the capacity or drive to succeed in politics. Pilot projects in Armenia demonstrate that when women run for local office, they are often supported by the electorate. For example, under a program managed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to support women's political activism in two regions (Syunik and Vanadzormarzer), 76% of the women who ran in local elections in 2013, 28 of 37 women were ultimately elected to the *avaganikhorhurd*. Such projects, though, required sustained support for several years in the form of capacity building, training, and networking.

70. Women's low level of political engagement (and the gender blindness of those elected) has important implications for how Armenia prioritizes development projects at both the local and national levels. However, because there are so few women in politics, there is limited information about their impact on the governing of their constituencies. One study, which examined the activities undertaken by mayors of rural municipalities, found that while male community heads focus on large-scale infrastructure projects... women prioritize human development. Primarily, women turn their attention to education: the school and the nursery; the next step is usually the organization of leisure for the community residents...and only after that does a woman start implementing infrastructural projects such as paving roads or building gas and water supply lines.⁷³ A focus group participant in Goris gave the example of how an *avaganikhorhurd* initiative to raise the cost of kindergarten/preschool payments was defeated because the composition of the council had more women than it had previously, and "men don't see the importance of these issues." In discussing the role of women in ministries and government positions, a focus group participant in Gyumri stated, "if women had a role in such areas as waste management or road planning, men would see the issues that they would prioritize. Women should be represented in every sphere and not be limited."

68 *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia: Report on Findings of the Sociological Study*, p. 35.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

71 *Sociological Study on Gender Attitudes and Stereotypes in Armenia*, p. 51.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

73 *Women in Local Administration in Armenia*, p. 40.

4. Engagement in Civil Society

71. Civil society organizations are crucial institutions through which both women and men can participate in public life and influence policy making. In Armenia, women's representation in NGOs is greater than in political parties, and the reverse is true for men. In 2011, women made up only 33.9% of all those working in NGOs, but this figure increased to 58.5% in 2012.⁷⁴ It is not clear whether this change is a result of more NGOs being founded or men transferring to other sectors.

72. From 2007 to 2010, the number of registered women's organizations increased from 76 to 250, representing 6.5% of all registered NGOs.⁷⁵ Further study is needed, however, to determine more clearly whether all of these organizations are active and whether they engage in advocacy around women's rights or, rather, are providing services where government services are inadequate or nonexistent.⁷⁶ NGOs tend to identify themselves as working on "women's issues"; rather than on gender equality more broadly. A very small number of organizations work specifically with men on topics related to gender stereotypes, masculinity, or gender identity.

73. As is the case in political parties, women usually make up the staff of most NGOs, and they "are represented only marginally in low- and middle-level leadership positions and are almost entirely absent in top-level positions."⁷⁷ NGOs that are led by women are those that have missions to resolve social issues (e.g., at-risk children), advance women's rights, and combat problems that impact women specifically such as domestic violence.

74. Despite the presence of professional women's NGOs, Armenia lacks an autonomous women's movement that is separate from both civil society organizations and political parties.⁷⁸ In contrast, environmental and human rights movements are better recognized as independent movements, separate from the organizations that support them. There is also limited overlap and cohesion across movements that could have common issues and objectives. For instance, a number of women have leading roles in the ecological movement, but they do not necessarily adopt a gender perspective in their work. Women's rights organizations express a sense of marginalization from the broader human rights movement and note that while they participate in human rights campaigns, human rights organizations are not particularly active on women's rights issues.⁷⁹

75. Some interviewees contended that women's organizations are fragmented and do not find platforms through which to cooperate with each other. Moreover, they often take differing approaches in their work. Younger female NGO leaders tend to take a more radical stance on gender issues, raising topics such as a woman's choice not to have children, while the older generation calls for greater opportunities for women without necessarily questioning predominant gender roles and stereotypes. A survey of women's NGOs found that they view themselves as "somewhat cooperative," but, overall, networks

74 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 116.

75 In 2006, for example, the World Bank estimated that of 60 registered women's organizations that were working nationwide, only 12 were active. World Bank. 2006. *Assessing the Enabling Governance Environment to Promote and Enforce Women's Rights in the Southern Caucasus*. Washington, DC. p. 13.

76 A. Pittman. 2013. *Exploring Women's Rights and Feminist Movement Building in Armenia: Learning from the Past and Strategizing for the Future*. Yerevan: Open Society Foundation Armenia. p. 15.

77 *Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia: Report on Findings of the Sociological Study*, p. 14.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

need to be improved and collaboration strengthened around specific policy issues.⁸⁰ There are, however, a few examples of solidarity among women’s NGOs: for instance, a diverse group of organizations has united to conduct collective actions to address domestic violence. In 2010, seven organizations formed the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women.

76. Women’s civil society work does not appear to have any particular connection to political participation or formal policy making. Women’s NGOs themselves consider their “weak access to government and weak bargaining power vis-à-vis government” as critical deficits of their organizations.⁸¹ Additionally, women do not transition from NGOs to political office. Perceptions, of the role of both women and of civil society institutions in Armenia, partially explain this situation. When women choose to work for NGOs, they “reaffirm the ascribed gender roles and gender-based divisions of labor and avoid the criticisms that they would face if they enter political parties or government, but [they] are still able to work in and through the public sector to achieve their personal and community objectives.”⁸²

77. One interviewee noted that young women leaders (both in civil society and international organizations) could be the next generation of political leaders since they are ambitious and have a following both in Yerevan and the regions, in part thanks to social media. However, the question was raised about how successful such women activists could be in transitioning into the government in its current form. They are frequently stigmatized and accused of taking grants from donors to advance “Western notions” of gender that are incompatible with “traditional” gender roles in Armenia. While organizations that are seen as oppositional (e.g., they critique local elections, speak out about human rights violations, or call for compliance with international standards) are generally criticized for being “Western funded,”⁸³ the accusations leveled at women’s NGOs is especially disruptive to their work. The “public notion that gender equality and women’s rights destroy national values and the strength of the ‘traditional Armenian family’...is more pronounced in different regions and rural locations, but also exists in Yerevan, where resistance to gender equality and rights discourse is deeply entrenched.”⁸⁴

78. Still, women’s role in NGOs should not be discounted. In communities, active women are much more likely to join NGOs than local administrations, and it is suggested that encouraging such women to be active both in civil society and in local governance will yield positive results. Such NGO activists “are a potential human resource for the local administration.”⁸⁵

C. Economic Opportunities for Women and Men

79. Disparities between the economic opportunities afforded to women and men contribute to continued gender inequality in Armenia. The government’s gender policy

80 *Armenian Survey of Women’s Organizations*, p. 8.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

82 *Gendered Transitions: The Impact of the Post-Soviet Transition on Women in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 487.

83 Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center. 2011. *Risks and Opportunities for the NGO Sector in Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 9.

84 *Exploring Women’s Rights and Feminist Movement Building in Armenia: Learning from the Past and Strategizing for the Future*, p. 5.

85 *Women in Local Administration in Armenia*, p. 43.

concept paper includes a chapter that calls for “reducing socio-economic inequality and eliminating inequality in the social status of women and men.”⁸⁶ The policy notes such critical issues as gender-based discrimination in the labor market, wage disparities between women and men, access to economic resources, and social protection for low-income female-headed households. The action plan for implementing this policy requires “gender expert examination of socio-economic programs and projects,” and includes actions for job creation, support for women’s businesses, eradication of women’s poverty, and gender-sensitive pension reform. However, it lacks a description of concrete actions that must be taken to address these complex, deeply entrenched problems. To achieve inclusive growth, it is critical that future projects counter women’s economic disempowerment.

1. Poverty and Access to and Control over Assets

80. The most recent national study of poverty in Armenia, the Integrated Living Conditions Survey, found that the structure of poverty has changed little over time, and there were no “significant gender differences in poverty incidence” between 2008 and 2011.⁸⁷ In 2011, women comprised 46% of the poor population and men 54%. Household composition, rather than gender itself, is a better predictor of poverty in Armenia, and the gender dimensions of poverty become clear when comparing the differences between families headed by men and by women. Female-headed households are more likely to be poor, and in 2011, female-headed households comprised 24% of the poor population (and also 24% of the total population).⁸⁸ Female-headed households with children under 6 years old are the most at risk for poverty and extreme poverty. One-quarter of all children live in female-headed households, 44.3% of which are poor, and 5.9% are extremely poor (as compared with 42.1% and 4.7%, respectively, in male-headed households).⁸⁹ Children living in households with a single (i.e., never married), widowed, or divorced head are more likely to be poor (46.0%) than those in households with married or cohabiting heads (41.2%). The likelihood of such households falling below the extreme poverty line increases by 10%.

81. The gender policy concept paper echoes these findings, noting that “divorce, as well as a large volume of long-term labor migration of men, increases the probability of women finding themselves in extreme poverty.”⁹⁰ Current statistics bear out the finding that women on their own are especially vulnerable to poverty. In 2012, women made up most of the people who were both unemployed and divorced (79.3%).⁹¹ Data by marital status on people who were doubly employed showed that more men (59.9%) than women held two jobs. However, of divorced persons working in more than one job, all were women.⁹²

82. Women’s ownership of and control over key resources is another indicator of their economic autonomy. Armenian law guarantees women and men equal rights to ownership and use of land and other property, but in practice, women are the minority of registered

86 *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 12.

87 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, Millennium Challenge Account, and World Bank. 2011. *Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia: Statistical Analytical Report*. Yerevan. p. 41.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

90 *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 11.

91 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 127.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

property owners. In part, this is based on traditions of registering property in the name of male family members and passing it down to male heirs. Also, women’s earning power is less than men’s, limiting their opportunities to independently purchase property such as land, homes, buildings, or vehicles. State land privatization schemes, carried out in the early 1990s, awarded land to the head of the household, regardless of gender. In reality, however, “women only gained ownership of land in the absence of a male head of the family.”⁹³

83. Considering a range of valuable assets, aside from land, only a small number of women clearly own property independently. A survey of almost 2,800 women asked rural and urban residents whether they owned certain assets or means of production by themselves, jointly with others (most often with husband or members of their parental family), or did not own these assets (Table 5).⁹⁴ As the figures illustrate, most women are co-owners of some form of property, but even then, “it would be an overstatement to say that they have adequate economic safeguards.”⁹⁵

84. Women’s ability to exercise control over assets also determines their level of economic independence. It appears that, on average, when women earn money, they usually decide freely how the earnings will be spent, but age and marital status may also be determining factors. A large majority (85%) of respondents to one survey reported that they made decisions about their earnings, and only a small number (10.6%) gave some of their earnings to their partner.⁹⁶ A separate survey confirmed that more than half of women decide how they spend money that they earn (either independently—25%; or with their husbands or boyfriends—32%), but a considerable number (20.1%) reported that they do not participate in decisions about how their earnings will be used.⁹⁷ Focus group

Table 5: Women’s Ownership of Property and Other Economic Resources

Type of Property or Economic Resource	Own by Themselves (%)	Own with Others (%)	Do Not Own (%)
Land	9.0	78.2	12.8
Animals ^a	3.2	50.8	46.1
Produce/crops	2.8	42.4	54.8
Company (<i>urban respondents</i>)	0.8	2.9	96.3
Company (<i>rural respondents</i>)	0.1	4.4	95.5
House/apartment	12.2	76.0	11.8
Large household items ^b	13.1	78.6	8.3
Jewelry	32.9	51.8	15.3
Cars	3.0	19.7	77.3

^a Represents large and small animals, combined.

^b Large household items refer to large appliances and furniture.

Source: National Statistical Service of Armenia and UNFPA. 2011. Report on Nation-Wide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia. Yerevan.

⁹³ Social Institutions and Gender Index. Armenia. http://genderindex.org/country/armenia#_ftn66

⁹⁴ National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia and UNFPA. 2011. *Report on Nation-Wide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia*. Yerevan. pp. 72–74.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁷ A. Dallakyan, and N. Hakobyan. 2007. *Domestic Violence and Abuse of Women in Armenia: Report on Nationwide Survey Findings*. Yerevan: Women’s Rights Center. p. 75.

participants in Gavar pointed out that in large families, the older female generation (i.e., grandmothers or mothers-in-law) play a major role in family budgeting and make most decisions about expenses. On the other hand, making financial decisions (e.g., applying for a loan) are usually considered a man's responsibility.

85. Having a bank account may be one indicator of a woman's financial independence and integration into the formal economy. According to a survey conducted by the Caucasus Research Resources Centers, the number of women reporting that they have bank accounts more than doubled from 15% in 2011 to 34% in 2012, with the most recent figures coming close to the number of men with bank accounts (for male respondents, the figures were 28% and 37%, respectively). Although the share of women who reported that they have personal savings did not show such an increase (a change from only 7.1% to 10.3%), these figures too are comparable with how men report their savings patterns.⁹⁸

86. Finally, poverty assessments that focus on economic status do not adequately convey the extent to which women's access to other resources may be limited. As noted, women devote considerable time in unpaid domestic work, child care, and voluntary social and community activities, and these contributions have not been valued or included in the gross domestic product (GDP). As a consequence of unpaid work, women are time-poor, especially with regard to pursuing entrepreneurial or civic activities. Women's limited access to such resources means that opportunities to create their own social and economic capital are also restricted overall.

2. Employment and Unemployment Patterns

87. Armenia's labor force (people 15–75 years old who are able to work) totals more than 2.4 million people. There are significant differences in the economic activity rates of women and men. Only 55.2% of women 15–75 years old are part of the economically active population compared with 72.1% of men.⁹⁹ Among the country's total female "economically inactive" population—women who are not employed or formally defined as unemployed (meaning they are not seeking formal work)—41.8% are housewives, and 21.9% are retirees.¹⁰⁰

88. Most Armenians are employed in the private sector (71.3% of women and 82.1% of men), but women represent more than half of all employees in the public and community sectors.¹⁰¹

89. Armenia has a high rate of self-employment, compared with other countries in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. In 2012, close to one-third of both women and men were self-employed.¹⁰² Although a relatively small proportion of all working people are employers, men are far more likely than women to have this status, as 79.2% of all employers are male.¹⁰³

98 Caucasus Research Resources Centers. 2013. Women in Armenia—Equality through Challenges! 6 April. <http://crrcam.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/women-in-armenia-equality-through.html>

99 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 107.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

103 *Ibid.*

90. Informal employment accounts for a large share of jobs in Armenia—by one estimate, 52.1% of total jobs can be considered informal.¹⁰⁴ Women appear to be more often employed in the informal sector, but because different methods are used to calculate this, data are not easily comparable. In 2009, a National Statistical Service survey found that of the total number of jobs that women are engaged in, 53.4% are informal. For men, this figure was 51.0%.¹⁰⁵ According to the International Labour Organization, 48% of all working women in Armenia, and 35% of working men, were in “vulnerable jobs” in 2010.¹⁰⁶ In 2012, women accounted for 49.5% of all people working informally.¹⁰⁷

91. Informal employment takes place in agriculture, enterprises that are not legally registered (e.g., in construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and food processing), and households (e.g., working as domestic help without a contract). The informal sector offers an alternative when jobs in the formal sector are lacking, but “informal employment rarely comes with social protection, good working conditions, and adequate wages and, thus, its benefits may not be sufficient for workers to achieve an acceptable standard of living. In general, only the employers in the informal sector can rise above the poverty threshold.”¹⁰⁸ The effects of working without a formal contract are serious for both men and women who are unprotected by national labor legislation and are not entitled to social protection or employment benefits such as notices of dismissal, annual leave, sick pay, maternity leave, or pension payments. As discussed in more detail below, the gender wage gap is larger in the informal sector than in formal jobs. Men working informally, especially in jobs that demand heavy physical labor, are exposed to dangerous working conditions and face an increased risk of occupational accidents. While data about informal workers could not be obtained, among officially registered employees in 2009 who sustained occupational injuries or diseases, 61% were men.¹⁰⁹

92. Most employed men and women are permanent workers, but men are more likely to work sporadically or in temporary and seasonal work. More women than men work in part-time jobs (in 2012, 60.2% of employees in non-full-time work were women).¹¹⁰ Data compiled by Gallup indicated that in Armenia, the gender gap in employment at capacity—men and women who are working full-time for an employer, or part-time and do not want full-time work—is fairly significant, with women 11% less likely to be employed at capacity.¹¹¹ Women’s underemployment is very much influenced by traditional gender roles, as “women often interrupt their employment after the birth of a child and/or work shorter hours in order to fulfill family responsibilities. In comparison, men tend to work full time irrespective of family responsibilities.”¹¹²

93. The real unemployment rate for the economically active population has exhibited little change from 2008 to 2012, but the female–male gap in unemployment rates has narrowed slightly. For women, the unemployment rate decreased from 19% to 18%, and

104 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia and ADB. 2011. *The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Armenia*. Manila. p. 8.

105 Ibid.

106 International Labour Organization (ILO). 2012. *Decent Work Country Profile: Armenia*. Geneva. p. vii.

107 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 125.

108 *The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Armenia*, p. x.

109 *Decent Work Country Profile: Armenia*, p. 36.

110 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 122.

111 J. Marlar and K. McGeeney. 2012. Wide Gender Divide in Employment in One-Fourth of Countries. *Gallup World*. 5 July. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155405/Wide-Gender-Divide-Employment-One-Fourth-Countries.aspx>

112 *Decent Work Country Profile: Armenia*, p. viii.

for men the rate increased from 14% to 16%.¹¹³ In 2012, women made up the slight majority of the officially unemployed (51.8% of all unemployed persons).¹¹⁴ Such figures should be considered with some caution, as there are significant gaps between the real and registered unemployment rates. For example, in 2007, the registered unemployment rate was 7.0%, while the real unemployment rate was estimated to be 28.4%.¹¹⁵ The high level of male out-migration may obscure a higher male unemployment rate, as could the fact that women tend to register with government employment bodies more often than men, because men may not register if they plan to leave the country. National statistics also conceal regional variations in unemployment rates; according to a study conducted in Berd in 2013, 54% of women were unemployed mainly because of the closure in the mid-1990s of local factories, in which most women used to work.¹¹⁶ But a staff member from a state employment center in Gyumri reported that 80% of job seekers there are women.

94. The unemployment experiences of women and men reveal some gender differences. Most women become unemployed due to the closure of an enterprise (57.1% of all unemployed women), but men are equally likely to lose a job after enterprise closure or at the end of temporary or seasonal work (36.4% and 40.7% of all unemployed men, respectively).¹¹⁷ Women are far more likely than men to become unemployed because of “family circumstances” (89.8% of those giving this reason for losing work are female).¹¹⁸ In a poll conducted in Yerevan, the primary reasons cited by unemployed women were the inability to find a job (25%), family duties (20%), and the family being opposed to them working (14%). In contrast, most men who were unable to find a job cited as reasons for their unemployment “appropriate salary” (43%), followed by the inability to find a job in general (19%); no one cited obligations to or restrictions by the family.¹¹⁹

95. Women spend longer searching for work than men. In 2012, women made up 63.7% of those who were unemployed for 4 or more years.¹²⁰ Men are more likely than women to find work within 6 months, because a large number of unemployed men are engaged in seasonal work; so, if they are able to wait, job opportunities may become available in the following season.

3. Gendered Features of the Labor Market

96. **Horizontal and vertical labor market stratification.** Of Armenia’s total employed workers, 44% of women and 31% of men are engaged in agriculture, making the sector the largest employer of both women and men.¹²¹ Excluding agriculture, the labor market exhibits stratification in the type of work performed by men and women. Men tend to engage in a more diverse range of economic activities, while women are more concentrated in education, health services, and trade. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the proportion of male and female employees in the principal nonagriculture sectors of the labor market.

113 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 129.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

115 Government of Armenia and the United Nations Country Team in Armenia. 2010. *Armenia: MDG National Progress Report*. Yerevan. p. 42.

116 Berd Women’s Resource Center Foundation. 2013. *The Socioeconomic Status of Women in the Berd Region of Armenia*. Berd. p. 2.

117 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 128.

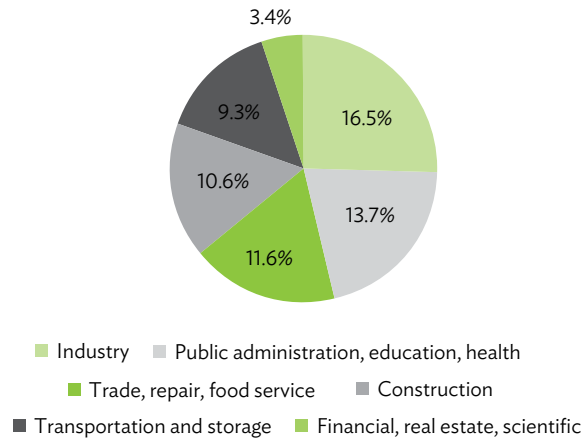
118 *Ibid.*

119 Women’s Resource Center. 2011. *Gender Dimensions of the Labor Market in Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 6.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

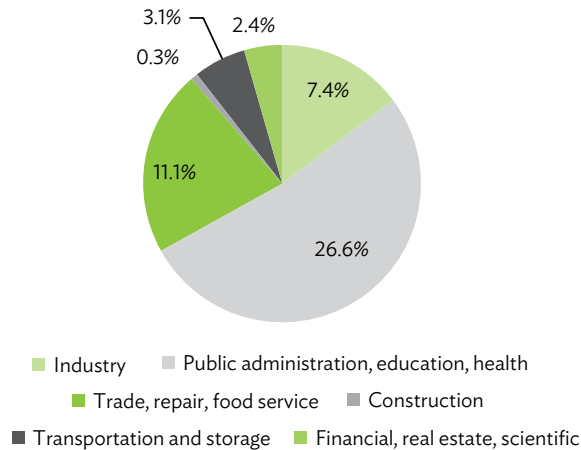
Figure 4: Male Employees by Nonagricultural Economic Activity, 2012



Note: 3.8% of men were engaged in other, unspecified employment.

Source: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*. Yerevan. p. 119.

Figure 5: Female Employees by Nonagricultural Economic Activity, 2012

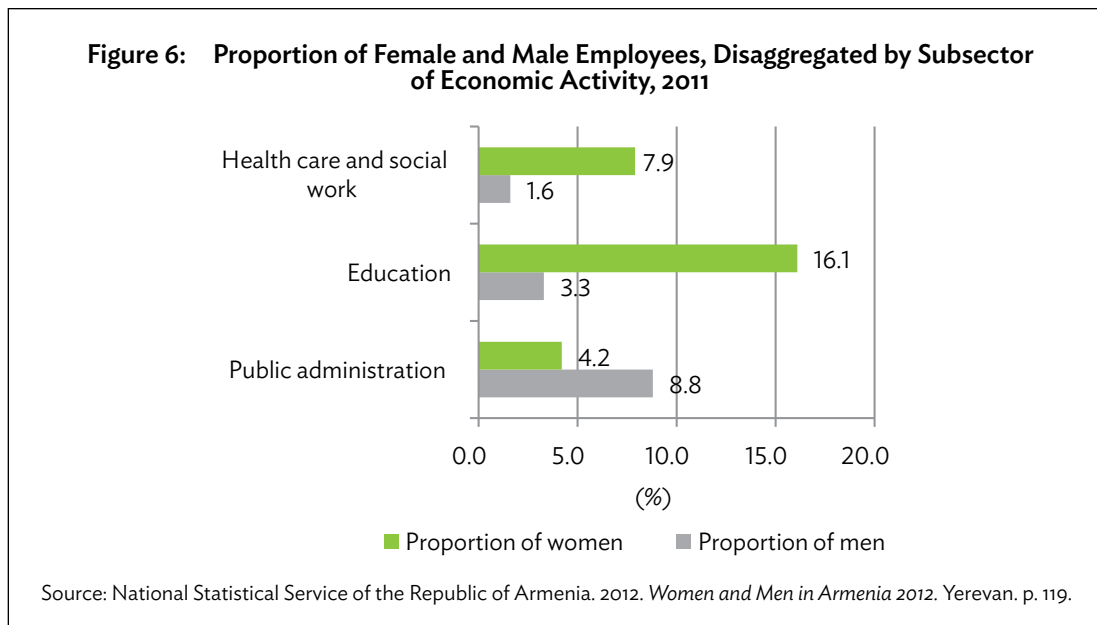


Note: 5.1% of women were engaged in other, unspecified, employment.

Source: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*. Yerevan. p. 119.

Data from previous years, which did not aggregate employment in public administration, education, and health, showed distinct differences in female and male employment even within this category (Figure 6).

97. A comparison of labor market data for the last decade provides a mixed picture of the trends in economic activities of women and men. In some fields, gender segregation has remained quite static, as is the case for employment in construction (97% were



male employees in 2003 and 2012) and education (81% were women in 2003 and 2011).¹²² Likewise, the fields of financial activities and hospitality (i.e., accommodations and food service) have had close to gender balance for the last decade. In 2011, about half of employees (50.7%) in financial and insurance activities were female, and 46.1% of all employees in the hospitality industry were male.¹²³ Women have also made important inroads in wholesale and retail trade. While they represented 33.0% of employees in this field in 2003, that proportion had increased to 44.6% by 2011.¹²⁴

98. Societal perceptions about the kinds of jobs that are “acceptable” for men and women account for some of the distinct patterns in the labor market. According to a survey on stereotypes, respondents were asked if men or women could attain professional success in specific jobs. In general, both men and women agreed that men can be successful at a range of jobs (the notable exception was modeling), but women’s perceptions appeared to be “more flexible and free of gender stereotypes regarding...the professional success of men.”¹²⁵ Regarding women’s opportunities, both male and female respondents gave low scores regarding women’s potential professional success as police officers, drivers, politicians, or entrepreneurs. The survey suggested that “there is a general societal perception that certain fields are a ‘no-go’ for women and that those women themselves adhere to these preconceived notions.”¹²⁶

99. The labor market also exhibits vertical segregation in which women are underrepresented in top positions. Although only 9.4% of the total employed population occupies management roles, most of these positions are held by men (67.8% of managers are male).¹²⁷ In business, women accounted for only 23% of senior managers in 2013, a

122 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 119; National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2012. *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*. Yerevan. pp. 118–119; and *Women and Men in Armenia 2005*, p. 60.

123 *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*, pp. 118–119.

124 *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*, pp. 118–119 and *Women and Men in Armenia 2005*, p. 60.

125 *Sociological Study on Gender Attitudes and Stereotypes in Armenia*, p. 41.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

127 *Armenia: MDG National Progress Report*, p. 43.

decline from 27% in 2012.¹²⁸ Further analysis showed that when women occupy such senior positions in Armenia, they tend to be in human resources management (27%) or financial management (25%), which reflects practices of the Soviet period.¹²⁹ In 2012, only 9% of businesses were led by female chief executive officers. Flexible working schemes have played a role in increasing the number of women in senior manager roles elsewhere (e.g., in European Union countries where 65% of businesses offer flexible hours), but among businesses polled in Armenia, 59% do not offer flexible hours to women.¹³⁰

100. Perceptions about women lacking management skills are also strong. In one survey, 60.4% of men and 39.6% of women agreed with the statement “women cannot be good managers.”¹³¹ While 79.8% of women would agree to work under female supervision, only 14.0% of men would do the same. Another survey of 350 men and women in Yerevan revealed that both sexes hold stereotypical beliefs about women’s limited leadership abilities. A majority of men (73%), but fewer women (27%), believed that “occupations that demand high level of competence, rationality and assertiveness are masculine only,” and the corollary that “occupations that demand [a] high level of dependency, passivity and nurturance are extremely feminine,” was supported by 81% of men and 65% of women.¹³² A considerable number of both women (45%) and men (65%) believe that women are not interested in developing a career.¹³³

101. **Gender wage gap.** Perhaps one of the clearest indicators of the detrimental effect of labor market segregation on women in Armenia is the gender wage gap. “Women’s lower wages are predetermined by the specifics of the sectoral and positional (horizontal and vertical) characteristics of their employment.”¹³⁴ In 2012, women earned less than men in every industry, and women’s average monthly wages represented only 64.4% of men’s wages. A review of women’s wages as a proportion of men’s over the last decade indicated that the gender wage gap has been slowly narrowing, from 53% in 2004 (Figure 7). However, the wage gap increased significantly during the 1990s, as women’s monthly wages as a proportion of men’s fell from 74% in 1989 to 55% by the early 2000s, so women’s salaries have not yet recovered to pre-independence levels.¹³⁵ The gender pay gap in Armenia remains one of the largest in the subregion, comprising Southeast Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States—the gap ranges from less than 10% in some countries in Southeast Europe to over 40% in some countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus.¹³⁶

102. The wage gap is even more pronounced in the informal sector. A survey that included information about average wages, disaggregated by sex and formal–informal work,

128 Grant Thornton International. 2013. *Women in Senior Management: Setting the Stage for Growth*. Yerevan. p. 7.

129 Panorama.am. 2012. Just Over One in Three Senior Management Positions in Businesses Surveyed in Armenia Are Held by Women—Grant Thornton. 13 March. <http://www.panorama.am/en/society/2012/03/13/women/>

130 Ibid.

131 *Keep Me Away From Your Stereotypes: Sociological Survey Analysis*. p. 28.

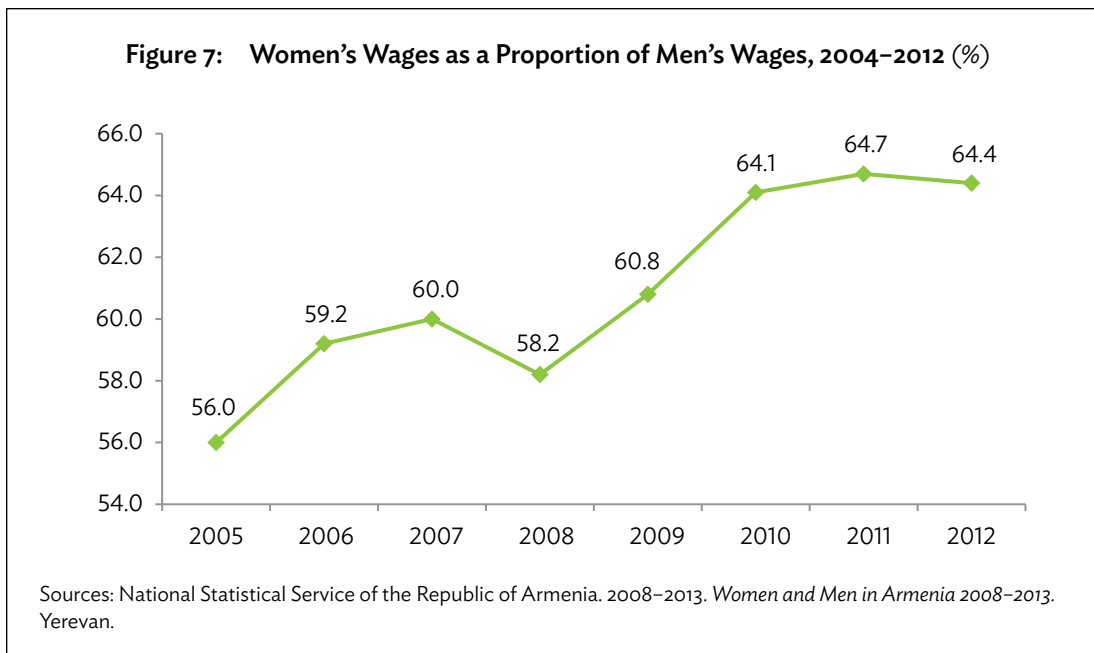
132 *Gender Dimensions of the Labor Market in Armenia*, p. 6.

133 Ibid.

134 *Armenia: MDG National Progress Report*, p. 42.

135 S. Sattar. 2012. *Opportunities for Men and Women: Emerging Europe and Central Asia*. Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 55; and P. Paci and B. Reilly. 2004. *Does Economic Liberalization Reduce Gender Inequality in the Labor Market: The Experience of the Transition Economies in Europe and Central Asia*. Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 53.

136 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. 2010. *The MDGs in Europe and Central Asia: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward*. Geneva. p. 59. This cited data from 2008.



found that in formal jobs, women’s wages were 64% of men’s. While both men and women earned less in the informal sector, women’s average earnings were only 47% of men’s.¹³⁷

103. The government has acknowledged that discrimination contributes to the wage gap. The Labor Code states that men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work (Article 178), and the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women prohibits gender discrimination in remuneration. In a 2006 review, the International Labour Organization recommended that the Labor Code be amended to “provide not only for equal remuneration for men and women for the same, similar or equal work but also for work of equal value,” based on a finding that women face both direct and indirect discrimination in remuneration.¹³⁸

104. Still, perceptions about the suitability of women taking on higher-paid (and presumably more skilled) jobs continue to play a role in limiting women’s access to top positions. According to responses to the most recent World Values Survey in Armenia, 47% of men and 31% of women believe that “problems are likely to happen if the wife earns more money than the husband.”¹³⁹ Women’s wages are also presumed to be supplementary to those of a male breadwinner.

105. Women also face discrimination in hiring practices based on stereotypes about male and female labor. For example, a representative of an employers’ association stated that she would give preference to male employees who could be asked to work long hours (even more hours than are permitted under the Labor Law), while, in her view, women would inevitably have to take time off to care for children. Another respondent expressed

¹³⁷ *The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Armenia*, p. 24.

¹³⁸ *Decent Work Country Profile: Armenia*, p. 34.

¹³⁹ *Women in Armenia—Equality through Challenges!*

the opinion that women could work in construction firms, but only in assistant and service roles (e.g., in finance or catering).

106. Respondents also drew attention to the fact that people with disabilities (PWDs) face difficulties finding jobs in Armenia, often an effect of discrimination. Women with disabilities face discrimination based on both disability and sex. A survey of nine employers across the country found that among nondisabled persons, women accounted for 35% of employees, but comparing male and female PWDs, employed men with disabilities outnumbered women with disabilities by a factor of more than four to one (women were only 18% of all employees with disabilities).¹⁴⁰

107. **Perceptions about women, men, and work.** As noted, it is traditionally a man's duty to work and support the family, while a woman's role is to manage the household and care for the children and other family members. While women have been part of the working world for generations, this norm still plays a role in Armenia today. "Women are and feel under pressure to conform to these norms, both from within their own families and from society at large and this is linked to ongoing discrimination in the labour market."¹⁴¹

108. The World Values Survey indicated that both men and women hold strong opinions about women and formal employment. When asked whether men should have more rights to work than women when jobs are limited, 65% of men agreed that this should be the case, as compared with 48% of women.¹⁴² Significantly, 42% of women disagreed with this statement, indicating that women are much more divided over this issue. In response to the statement "children normally suffer when the mother is a hired employee," 59% of men expressed agreement (either "strongly agreed" or "agreed"), and 49% of women also felt this to be the case.¹⁴³ Only 10% of men and 11% of women strongly disagreed with the idea that work outside of the home harms children.

109. Gender disparities and inequalities in the labor market are mainly to the detriment of women, but the notion that it is a man's primary responsibility to support the family financially is not completely advantageous to men. Participants in interviews and focus group discussions for this assessment raised several issues about the negative impact of labor migration on men, men's increased exposure to workplace injury and unhealthy working conditions, and the psychological stress men experience when they feel unable to find "suitable" work and fulfill their societal duties.

4. Labor Migration

110. Labor migration was a recurring theme of all focus group discussions about jobs and the roles of men and women in Armenia. Labor migration is an overwhelmingly male

¹⁴⁰ V. Osipov. 2013. *Employment of People with Disabilities in Armenia: Needs and Barriers: Report on Qualitative Study Findings*. Yerevan: USAID and Save the Children. p. 14.

¹⁴¹ ILO. 2009. *Work and Family Relations in Armenia*. Moscow. p. 1. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/info/publ/workandfamily_arm_en.pdf

¹⁴² Women in Armenia—Equality through Challenges!

¹⁴³ Ibid.

phenomenon, and an estimated 77% of migrants are men.¹⁴⁴ In some communities, up to one-third of the male population, and about one-tenth of the female population, are absent due to migration.¹⁴⁵ Men in semi-urban communities, those that were supported by industrial work in neighboring cities during the Soviet period, and those that do not have agricultural enterprises are most likely to engage in seasonal migration to the Russian Federation.¹⁴⁶ Focus group participants also mentioned families in which the men have worked outside of Armenia for decades.

111. In comparison with other countries in the region, few women in Armenia migrate for work. One of the primary reasons suggested for this gender divide is the “national mentality [that] still perceives women as homemakers while men solely take the responsibility to provide for the family.”¹⁴⁷ Migration was also viewed more negatively for women than for men by 78% of respondents to a 2005 survey.¹⁴⁸ Other factors concern the demands of destination country labor markets and differences in migration patterns. The Russian Federation, the primary destination for Armenia’s migrants, demands workers in industry sectors such as construction. In contrast, higher-GDP and European markets (which are the countries of destination for many of Georgia’s migrants) have greater demands for employees in the service sector, especially domestic help and nursing care, which employ more women.¹⁴⁹ When Armenian women do migrate, it is often with their families, and they are “expected to be the good mothers taking care of family members rather than engaging in work in other countries.”¹⁵⁰

112. Men’s motivation to migrate is clearly tied to employment problems in Armenia, which can range from a lack of jobs generally, lack of jobs that pay sufficiently for a decent standard of living, and the absence of profession-specific work opportunities. However, the long tradition of migrating for work may also be a significant push for young men. Surveys have indicated that in some villages, from which men have been migrating for years, many young men leave to work abroad immediately after completing compulsory military service, without “[making] serious efforts to find a job in Armenia; they just leave, as their fathers or uncles did before them.”¹⁵¹

113. The positive side of labor migration is the fact that migrants are able to provide financial support to their families. On average, from 2007 to 2012, remittances accounted for 16% of GDP, down from a peak of 19% in 2004.¹⁵² Households in Armenia commonly use remittances for food (82%), monthly bills and household maintenance (82%), and for health care expenses (29%).¹⁵³ A study conducted in Berd confirmed this finding, where over half of the women included in a survey are unemployed and rely on remittances. The income that they receive each month covers only the family’s minimal needs.¹⁵⁴ Most

144 WomenAm.net. Facts and Figures. <http://womensnet.am/հայ-միգրանտների-77տոկոսը-տղամարդիկ-են-23/> [in Armenian].

According to other estimates, 90% of more migrants from Armenia to the Russian Federation and other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States are male. A. Dulgaryan, et al. 2008. *Labor Migration in Armenian Communities: A Community Survey*. Yerevan: Eurasia Partnership Foundation and Caucasus Research Resource Centers. p. 23.

145 Women in Local Administration in Armenia, p. 5.

146 Ibid., p. 29.

147 ILO. 2009. *Migration and Development: Armenia Country Study*. Yerevan. p. 8.

148 Ibid.

149 *Labor Migration in Armenian Communities: A Community Survey*, p. 23.

150 *Work and Family Relations in Armenia*, p. 2.

151 *Migration and Development: Armenia Country Study*, p. 9.

152 A. Ghazaryan and G. Tolosa. 2012. *Remittances in Armenia: Dynamic Patterns and Drivers*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund. p. 1.

153 *Labor Migration in Armenian Communities: A Community Survey*, p. 39.

154 *The Socioeconomic Status of Women in the Berd Region of Armenia*, p. 2.

of the women (36%) receive between AMD100,000 and AMD150,000 a month. An equal portion (27% in each case) receives either less than AMD50,000 or AMD50,000–AMD100,000. Only 10% of women receive more than AMD150,000 per month. In some cases, remittances end or decline when male migrants establish “parallel families” in their new location, a situation that increases the number of female-headed households in Armenia who are at risk of falling into extreme poverty.¹⁵⁵

114. Only a small proportion of remittance income reaches the formal finance sector. Banks retain about 15%–20% of remittances as savings, in part because only 14% of remittance recipients have bank accounts.¹⁵⁶ Regarding the possibility that remittance income can be used by families, or women specifically, to invest in a business, a study pointed out that only 12% of remittance-receiving households are engaged in business activities. Business ventures tend to be “concentrated in commerce at a micro level (small shops, selling groceries by the village road etc., 43%) and agricultural business activity (plant growing and cattle breeding, 33% in total).”¹⁵⁷

115. Migration can have negative consequences for men. Among the migrants who responded to a survey, 60% said they had experienced one or more rights violations.¹⁵⁸ Such violations included workplace accidents, issues with remuneration, working without proper time off, restrictions placed by employers, and discrimination. In addition to exposure to unsafe and exploitative working conditions, men are also at higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections when they practice risky behavior when away from home (e.g., injecting drug use, having multiple sexual partners, and using commercial sex services). In turn, a study in Armenia confirmed that women married to migrants are also at a greater risk of sexually transmitted infections, especially when they are unable to negotiate safe sex practices.¹⁵⁹ Lastly, there is evidence that returned migrants are generally not able to find work in Armenia, which could be connected to seasonal work patterns, but also suggests that skills transfer is very limited.¹⁶⁰

116. Limited information is available about the “women left behind” by labor migration, since most studies focus on the migration experience. Anecdotal information from focus group discussions reveals that women often effectively take on the role of running the household. Many such women manage family businesses or engage in income-generating activities in addition to household chores, even though men are still formally considered the head of the family. As a focus group participant in Gyumri put it, “women are used to being the man and the woman in the family; they have no choice.” There was considerable discussion in focus groups about the fact that in areas with high levels of male out-migration, women now have an increased role in local self-government. Still, in the country as a whole, few women appear to have made inroads into “male” occupations and formal positions of authority. This finding suggests that despite changes in the traditional division of gender roles in the family and community, women have not necessarily become especially empowered in other spheres.

155 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Armenia Gender Profile. <http://www.ifad.org/english/gender/cen/profiles/arm.htm>

156 L. Karapetyan and L. Harutyunyan. 2013. *The Development and the Side Effects of Remittances in CIS Countries: The Case of Armenia*. CARIM-EastRR 2013/24. San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute. p. 16.

157 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

158 *Labor Migration in Armenian Communities: A Community Survey*, p. 40.

159 E. Duban. 2010. *Gender Assessment: USAID/Armenia*. Yerevan: USAID and Dev Tech Systems. p. 39.

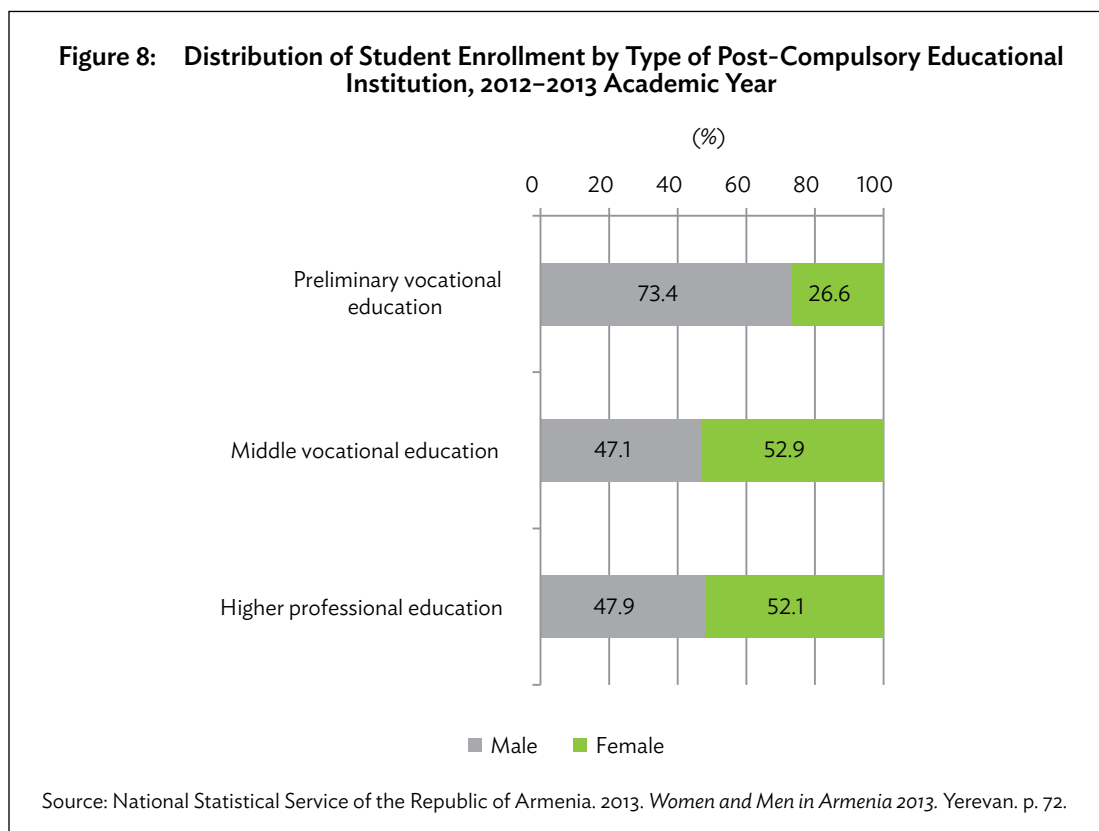
160 *Labor Migration in Armenian Communities: A Community Survey*, p. 51.

D. Gender Dimensions of Human Development

117. The ability of men and women to participate in and benefit from development projects, especially in the long term, is dependent on factors such as their education and health. Infrastructure issues and the state of the economy also affect the relative health and educational status of women and men. Diverse stakeholders raised the topic of education, mainly in the context of how the educational system prepares young men and women for their future livelihoods, while others noted the role that education plays in reinforcing gender stereotypes. Gender-based violence (GBV) and imbalances in sex ratios at birth are considered especially acute problems in Armenia and ones that raise a number of social, health, and demographic issues.

1. Gender Issues in Education

118. Armenia exhibits gender parity in enrollment rates from primary to higher education. The only significant deviations in enrollment occur at the level where students enter vocational or professional education. Enrollment figures show that girls tend to stay in education for a greater number of years, up to the level of postgraduate education. More boys, on the other hand, enter preliminary vocational education after having completed basic or general education, and presumably enter the labor market earlier. Technical and vocational schools require completion of compulsory education (grade 9), while middle vocational and higher education require completion of general secondary education (grade 12). Figure 8 illustrates the dynamic of enrollment at these educational levels.



119. No barriers appear to keep women from accessing higher education. In fact, young women dominate at the level of master's studies, making up 68% of the student body. In 2012, women accounted for 70.5% of graduates with master's degrees, but only 23.5% of students in doctorate courses. There were no female graduates with doctorates that year.¹⁶¹

120. Calculating the value of such education to the female population is a challenge. There is a striking disconnect between women's educational attainment and career achievements, and specifically in access to top-level and upper management posts and high salary jobs. As noted in the previous section, women represent considerably less than half of Armenia's labor market, but the economically active female population has a higher level of educational attainment than the males (56% of women have secondary specialized or postgraduate education, as compared with 48% of men).¹⁶² Despite women's "high levels of education and equal capacities for professional productiveness, there is a lack of opportunities for them to utilize their abilities in the labor market and in society."¹⁶³

121. **Education choices of women and men.** Women's education choices, which show patterns of gender segregation, seem to affect their opportunities to use their education in the working world. In general, at the level of preliminary and middle vocational education, young women are concentrated in traditionally female fields of study such as light industry/manufacturing, teaching, health, and the arts. Young men tend to enter technical fields, particularly construction, transport, machine building, and computer engineering. Thus, the education that women receive may not correlate with labor market demands.

122. In higher education, the patterns are similar, with women concentrated in the humanities and men in technical areas. Table 6 provides data for subjects in which the

Table 6: Female and Male Students by Specialization in Higher Education, 2012–2013 Academic Year

Specialization	Female Students (%)	Male Students (%)
Education and pedagogy	84.6	15.4
Social sciences	79.2	20.8
Services	73.9	26.1
Natural sciences	63.5	36.5
Humanities	62.2	37.8
Public health	58.2	41.8
Transport systems	3.4	96.6
Metallurgy, mechanical engineering	10.6	89.4
Energy, power machine building, electronic engineering	7.1	92.9
Construction and architecture	13.5	86.5
Automation and management	16.8	83.2

Source: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2013. *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*. Yerevan. pp. 84–85.

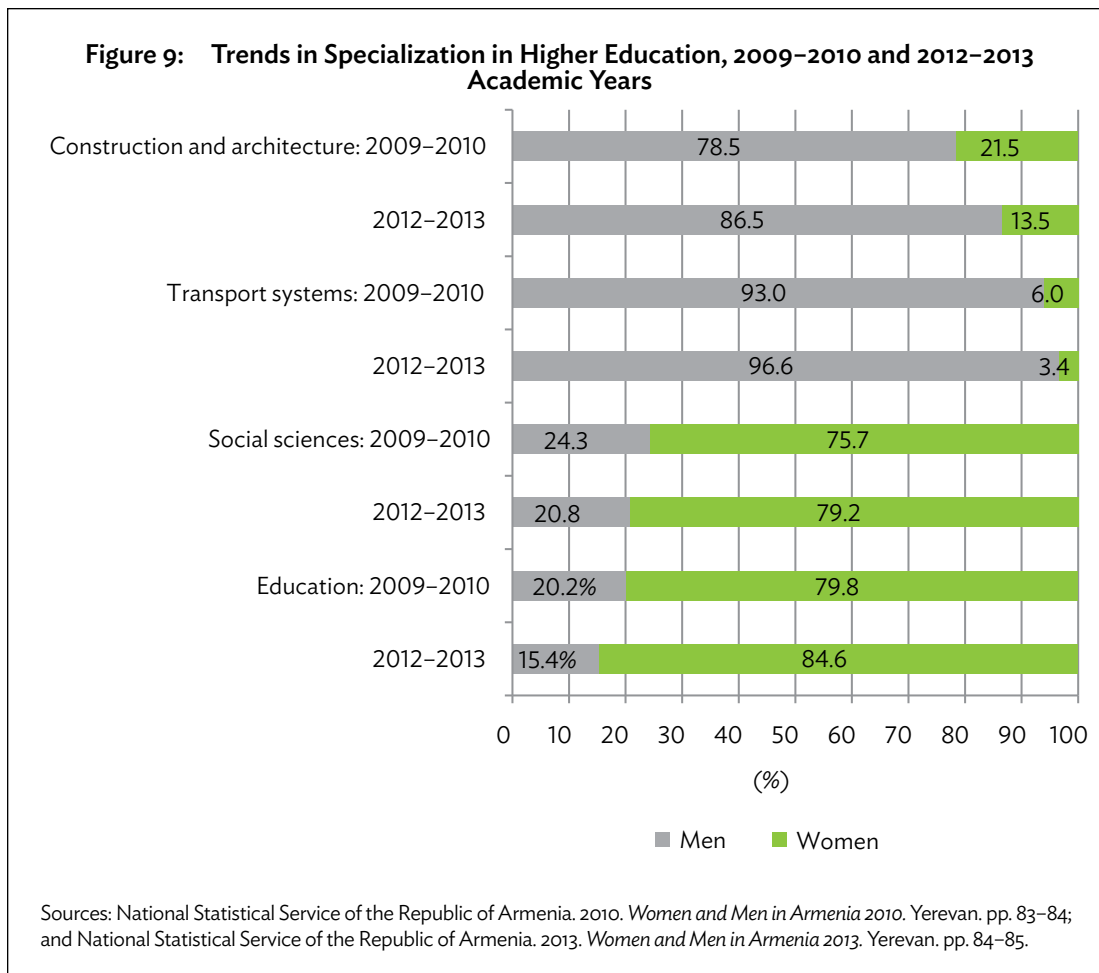
¹⁶¹ *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 90.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁶³ *Armenia: MDG National Progress Report*, p. 40.

disparities in enrollment by sex is largest, for state and private educational institutions combined.

123. While it is not possible to make a full comparison of the fields of study over many years for males and females (since the categories used in national statistics have not remained consistent), academic subjects appear to have become more segregated. Comparing enrollment in higher education for the 2009–2010 and 2012–2013 academic years, the gender divide has slightly increased in those subjects that were already highly segregated (Figure 9). It would be useful to investigate further whether this is indeed a trend and what factors are affecting student choices about areas of study. Note also that Figure 9 and Table 6 suggest that traditionally female subjects still appear to be more accessible to men than the reverse, despite women’s high university enrollment rate. A pattern has emerged in which young women are underrepresented in the specific technical and scientific fields that would “open a window for entry into highly respected and highly demanded occupations in the labor market, in particular occupations in the information and communication technology sector.”¹⁶⁴



164 N. Zastoukhova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. 2011. Statement at the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. New York. 24 February. p. 2.

124. A tracer study of 451 graduates of vocational education and training in two *marzer* (of whom more than half were women) found that only slightly more than one-third of graduates considered themselves employed.¹⁶⁵ Although the study was limited in scope and its gender perspective, it nevertheless presented some information about the success of these graduates in the labor market. For instance, women made up only 35.8% of employed graduates, but the share of self-employed women was higher than men. Agriculture and engineering graduates reported the highest employment rates (75.0% and 48.1%, respectively), while graduates of education and health care programs had the lowest employment rates (26.3% and 22.6%, respectively).¹⁶⁶ It is significant that in the year of the assessment, women represented 19.1% of agriculture students in secondary educational institutions but 85.1% of students in health and 81.7% in pedagogy.¹⁶⁷ Female graduates were also earning less than males. Most of the women reported earning less than AMD50,000 per month (51.7%) while the largest group of male graduates were earning AMD50,000–AMD100,000 (48.1%). No female graduates had monthly salaries of more than AMD100,000.¹⁶⁸

125. Interestingly, female graduates were much more likely than male graduates to see “a correlation between investment in education and better employment opportunities and living standards,” as almost two-thirds of women had this response as compared with just under one-half of men.¹⁶⁹ Such a finding suggests that women and men have different expectations about how they will use their professional education. Still, the study also found that among vocational graduates, most were motivated by personal interests when choosing a field of study and not by prospective jobs, so it appears that young people generally do not “see an inseparable link between [vocational education and training] and future employment.”¹⁷⁰ Further study is needed to better understand whether the quality of education that women, in particular, receive in their areas of study is meeting labor market demands and also whether vocational guidance could be improved so that young women are assisted to enter key fields where jobs are available.

126. One of the goals of the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan is to ensure that women and men have equal access to educational services, but there is no specific provision on positive measures to encourage either women or men to enter nontraditional institutions or courses. During this assessment, some initiatives were found to have been aimed at young women. For example, in 2013, a forum, Tech Needs Girls, was organized jointly by the American University of Armenia, the Ministry of Economy, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NGOs, and several businesses to encourage secondary school-age girls to consider academic paths and careers in information and communication technology.¹⁷¹ The Ministry of Defense also announced that two military universities would accept female students for the first time for the 2013–2014 academic year.¹⁷²

165 European Training Foundation and Caucasus Research Resource Centers Armenia. 2012. *Tracer Study of Recent Graduates from Vocational Education Institutions in Kotayk and Ararat Marzes of Armenia*. Turin. p. 7.

166 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

167 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2010. *Women and Men in Armenia 2010*. Yerevan. p. 80.

168 *Tracer Study of Recent Graduates from Vocational Education Institutions in Kotayk and Ararat Marzes of Armenia*, p. 49.

169 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

170 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

171 Panorama.am. 2013. Armenia Marks International Girls in ICT Day. 25 April. <http://www.panorama.am/en/society/2013/04/25/girls-in-ict/>

172 RIA Novosti. 2013. Armenian Military Universities Open Doors to Women. 6 June. http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20130606/181536514/Armenian-Military-Universities-Open-Doors-to-Women.html

127. **Gender disparities within the educational system.** The issue of gender imbalances among teaching staff was raised as a concern from two different perspectives. First, women dominate teaching staff—they are 84.2% of all secondary school staff—but they account for fewer than 40.0% of school directors.¹⁷³ At the level of higher education, there are more female lecturers and teachers than male, but significantly fewer women are represented among department heads, rectors, and deans.¹⁷⁴ In education as in other fields, men are more likely to occupy top decision-making posts.

128. Second, the low representation of men among public school teaching staff is thought to have a negative impact on children’s development, and especially on boys’ development. The gender equality concept paper states that the feminization of school teaching staff “impedes full socialization of boys and girls.”¹⁷⁵ Focus group participants, too, noted that male role models are important for all children. The lack of men in the teaching profession, combined with absent fathers who have migrated for work, suggests that boys in Armenia have few opportunities to observe, question, or challenge their notions of what constitutes “male” qualities and therefore may face problems with “misconceptions and misinterpretations of masculinity.”¹⁷⁶ The lack of male role models has been linked to boys’ poorer academic performance at school as compared with girls, higher school dropout rates, and juvenile delinquency.¹⁷⁷

129. Women’s dominance among teaching staff is traditional in Armenia, but there are qualified male teachers. A large number of men have left the teaching profession, however, because of “the salary levels and low rating of the profession and poor social protection.”¹⁷⁸ When focus group participants were asked why men have left or are not entering the teaching profession in their regions, they noted that teaching salaries are so low that men cannot support their families.

130. The concept paper on gender equality, and subsequent strategic action plan, prioritize integrating a gender approach into education, “aimed at the full self-expression of women and men, as well as the elimination of biased attitudes toward one of the sexes,”¹⁷⁹ which includes developing new and gender-sensitive curricula, and increasing the number of women in decision-making roles in the educational system. To date, no official gender assessment has been conducted of the educational system, but a survey conducted among teachers and students in three Yerevan high schools gave some indications of the types of gender inequalities that exist. The survey found that 54% of teachers believe that boys and girls are essentially different and should be treated differently; and 28% responded that they are different but should be treated equally.¹⁸⁰ Teachers also lacked an understanding of what constitutes a gender-equal approach. Students confirmed that they face different treatment and discrimination; further, physical punishment is used more often with boys, but girls are expected to be better behaved in the classroom.

173 Statement at the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, p. 2.

174 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 79.

175 *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 15.

176 M. Martirosyan. 2008. *Lack of Adult Male Role Models in Secondary Schools of Armenia and Its Impact on Armenian Male Teenagers’ Conceptualizations of Masculinities*. Final Analytical Report. Yerevan: Caucasus Research Resource Centers, p. 19.

177 J. Hashmi. n.d. *Boys’ Declining Access to School in Armenia*. *Out of School Children Paper Series*. Paper No. 3. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund, p. 53.

178 *National Review of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in the Context of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015*, p. 14.

179 *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 18.

180 Society Without Violence. 2013. *Gender Equality in Armenian High Schools*. Yerevan. pp. 16–17.

131. About half of the teachers held the view that “women and men should keep traditional professions” and “there are some professions that women should not have,” and 56% of teachers felt that a man can have any profession that he wants.¹⁸¹ These findings suggest that many teachers subscribe to stereotypical views about gender, which in turn impacts the opportunities that are presented to girls. A number of women’s NGOs have developed curricula on gender equality in an effort to increase sensitivity among teachers and students and to work cooperatively with schools in Armenia. Such programs have not become part of the national educational program, however.

132. In addition to the stereotypes reinforced by some teaching staff, school textbooks reproduce stereotypical information about gender roles. According to an assessment of textbooks in primary schools, both the text and pictures show men and women in clearly defined roles and jobs. “Feminine” roles are shown to be more passive and limited to the private sphere, domestic work, child care, and preparing meals, while “masculine” roles are more varied and relate to the public sector, showing boys and men as more active and engaged in creative work and decision making. Teachers are exclusively depicted as female, but other professions (e.g., doctors, scientists, artists, pilots, and police officers) are represented by male characters.¹⁸²

133. **Value of female education.** Several participants of focus group discussions made the point that although women attain high levels of education, a large majority marry soon after completing university and, therefore, do not enter the job market. Higher educational institutions do not appear particularly concerned with the low levels of employment among female graduates but characterize the phenomenon as a personal choice. According to respondents to this assessment (particularly in Ashtarak and Goris), this pattern is linked to gender stereotypes. Women are considered to be the cornerstone of the family in Armenia, and thus family success correlates positively with the level of women’s education. Participants acknowledged the positive impact of a woman’s educational attainment on child development, the husband’s professional growth, and on the physical and mental health of family members generally. Culturally, a woman’s education is seen to be less tied to her professional development than to her role in raising the next generation.

134. The commonly held notion that female education is part of the dowry of women in Armenia, even in the figurative sense, persists today. The results of a 2013 survey of male and female students at Yerevan State University, 16–25 years old,¹⁸³ revealed that the majority of young people think “a woman should have a good education” (93% of men and 96% of women).¹⁸⁴ However, a considerably smaller group agreed that it is “important, or very important, for a woman to have a successful career” (46% of men and 62% of women). When asked specifically about the importance of a professional career, female students were far more likely to value being a “good specialist” over “having a successful professional career.” This finding was interpreted to have varied meanings: that women lack self-confidence and do not have career aspirations and that women fear that being successful

¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 13–15.

¹⁸² R. Tsaturyan. 2013. *Gender Roles in Armenian Primary School Textbooks*. Yerevan: Open Society Foundation Armenia [in Armenian].

¹⁸³ In the survey, 205 female students and 173 male students participated.

¹⁸⁴ Yerevan State University Center for Gender and Leadership Studies. 2014. *Gender Attitudes of Yerevan State University Students*. Yerevan. p. 9. <http://ysu.am/gender/en/1383045671>

in a career could compromise their family life and challenge their traditional roles as wives and mothers.¹⁸⁵

135. Even among younger girls, adherence to stereotypes is quite strong. According to a survey of 101 girls, 12–17 years old in Yerevan, 88% agreed with the statement that “the most important thing for a woman is being a good wife for her husband and a good mother for her children,” but almost the same number (70%) aspired to combine careers and family.¹⁸⁶ Only a small number (20%) aimed to focus solely on careers and “become a good professional.”

136. It should also be noted that the value placed on female education may vary between the capital and the regions and by family. In some families, for instance, boys “receive the best education and get the most prestige [sic] specialization in the best universities, whereas the girls can either study in less famous universities thus receiving less important professions or don’t study at all.”¹⁸⁷ In a sociological study of gender stereotypes that was conducted among 1,500 women and men (with an approximately equal division of male and female respondents) in Yerevan and the largest cities of five *marzer*, respondents were asked to list three qualities of their own choosing that they develop in their sons and daughters. While “education” was the first choice for boys (16.5% of respondents listed this quality), it was not even included among the responses given about girls.¹⁸⁸

2. Gender-Based Violence

137. GBV, especially domestic violence, is one of the most critical issues facing women in Armenia. Globally, domestic violence is linked to women’s subordinate role and a patriarchal system that honors male power and control. The concept paper on gender equality and the subsequent strategic action plan devote chapters to the issue of preventing GBV, and draw attention to the absence of government programs for victims, societal stigmatization of victims, and the lack of statistical data about the incidence of GBV.¹⁸⁹ The government adopted a stand-alone Strategic Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence, 2011–2015¹⁹⁰ that addresses prevention of GBV, provision of comprehensive services to and protection of victims of GBV, and prosecution of perpetrators. While policy documents speak of GBV, the focus of most government efforts and NGO activities has been on domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, specifically.

138. Although official data and reliable statistics on GBV are limited, surveys carried out by the government and women’s NGOs confirmed that domestic violence affects a significant portion of the population, yet it remains a latent problem, largely invisible in society. A quantitative survey that included close to 5,000 households was conducted in 2008–2009 and revealed that 61.7% of ever-partnered women had experienced some form of controlling behavior from an intimate partner. More specifically, 25.0% of women

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Z. Aznauryan. 2013. *Socio-Psychological Specifics of Adolescent Girls in Yerevan*. Yerevan: Women’s Resource Center. pp. 21, 24.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ *Sociological Study on Gender Attitudes and Stereotypes in Armenia*, pp. 30–31.

¹⁸⁹ *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, pp. 29–30.

¹⁹⁰ Adopted 17 June 2011.

were subjected to psychological violence, 8.9% to physical violence, 3.3% had experienced sexual violence, and 9.5% had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence.¹⁹¹ Other surveys have shown a higher incidence of domestic violence, ranging from about 27% of women reporting that they experienced physical violence to 46%–66% having experienced psychological abuse.¹⁹²

139. In addition to evaluating the incidence of psychological, physical, and sexual violence, the 2008–2009 survey included questions that revealed the extent to which women in Armenia also experience “economic violence or abuse,” another dimension of domestic violence. Economic violence can refer to control over a woman’s earnings and prohibitions on working. Among currently partnered women, 7.4% “gave up or refused a job because their partner did not want them to work,” and 8.7% of women stated that “their partners had taken their earnings/savings against their will.”¹⁹³

140. Women’s lack of financial independence and economic dependence are not only consequences of violence. They also limit women’s ability to leave violent relationships. An NGO-supported survey of 1,006 women found that 85% of respondents agreed with the statement, “many women have to choose to live alone and be poor, or stay in the home where they are being battered.”¹⁹⁴ The survey found that a large number of ever-partnered women who had experienced violence were unemployed (60.9%)—a condition that was attributed to the fact that “victims of domestic violence...are economically dependent on their partner [and] find it difficult to break away from the abusive relationship.”¹⁹⁵ Only about a third of the women surveyed were engaged in income-generating activities (37.7%).¹⁹⁶ The remainder had no independent source of income and, thus, depended on others (most often the intimate partner) for their support.

141. Research about the links between economic empowerment and domestic violence has indicated, on one hand, that “more equitable and less violent relations are more easily achieved and sustained when incomes earned by men and women do not differ greatly.”¹⁹⁷ Women who are able to equalize their employment status with their partner generally experience fewer types of abuse. On the other hand, studies also show that “batterers may oppose and feel threatened by women’s efforts to obtain or maintain financial independence and may inflict abuse to prevent them from obtaining financial means with which they could establish independence, resourcefulness, and social power.”¹⁹⁸ In situations where men lack access to economic resources and employment, “they may use violence in an attempt to re-establish their power at home.”¹⁹⁹ For this reason, projects to increase women’s economic empowerment, particularly those in settings that lack resources for survivors of GBV, often also include measures to assure women’s safety.

191 *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence Against Women in Armenia 2008–2009*, p. 10.

192 *Gender Assessment: USAID/Armenia*, p. 40.

193 *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence Against Women in Armenia 2008–2009*, p. 10.

194 *Domestic Violence and Abuse of Women in Armenia: Report on Nationwide Survey Findings*, p. 89.

195 *Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence Against Women in Armenia 2008–2009*, p. 10.

196 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

197 *Ibid.*

198 C. K. Sanders. 2011. *Asset Building Programs for Domestic Violence Survivors*. Washington, DC: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. http://www.vawnet.org/grants-funding/print-document.php?doc_id=2972&find_type=web_desc_AR

199 *Ibid.*

142. Other forms of GBV are no less serious than domestic violence but have not been thoroughly studied in Armenia. For instance, there are no official data about sexual harassment in the workplace, but according to a 2004 survey, 64% of women interviewed had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. One in five women had been forced to leave their job due to sexual harassment, and 5% “had been forced to enter an unwanted relationship with a male colleague in a management position in order to retain their jobs.”²⁰⁰ A survey conducted by the Women’s Resource Center, an NGO that receives a large number of complaints from women about sexual harassment in the workplace, found that women experience harassment from employers, managers, colleagues, as well as from customers and clients (which can take the form of either quid pro quo harassment or hostile work environments).²⁰¹ Information compiled by NGOs has indicated that victims of sexual harassment rarely file formal complaints or report incidents to the police or women’s organizations, but instead they attempt to resolve the situation themselves, often by resigning, or by asking male relatives to “talk to employers, managers or even customers.”²⁰² No studies were found during this assessment about sexual harassment occurring in educational institutions or on public transport; however, women do report experiencing sexual harassment on the street, especially at night after working hours.²⁰³

143. The impact of societal attitudes to GBV on victims’ ability to seek help should not be overlooked. There is considerable ambivalence about the acceptability of men using violence in their relationships. Most surveyed women (56%) and more than one-third of men (35.8%) disagreed with the statement that “a woman herself provokes her husband to raise his hand against her,” but a large number of respondents agreed that this was sometimes the case (39.4% of men and 34.0% of women), and a considerable number thought that this was always the case (17.2% of men and 9.7% of women).²⁰⁴ In a second survey, 24% of respondents (male and female combined) believed that domestic violence can be justified, but at the same time 36.8% also believed that it is a crime. Notably, men were more likely than women to agree with the statement that “subjecting women to violence is for their own good” (65% of people who agreed).²⁰⁵

144. GBV is commonly thought of as shameful, and this attitude prevents survivors from seeking help outside of their immediate families and informal networks.²⁰⁶ Even in cases of sexual violence, many survivors fear “being blamed by society for ‘bringing it upon themselves’” and thus do not report to the police.²⁰⁷ Women’s organizations have been especially active in conducting awareness-raising activities to reduce the stigma surrounding GBV and to promote their services, and such NGOs report an increase in the number of women contacting them after such campaigns. Such work is critical, but women’s organizations alone cannot support the sustained effort that is needed to change societal attitudes. In addition, the media perpetuate images of GBV as normal and justifiable. For instance, one NGO analyzed a popular soap opera and found that of

200 Amnesty International. 2008. *No Pride in Silence, Countering Violence in the Family in Armenia*. London. p. 12.

201 *Gender Dimensions of the Labor Market in Armenia*, p. 8.

202 *Ibid.*, p. 9; and I. Sargsyan. 2007. *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*. Master’s paper. Yerevan: American University of Armenia. pp. 6–7.

203 *Gender Dimensions of the Labor Market in Armenia*, p. 8. Note that the Center for Gender and Leadership Studies of Yerevan State University is supporting research on sexual harassment in the workplace, which should be completed by 2015.

204 *Keep Me Away From Your Stereotypes: Sociological Survey Analysis*, p. 23.

205 *Sociological Study on Gender Attitudes and Stereotypes in Armenia*, pp. 73–74.

206 According to one survey, 76.5% of women who sought help due to domestic violence turned to their families, followed by 27.2% who relied on friends. Only 17.3% contacted the police, and 3.7% went to the courts. *Domestic Violence and Abuse of Women in Armenia: Report on Nationwide Survey Findings*, p. 87.

207 S. Gevorgyan. 2011. *Sexual Abuse: Fear and Shame Make Armenian Women Keep Silence*. Armenia Now. 10 June. http://armenianow.com/social/human_rights/30318/armenia_domestic_violence_sexual_abuse

the 550 minutes that depicted women, more than half the time they were portrayed as “experiencing violence, crying, or in a state of despondency,” and of the 10 lead female characters, all were subjected to violence and only 1 was employed.²⁰⁸

145. Other factors that prevent women from seeking redress for GBV include inadequate legal protection; a lack of protective measures and crisis services, especially for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence; and impunity for perpetrators. Despite a solid policy framework for developing a system to address GBV, government action has not been adequate. In January 2013, the National Assembly rejected a draft law on domestic violence, which had been lobbied for by women’s NGOs for many years and was supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.²⁰⁹ According to a government report, “[a]ll state agencies involved in the legal and justice sphere ... expressed negative opinions on the draft law.”²¹⁰ Officially, the law was not approved because of ongoing large-scale legal reform, and the Prime Minister called for the inclusion of provisions on domestic violence in relevant legal acts during the amendment process.²¹¹ Experts interviewed for this assessment pointed out, however, that the draft law contains new legal protections (e.g., protection orders) that were not part of existing legal codes and that it also addresses prevention of domestic violence. The actual reasons for rejecting the law are thought to be lack of political will, a failure to acknowledge that domestic violence is a problem in Armenia, and an unwillingness to devote government resources to developing services for victims. NGOs have also lobbied for reform of Criminal Code provisions on sexual assault and rape and to improve how the Labor Code treats gender discrimination and physical violence in the workplace.

146. Assistance to victims of GBV is provided almost exclusively by NGOs that offer telephone hotline advice, psychological and legal counseling, and sometimes temporary accommodations, but these organizations do not have the capacity to address the needs of all victims. Armenia has no special legal protections for victims of domestic violence, only two shelters (neither of which has government support), and no assistance programs to find housing or jobs for women who cannot return home.

147. The lack of alternative housing for women who have experienced violence, either short or long term, is especially problematic given that there is no legal mechanism to remove a perpetrator from the home, and more than 88% of women who left after experiencing domestic violence reported that they eventually returned.²¹² International good practices recommend 1 crisis center per 50,000 people and, at a minimum, 1 place in a shelter should be provided for each 10,000 people.²¹³ At present, Armenia, with an official population of approximately 3 million, is falling short of this goal.

148. During this assessment, it was established that service-providing organizations have not estimated the economic value of the services that they provide. This could

²⁰⁸ *Exploring Women’s Rights and Feminist Movement Building in Armenia: Learning from the Past and Strategizing for the Future*, p. 24.

²⁰⁹ Women’s organizations began drafting a domestic violence bill in 2007, which they submitted to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2009. In 2011, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs created a working group to review the draft, which was opened for public discussion in 2012.

²¹⁰ *National Review of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcomes of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) in the Context of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015*, p. 26.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Domestic Violence and Abuse of Women in Armenia: Report on Nationwide Survey Findings*, p. 88.

²¹³ United Nations Secretary General. 2010. UNITE to End Violence Against Women Campaign. New York. p. 2.

be a useful calculation when estimating potential costs to the state of implementing a comprehensive domestic violence law and for budget planning.

149. While the economic impact of GBV on the larger community has also not been studied in Armenia, internationally, it is recognized that GBV places a considerable strain on national resources, to say nothing of devastating consequences for individual women and their families. Assessments in other countries have found that GBV reduces the capacity of victims/survivors to contribute productively to the family, the economy, and public life; and drains resources from social services, the justice system, health-care agencies and employers. While even the most comprehensive surveys to date underestimate the costs, they all show that the failure to address violence against women has serious economic consequences.²¹⁴

150. In Armenia, domestic violence has been identified as leading directly to losses in women's productivity, which can be considerable when aggregated. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a factor that limits women's choice of jobs and ability to advance. Although there are no figures for Armenia, calculations of the economic losses incurred through direct costs (e.g., expenditures related to services for survivors, medical care, law enforcement costs, legal costs, and property damage), indirect costs to the private sector (e.g., lost or reduced productivity at work, and absenteeism), and pain and suffering in other countries are high. The European Parliament, for example, estimates that the annual economic cost of violence against women across the European Union (EU) amounted to €228 billion (\$285 billion) in 2013 (1.8% of the EU gross domestic product [GDP] in 2011).²¹⁵ Prevention measures are estimated to cost substantially less and to be more cost-effective than treating the consequences of violence once it has occurred.

3. Skewed Sex Ratio at Birth

151. In the last 3 years, the issue of skewed birth sex ratios in Armenia has come to the fore and been the subject of public debate and research. Since the early 1990s, the sex-at-birth ratio has been consistently widening, with male births outnumbering female births in a greater proportion than occurs naturally. The same trend has been observed in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Immediately after independence, the sex-at-birth ratio rose from the accepted normal biological ratio (102–106 boys to 100 girls), peaking at 120 male births per 100 female births, the highest level ever observed in the world. Neighboring countries reached peaks of 115–118 male births per 100 female births.²¹⁶ Since then, the sex-at-birth ratio has oscillated between 114 and 116, and seems to have stabilized at 114 male births to 100 female births in 2012.²¹⁷ There is also considerable regional variation within Armenia in sex-at-birth ratios—as high as from 122–124 boys to 100 girls (in Aragatsotn and Gegharkunik marzer) and as low as 110–113 boys to 100 girls (in Yerevan and Syunik Marz).²¹⁸

214 United Nations. 2006. *Ending Violence against Women: From Words to Action*. A Study of the Secretary General. New York. p. iii.

215 Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament. 2013. *Draft Report with Recommendations to the Commission on Combating Violence Against Women*. 2013/2004(INL). Strasbourg. p. 5.

216 C. Guilamoto. 2013. *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*. Yerevan: UNFPA. p. 40.

217 Ibid., p. 6.

218 Ibid., pp. 54–55.

152. A 2013 study, supported by the United Nations Population Fund, confirmed what had been suspected—skewed birth sex ratios are caused by the use of technology to determine prenatal sex and terminate a pregnancy in the case of a female.²¹⁹ Families in Armenia are using prenatal sex selection as a means to “prevent girls from being born for the sake of having a son.”²²⁰

153. Three preconditions are necessary for prenatal sex selection to occur, and all are present in Armenia: (i) the availability and accessibility of technology that allows for the determination of prenatal sex and the termination of a pregnancy; (ii) preference for sons, and specific conditions that suggest that male children “carry distinct social, cultural or economic benefits;” and (iii) a decline in fertility and low birth rates that act as a “‘squeeze factor’, forcing parents to make serious choices regarding a subsequent pregnancy.”²²¹ Examined more closely, ultrasound technology, which became widely available in Armenia in the 1990s, as well as an inheritance of using abortion as a method of contraception and family planning from the Soviet period, has contributed to this.

154. A declining fertility rate, perhaps combined with economic instability, has also meant that the size of families in Armenia has decreased considerably. Fertility is below the replacement level in Armenia, with an average birth rate of 1.5 children per woman in 2011.²²² The significance of decreasing family size is illustrated by the fact that sex-selective abortion increases dramatically with the third and fourth pregnancy. Among third births, the sex ratio at birth reached an average of 170 males to 100 females from 2001 to 2010.²²³ This finding was confirmed during focus group discussions when people noted that the hope with a first pregnancy is simply for a healthy child, and only later when a male has not been born, do families become more focused on the need for a boy.

155. The other precondition, son preference, is perhaps the most difficult to quantify, and it is also important to keep in mind that son preference is itself a manifestation of a deeper issue of gender discrimination. Although there has been limited research on son preference in Armenia, surveys do show that parents prefer to have more sons than daughters.²²⁴ One survey found that the number of families preferring sons is 6 times greater than those that prefer a daughter, and in rural areas, this rate rises to 10 times more families preferring sons. In urban areas, son preference is less evident—about 4 times higher than daughter preference.²²⁵ Such differences may reflect more traditional attitudes in rural areas about men’s role or may indicate that urban residents perceive that their daughters will have greater opportunities. The provinces with the greatest evidence of son preference (most skewed sex-at-birth ratios) are also those with the highest male out-migration levels.

156. The kinds of inequality and gender disparities that are discussed throughout this assessment stem from Armenia’s patriarchal culture that is “based on a patrilineal kinship system... [in which] families revolve around the male line, headed by the elder

219 It is thought that sex-selective abortion is the primary mechanism that results in the sex imbalance, and not, for example, the use of pre-implantation sex testing in fertility clinics. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

220 UNFPA. 2013. *Factsheet on “Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis” Report*. Yerevan. p. 1.

221 *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*, pp. 17–18.

222 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

223 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

224 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

225 UNFPA. 2012. *Prevalence of and Reasons for Sex-Selective Abortions in Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 41.

and constituted by married sons.”²²⁶ Respondents to a quantitative survey of reasons for sex-selective abortions confirmed a strongly held belief that sons carry on the family traditions. The most common answers to the question why families give preference to sons over daughters were, “sons continue the family lineage” (39.2%), “sons are inheritors of property” (30.9%), followed by “sons are guarantors of material well-being,” “sons are defenders of the homeland,” and “sons can provide financial support.”²²⁷ Less common answers focused on perceived limitations that daughters face, such as “after she gets married, a girl is no longer yours,” “girls have fewer opportunities,” and a daughter cannot provide financial support for parents in old age.²²⁸ Although United Nations Population Fund-supported focus group discussions with women revealed an awareness of the fact that women have an equal right to inherit property, women are the de facto breadwinners in a large number of families, and women have opportunities to enter nontraditional fields, notions about sons’ greater social mobility and societal value remain deeply entrenched.

157. The public dialogue about sex-selective abortion has increased, especially among women’s NGOs and international organizations, yet interviewees observed that hard data are still lacking and that there is still considerable reluctance to discuss this issue, especially at the policy level. Further, there is resistance to examining the deeper implications of skewed sex-at-birth ratios. Most participants, in group discussions, agreed that the phenomenon of a deficit of female births is not natural.²²⁹ Yet people also tended to focus on the demographic consequences of sex-selective abortion, for example, citing such future problems as the difficulty men will face in finding wives and the possibility of more aggression and violence in society. Respondents did not appear to conceptualize sex-selective abortion as a form of gender discrimination or link it to other manifestations of inequality that girls and women face later in life.

²²⁶ *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*, p. 29.

²²⁷ *Prevalence of and Reasons for Sex-Selective Abortions in Armenia*, p. 33.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Interestingly, during a focus group discussion in Berd, the point was made that after a period of violent conflict, more boys are born—a common, but incorrect, assumption that after war, there is a spontaneous increase in the number of male births. See *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*, p. 29.

III. Mainstreaming Gender in Project Operations

158. This chapter reviews gender issues in sectors on which the Asian Development Bank (ADB) plans to focus its operations under the country partnership strategy, 2014–2018. While some of the topics included here have been approached in the past as gender-neutral, consideration of the different roles and responsibilities of men and women, their unequal access to resources, and the potential impacts of neutral policies illustrate that gender should be given consideration in such sectors.

159. The ADB Policy on Gender and Development (GAD, 1998) adopts mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment.²³⁰ The ADB approach to GAD, and specifically to the promotion of gender equality, includes (i) treating gender as a crosscutting theme in all social and economic processes, and (ii) adopting targeted measures to address egregious gender disparities. ADB guidelines set forth four categories for integrating gender in projects, ranging from those that include gender equality and/or women’s empowerment as a primary outcome to those that include some gender elements. The categories are (i) gender equity theme, (ii) effective gender mainstreaming, (iii) some gender elements, and (iv) no gender elements.²³¹

160. At the time this assessment was conducted, four of ADB’s projects in Armenia have mainstreamed gender to some extent. Further details about each project’s gender action plan are provided in the relevant sections that follow.

Table 7: Gender Mainstreaming in ADB Projects

Project	Gender Mainstreaming Category	Gender Action Plan
Women’s Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program	Gender equity theme	✓
Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project	Effective gender mainstreaming	✓
Sustainable Urban Development Investment Program	Some gender elements	✓ (undergoing revision)
North–South Road Corridor Investment Program	Some gender elements	

Source: ADB. Gender and Development. <http://www.adb.org/themes/gender/projects/gender-mainstreaming-categories>

²³⁰ ADB. 2003. *Gender and Development*. Manila. p. viii.

²³¹ In 2012, the “some gender elements” classification replaced the former “SGB: some gender benefits” classification. See Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming Categories of ADB Projects for full definitions. Note that projects that are categorized as either gender equity theme or effective gender mainstreaming are deemed to include “significant gender mainstreaming.” The results framework formulated in light of ADB’s Strategy 2020 established corporate targets that 40% of all ADB operations and 50% of those financed through the Asian Development Fund should include significant gender mainstreaming.

161. In 2012–2013, ADB provided grants to three Armenian nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to conduct pilot projects with gender themes. Each project had specific objectives and addressed different aspects of gender equality in Armenia: (i) capacity building on gender mainstreaming in local planning and budgeting processes, (ii) economic empowerment of rural women through small business promotion, and (iii) research into women’s entrepreneurship in Armenia.²³² The first project was carried out in close cooperation with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and included training and capacity building in gender mainstreaming for members of *marz* administrations and the drafting of a manual on gender in local planning. The second project, implemented in Ashtarak, Ararat, Yerevan, and neighboring communities, had three key outputs: increasing the knowledge and skills of rural women in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) management; establishing a network of rural businesswomen; and improving women’s income-generating opportunities (i.e., through business training, consultations with experts in agricultural production, and networking activities). The final pilot project resulted in an assessment that highlighted both women’s motivations to start a business and the constraints that they face. Collectively, the results of the pilot projects should enhance gender mainstreaming in other ADB operations.

A. Gender Issues Related to Entrepreneurship and Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development

162. Private enterprise is an important economic driver for Armenia. In 2012, SMEs accounted for 43% of the GDP.²³³ In 2010, about one-third of the employed population worked in the private sector—about two-thirds in large enterprises, and one-third in SMEs.²³⁴ Of those employed in SMEs, 10.4% worked in micro enterprises, 14.0% in small enterprises, and 9.1% in medium-sized enterprises.²³⁵ Since 2000, the government has annually developed a support program for SMEs, with the most recent policy, the National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development, 2011–2015, focused on creating a competitive environment for SMEs.

163. Increasing the role of women in entrepreneurship, and especially developing the economic activity of rural women, is a key priority of the gender policy concept paper.²³⁶ In fact, support for women’s start-ups is one of the goals articulated in the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan.²³⁷ These goals are also supported by the national SME strategy that includes a chapter on promoting women’s entrepreneurship. Increasing the ratio of businesswomen among entrepreneurs is a means “to ensure equal opportunities for both males and females and enhance women’s role in entrepreneurship hence contributing to the establishment of additional workplaces in the country and ultimately to economic growth.”²³⁸ The national SME strategy outlines an action plan to increase women’s

²³² The pilot projects were conducted by, respectively, the Caucasus Institute, the Armenian Young Women’s Association, and Alpha Plus Consulting.

²³³ Arka News Agency. 2013. SME in Armenia Accounted for 43% of GDP in 2012: Economy Ministry. 1 March. http://arka.am/en/news/business/sme_in_armenia_accounted_for_43_of_gdp_in_2012_economy_ministry/

²³⁴ National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development. SMEs in Armenia, A Statistical Overview. <http://www.smednc.am/?laid=1&laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=173>

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ *Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia*, p. 12.

²³⁷ *Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan, 2011–2015*, p. 3.

²³⁸ National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development. SMEs in Armenia, A Statistical Overview. Women’s Entrepreneurship Promotion. 3. <http://www.smednc.am/?laid=1&laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=173>

entrepreneurship with a timeline, budget, and responsible agencies, primarily the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center, a fund established by the government in 2002. In addition, a large number of donors, international organizations, and NGOs have projects on women's enterprise development and business training. In fact, of all women-focused projects in Armenia at present, the majority address a "women and entrepreneurship" theme.

164. ADB is undertaking a 5-year program, the Women's Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program, which aims to improve the role that female entrepreneurs and micro and SMEs play in Armenia's economic development and to reduce obstacles to women's participation. The program consists of two loans and technical assistance. The first loan is policy-based and strengthens the business environment and the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center. The second loan enables participating financial institutions to provide local currency loans to micro and SMEs, of which at least 50% are to be women's micro and SMEs. Technical assistance will be provided to develop the entrepreneurial capacity of individual women and to increase the capacity of key institutions to support them.²³⁹

165. The gender action plan for the program outlines several objectives aimed at both female entrepreneurs specifically and micro and SMEs more generally: improving the institutional framework that enables private enterprise to develop, improving the capacity of female entrepreneurs and micro and SMEs, and increasing access to finance. For each objective, targets to increase women's participation and access to key resources are enumerated. For instance, at least half of the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center Board of Trustees will be women, training programs and business development services will target 40%–50% female participation, and at least 50% of certain types of loans are to be made to female entrepreneurs.²⁴⁰

166. **Limited quantitative and qualitative sex-disaggregated data.** Gender analysis in SME development is complicated by incomplete statistical data about women and men in the business world. Most official data, such as numbers and types of registered businesses, are not sex-disaggregated. Furthermore, available figures are inconsistent and give only a partial view of women's role in private enterprise. Discrepancies in data about women's involvement in micro and SMEs are attributed to the use of varying definitions or methodologies.

167. Surveys and assessments that examine the number of women starting enterprises in a given year reveal disparate information. By one estimate, only 3% of start-ups in 2010 were "women's businesses."²⁴¹ A more recent study, however, suggested that this figure may be an overestimation of the number of male entrepreneurs.²⁴² According to a representative of the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center interviewed for this assessment, without any special incentives or initiatives, 30%

239 ADB. 2012. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Policy-Based Loan, Loan, and Technical Assistance Grant to Armenia for the Women's Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program*. Manila.

240 The gender action plan is available from <http://www.adb.org/projects/documents/womens-entrepreneurship-support-sector-development-program-gap>

241 National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development. SMEs in Armenia, A Statistical Overview. Women's Entrepreneurship Promotion, 4. <http://www.smednc.am/?laid=1&laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=173>

242 ADB. 2013. Study on Women's SMEs in Armenia. Consultant's report. Unpublished. p. 12.

of business start-ups are initiated by women. The goal of the women's entrepreneurship policy is to increase this figure to 50%.

168. Counting the number of existing women's businesses (which can include individual enterprises) rather than the rate of start-ups is equally challenging. Estimates vary considerably, from as low as 3% to over 35%, depending on the size of enterprise and when surveys were conducted. According to information provided for this assessment by the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia in late 2013, women represented about 20.7% of business owners of all active enterprises combined (16,200 of 78,000 enterprises).²⁴³ Looking only at individual entrepreneurs and owners of micro-sized enterprises combined, women made up 30% of this group (about 15,000 of 50,000 enterprises). Appendix 1 contains a summary of the findings from recent studies and surveys that include calculations of women's engagement in private enterprise.

169. Proxy data can also be used to elaborate on a picture of women's engagement in business ventures. For example, an analysis of lending programs, which primarily have individual entrepreneurs as borrowers, found that women are 8%–10% of loan recipients.²⁴⁴ According to 2009 figures, women represented only 8.8% of employers in formal enterprises; there were no female employers in informal enterprises.²⁴⁵ Within the database for Armenia's yellow pages business directory, women are listed as 3%–4% of top managers in private companies.²⁴⁶

170. World Bank estimates, however, were considerably higher: 13.5% of firms in Armenia have female top managers, most of whom are in small firms in the retail sector.²⁴⁷ Several theories were posited for the significant variations in the data. Foremost, interviewees explained that World Bank findings were artificially high since it is common practice for men, especially in government, to register a business in the name of a female family member, usually the wife. In reality, these female "business owners" are not controlling the operation of the business or participating in decision making. Similarly, a 2009 study found that a number of women have a business registered in their name, "but [they] are not even aware of its activity," a finding that was confirmed by loan officers who stated that even specific lines of credit established for women's businesses are taken by women but used by men.²⁴⁸ These practices also explain the discrepancy between the number of women who are "owners" of businesses and the rate at which women start enterprises.

171. Focus group participants raised the issue that many female entrepreneurs, especially those who are operating at the individual or micro level, chose not to register their businesses when they see how unfavorable the conditions are in complex regulations and corruption. It may be the case that some studies count only the number of registered businesses, which would result in an underestimation of women who are actually engaged in business, while others calculate functioning enterprises, regardless of registration.

243 Republican Union of Employers of Armenia. 2014. Personal correspondence. December.

244 *Study on Women's SMEs in Armenia*, p. 12.

245 *The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Armenia*, p. 23. The survey data from 2009.

246 *Study on Women's SMEs in Armenia*, p. 12.

247 World Bank and International Finance Corporation. 2011. *Enterprise Surveys Country Note Series: Armenia*. Washington, DC. p. 3.

248 Republican Union of Employers of Armenia. 2014. *Assessment of Women Entrepreneurship Development in Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 30.

172. **Defining a “woman’s business” in Armenia.** In addition to the challenge of quantifying businesses owned or managed by women, defining a “woman’s business” in the Armenian context is not straightforward. According to law, enterprises are legal commercial entities that are classified by the number of paid employees, by sector.²⁴⁹ Micro enterprises have up to 5 employees, small enterprises can have a maximum of 15–50 employees, and medium-sized enterprises are those with 30–100 employees, depending on the sector. See Appendix 1 for a full overview of the micro and SME classification system in Armenia.

173. There is no legal definition of a “woman’s enterprise,” but, in practice, the term has several meanings. The national SME strategy defines a “woman’s business” as “an enterprise managed by [a] woman or with a capital of at least 30% investment by [women].”²⁵⁰ Under the ADB technical assistance grant to the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center for women’s entrepreneurship support, women’s micro and SMEs are defined as enterprises that fit any of the following categories: (i) at least 50% of enterprise ownership is controlled by women, (ii) at least 60% of senior managers are women, or (iii) at least 50% of the registered employees of the enterprise are women.²⁵¹

174. During this assessment, several different models for women’s engagement in entrepreneurial activities were suggested that do not fit the accepted definition of an SME. One interviewee from an organization that provides business skills training to women noted that most women are engaged in what she referred to as “super small” businesses, at the micro level. A respondent from a women’s handicraft initiative explained that the women who carry out crafts production are registered as artisans. Women at a focus group in Berd also described common ways that women engage in individual, and often informal, business activities, such as traveling to Georgia to purchase goods that they resell in Armenia (shuttle trade) or collecting local plants that they sell locally. These types of activities may, in fact, represent how many women in Armenia are engaged in business, but they fall outside of the usual concept of a micro or SME.

175. Focus group participants who had personal experience running a business most often described a family business scenario, in which they worked cooperatively with their husbands and children. Even if the business venture was initiated by a woman, the respondents made clear that they relied on other family members to help run the business on a day-to-day basis—they see it as a family venture rather than their sole project. The need for programs dedicated specifically to women’s businesses is crucial. On the other hand, too much emphasis on formally delineating a “woman’s business” from any other kind of enterprise may be an artificial exercise and one that may not reflect the reality for many women in Armenia.

176. Indicators for women’s entrepreneurship promotion included in the national SME strategy are based on the ratio of enterprises established by women and men, with an expected increase from 3% (start-ups by women) in the following pattern: 4%, 2012; 9%, 2013; 16%, 2014; and 20%, 2015. By 2015, 200–300 new enterprises that are founded and

249 Government of Armenia. 2000. Law on State Support of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship. Yerevan. Adopted 5 December.

250 National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development, Women’s Entrepreneurship Promotion, 3. <http://www.smednc.am/?laid=1&laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=173>

251 *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Policy-Based Loan, Loan, and Technical Assistance Grant to Armenia for the Women’s Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program*, p.1.

managed by women are expected to be established annually.²⁵² Again, although these goals and targets are very important, it is also essential to improve monitoring and evaluation of women's experiences in business to capture other positive developments, such as women advancing from the individual and micro level to the level of a small business, and women taking leadership roles in family enterprises (even though they may not be the legally registered owner).

177. Two examples were given of difficulties in taking a “women-only” approach to business development. In one case, under a program that has now ended, women were given special opportunities to apply for loans, which apparently resulted in men re-registering their businesses in the name of female family members to qualify. “[T]here are some borrowers who only participate in the credit facilities using their privileged status as women, while the money and control over the money is transferred to men.”²⁵³ Even though some women benefited from increased access to credit, there is a general perception that the number of female entrepreneurs in this particular sector (agriculture) did not increase. There is a risk that the goals of a women-oriented entrepreneurship program can be circumvented and thus will not bring particular benefit to women. In a second example, an interviewee from an organization with experience working in *marzer* with high male and female unemployment rates said that men found it difficult to understand why women were privileged for loans. In this case, the NGO felt that a women-focused approach could lead to conflicts and, thus, made loans available to men as well.

178. **Women's businesses are less diverse.** Women's businesses are not only mostly at the individual or micro level and often home-based; they also occupy specific sectors that are traditionally considered “female” specializations.²⁵⁴ Official data on the sectors where micro and SMEs operate are not sex-disaggregated, but focus group participants explained that women are most often engaged in service-providing businesses, generally in areas with which women are familiar or which cater to other women such as tailoring, beauty salons, entertainment, hospitality and tourism (e.g., running guesthouses), education (e.g., child care, private kindergartens or tutoring), culture (e.g., dance or music lessons), and consulting. Women in rural regions undertake food production such as cheese making, milk processing, growing herbs, drying fruits, and baking, but not manufacturing. Women also engage in trade, including shuttle trade.

179. In contrast, many men have started businesses in the growing field of information technology, but almost no women have businesses in this sector. Several interviewees drew attention to the hospitality industry, and especially tourism, as fields in which there is further potential for women to start and expand businesses. In fact, many focus group participants stated a personal interest in taking advantage of opportunities in this field (Box 2).

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ L. Hovhannisyanyan. 2007. *Water to Market Activity of the Millennium Challenge Account—Armenia Program: Gender Analysis*. Yerevan: ACDI/VOCA, p. 20.

²⁵⁴ *Assessment of Women Entrepreneurship Development in Armenia*, p. 15.

Box 2: Opportunities for Women's Entrepreneurship in the Tourism Industry

Representatives of development partners noted that hospitality is a promising sector for Armenia's businesswomen for several reasons. According to a United States Agency for International Development assessment, women continue to dominate in only one value chain in Armenia: hospitality. In 2011, women represented 53.9% of employees working in accommodation and food service activities, which is a close proxy for employment in the tourism industry.^a It is thought that in this industry, networking and marketing opportunities are easier for women; flexible hours are more often the norm; and big business does not yet dominate. In rural areas, in particular, tourism-related businesses are often home-based (e.g., running a guesthouse or making souvenirs to sell on tourist routes), allowing women to divide their time between work and family responsibilities.

Focus group participants, especially those in Ashtarak, Berd, and Goris, described concrete ideas they had for businesses in this sector. At the same time, all noted that such businesses would not be possible without first addressing serious infrastructure issues that are off-putting to tourists such as poor road conditions, lack of roadside stops and signs, lack of a 24-hour clean water supply, and insufficient sanitation facilities in public places.

Women in focus groups also made clear that they are interested in developing responsible tourism in their communities and expanding production of organic products based on the local ecology that could be marketed to tourists to promote their region. Many mentioned an interest in ecotourism but warned that some forms of development could spoil the beauty of the local environment.

Armenia has a strategy for developing tourism, but several women said they were unaware of such a government policy. The strategy itself includes an objective on developing ecotourism, but does not describe any particular role for women in tourism development.^b In fact, gender is only mentioned in the context of marketing.

^a National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2012. *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*. Yerevan. pp. 118–119.

^b Ministry of Economy. 2008. *Tourism Development Concept Paper*. Yerevan. 13 February. p. 21. <http://www.mineconomy.am/eng/39/gortsaruyt.html>

180. **Gender-specific features of common obstacles to starting and running a business.** Many respondents were quick to point out that the business environment in Armenia presents challenges for start-ups, but that gender discrimination does not play a role. When asked about their personal experiences of gender discrimination, nearly all female entrepreneurs involved in a survey (95%) stated that they had not experienced overt unequal treatment.²⁵⁵ Male and female entrepreneurs certainly face many common problems such as unfavorable tax rates, bureaucratic requirements, and corruption. However, prevailing gender norms also play a role in hindering women's ability to start and run a business.

181. One of the most often cited constraints to starting a business in Armenia is excessive regulation, including a taxation system that is unfavorable for small enterprises and that can lead to corrupt practices and demands for additional payments. In the above-mentioned survey of 120 female entrepreneurs, the most commonly identified obstacles to starting a business were tax issues (which includes complicated regulations, frequent changes in legislation, and high tax rates; cited by 76% of respondents) and financial problems (including lack of resources, high interest rates for loans, and unstable income; 61% of respondents).²⁵⁶ When asked about the main factors that are affecting

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

their businesses, after legislative changes (50%), the most frequent answer was “biased inspections” and “corruption” (25% combined total).²⁵⁷

182. How gender and corruption intersect in Armenia is not entirely clear. Local regulations and high taxes, combined with corrupt practices, are detrimental to small businesses, and because women are overly represented in micro and small enterprises, they may be particularly vulnerable. Women participating in a focus group under an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) project viewed businessmen as having more resources and networks to avoid corrupt practices and to take advantage of lax enforcement of the law. In addition to providing knowledge and contacts, male networks were perceived to also serve as “an instrument to avoid the authorities and their interference in men’s businesses. The women in business generally believed that the men did not follow the law and took special illegal advantages, which were not open to them.”²⁵⁸

183. On the other hand, prevailing gender norms may make it difficult for male officials to approach female entrepreneurs and request payments, and so this may insulate women from corruption. Businessmen are said to be less likely to report corrupt practices (i.e., they would more likely attempt to resolve such problems themselves) while women may seek assistance.²⁵⁹ World Bank data, which seem to bear out this theory, showed that firms with top male managers and firms without female participation in ownership were more often expected to pay bribes to conduct business. Male top managers had “almost twice as many visits or required meetings with tax inspectors as firms with female top managers ... [and] a much higher percentage of firms with male top managers are expected to give informal payments to public officials than firms with female top managers.”²⁶⁰ One interpretation of these data is that female top managers face less corruption simply because they have more limited interactions with government officials, and the same may well be true for female business owners.

184. **Female entrepreneurs have limited access to commercial loans.** There are many options for women to obtain microfinance, and loan requirements are gender-neutral. More than one respondent stated that women face no particular barriers to obtaining a loan as long as they are employed and can meet the application requirements. However, a large number of speakers also explained that, de facto, women cannot access credit because of issues such as their lack of collateral, lack of business experience, high interest rates, and personal aversion to taking on risk.

185. As noted, only a small proportion of women own property independently, and they also lack the autonomy to make decisions about how to use the property (e.g., as collateral for a loan). When women have joint ownership, or even in the case of full legal ownership, it is customary for “the father, the brother and then the husband [to] take care of the property which by law is owned by the woman/wife.”²⁶¹ In reality, many women may not be able to apply for a loan or even start a business without the permission of their fathers or husbands.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁵⁸ B. Wistrand. 2007. *Women Empowerment and Cooperation in Armenia with a Focus on the Syunik Region*. Yerevan: OSCE. p. 14.

²⁵⁹ *Gender Assessment: USAID/Armenia*, p. 38.

²⁶⁰ *Enterprise Surveys Country Note Series: Armenia*, p. 5.

²⁶¹ *Study on Women’s SMEs in Armenia*, p. 8.

186. In Ashtarak, participants explained that bank loans are generally not available for start-ups and that a borrower must show 6 months of experience. Focus group participants in several regions stated that interest rates are very high—about 24%—and they “kill businesses.” In addition to high rates, the repayment period is very short, and this is incompatible with the type of business ventures women often start (e.g., agriculture-based businesses). In some cases, men who migrate abroad for work take loans in Armenia and register these in the name of their wives, leaving them with the responsibility for repayment.

187. Several people raised a related issue, that a large number of women take loans not necessarily for business but simply to cover everyday expenses. Women can easily find themselves in a cycle of debt in which they take further loans to pay off the first one. A participant in Goris said, “there is no woman in the town who has fewer than two loans.” First, this phenomenon complicates the process of assessing whether women have equal access to credit for their businesses since loans may be granted for one purpose but in actuality used for another. Second, because so many women have the experience of taking one loan after another, they are afraid to apply for loans or microfinance for their businesses. For women to overcome this fear, they must fully understand the contract terms and the risks before deciding. Focus group participants thought that specific technical assistance related to borrowing would be especially useful for businesswomen.

188. In reference to questions about the utility of providing special loans or credit lines to businesswomen, some respondents suggested that different interest rates could be applied to female and male borrowers. Alternatives to loans and microcredit were also suggested such as grants or seed money tied to mandatory training programs. It was noted that some women are in such a vulnerable position (in lack of capital or business knowledge, and doing business in risky sectors such as agricultural production), that loans are not recommended at all. Such women are at great risk of losing money and becoming increasingly impoverished.

189. **Unequal access to human capital and support.** Women also lack access to important human and social assets such as specialized knowledge/skills, information, and business networks. In a poll of female entrepreneurs, 56% identified a need for consulting and services related to “advertising, marketing and [public relations],” and 44% a need for training (of those, 69% wanted training in specific professional skills, followed by business development training, e.g., management, marketing, accounting, and legislation).²⁶² While some interviewees from organizations that offer training felt that teaching the basic steps in how to start a business is still needed, almost all focus group participants agreed with the survey findings described above and stated that women need more advanced and targeted training. They particularly emphasized the need for marketing skills and how to do basic market research before starting a business. In fact, women from Gyumri emphasized that the starting point for all business training for women should be market assessments rather than how to run a business.

190. The topic of marketing is especially important for businesswomen, because the domestic market is small for the goods and services that women tend to produce. Women

²⁶² *Assessment of Women Entrepreneurship Development in Armenia*, p. 29.

engaged in business, especially at the micro level and outside of large cities, are said to be buying and selling to each other since they are isolated from larger markets, even in Armenia. Women in Berd and Goris who had experience with home production of vegetables and fruits explained that it is very time-consuming to sell homegrown products, and because they cannot access larger markets, they found it easier to sell their products to a distributor for a lower price. In Goris, one woman gave the example of a jam-making venture she started, but because she had too little knowledge of market constraints, she found that the licensing and taxes were too prohibitive to continue. Monopolies also play a role in limiting women's ability to sell their products in certain stores.²⁶³ For women who are engaged in trade, the lack of transport routes in and out of the country, and limited road transport, constrain their export potential. Furthermore, women who own micro-sized enterprises often are unable to obtain the licenses needed for export. Those that do export their products usually have assistance and facilitation from international organizations.

191. Prevailing gender norms limit women's networking opportunities and place female entrepreneurs at a disadvantage. Businesswomen face particular difficulties meeting and speaking with men who are not relatives about business matters. Sometimes business negotiations between men take place in settings that are not accessible to women, for example, over meals (in some locations, social norms would prevent women from sitting with men). In some regions, a woman would be "embarrassed to invite a male business partner to a restaurant or café" to discuss business matters, so she would most likely go with her husband or sons.²⁶⁴ It is not accepted in society for married women (or women over age 35 years) to undertake "negotiations with men (including non-formal meetings, such as discussing business ideas in a restaurant or, casual places) by themselves alone."²⁶⁵

192. Several stakeholders mentioned the fact that women entering business face tough competition from men, which prevents their businesses from expanding, in size and by sector. In Gyumri, a focus group participant commented that there is no possibility for women to openly compete with men in business, and that this is a closed field. Women in Ashtarak felt that business interests are closely connected to local authorities, and there is "no room" for women there. Culturally, women are generally "allowed" to manage micro and small enterprises, and may reach the mid-level, but large female-owned businesses are said to be "run by women with some very influential protector from the government."²⁶⁶

193. **Gender stereotypes affect women's entrepreneurial activities.** Gender roles as well as stereotypes about women in business are influential. On one hand, in surveys that ask whether "business" or "trade" are professions for men or women, a fairly large number of people considered these jobs open to either sex (51.2% in the case of business and 30% in the case of trade), but these jobs were also more closely associated with men.²⁶⁷ On the other hand, questions about women's ability to be managers elicited clearer responses that men are preferred in this role. Some interviewees stated that there are no role models of successful businesswomen, and research has found that there is a common perception

²⁶³ *Study on Women's SMEs in Armenia*, p. 19.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Assessment of Women Entrepreneurship Development in Armenia*, p. 13.

²⁶⁶ *Study on Women's SMEs in Armenia*, p. 29.

²⁶⁷ *Keep Me Away From Your Stereotypes: Sociological Survey Analysis*, p. 40; and European Training Foundation and Caucasus Research Resource Centers. 2011. *Mosaics of Gender Relations: Studies of Gender Socialization, Gender Tolerance, and Gender Identity*. Yerevan: Yerevan State University, pp. 28–29.

that to get ahead, a businesswoman must be an “iron lady.”²⁶⁸ A focus group participant in Ashtarak said that if a woman is very active in business, people would “ask if there was no man in her family.”

194. Although there are some negative associations between women and business, they are not considered insurmountable. At the family level, women who may not have at first considered themselves businesswomen are quick to make the transition once they make a profit and can see their successes. Likewise, family members are said to be accepting and supportive of women once they see the benefit of additional household income. Still, it was pointed out that greater publicity, through mass media, of women’s success stories would help change societal perceptions about female entrepreneurs.

195. Women who want to start a business face much more severe time constraints than men, based on the fact that they must combine their business responsibilities with domestic duties. As one interviewee phrased it, “no one frees a woman from her housework, even if she’s an entrepreneur.” Another noted that many women would feel guilty if they devoted too much time to a business venture, especially if it took them away from the family. Men are largely freed from these kinds of duties and can, and are even expected to, concentrate on establishing or growing a business. Another indication of the time constraints women face is the fact that they tend to start businesses when they are in middle age (over 40 years old), after they have raised children and have more free time. There are few young women in start-ups, which raises questions about whether women have sufficient time to grow their businesses.

196. **Varied approaches to promoting women’s entrepreneurship.** Many international organizations in Armenia are supporting projects that aim to increase female entrepreneurship. Such projects range from grass roots handicraft initiatives in various

Box 3: Best Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award

In 2012, the Ministry of Economy launched a pilot award for female entrepreneurs and women’s micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. Eleven awards were given, and the initiative was established as an annual campaign.

The following year, the Prime Minister announced the Best Female Entrepreneur Award as a means of inspiring female entrepreneurs to contribute to the country’s economic development and to publicly acknowledge and support businesswomen in Armenia.^a Women were nominated in six categories: (i) best female employer, (ii) best female innovator, (iii) best philanthropist, (iv) best brand developed by a female entrepreneur, (v) best young female entrepreneur, and (vi) best start-up.

Over 150 nominations were received, and the winners represented such diverse business ventures as natural cosmetics, organic vegetable growing, and fashion. The Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center has profiled a number of successful businesswomen on its website and in the press.

^a Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center. 2013. Best Woman Entrepreneur—RA Prime Minister’s Award. 13 March. <http://www.smednc.am/en/news/articles/best-woman-entrepreneur-2014-ra-prime-minister’s-award.html>

²⁶⁸ Study on Women’s SMEs in Armenia, p. 28.

marzer (e.g., the Homeland Development Initiative Foundation) to developing business consultancy skills for more established businesses (e.g., through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). Several interviewees stated that it would be useful to know more about what other donors are doing in this field and to identify where there may be overlap.²⁶⁹

197. As stated, most entrepreneurship-focused projects center on business skills training. Focus group participants who are engaged in business stated that they would like more practical experience in training, rather than theoretical knowledge, and would benefit from mentoring. Several organizations do offer mentoring for business start-ups by successful businesswomen and they note that, while effective, this method also requires considerable commitment from the mentors. Respondents also raised the issue of ensuring that training courses are accessible. Focus group participants in Ashtarak expressed the desire to have business schools or training centers locally.

198. The common model of training for start-up businesswomen in the regions, such as the one used by the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center, could also be made more effective if they considered women's time constraints. For instance, a 20-day training program from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. is not an option for women in rural areas, especially those who engage in agricultural work. A modified and longer program (for 3 hours per day and during the less-active seasons) would be preferable. Ideally, child care services would also be offered in parallel with training courses.

199. Respondents explained that self-employment is the only option for women in many regions since factories have closed, and because of their heavy domestic burdens, women can only earn extra income in jobs they can combine with household work. For this reason, externally funded projects tend to focus on agriculture and handicraft production, but this raises questions of whether such projects are truly supporting female entrepreneurship or are providing women with a means of generating income that may not have the potential to develop into a business. For example, one handicraft project has provided a number of women with work (and facilitated the creation of several women's organizations), but the work is based on filling orders. It is not clear to what extent the women themselves have gained skills in such areas as marketing, sourcing raw materials, finding buyers, and pricing.

200. The head of a network of female business leaders that provides training to women start-ups made the point that not all business ventures should be encouraged because some are simply not viable. In her experience, only a very small number of people who have ideas for business will be able to fulfill all of the requirements needed to write a comprehensive business plan that can be used to secure a loan. At the end of their training program for women, several participants realized that they were not ready to open the business that they had initially proposed and so were considering other options.

201. Another theme raised during interviews about efforts to improve female entrepreneurship was the importance of empowering women in other ways. For example,

²⁶⁹ Other organizations with projects on women and business include the American University of Armenia–Armenia International Women's Association, Armenian Young Women's Association, Open Society Institute–Near East Foundation, OSCE, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and USAID.

some projects aim to provide women with skills in income generation or business start-ups as a means to raise their status and give them a voice in other areas such as community development, politics, or peacebuilding. More than one speaker expressed the view that purely economic programs, without attention to social issues, are not sustainable. Projects on women's economic empowerment are effective when framed within larger initiatives that address women's personal growth and aim to improve their status in the family and in society.

202. Both self-employment and entrepreneurship have been proposed as viable means to assist people with disabilities (PWDs) to become economically independent. Unfortunately, there is little information about the gender-specific opportunities or constraints PWDs face in starting or running a business. Studies do suggest, however, that the obstacles that men and women generally face are magnified for PWDs. A regional survey found that men with disabilities are more likely than women with disabilities to start their own businesses in Armenia, but that women with disabilities are likely to engage in entrepreneurship in the informal economy, producing handmade goods for sale or selling goods for other people.²⁷⁰ In a survey of PWDs, male respondents expressed more willingness to start their own business than female respondents (of 26 men, 15 expressed such an interest, while of 23 women, only 9 were inclined to start a business).²⁷¹ When asked about the role gender might play in starting a business, responses were inconclusive, with most respondents citing common obstacles such as high taxes, interest rates, and corruption. Notably, a male respondent stated that male PWD entrepreneurs would face greater obstacles due to competition with other men, "because there are more entrepreneurs among them and they are more active than women." This view actually lends support for the theory that women with disabilities face even greater hurdles to starting a business and are thus barely represented in the field. A female respondent highlighted the additional discrimination women with disabilities face: "as women, they do not inspire particular confidence as counterparts in business."²⁷²

B. Gender Issues Related to Water Supply and Municipal Services

203. Armenia has abundant water, sufficient for drinking, irrigation, and industrial use. Almost all urban and rural residents have access to noncontaminated drinking water that is primarily supplied from groundwater or springs and only requires chlorination or disinfection.

204. Estimated use of improved water sources presented only a partial picture of the water supply that is available to the population (Table 8). Despite an abundance of water, not all needs are being met, and a significant proportion of the population has access to drinking water for only a few hours a day.²⁷³ "In some villages, water is supplied without disinfection once every 3–4 days."²⁷⁴ In remote regions, access to water is limited to twice a

270 S. Phillips. 2012. *Women with Disabilities in the Europe and Eurasia Region*. Washington, DC: USAID. p. 18.

271 *Employment of People with Disabilities in Armenia: Needs and Barriers: Report on Qualitative Study Findings*, p. 86.

272 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

273 A. Gharabegian. 2013. Water Issues in Armenia. *The Armenian Weekly*. 10 May. <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/05/10/gharabegian-water-issues-in-armenia/>

274 ADB. 2011. *Armenia Water Supply and Sanitation: Challenges, Achievements and Future Directions*. Manila: ADB. p. 20.

Table 8: Estimates of Use of Drinking Water Sources in Armenia, 2011
(% of population)

URBAN					RURAL				
Improved		Unimproved			Improved		Unimproved		
Total Improved	Piped on Premises	Other Improved	Unimproved	Surface Water	Total Improved	Piped on Premises	Other Improved	Unimproved	Surface Water
100	98	2	0	0	98	91	7	2	0

Source: World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2013. *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water—2013 Update*. Geneva. p. 15.

month. Household surveys conducted in Yerevan and all 10 marzer in 2009 provide further insights into water supply conditions. Of almost 3,000 households in both urban and rural areas that were surveyed, 94.3% of families had a centralized water supply, but 54.0% did not have hot water piped to the premises.²⁷⁵ According to a second survey, only 2.8% of families had cold and hot running water on a permanent basis. About half had only cold water on a permanent basis, and others had cold running water intermittently (i.e., 2–10 hours per day) or no piped water.²⁷⁶ When water is not piped into the dwelling or premises, it must be collected from public pumps.

205. Problems with Armenia's water supply lie with the fact that the network and system were created during the Soviet period. Not only is the average age of most of the water infrastructure more than 50 years old, it was constructed using low-quality materials.²⁷⁷ Now, the system is in need of upgrading, as infrastructure has not been maintained and no major repairs have taken place for decades.²⁷⁸ Water losses are very high; by some estimates, Armenia's water losses are one of the highest in the world. Deteriorated and leaking pipes are the main cause of water loss, but water loss is also caused by "human factors, such as meter tampering by using magnets, leaving the water running, and using second and third unmetered inlet pipes at residential units."²⁷⁹ In fact, almost 65% of nonrevenue water losses are estimated to "occur at multifamily residential buildings and private houses."²⁸⁰ The lack of a water-saving culture in Armenia is also attributed to the fact that water has not been scarce and is viewed as a "gift" and not as a 'commodity' that costs money," and so should be used carefully.²⁸¹ Key priorities for the country are increasing the proportion of the population that has access to potable water for at least 12 hours a day, instituting a water-metering system, and working with communities on water use and management.

275 Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, National Institute of Labor and Social Researches, and National Statistical Service. 2009. *Analysis of Results of the Sample Survey on Fertility Preferences of Armenian Population*. Yerevan: UNFPA. p. 40.

276 Ministry of Health; National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia; and Institute of Perinatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology. 2009. *Clinical and Epidemiological Survey on Etiology, Prevalence of Infertile Marriages*. Yerevan: UNFPA. p. 33.

277 Mendez England and Associates. 2012. *Clean Energy and Water Program: Needs and Opportunities Assessment Report for Selection of Demonstration Projects*. Yerevan: USAID. p. 9.

278 *Armenia Water Supply and Sanitation: Challenges, Achievements and Future Directions*, p. 20.

279 Ibid.

280 Ibid.

281 *Clean Energy and Water Program: Needs and Opportunities Assessment Report for Selection of Demonstration Projects*, p. 9.

206. As is the case with drinking water, access to improved sanitation services is more limited in rural areas (Table 9). “Improved sanitation facilities” include flush systems (e.g., piped sewer systems or septic tanks), pit latrines, or composting toilets. Only a small number of rural communities (5%) are connected to a central sewer system. The rest “make their own provision for sanitation such as latrines and septic tanks. The quality and types of institutional, operational, and technical arrangements are extremely variable.”²⁸²

207. According to the household survey described above, 25.0% of families did not have flushing toilets in their dwellings, and 15.1% did not have bathrooms, which is probably related to the fact that 22.6% of households (mainly in rural areas) were not connected to a centralized sewerage system.²⁸³ Outside of the capital, public buildings (e.g., kindergartens, schools, and clinics including maternity hospitals) are also often not connected to a sewage system.

208. Armenia lacks a comprehensive solid waste management system, and the process by which waste is disposed of varies greatly by location. Focus group participants described various trends, for example, towns in which there is no garbage collection at all, and others that have introduced recycling of plastics. ADB and other international organizations are undertaking projects to construct landfills and help establish systems for solid waste management. Projects may also include components to improve how the public disposes of trash and recycling.

209. The gender action plan for ADB’s Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project describes how gender will be mainstreamed in each of the project outputs. Objectives include the promotion of gender-balanced jobs among civil works contractors and in utility agencies; ensuring that female-headed households have access to a safe, reliable water supply; and undertaking other actions aimed at strengthening the Armenia Water and Sewerage Company. Work with the Armenia Water and Sewerage Company entails developing the agency’s capacity to undertake gender mainstreaming, promoting women’s career advancement within the company, and improving the company’s outreach to its female customers. Specific targets include jobs awarded to women (from 10%–40% of jobs, depending on the agency), surveys conducted with sex-disaggregated data, the establishment of a gender-sensitive human resources policy within the company, the development of gender-sensitive informational materials for effective outreach to customers, and gender analysis of customer feedback on water supply and sanitation issues.

Table 9: Estimates of Use of Sanitation Facilities in Armenia, 2011
(% of population)

URBAN		RURAL	
Improved	Unimproved	Improved	Unimproved
96	4	81	19

Source: WHO and UNICEF. 2013. *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water—2013 Update*. Geneva. p. 14.

²⁸² Armenia Water Supply and Sanitation: Challenges, Achievements and Future Directions, p. 20.

²⁸³ Analysis of Results of the Sample Survey on Fertility Preferences of Armenian Population, p. 40.

210. **Improved water supply can ease women’s workload.** In Armenia, women are the major users of water in households for preparing meals, cleaning, laundering, bathing children, tending household gardens and livestock, and other domestic duties. Women also play a major role in collecting and purchasing water for domestic use as well as storing and managing it; therefore, they are acutely affected by water limitations. In areas where water is only available for a few hours a day or on certain days during the week, women reported that families fill barrels or other containers with enough water to last them until supply is resumed. When there is no centralized water supply, “it is mainly women, usually girl [sic] and children who collect water with rather big containers outside the immediate vicinity of their homes.”²⁸⁴ Because a significant proportion of women’s time is spent obtaining water and managing its use in the home, ADB projects to improve access to safe water could result in time savings for women. Establishing baseline data to assess changes to women’s workload is critical to determine how water supply and sanitation projects have benefited them.

211. One interviewee raised a related point that families often purchase drinking water when the quality of piped water is poor. She pointed out that having to make such expenditures has a particular impact on female-headed households, which are already at risk of impoverishment. It does not appear that any assessments have been conducted of the proportion of the household budget families spend on alternative sources of water, but this information would be useful to evaluate gender-based impacts of water supply and sanitation projects.

212. **Gendered impacts of limited access to water and sanitation.** Women and men have different water and sanitation needs, especially in public places. Women predominantly work in public institutions, such as kindergartens, schools, and health clinics, many of which have unsatisfactory water supply and sanitation facilities. Women in focus groups in Gavar and Gyumri stated that sanitation facilities in schools are poor, so students avoid using the toilets. A project to improve the sanitation system at a rural school in Ararat Marz offers the following case study:

[D]uring Soviet times the school had flush toilets for teachers and students, sewage pipes connected to a drainage canal and a piped water supply system. This system is out of order, forcing students and teachers to use dirty and very bad smelling latrines outside the school, close to the drainage canal. The school used to have one simple pit latrine for about 200 boys/male teachers and 200 girls/female teachers each. In order not to have to use the latrines many students and teachers avoided drinking during school time.”²⁸⁵

213. According to a United Nations Children’s Fund survey in Armenia, 60% of female and 70% of male students “never or rarely use the toilets in their schools.”²⁸⁶ Many students did not use toilets at the schools because they were concerned that they were not clean (41%), but a large proportion were “concerned about the social implications of using the toilet, and reported feeling ashamed to do so at school.”²⁸⁷ The poor sanitation facilities,

284 E. Manvelyan et al. 2006. *Case Study on the Right to Water and Sanitation in Armenia*. Yerevan: Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment. p. 20.

285 S. Deegener, M. Samwel, and E. Anakhasyan. 2009. *UDD Toilets in Rural School Hayanist, Armenia—Case Study of Sustainable Sanitation Projects*. Yerevan: Sustainable Sanitation Alliance. p. 2. <http://www.susana.org/en/resources/case-studies/details/54>

286 WASH in Schools. Armenia: Enabling Policy Environment for Wash in Schools. <http://www.washinschoolsmapping.com/projects/Armenia.html>

287 Ibid.

combined with the lack of running water and soap, “means that students can’t effectively wash their hands with soap at critical moments, such as after using the toilet and before handling food.”²⁸⁸

214. While children and school staff are all susceptible to the health hazards of poor sanitation and hygiene conditions, female teachers (who make up the majority of school staff) and girls have special needs related to menstrual hygiene. Thus, improper water supply and sanitation services contribute to girls’ absenteeism from school. In addition, women carry the main burden of caring for children or other family members who become ill from waterborne diseases.

215. **Decision making about water supply and sanitation.** Women in Armenia are concerned about water supply and sanitation issues but have limited opportunities to be involved in formal decision-making processes. Focus group participants expressed considerable frustration about several critical water supply and sanitation issues, which they felt had not been given adequate attention by local authorities, who are male. In Berd, the example was given of two serious outbreaks of waterborne diseases in a local kindergarten, which had affected so many children that there were insufficient hospital beds to care for them. The women stated that they could merely bring publicity to the issue since “women will not be allowed to take control” when important resources (e.g., water) are at stake. In Gyumri, a respondent recalled that the local maternity hospital has one toilet in very bad condition and expressed the view that because men do not use this facility, its repair is not a priority. A final example was given about an initiative by several women to ask the head of a local village to install a toilet near a local landmark, where they saw potential to attract tourism. According to the speaker, the male leader responded that having a paid toilet would be a “shameful” way of earning money, and it was not a priority for the village to establish a public toilet.

216. An independent assessment found that “the level of maintenance of water systems and the quality of water-supply services often depends on personal qualities of the village mayor: his/her background, experience, leadership qualities and management skills.”²⁸⁹ As noted in this assessment, women are vastly underrepresented in local political offices (only 2% of mayors are female, all of them in rural areas), so women’s priorities may not be represented in local decision making.

217. **Empowerment of women to protect their consumer rights.** Related to women’s ability to influence decisions about water supply and sanitation projects is the matter of whether women are able to protect their rights as customers of water companies. Women acknowledged that it was generally the job of the male household head to manage repair work if there is a problem with the water supply or sanitation services in the home, although they also stated that in the absence of men, women could manage such tasks. Focus group participants in both Gavar and Ashtarak described the process of contacting the municipal authorities to complain about water problems, as it requires several days and is something that many women would not be able to do “psychologically.” Thus, when water is unsafe to drink, a woman would most likely stop giving it to her children but would

288 World Vision Armenia. 2010. Global Handwashing Day Celebrations Support Culture of Hand Washing with Soap. 21 October. <http://www.wvarmenia.am/en/news/show/99>

289 Clean Energy and Water Program: Needs and Opportunities Assessment Report for Selection of Demonstration Projects, p. 9.

not make a complaint. Notably, consumer hotlines run by water companies were said to be more responsive than local authorities, and women were generally satisfied with this service.

218. In developing processes by which consumers manage and monitor their water use in the home, it will be important to ensure that women are empowered to protect their rights, especially in households affected by male out-migration. Targeted awareness raising for women about their consumer rights in the water supply and sanitation context may be especially effective, as well as focus groups with women and sex-disaggregated tracking of helpline calls.

219. **Employment and management opportunities for women.** Very few women work in the construction industry; therefore, it is unlikely that women will benefit greatly from jobs related to water utility repair or meter installation unless positive measures are taken to train and hire them. Evaluation of a USAID small-scale infrastructure project that included water and gas supply is a useful case study. During the project, 920 short-term jobs were created, but only 3 women were hired directly, a result that was attributed to the fact that the jobs entailed construction work.²⁹⁰

220. On the other hand, compared with the construction and transport fields, women have better representation in jobs related to water supply, sewerage, and waste management in the labor market. In 2011, women accounted for 24.7% of all employees in this field, even though the industry does not represent a major employer of women.²⁹¹ In the Armenia Water and Sewerage Company, 30% of employees are women, but a large proportion deal with administrative work.²⁹² In top management, one of the six deputy directors is a woman.

221. Information about women's representation in policy positions concerned with water management and sewerage could not be obtained, but it appears that the general pattern is similar to that of the Armenia Water and Sewerage Company. In the State Committee of Water Economy, no women occupy chair or advisory roles but they are instead heading the financial-economic department and external relations division.²⁹³

222. **Women's environmental concerns over water and waste management.** Focus group participants consistently raised issues about environmental protection in the context of water use and sanitation. Women are well represented in civil society organizations concerned with ecology and the environment and have been responsible for such projects as introducing composting toilets in schools and waste reduction in health facilities. Women's interest in the environment is said to stem from their concern for clean water, the health of their children, and mitigating climate change. Men, on the other hand, are perceived to be primarily "motivated by money" and less interested in the long-term impacts of natural resources use. Indeed, at a focus group in Gavar, a participant stated that municipal garbage collection is efficient, but the truck drivers simply dump the garbage outside of town wherever space is available, without concern for contamination.

290 V. Heboyan and M. Vanoyan. 2012. *Final Evaluation of the Armenia Small Scale Infrastructure Project (SSIP)*. Vienna, VA: International Business and Technical Consultants. p. 7.

291 *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*, p. 118.

292 ADB. 2012. *Summary Poverty Reduction and Social Strategy for the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project in Armenia*. Manila. p. 2.

293 State Committee of Water Economy. <http://www.scws.am/index.php?menu1=37>

223. In environmental projects, women can be considered an entry point for behavioral change concerning waste disposal. Women are not only often open to the idea of engaging in “green” practices themselves; they also play an important role in educating children about protecting the environment, both in the home and the community. For example, the NGO Green Lane has an environmental and waste management educational project in Tavush Marzin which teachers learn about composting, waste reuse, and recycling, and pass this knowledge to their students.²⁹⁴ Women in Gyumri and Berd began an initiative to create reusable shopping bags and promote them with local citizens and businesses. Respondents in Gyumri stated that they are trying to develop a culture of reuse and recycling, but, so far, business owners have not committed or shown interest in giving up the use of plastic bags.

C. Gender Issues Related to Transport

224. Armenia is a mountainous country in which about one-third of the population lives in rural areas. The country inherited its road and transport infrastructure from the Soviet period, and much of it is in need of rehabilitation. Poor roads make it difficult for people to travel between towns, especially in the winter. Cross-border travel and trade are complicated by the fact that of its four international borders, the two longest (with Turkey and Azerbaijan) are closed. The failure to resolve border disputes means that north–south transport routes are especially vital.

225. ADB transport projects prioritize modernizing Armenia’s internal and external transport links by investing in the road network to link towns to each other and to the North–South Road Corridor (from the border with Georgia to the border with Iran, and connecting routes to Yerevan). In addition, ADB’s Sustainable Urban Development Investment Program, which concerns highways and transport in the capital, includes a gender action plan that focuses on ensuring that women’s needs and priorities will be considered in the urban transport reorganization scheme and in land acquisition, and that capacity development will be undertaken to increase coordination on gender and development (GAD) among various stakeholders in Yerevan’s transport sector. It is important that improvements to urban transport infrastructure, especially public transport in Yerevan, increase the access of women and girls to schools, health centers, employment, and markets, and provide other livelihood opportunities. Other expected outcomes from ADB projects include improved road safety and an increase in both freight and passenger traffic.

226. **Limited quantitative and qualitative sex-disaggregated data.** Very little concrete information is available on the gender-related patterns of road use and travel in Armenia, such as the number of male and female road users, public transport use disaggregated by sex, or accessibility of urban transport for women and men with regard to cost and timetables, and including such groups as single parents, the elderly, PWDs, and rural users. Likewise, sex-disaggregated data on the number of people employed in specific transport jobs, which could be used for project planning, are not collected. Qualitative information

²⁹⁴ Green Lane. Environment Projects. <http://greenlane.am/projects/environment/>

about the effect of inefficiencies in transport infrastructure (relating to poor road conditions and transport logistics) on male and female entrepreneurs who engage in trade also would be particularly relevant to ADB projects.

227. **Women’s priorities in road construction projects.** Although the links between gender and transport are recognized, gender equality goals have not usually been incorporated into project design. Progress has generally been measured by immediate physical outputs (e.g., construction and rehabilitation) rather than by the increased mobility of men and women and improvements in their ability to access basic services and goods.

228. Because of their distinct gender roles, men and women have different transport needs. For instance, the rehabilitation of large intercity highways, which will undoubtedly bring important improvements for the population as a whole, has been a priority for both the government and ADB. Women in focus group discussions voiced clear priorities and concerns about road rehabilitation and construction projects. In particular, women expressed the opinion that in the country as a whole, funding is allocated to the construction of large highways, while small local roads are in “dreadful condition.” Municipalities make small repairs to local roads every year, but women pointed out that the work is not always adequate and often has to be repeated. Women would prioritize repair of subsidiary and local roads, which are the ones they use more often, and which would especially improve access to the markets at which they sell the goods that they produce at home. Women in Goris stated that they have used alternative forums, such as the media, to highlight the lack of attention to local roads, but, so far, the authorities have not been responsive.

229. A second key priority for women in road rehabilitation projects is ensuring safety, especially for children. Women in Berd were especially critical of the decision to construct an intercity highway that is exposed to the Azerbaijan border (across which gunfire is regularly reported). Women in all five focus groups emphasized that many schools are located on busy streets, and this presents particular safety concerns for children. Participants mentioned the kinds of safety features that they think should be considered in road rehabilitation and construction projects such as signs warning drivers of the location of schools and of speed limits, traffic lights, speed bumps and special crossings near schools, and underpasses where children can cross busy roads safely.

230. **Consideration of women’s views in ancillary road projects.** Gender roles mean that women often travel with children and while doing daily chores, and thus women are concerned with issues ancillary to major road construction, such as damaged pavement or lack of breaks in curbs, both of which hinder the use of prams, wheelchairs, and shopping trolleys. Women participating in focus groups drew particular attention to the need to build sidewalks on their community streets. In Goris, the lack of sidewalks means people often walk in the street. In Gyumri, women mentioned that they tend not to walk at all because there are no safe sidewalks, and this is a particular problem for women with children in prams. Several women pointed out that the lack of playgrounds in their towns means that children play in the streets. A portion of road construction funds could be used to create dedicated spaces for children to play, away from city roads.

231. Another priority women voiced is ensuring that highways have safe and clean sanitation facilities. The lack of public toilets along roads was mentioned as a particular women’s concern, especially for women traveling with children. Opinions differed, however, about how best to develop roadside sanitation. Some thought that such facilities would have to be fee-based or they would not be maintained. Others suggested that existing roadside petrol stations should be encouraged to have such toilets for the public as part of their business.

232. **Benefits of improved roads to women’s livelihoods.** Improved roads (and especially the creation of roadside infrastructure) can also provide women with jobs and income-generating activities. Women in all focus group discussions identified areas in which roadside infrastructure could be beneficial. They highlighted improved opportunities to sell homegrown products and souvenirs, and to provide refreshments and accommodations to travelers by opening bakeries and guesthouses along major routes. Such business ideas were generally connected to a desire to develop tourism, for which the construction of key roads, with signs advertising local goods and services, is crucial. Because women are well represented in the service sector, they could benefit greatly from transport projects that are designed to enhance tourism in Armenia. Women also expressed opinions about the kinds of responsible tourism that they would like to see expanded and are wary that roadside infrastructure could lead to the growth of businesses that they consider undesirable such as fast food outlets and commercial sex work. It is important to link transport projects—with components on roadside infrastructure, especially the North–South Road Corridor—to programs on women and entrepreneurship.

233. **Gender issues in urban and rural transport.** While several respondents noted that more women are driving private vehicles now than in the past, women still make up the majority of public transport users. The distinct transport needs of women and men are based on their patterns of use. Men are more likely to make regular trips to and from work, and women more often make shorter trips with multiple stops (e.g., to shop, to take children to/from school, and/or to visit health clinics or family members). Women, both in the capital and smaller cities, raised many common concerns about the current state of transport in Armenia.

234. In Yerevan, as in other locations, women reported using *marshrutki* (private microbus services) and taxis much more than publicly owned transport. In fact, *marshrutki* carry 85% of city passengers in Yerevan.²⁹⁵ Women mentioned that *marshrutki* are often overcrowded and unsafe. In addition, such services are unregulated, minibuses operators do not accept “social and concessionary fares,” and because transfers are not used, “each trip has to be paid for separately, which limits mobility.”²⁹⁶ Women outside of Yerevan did not comment on the price of traveling on *marshrutki* but explained that they can generally afford to use such minibuses and even taxis. When women cannot pay such costs they walk, as public transport is not reliable.

235. When asked more specifically why women outside of Yerevan did not use public transport, they described several ways that the current system does not meet their needs.

²⁹⁵ ADB. 2012. *Summary Poverty Reduction and Social Strategy for the Sustainable Urban Development Investment Program in Armenia*. Manila, p. 2.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

The routes between small communities are very limited, and buses do not travel to the main destinations that women need. Women in Gavar noted that it was very difficult to travel to Yerevan. Women in Ashtarak commented that there is a long-distance intercity bus (from Aparan to Yerevan) that passes several local villages, but it does not always stop at small towns on its route, or if it does, passengers must pay full price even if only traveling on part of the route. Focus group participants in two locations stated that in villages, the bus service ends early, at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., and earlier on Sundays. Buses are also generally not accessible to people with prams or wheelchairs. Women also commented on the state of bus shelters, many of which are in poor condition, so they do not offer protection from the weather and may be dangerous for women at night (e.g., if they are unlit or in secluded places).

236. Public transport and many public buildings are largely inaccessible to PWDs due to a lack of sidewalk and building ramps or inaccessible pedestrian crossings, particularly outside of the capital. Many of the country's specialized services for PWDs, such as inclusive schools, vocational training, and rehabilitation programs, are located in Yerevan. "Accessible transport is one of the preconditions for equal opportunities, independent living, active participation in social and cultural life of the community, as well as provision of employment."²⁹⁷ There has been no detailed assessment of whether women and men with disabilities have different needs in accessible transport. However, given that women are more likely to be the main caretakers for PWDs, they would also benefit from transport and road infrastructure that is accessible to wheelchair users and people with limited mobility.

237. **Restrictions on women's mobility.** The subject of limitations on women's ability to travel in Armenia was raised on several occasions, usually related to social norms rather than road or transport infrastructure. Still, the link between perceptions about women's safety and current transport options available to women warrants greater attention. In Gavar, interviewees explained that a decade ago, it would have been considered improper for a woman to be seen taking a taxi alone. She would have needed a male chaperone or would have faced scrutiny from the community. Today, this perception has largely changed, but it is not clear if the change is attitudinal or out of necessity. Some respondents described how women do not sit in certain seats on public transport (or *marshrutki*), such as those close to the driver (who is male) or other men. A Yerevan-based NGO that works extensively with young people in the regions mentioned that it encounters difficulties inviting young women to attend training events in the capital, as families frequently do not want the women to travel unless they are accompanied by a male relative. The same attitudes restrict young women from traveling to the capital to study. It is unclear to what extent such restrictions on young women's mobility is related to transport infrastructure, but increased safety features, such as priority seats for women (especially for women with children); the employment of female drivers, conductors, or other staff for long-distance travel; and bus stations and waiting areas that are safe for women, may help alleviate such travel restrictions.

238. **Limited employment opportunities for women.** In Armenia, the transport and construction industries are male-dominated, suggesting that women will most likely not

²⁹⁷ Report on Public Opinion Poll About People with Disabilities and Their Employment, p. 21.

benefit to the same extent as men from job creation and employment opportunities resulting from ADB transport projects.

239. The share of women employed in transport and communications (which are aggregated in national statistics) is small. In 2011, women represented 14.7% of all employees in this sector.²⁹⁸ Women made up less than 3% of people employed in construction in 2012.²⁹⁹ As noted, there appears to be a trend of fewer young women training professionally for these fields.

240. Focus group participants confirmed that road construction jobs would not be a realistic prospect for women. They also raised concerns about whether local men would benefit from such opportunities. In two communities, women felt that road construction jobs contracted by tender often go to companies in other *marzer* due to corrupt practices, and these companies bring in outside workers. Opportunities for women to work as drivers of taxis or buses are also severely limited. Although women in larger cities drive, they do not do so as a profession. Interviewees could recall only a handful of female taxi drivers and a single trolleybus driver, all working in Yerevan. A study of stereotypes revealed that 61% of people surveyed considered “driver” to be an exclusively male profession.³⁰⁰ In addition, 19% of men responded that they are dissatisfied that women drive, while 9% felt that women should be forbidden from driving.³⁰¹

241. While there may be opportunities within transport projects to develop occupations that would be acceptable for women in Armenia (e.g., in customer service), it is also important that attention be given to raising awareness among transport and construction employers about stereotypes of “women’s work.” Outreach to female students and recruitment of women may be necessary to bring greater balance to employment in the sector.

242. **Gender dimensions of road safety.** Road safety is a concern both for drivers and for people who live along major roads and use public transport. As noted above, women express particular concern for the safety of their children because of the lack of sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, posted speed limits, and pedestrian underpasses.

243. According to the World Health Organization, the mortality rate from road traffic injuries in Armenia (in 2010) was 6.4 per 100,000 people, lower than the regional average in Europe.³⁰² A 2008 government-led national campaign on road safety is credited with a significant decrease in road traffic deaths. Information about the gender dimensions of road safety is limited, but data from 2007 showed that men were much more likely to die in road accidents than women (75% of fatalities were among males).³⁰³ Most fatalities are among pedestrians (44%), followed by drivers (33%).³⁰⁴ Research has also suggested gender norms around seat belt use. Monitoring of automobile traffic in Yerevan found that 29% of female drivers (who at the time represented only 3.8% of all drivers in the city)

298 *Women and Men in Armenia 2012*, p. 118.

299 *Women and Men in Armenia 2013*, p. 119.

300 *Keep Me Away From Your Stereotypes: Sociological Survey Analysis*, p. 40.

301 *Ibid.*

302 WHO. n.d. *Progress in the Prevention of Injuries in the WHO European Region: Armenia*. http://www.euro.who.int/___data/assets/pdf_file/0008/98702/Armenia.pdf

303 WHO. 2009. *Global Status Report on Road Safety: Country Profiles*. Geneva. p. 53.

304 WHO. 2013. *Global Status Report on Road Safety: Country Profiles*. Geneva. p. 48.

used seat belts as compared with only 1.1% of male drivers.³⁰⁵ Seat belt use is thought to indicate the driver's inexperience, lack of ability, cowardice, and fear, all traits that correlate negatively with notions of masculinity.³⁰⁶ While such figures do not present a definitive picture of the gender issues implicated in road safety, they do suggest that greater attention should be given to the reasons behind the high accident and fatality rates in males.

244. **Links among gender, transport sector work, sexually transmitted infections, and human trafficking have not been clearly established.** An important priority for ADB infrastructure projects is to ensure that the improvement of transport corridors does not facilitate the movement of illegal goods, the spread of diseases, or an increase in illicit practices such as commercial sex work and human trafficking. While there are very important gender dimensions within each of these subjects, there is insufficient information relevant to Armenia to establish clear connections between ADB transport projects and activities to combat human trafficking and related issues.

245. Armenia is primarily a country of origin for men, women, and children who are trafficked into situations of forced labor or sexual exploitation both outside of and within the country. The primary trafficking routes are (i) transit over land to Turkey via Georgia, and (ii) directly (or via Moscow) to the United Arab Emirates.³⁰⁷ Women are generally subjected to sex trafficking within Armenia and in the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. Both men and women have been subjected to forced labor in the Russian Federation and Turkey.³⁰⁸ Trafficking of men is closely associated with labor migration, as men may incur debts during travel abroad and are then vulnerable to being exploited and victimized in the destination country. The majority of trafficking victims that have been identified by authorities are female Armenian nationals (in 2011, 12 women and 1 man were identified).³⁰⁹ Officials and NGO representatives acknowledge that the actual scale of human trafficking might be greater, because of “the changing nature of human trafficking [for instance, greater internal trafficking], certain shortcomings in the procedure for the identification of victims, and difficulties in collecting data.”³¹⁰ There has been no clear mapping of the populations most at risk of trafficking from, into, or within Armenia, including the mapping of gender-based risk factors or the methods and transit corridors employed by traffickers.

246. The government and NGOs have taken measures to prevent trafficking in humans, most of which involve awareness raising and education about trafficking risks and sources of assistance, either aimed at a general audience, youth, or specific to child trafficking. Further development of targeted awareness raising for groups vulnerable to trafficking in persons is needed.³¹¹ Likewise, prevention efforts should be expanded to include social and economic empowerment measures for groups vulnerable to trafficking that are based on

305 T. Matosyan. 2009. Killer Seat Belts, Feminine Drivers and Tinted Windows: Pitfalls on the Way of Enforcement of Seat Belt Rules in Armenia. Yerevan: Caucasus Research Resource Centers. pp. 11–12.

306 Ibid.

307 H. Snajdrova and B. Hancilova. 2007. *Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Armenia: An Assessment of Current Responses*. Yerevan: OSCE. p. 11.

308 United States Department of State. 2013. *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2013*. Washington, DC. p. 75.

309 Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. 2012. *Report Concerning the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia*. Strasbourg. p. 10.

310 Ibid.

311 Ibid., p. 25.

root causes, “such as difficult economic and social conditions, absence of employment opportunities, inadequate education.”³¹²

247. Epidemiological data about the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among men and women do not conclusively indicate whether particular groups, such as (male) workers in the construction and transport sectors, long-distance drivers, female sex workers, or trafficked persons, engage in high-risk behaviors or are at particular risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections. The majority of newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection were among males (62% of all cases), and of cases where information about transmission mode is available, most people became infected through heterosexual contact (72.8%), injecting drug use (23.7%), or sex between men (2.3%).³¹³ The World Health Organization estimates that 3.1% of sex workers and 1.5% of men who have sex with men have active syphilis in Armenia,³¹⁴ as compared with the general population in which rates for 2011 were 58.4 per 100,000 males and 41.6 per 100,000 females.³¹⁵

248. While NGOs have carried out interventions with female sex workers aimed at reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections and enhancing HIV-preventative behaviors, little attention has been given to discouraging the demand for the services of trafficked persons (which can include sex workers), particularly those who are trafficked within Armenia.³¹⁶ Generalized awareness-raising projects are useful, but they are much less effective than campaigns that are based on research and analysis of the problem and that target specific risk groups or behaviors.

D. Gender Issues Related to Energy Supply

249. Armenia’s fossil fuel and coal reserves are limited, making the country “entirely dependent on imported fuel for transportation, electricity generation, and heat production.”³¹⁷ Experts estimate that the country is only meeting 35% of the total demand for energy with domestic resources.³¹⁸ Developing local energy resources would stabilize prices and insulate against the risk of interruptions in fuel supply. Armenia has several options for renewable energy, in the short term (e.g., small hydropower plants and solar hot water heaters), medium term (e.g., wind farms), and also longer-term options that will require significantly more investment (e.g., geothermal power and biofuels).³¹⁹

250. In households, most families use natural gas for heating, followed by electricity and then firewood. A survey of almost 3,000 households across Armenia found that 86.8% of families had a central gas supply to the premises, but 95.0% lacked a centralized heating system in the home, and 58.8% of families did not have a private heating system.³²⁰ During the 2010–2011 heating season, a decline was observed in the use of natural gas as well as an

312 Ibid., p. 26.

313 WHO Regional Office for Europe. 2011. *Key Facts on HIV Epidemic in Armenia and Progress in 2011*. Copenhagen.

314 Data accessed WHO. Global Health Observatory Data Repository. <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main>

315 *Women and Men in Armenia* 2012, p. 28.

316 Ibid., p. 25.

317 T. Babayan, et al. 2011. Report: Renewable Energy Potential in Armenia. *The Armenian Weekly*. 3 December. <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2011/12/03/report-renewable-energy-potential-in-armenia/>

318 Ibid.

319 Ibid.

320 *Analysis of Results of the Sample Survey on Fertility Preferences of Armenian Population*, p. 40.

increase in other fuel sources, related to an increase in gas tariffs.³²¹ The use of firewood for heating varies by region, with 10% or more of households in some *marzer* (i.e., Lori, Syunik, and Tavush) relying on firewood.³²² In cattle-breeding regions, households also use dried cow dung. Mountain villages still rely on energy sources that are expensive (e.g., electricity) or environmentally unfriendly for heating. The lack of an adequate gas supply, or the high cost, also precludes many families from investing in boilers to heat water in their homes.

251. **Limited sex-disaggregated data pertaining to energy.** There have been no studies on how gender is implicated in energy projects in Armenia. National time-use studies have neither specified the types of domestic activities that women engage in nor estimated the additional time that they must expend in energy-poor households. Sector assessments have tended to focus on technical insufficiencies and measure quantifiable energy outputs but have not included gender-specific information about project impact, affordability, and satisfaction with the quality of energy supply or women's priorities for developing the energy sector.

252. **Improved energy supply can ease women's workload.** In energy-poor areas, women must spend time and effort to find alternative fuels. One of the positive outcomes of a project to extend natural gas to rural and mountainous regions of Armenia was the freeing of women's time that they once spent on cutting wood or preparing cow dung. It was reported that now "women have more time to spend with their children or to invest in productive activities."³²³ It is commonly assumed that energy projects will ease women's household workload, but to show positive change, it is critical that baseline data are established to evaluate the extent to which women benefit from any free time that they have gained.

253. Women who participated in focus group discussions for this assessment reported that they have many standard and labor-saving electrical appliances in their homes (e.g., refrigerators, washing machines, irons, fans, kitchen equipment, heaters, televisions, and computers), but because of fluctuations in voltage and electrical outages, they often cannot use them. Interestingly, many respondents were not particularly critical of the present situation, stating that they remembered the energy crisis of the 1990s and, after that time, felt that they could cope with anything.

254. **Gendered impacts of improved energy efficiency.** Examples were provided during the assessment of energy-efficiency projects that benefit women. Unfortunately, it does not appear that benefits to women and men specifically have been evaluated; rather, it has been assumed that all residents will benefit in the same way. For instance, USAID has supported the renovation and installation of street-lighting systems that use energy-efficient LED technology. Street lighting is a priority for most villages and for local authorities. Mayors stated that "they spend about 25% of the total annual electricity bill for street lighting on replacement of nonoperational lamps."³²⁴ It can be assumed that such street-lighting projects have led to an increase in women's safety and even improved their mobility or access to transport in the evening and at night.

321 Armenia Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency Fund. 2011. *Assessment of Heat Supply and Heating Options in Multi-Apartment Blocks in Armenia*. Yerevan. p. 8.

322 Ibid.

323 IFAD. 2009. *Seeds of Innovation, Connecting Mountain Villages to Natural Gas*. Rome. p. 2.

324 *Clean Energy and Water Program: Needs and Opportunities Assessment Report for Selection of Demonstration Projects*, p. 21.

255. **Women’s potential as agents of change.** Respondents to the assessment mentioned that natural gas prices, followed by electricity prices, were expected to increase shortly. Concern over Armenia’s dependence on natural gas from the Russian Federation, and the impact of price hikes on the population that is living below the poverty line, has been voiced publicly.³²⁵ It has been speculated that the price increase will not only raise the cost of food and other goods but may “heighten dissatisfaction with the government.”³²⁶ These circumstances highlight the importance of becoming less dependent on imports and developing renewable sources of energy.

256. Many of the women in the focus groups expressed an interest in energy-efficient and renewable energy projects, providing examples of pilot projects that they thought were successful (e.g., a project in a Sevan park to use solar-powered lights). Participants in Gyumri were also interested in making use of solar energy but noted that installation costs are high, and there is no political interest in promoting solar power. Experts confirmed that Armenia is “rich” in its solar resources, but application of solar technology has been very limited.³²⁷ Problems in adopting solar technology, in particular solar heaters, are that the cost of solar water heaters in the local market is not affordable for most households, and the investment will only be returned in 7–8 years; the public has limited information about how solar heaters can be used; and there is no government support for promoting solar energy systems, as it is “completely missing at all levels: legal, financial and organizational.”³²⁸

257. The possibility of developing biogas was also raised during consultations. At least one pilot project has been tested to develop biogas from the waste produced by a fruit-canning plant (an enterprise that mainly employs women to prepare fruit). In this particular case, it was found that such small-scale enterprises do not have sufficient output to cover the energy needs. Large food production industries, which are better candidates for biofuel production, have been approached, but have not yet shown interest in this technology.

258. Worldwide, women tend to value new and efficient energy technology, and “women are key buyers of solar lighting systems, representing up to half of this vast and growing market.”³²⁹ It also appears to be the case that women in Armenia are interested in using renewable sources of energy, but at present, they do not have sufficient social or financial capital to initiate such changes. There may also be greater potential to engage with women about their priorities in the energy sector through supporting their participation in renewable energy projects rather than in conventional infrastructure rehabilitation projects. Renewable energy is “a more open field for women, as knowledge and technology transfer to the community is at an early stage in most developing countries.”³³⁰

259. In addition, experts maintain that the use of renewable energy technologies also has the potential to create jobs using local resources in the form of a new, “green,” high-technology industry with an important export potential. Banks and construction firms will

325 M. Grigoryan. 2013. Armenia: Could a Gas Price Hike Have Political Implications? *Eurasianet*. 10 June. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67096>

326 Ibid.

327 *Clean Energy and Water Program: Needs and Opportunities Assessment Report for Selection of Demonstration Projects*, p. 16.

328 Ibid., p. 17.

329 Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. 2011. *Gender Equality in Financing Energy for All*. Oslo. p. 5.

330 ADB. 2012. *Gender Tool Kit: Energy—Going Beyond the Meter*. Manila. p. 5.

also benefit from the development of renewable energy industries. Growing, harvesting, and transporting biomass fuels all require local labor, as does maintaining the equipment, which contribute to the high cost of biofuel. However, this means that jobs will be created in areas with a depressed agricultural economy.³³¹

260. In 2011, women represented 17.3% of all employees in “electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply.”³³² According to a USAID evaluation, there are no energy service companies with female chief executive officers, and “all key personnel” of such companies are male.³³³ Not only should women’s interest in renewable energy be supported, but they should also have access to potential jobs in this new field. If women are early adopters of new technologies, they should also benefit from new jobs.

³³¹ Report: Renewable Energy Potential in Armenia.

³³² *Women and Men in Armenia* 2012, p. 118.

³³³ L. Melikyan. 2010. *Evaluation of the Commercialization of Energy Efficiency Program (CEEP) USAID/Armenia*. Arlington, VA: Social Impact. p. 19.

IV. Recommendations

261. The first part of this section includes recommendations on crosscutting gender issues that are relevant to a large group of actors, including government institutions, development partners, international organizations, donors, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The second part lists opportunities for gender mainstreaming into activities in those sectors where ADB anticipates projects under the country partnership strategy, 2014–2018.

A. Recommendations Relevant to Crosscutting Gender Issues

1. General

- Provide technical assistance to key government agencies to enable them to conduct comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of law and policy on gender equality, including the Equal Rights Law and the concept paper on gender equality.
- Continue to participate in donor coordination meetings, and promote detailed mapping of gender equality initiatives to date and any overlapping areas of donor activity and gaps in projects that address gender disparities.

2. Gender Stereotypes

- For organizations undertaking projects on gender equality, promote the benefits of an inclusive approach, in which women and men participate and benefit equally, which will lead to better-functioning institutions and better outcomes for society as a whole (rather than just “helping women”).
- Undertake public campaigns to promote societal understanding of gender equality as compatible with Armenian values and supported by national law and policy.
- To counter gender stereotypes, widely disseminate success stories through the media and other outlets about women in varied sectors such as politics, business, education, medicine, the arts, and culture; and promote positive images of women in “nontraditional” sectors.
- Support the creation and dissemination of women’s success stories relevant to project sectors, for example, by funding awards and prizes, and encouraging executing agencies to do the same.
- When undertaking consultations with women or women’s groups, ensure that women from diverse groups are included, representing different socioeconomic groups and including women with disabilities.

3. Political and Civic Participation

- Support women at the local level to enter political office, and provide sustained technical assistance so that they can network with other female politicians and gain skills in campaigning and working with their constituents.

- Because women are largely absent from decision-making roles in government offices with mandates covering the ADB sectors, special measures should be taken to ensure that women meaningfully participate in and influence decisions about operations and projects, at the national and local level.
- Assess the capacity of women’s NGOs to represent female stakeholders and beneficiaries, especially locally, and provide capacity building if needed. Donors should engage with such NGOs on project planning and implementation. A cooperative approach can also be modeled, in which civil society organizations work with international organizations and government agencies to advance common gender equality goals.
- In civil society development and support projects, include activities to mentor and assist women who are active in the NGO sector to engage with government representatives and to transition to elected office. In parallel, build the capacity of local administrations to cooperate with women’s NGOs in the community.

4. Economic Opportunities

- Develop means to facilitate the entry and reentry into the workforce of women with children, such as re-training, flexible work schedules, affordable child care, and encouraging men to take parental leave. Measures should address both equalization of gender roles and responsibilities in the home and employment practices that foster a balance between professional and private life.
- Identify the key barriers to women entering nontraditional fields in the labor market, including the roles of gender stereotypes and discrimination. Develop training opportunities to assist women to enter nontraditional professions in the private sphere, and, in parallel, build the capacity of employers to attract and retain female employees.
- Because of labor market segregation, women may not benefit from employment opportunities in the key sectors discussed to the same extent as men. Donors should thus take measures to increase women’s access to jobs in those sectors, such as specialized training, modification of workplaces and facilities, sensitization of employers, and addressing dominant gender stereotypes.
- Fund studies relating to the positive and negative impacts of labor migration on the economic status and opportunities of men who migrate and the “women left behind” to design community-level projects that are tailored to the needs of men and women and are responsive to local needs.

5. Education

- Take measures to improve the marketability of young women within professional and higher education institutions, especially by improving educational quality and developing curricula that are relevant to the current labor market.
- Build the capacity of the executing agencies—in connection with core operational sectors such as construction, transport, and urban infrastructure—to encourage young women to enter nontraditional fields of study by using special initiatives such as scholarships, internships, or mentoring programs.

- Encourage higher educational institutions to improve tracking of their female graduates and to provide career counseling and internship opportunities for young women.
- Promote a comprehensive assessment of the compulsory educational system to identify gender stereotypes in curricula, teaching materials, and teachers' attitudes to develop projects on textbook reform and teacher training.
- Identify barriers to men pursuing careers in teaching, and design activities to encourage men to enter and remain in the education field while not displacing women from teaching jobs.

6. Gender-Based Violence

- Adopt legislation that defines and punishes gender-based violence (GBV), especially domestic violence and sexual harassment, and provides the legal basis for funding comprehensive prevention and protection services for victims of GBV.
- Build the capacity of key institutions, such as the National Statistical Service, law enforcement agencies, and health centers to collect statistics regularly about various forms of GBV.
- Provide government funds to NGOs to open and operate in each *marz* crisis centers and shelters that are accessible to all victims of GBV.
- Encourage the government to include the provision of services for domestic violence victims, such as funding for shelters and crisis centers, within municipal services projects.
- Fund research and analysis of the connections between women's economic status and vulnerabilities to GBV.
- Conduct an assessment of the economic costs of GBV to the government budget. The analysis should include information about the cost of preventative measures and provision of comprehensive services for victims, and should be used in national and local budget planning.

7. Prenatal Sex Selection

- Provide grants to NGOs or other organizations to carry out activities that raise awareness of prenatal sex selection and aim to change the predominant mentality that sons are preferred.
- In collaboration with other development organizations, advocate for greater attention to the problem of prenatal sex selection as an issue of gender equality (as well as demographics) that is related to other forms of discrimination against girls and women.

B. Sector Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming

1. General

- In all projects, ensure that data are sex-disaggregated and include gender-sensitive information in the collection of baseline data, in project monitoring, and in the collection of end-line data to show gender impacts.
- Promote meaningful participation of women in government discussions, design, and implementation of infrastructure projects. This should not only include consultative processes but should also institutionalize a system in which women are part of discussions about municipal services and have a role in overseeing their implementation.
- Strengthen the capacity of executing and implementing agencies and other key stakeholders to mainstream gender when conducting preliminary assessments, project planning, and monitoring and evaluation (including collection, analysis, and use of sex-disaggregated data for evidence-based planning).

2. Entrepreneurship and Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development

- Develop a unified and sex-disaggregated system of classifying and counting businesses that takes into account the complexities described above and uses consistent criteria.
- Support qualitative studies of the experiences of successful businessmen and businesswomen to identify key factors that contribute to their success. In addition, conduct longitudinal studies of women's businesses to identify both success and failure rates. Map the multiple ways that women may be engaged in business in Armenia, including as individual entrepreneurs and as members of family businesses.
- Provide female entrepreneurs with opportunities to enter new sectors and to expand their micro and small-scale businesses. Identify barriers to women entering specific sectors (e.g., manufacturing and information technology) that may include competition, low placement on value chains, or lack of knowledge, so that they can be better addressed.
- Work with women across the business hierarchy, from the level of individual entrepreneurs to women who own or manage large businesses. Identify key businesswomen in varied sectors, and sponsor them to become mentors to other female entrepreneurs and support them in developing women-friendly workplaces.
- Conduct analysis of the hospitality and tourism industries and the potential entry points for female-owned and -managed businesses.
- Give consideration to issues of women's entrepreneurship in infrastructure development projects to create conditions that will assist women to start and expand their businesses.
- Develop varied business training programs that are continual and harmonized with the projects of other donors. Improve partnerships with other donors that manage or are developing training programs aimed at women's entrepreneurship.
- Training programs should be tailored to the needs of female entrepreneurs, which are specific to the sizes and types of businesses and sectors in which they operate. Training should be aimed at women who already have basic skills and advanced skills building (e.g., in marketing, accounting, and taxation) should be offered as well as mentoring with established business owners.

- Training and support programs should assist female entrepreneurs to enter nontraditional and high-level industries and also to develop or join existing cooperatives, to form business clusters, and to access higher levels of relevant value chains.
- Support business advisory services and training programs that are flexible and are accessible to women (e.g., training programs that are located in regional centers, rather than the capital, and are compatible with women's schedules and child care responsibilities). Ensure that business services and training programs are accessible to women with disabilities.
- Consider alternatives to loans and microfinance for women who are starting businesses, especially in rural areas, such as providing seed money or small grants. Additionally, improve women's knowledge about loan requirements, contractual obligations, risks, interest rates, and how to develop repayment plans to reduce women's fears about borrowing.
- Link projects on women's entrepreneurship to existing programs that aim to empower women socially and politically to raise women's status on several levels.
- To counter gender stereotypes about female entrepreneurs, increase the dissemination of success stories that promote women as role models in business.
- General business advisory and small and medium-sized enterprise development projects should support the development of human resources policies on nondiscrimination in the workplace in such areas as hiring, promotion, remuneration, termination, and sexual harassment.

3. Water Supply and Municipal Services

- Conduct household-level research into gender roles relevant to water use and solid waste management, which includes time spent collecting and using water for domestic tasks and waste disposal practices, to assess gender-specific project benefits and to identify ways by which both women and men can be involved in project implementation.
- Prioritize upgrading of water supply and sanitation systems in public institutions that would bring considerable benefit to women such as in kindergartens, schools, maternity hospitals, and health clinics.
- In parallel with infrastructure improvement projects, ensure that women are aware of their rights as water consumers and/or customers and that they have the necessary knowledge and capacity to make complaints about inadequate service. Customer helplines should track complaints and also monitor customer satisfaction, with information disaggregated by sex.
- Identify the key barriers to women working in the fields of water supply and sanitation (e.g., construction and engineering), including the influence of gender stereotypes and discrimination. Develop training projects with educational, technical, and vocational training institutions and key employers to assist women in entering nontraditional professions.
- Track employment patterns for women in water supply and sanitation, build the capacity of executing agencies to hire women in related industries, and ensure that they can also develop careers and reach management positions there. In particular, consider jobs for women in meter reading, billing and collection, and customer service.

- In infrastructure development projects, consider providing the necessary skills to women to become private sector service providers in water supply and sanitation (e.g., in the supply of equipment, repair, or maintenance).
- Collaborate with women's and environmental organizations to develop strategies for safe waste disposal, water treatment, and recycling programs. Explore the possibility of linking such projects with renewable energy initiatives (e.g., the collection of methane from landfills).
- In addition to engaging with women locally on environmental projects, promote the formal inclusion of women in national bodies that address climate change and advocate for gender mainstreaming in environmental policy.

4. Transport

- Support the rehabilitation and construction of local feeder roads in project areas.
- Within road construction and rehabilitation projects, earmark funds for rehabilitation and construction of safety features in local communities such as sidewalks, speed limitations near schools, speed bumps, traffic lights, public crossings, underpasses, play areas away from streets, bus shelters, and waiting areas that are well-lit, and separate sanitation facilities.
- Within transport projects, create opportunities for income generation and jobs for women, such as roadside areas to sell goods and roads that connect to local services run by women. Transport projects should be linked to female entrepreneurship projects and tourism strategies.
- In infrastructure development projects, consider providing the necessary skills to women to become private sector service providers, for example, in transport services. Road projects can also consider measures that would facilitate trade and export by women.
- Conduct gender assessments of the transport sector that consider such issues as women's mobility, modes and costs of transport, routes, and schedules. The results of such sector assessments should be used to develop transport options that will be accessible for women, for instance, buses that can be entered with prams, designated seats for women, or transfer systems that allow for journeys with multiple stops. Ensure that transport and roadside infrastructure are accessible to all people with disabilities (PWDs), with special consideration to the needs of female PWDs.
- Identify the key barriers to women working in the transport industry, including the influence of gender stereotypes and discrimination. Develop training projects with educational, technical, and vocational training institutions and key employers in the transport sector to assist women in entering nontraditional professions.
- Build the capacity of employers in the transport sector to undertake effective gender mainstreaming in the work environment, including hiring and promotion practices. Encourage employers to undertake positive recruitment of women.
- In road projects, address not only the technical aspects of road safety, such as road design, but also undertake activities that address gender-influenced behaviors, such as risky driving, alcohol consumption, or low levels of seat belt and safety helmet use among men. Fund NGOs to carry out educational and awareness-raising programs with messages targeting male drivers.

5. Energy

- Conduct needs assessments to identify women's specific energy needs in Armenia before undertaking energy projects.
- Conduct household-level research into gender roles relevant to energy use that include assessments of the time spent by females on domestic tasks when energy supply is limited to assess how women are impacted by energy supply problems, in additional time spent on housework or complicating home-based production (e.g., making food products or handicrafts to sell). Such research should be used to develop baseline data to evaluate gender-specific benefits.
- During project implementation, conduct qualitative assessments of the gender-specific benefits that can be attributed to energy projects in the community, for example, installation of street lights or improved energy efficiency of public buildings such as schools and health clinics. Specifically evaluate any increase in female mobility and reductions in crime and childhood illnesses.
- Assist women's NGOs that have missions to promote renewable sources of energy to build their capacities and also encourage cooperation and consultations between civil society organizations, international organizations, and government agencies on this topic.
- Work with key employers in the energy sector to ensure that women have access to any jobs that may be created when renewable energy technologies are adopted, through job fairs, positive recruitment, and support for academic and training programs for women.

APPENDIX 1

Additional Information about Entrepreneurship in Armenia

Table A1.1 Summary of Estimates of Women’s Engagement in Entrepreneurship in Armenia

Findings	Source and Year
Of all active enterprises, women represent about 20.7% of business owners (16,200 of 78,000 enterprises).	Republican Union of Employers of Armenia (2014)
Women represent about 30% of individual entrepreneurs and owners of micro-sized enterprises combined (about 15,000 of 50,000 enterprises)	
Women’s micro and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent about 11% of active micro and SMEs.	ADB. 2012. <i>Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Policy-Based Loan, Loan, and Technical Assistance Grant to Armenia for the Women’s Entrepreneurship Support Sector Development Program</i> . Manila. p. 2. Data from the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development Center.
Of all survey respondents who are employed in individual businesses (i.e., the business owners), 23% are women. Note all individual businesses in the survey were in the informal sector.	National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia and ADB. 2011. <i>The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Armenia</i> . Manila. p. 32. The survey data are from 2009.
Of registered enterprises, 97% of the founders and managers are male and 3% are female.	National Strategy of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development, Women’s Entrepreneurship Promotion, p. 4.
Women constitute 20%–25% of business owners, 36.2% of the self-employed, and 10.3% of employers.	Government of Armenia. 2010. <i>Gender Policy Concept Paper of the Republic of Armenia</i> . Yerevan. p. 11.
Women own about 700 enterprises as compared with 5,700 owned by men (women own 11% of enterprises).	Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development Center, Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, and International Labour Organization. 2009. <i>Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Assessment in Armenia</i> . Yerevan. pp. 10, 31.
Women represent 26% of individual entrepreneurs.	
About 31.8% of firms have “female participation in ownership.”	World Bank and International Finance Corporation. 2011. <i>Enterprise Surveys Country Note Series: Armenia</i> . Washington, DC. p. 3. This cited 2009 data.
Of all persons who responded to a household survey that they were employed as “entrepreneurs,” 22.2% were women.	Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, National Institute of Labor and Social Research, and National Statistical Service. 2009. <i>Analysis of Results of the Sample Survey on Fertility Preferences of Armenian Population</i> . Yerevan. p. 23.
Less than 15% of entrepreneurs are women.	S. Sabarwal and K. Terrell. 2008. <i>Does Gender Matter for Firm Performance? Evidence from Eastern Europe and Central Asia</i> . Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 10.

Table A1.2: Classification of Enterprises in Armenia

Classification	Size of Enterprise		
	Micro (number of employees)	Small (number of employees)	Medium (number of employees)
Sector			
Industry and other productive spheres	up to 5	up to 50	up to 100
Construction and power engineering	up to 5	up to 25	up to 50
Science and education	up to 5	up to 25	up to 50
Transport, trade, and services	up to 5	up to 15	up to 30

APPENDIX 2

Definitions of Gender and Development Terms

This country gender assessment uses several terms relevant to gender and development. Some development organizations and international financial institutions have their own definitions of these terms, but the Asian Development Bank (ADB) generally relies on commonly accepted meanings. Where possible, the list below includes definitions from ADB policy documents. As meanings change over time, vary by organization, and are also dependent on context, the definitions are illustrative and are not intended to be definitive.

Domestic violence (also called “intimate partner violence”) refers to behavior in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors.¹

Empowerment describes both the process and the outcome of people—women and men—taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills (or having their own skills and knowledge recognized), increasing self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance. Empowerment implies an expansion in women’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. In most cases the empowerment of women requires transformation of the [gender] division of labor and of society.²

Gender refers to the sociologically and culturally based distinction between men and women. One’s gender is therefore most often composed of those roles and attributes that are not purely “natural” or biologically determined, but are rather dictated by norms and traditions. Because gender is not biologically given, the attributes of both male and female gender can (and do) change over time and across cultures.³

Gender analysis is a key strategy of ADB’s gender mainstreaming approach that involves systematically assessing the impact of a project on men and women, and on the economic and social relationship between them.⁴

Gender-based violence (GBV) was first defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as an alternative term for “violence against

1 World Health Organization. 2011. *Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women*. Fact Sheet No. 239. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/index.html>

2 Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. 2009. *Glossary of Gender-Related Terms*. Nicosia. pp. 6–7. <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/publications/glossary-on-gender>

3 United Nations Development Programme. 2007. *Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: A Toolkit*. 3rd ed. Bratislava. p. 125.

4 ADB. 2003. *Gender and Development*. Manila. p. 39.

women” to refer to any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.⁵ Over time, the definition has evolved to refer to any harm that is perpetrated against a person’s will; that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person; and that is the result of gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males, and among females. Although not exclusive to women and girls, GBV principally affects them across all cultures. Violence may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or sociocultural.⁶

Gender and development (GAD) is an approach that concentrates on the unequal relations between men and women due to “uneven playing fields.” The term “gender” as an analytical tool arose, therefore, from an increasing awareness of inequalities due to institutional structures. It focuses not only on women as an isolated and homogeneous group, but on the roles and needs of both men and women. Given that women are usually in [a] disadvantaged position as compared with men, promotion of gender equality implies an explicit attention to women’s needs, interests, and perspectives. The objective, then, is the advancement of the status of women in society, with gender equality as the ultimate goal.⁷ ADB describes the GAD approach as one that sees gender as a crosscutting issue with relevance for and influencing all economic, social, and political processes.⁸

Gender discrimination refers to any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms that prevent a person from enjoying full human rights.⁹

Gender equality is a desired result of gender equity and refers to equal opportunities and outcomes for men and women.¹⁰

Gender equity is a process for achieving the goal or outcome of gender equality. ADB includes gender equity as one of the five drivers of change in its long-term strategic framework, *Strategy 2020*.¹¹

Gender mainstreaming. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, programs, and projects in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.¹²

5 United Nations General Assembly. 1993. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. Resolution A/RES/48/104, Article 1. New York. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

6 Council of Europe. 2007. *Gender Matters: Manual on Gender-Based Violence Affecting Young People*. Budapest. p. 43. <http://eycb.coe.int/gendermatters/contents.html>

7 European Commission, EuropeAid Cooperation Office. 2004. *Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation*, Brussels. Section 3, p. 2.

8 Gender and Development, p. 28.

9 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2006. *Glossary on Gender-Related Terms*. Paris. p. 2.

10 ADB. 2010. *Country Gender Assessment: Bangladesh*. Manila. p. vii.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Gender sensitivity is a key strategy of ADB's gender mainstreaming approach that involves observing how ADB operations affect women and men, and taking into account women's needs and perspectives in planning its operations.¹³

National machinery (for the advancement of women) is the central policy-coordinating structure inside the government, whose main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas.¹⁴

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish human beings as female or male.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work, including the conduct of superiors and colleagues.¹⁵

¹³ *Gender and Development*, p. 39.

¹⁴ United Nations. 1995. Platform for Action: The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing.

¹⁵ *Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation*, Section 3, p. 5.

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Armenia Country Gender Assessment

Armenia, a country of ancient traditions, is shaped by events of the recent past. As it left behind the Soviet legacy of an official gender equality policy, there came about a resurgence of patriarchal views and customs. At the same time though, Armenia saw the growth of diverse women's civil society organizations, and the development of a solid legal and policy framework for the protection of equal rights. This publication discusses gender equality concerns in Armenia's government, economy, society, and culture. It analyzes gender issues in key sectors such as energy, transport, water supply and municipal services, and entrepreneurship. Developed in cooperation with the government and other development partners, this country gender assessment is envisaged to be a useful guide in developing and implementing policies, programs, and projects with a social and gender perspective.

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