



Government Offices of Sweden



WOMEN IN POLITICS
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COMMUNIQUE´

“National Assembly-CSOs cooperation platform”

working discussion on

«Women Reproductive Health»



On July 16, 2019 “National Assembly-CSOs cooperation platform” (hereinafter the Platform) held its regular meeting at Opera Suit hotel of Yerevan, with the following agenda:

1. Summing up the results of the previous meetings of the platform regarding women’s labor rights.
2. Discussing recommendations for policy reform in women reproductive health
3. Annual “EQUAL” campaign award

Members of the National Assembly, officials of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, representatives of civil society organizations participated in the meeting.

1. **Within the framework of the first topic Lena Nazaryan, Vice President of the NA,** referred back to the issues and recommendations discussed on the first meeting of the platform Women in the Labor Market: Problems and Solutions. She gave the floor to Heriknaz Tigranyan, MP, My Step faction, to present the legislative initiatives that were under elaboration in result of the platform's discussions. The following legislative initiatives have been presented by Ms. Tigranyan:

Temporary contracts that make vulnerable especially women



The new legal initiative considers two consecutive temporary contracts with the same employer as an open-ended contract. This regulation will benefit all subjects, irrespective of sex. However, in case of women it will eliminate the possibility to refuse the next extension of the contract with a woman who is pregnant or going to conceive thus leaving her bereft of her right to enjoy pre- and

post-natal vacation.

Expanding Functions of Inspection Body

Although, ideally the Health and Labor Inspectorate must be split in two separate structures which would allow existence of a Labor inspectorate authorized to supervise/control implementation of a /reformed/ labor code, there is no consensus among stakeholders on this kind of solution. Hence, the current Health and Labor Inspectorate needs to be granted such supervisory authority. Bringing cases to the court are necessary and important, but they last long, are cumbersome thus not desirable to workers, while cases of violation of rights of employees are plenty. This comes to prove the necessity of having a strong inspectorate and strong trade unions – all dealing with labor rights.

Perspectives of Introduction of Actio Popularis in Protecting Public Rights

Currently, a working group with participation of representatives of NA, Government, and trade unions is established to elaborate changes in the law on trade unions. The WG is coordinated by Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES). The model of Actio Popularis, if introduced, would allow trade unions and NGOs help employees in restoring their violated rights, especially those vulnerable, avoiding cumbersome procedures at courts, as well as further discrimination on employers' side, and would support employees to stand for their rights in the court.

The final draft will be made available to public – including civil society – for discussion.



Recommendation for changing the flow of fines for violation of Labor Code

It is proposed to change the flow of the revenues generated due to penalties to employers. Currently they go directly to the state budget.

If a major portion of the fine were directed to employee and the larger public were informed about that novel approach, then every employee would be better motivated to pursue his/her labor rights. This would be reinforced by examples of successful court cases elucidated in media.

Women Participation in LSG

Summarizing the first topic of the agenda Lena Nazaryan told that the issue of increasing women representation and participation in the system of LSG is under discussion in the Parliament now. The progress and results will be presented on the next meeting.

2. **Discussion of the second topic of the agenda** opened Zhanna Andreasyan, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA), who presented the findings of the meetings in marzes conducted by MLSA in the course of the last two months.

Women Reproductive Health (RH) issues

Non-official and open meetings conducted in marzes with direct communication with 175 women revealed lots of problems: physical conditions of health posts and medical ambulatories, deficiencies in the health care workers' behavior, lack of confidentiality. The latter is especially sensitive for girls and women thus making them refrain from seeking health advice or medical care. All the revealed problems may have effect on RH. It was also found out that there was serious lack of knowledge of RH hygiene not only among young women and girls, but also among parents. All these must be considered as not only health but also educational issues.

Participants of the platform agreed that these problems must be addressed step by step, in a coordinated and considerate manner.

The Deputy Minister assured that women RH issues are under scrutiny of not only MOH but also MLSA. She informed that an inter-departmental working group will be established to deal with RH issues from legislative, organizational, infrastructure, health, educational, cultural and other perspectives. Civil society recommendations will be brought to the attention of this working group via NA-CSO platform as well as committees in the ministries where NGOs are also represented.

Participants discussed other RH recommendations by CSOs

The participants discussed problems and potential solutions raised by relevant CSOs:

- Provision of paid paternity leave.
- Lack of sense in 3-day period for contemplation on abortion as legally mandated for women under 12-week gestation.
- Need to correctly organized sexual education in schools and unacceptable situation with teaching these topics by teachers of physical culture or military preparedness.
- Need to address and solve issue of sexual violence in families.
- Homosexual women are not able to surmount obstacles towards getting proper health care services.



It was decided

The Vice President of the NA Ms. Nazaryan proposed to invite also Arsen Torosyan, Minister of Health and Arayik Harutiunyan, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, to the next meeting of Platform to have specialist insight and substantial discussion on RH.

P.S. It was decided to devote the next meeting to the issues of domestic violence, as well as discuss RH recommendations.

The platform meeting was organized within the frame of “Women in Politics” project. The Project is implemented by UNDP in Armenia and OxYGen Foundation, with financial support from the UK Good Governance Fund, and in partnership with the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures.

3. Award Ceremony

The idea and realization of establishing an NA-CSO platform became possible thanks to the EQUAL campaign implemented by OxYGen. At the end of the Platform meeting, OxYGen had organized its annual award ceremony to acknowledge partners for the best collaboration.



7 MPs representing 3 factions of the National Assembly 7th convocation received symbolic awards of being “a champion” of the EQUAL campaign: Lena Nazaryan, Anna Kostanyan, Arsen Julfalakyan, Gayane Abrahamyan, Shaqe Isayan, Heriknaz Tigranyan.

- For years already the EQUAL campaign and OxYGen’s other projects have created great opportunities and inputted into girls and women empowerment, dissemination of the concept of equality in the public discourse and into difficult task of changing public attitudes. I express my deep appreciation to all of you. *Message by Gayane Abrahamyan, My Step faction*
- Taking forward women’s agenda in the political arena requires lots of efforts. So far, it has been successful. I am committed to continuing it. *Anna Kostanyan, Bright Armenia faction*
- We have yet a lot to do for women’s labor rights, RH and labor code as a whole. I do hope this collaboration will continue. *Shaqe Isayan, Prosperous Armenia faction*
- Collaboration with OxYGen has generated new mindset in me. Now we are in need of positive discrimination to achieve equality. Hopefully, in future we will have society where

men and women exercise equal rights and there will be no need in any such discrimination. I consider this a commitment. *Heriknaz Tigranyan, My Step faction*



In honor of active and effective collaboration awards were given to OxYGen's partners: ProMedia-Gender NGO, Family Academy NGO and Gender Research and Leadership Center of Yerevan State University.

As mentioned by Margarita Hakobyan, OxYGen Director, EQUAL campaign would not be so comprehensive and successful without Government of Sweden attention and persistent financial support. This has been acknowledged by giving the symbolic award to Embassy of Sweden in Yerevan.

Champion of EQUAL initiative was organized within the frame of the project Equal: Supporting Women's Political Participation at National Level in Armenia, which is implemented by OxYGen Foundation in partnership with ProMedia-Gender NGO through funding support from Government Offices of Sweden.