

PARTICIPATION  
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CHANGES

RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

CAUCASUS SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER

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The opinions expressed in the Report are solely of the authors and do not necessarily coincide with those of OXFAM.

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### LITERATURE

## **INTRODUCTION: *THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM. THE COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH***

### **The Essence of the Problem**

The principal advantage of democracy is the realization of the public's potential to the uttermost efficiency, thanks to the freedoms granted to citizens, with the aim of solving problems and advancing the development of the social system. Contemporary perceptions of democracy imply the importance of representative, specifically gender-balanced, and participatory models and the necessity of their realization.

A crucial factor for democratization of the political system of the countries-in-transition is the broadening of political and civic participation and providing balanced representation of men and women at policy elaboration and decision-making levels.

Although women in Armenia have a powerful potential in terms of their professional and educational levels, and they make up more than half of the population<sup>1</sup> that has post-graduate and higher professional education, as well as has capacity for work, their representation in the political decision-making, in local self-governance, and regional and central bodies of state governance, as well as in party governing structures is far from satisfactory. Women's potential is not fully utilized in the fields of decision-making and public and political governance. Elections periodically taking place at different levels of political governance can play an important role in improving this situation. However, here there are certain obstacles and problems requiring solution. The overcoming of these obstacles and effective solution of the problems are largely dependent on the implementation of research and analytical programs that aim to bring to light developments and trends, which will allow avoiding mistakes and the flawed practice of paying heavily for those mistakes and will help make the reforms in implementation more effective.

The described program was implemented by the experts of the Caucasus Sociological Research Center, with the support of OXFAM, in Armenia during the months of March through September 2012.

### **The Goal of the Project**

The project aimed at helping increase the number of women deputies in the RoA National Assembly of the fifth convocation (2012-2017), at developing recommendations to improve gender policies in terms of formation and reinforcement of mechanisms promoting improvement in women's participation indicators and an increase in women's representation in political governance structures.

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<sup>1</sup> Women and Men of Armenia. Statistical booklet, the RoA National Statistical Service, Yerevan, 2012, page 70.

[http://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2012.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2012.pdf)

## Project Objectives

- a) To prepare and address an appeal message to the parties participating, through proportional electoral system of representation, in the 2012 NA elections, calling on them to support women's participation and to rule out the practice of giving up mandates by female candidates after elections;
- b) To prepare and broadcast through mass media a video clip arguing for the importance of women politicians' representation in legislature and calling on women candidates not to renounce their mandates after elections;
- c) To study the domestic and international legal documents on the issue of involving women politicians in central power structures and to identify achievements and gaps in this area;
- d) To research the deputy candidates' motivational system for a political career and its gender peculiarities;
- e) To study the characteristics and influences of the social environment from the perspective of their promoting or impeding women's political career;
- f) To bring to light the capacities and characteristics of the intra-institutional environment of political parties and non-governmental organizations in terms of their impact on advancing and constraining women's political career;
- g) To present conclusions and recommendations on women's political participation and actions to increase their representation in the political governance bodies to political and non-governmental organizations, domestic and international structures dealing with gender policy issues.

## *Project Components and Tools*

### Advocacy

The experts of the *Caucasus* Sociological Research Center prepared an appeal message addressed to the parties participating in the 2012 RoA NA elections. The appeal message<sup>2</sup> argued for the importance of women's significant representation in Parliament and called upon the parties to promote women's political participation and to rule out the practice of giving up mandates after elections for different reasons and without any reasons. The appeal message was introduced to the parties during the pre-electoral campaign on behalf of the *Caucasus* Sociological Research Center and OXFAM-partner thirty non-governmental organizations, members of the Civil Society Cooperation Network. The message was also placed on <http://www.cspn.am> <http://womennet.am> web site, where many other organizations joined it before and after elections.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

The expert group, implementing the project, together with the creative staff of the magazine *Yerevak* (“G.Tadevosyan” Ltd), also prepared a PSA<sup>3</sup> arguing for the necessity of the representation of women politicians in the legislative body and containing an appeal to women deputy candidates not to give up their mandates after elections. The video-clip PSA was broadcast by the television companies “ArmNews” and “Yerkir Media” and the radio station “Ardzagank” during the weeks preceding and following the elections.

To analyze the interim presentation of the research preliminary results, a press-conference discussion was organized with participation of journalists and women political figures. The information about this event and some results were published in mass media and members of the expert group made a TV presentation<sup>4</sup> on preliminary results.

## **The Research Part**

Within the framework of the project, the results of the previously made significant studies on women’s participation in the RoA political processes were analyzed and official statistical documents and data were researched.

We also reviewed the RoA legislative-normative field in terms of whether it provides for favorable conditions for women’s political participation and their involvement in political power structures and in terms of its deficiencies. We examined the correspondence of the domestic legal field to the fundamental international documents and to the obligations undertaken by Armenia.

Six focus group discussions and an in-depth interview with women political figures were held to analyze the motivational system of the political career of the NA deputy candidates and its gender peculiarities; to study the impact of the social environment and its different factors on women’s political career; as well as to elucidate the intra-institutional capacities of political parties and non-governmental organizations and to research the mechanisms for increase in the representation of women in political power bodies.

The focus group discussions were organized with participation of a) women politicians included in the party proportional electoral lists; b) men politicians included in the party proportional electoral lists; c)

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xKv1HamWHO>. See also Appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Od1HmxrLec&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Od1HmxrLec&feature=player_embedded), <http://womennet.am/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/121a> 121. pdf, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOmil6wiXSQ>, <http://ankakh.com/2012/06/219860/>, <http://www.aravot.a/2012/06/19/82937/>

leaders of non-governmental organizations; d) young public activists; e) mass media representatives; and f) regional political figures<sup>5</sup>.

This analysis of the research results consists of three parts.

*The first part* is devoted to the analysis of the motivational system of the political career of the NA deputy candidates and its gender peculiarities.

*The second part* considers the characteristics of the RoA legislative-normative field from the perspective of women's political participation and female politicians' involvement in political power bodies, the correspondence of the national legal field to the fundamental international documents and the obligations undertaken by Armenia.

*The third part* is devoted to the study of the influence of the social environment and its different factors on women's political career, as well as to the elucidation of the intra-institutional capacities of political parties and non-governmental organizations and to the analysis of the issues related to the development of mechanisms for increase in women's representation in political power bodies.

The book also includes women stories, which were compiled on the basis of the interviews conducted during the research, as well as on the basis of materials placed on [WomenNet.am](http://WomenNet.am) web site.

The research group members express their gratitude to partner organizations and focus group participants for their support to and participation in the implementation of the project and their valuable observations.

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<sup>5</sup> The regional focus group has been formed in accordance with the same principle: political and social activists were engaged, as well as representatives of youth activists and local mass media. The study was carried out in the Tavush marz with the support of the NGO *Bridge of Hope*.

## PART I. MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RoA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. GENDER PECULIARITIES.

### 1.1 The Problem of the Political Participation Motivation

The essence of any phenomenon is to a larger extent given in its determination. Judgments about the consequences and results of political participation can be made on the basis of analysis of the motivation of participants in political elections, on the basis of a study of observations and evaluations about it.

In professional literature there are approaches to classifying motives for public activities and political participation, as well as scales of different sensitivity.

In his work on *Human Motivation* David McClelland identifies four main motivational systems: power, achievement, affiliation, and avoidance of unpleasantness<sup>6</sup> The American researcher highlights a number of factors when power is desirable. These include the desire to guide behavior and activities of others and to change or to limit them; to exclude the interference by others in one's affairs or their power over oneself; to gain possibilities for attainment of one's own political and other ends. Achievement motivation is connected with overcoming competition and obstacles and as a result of this with feelings of mental satisfaction and self-assertion, which are most typical of political leaders. Affiliation motivation (being with others) is linked to membership in political organizations and movements, which instills feelings of togetherness, mutual assistance and protection. Avoidance of unpleasantness motivation is connected with an aspiration to get free of anxiety resulting from failures, rejection by society, and the feeling of vulnerability.

There are certain things in common between viewpoints of D. McClelland and J. Atkinson<sup>7</sup> and the hierarchic pyramid of needs by Abraham Maslow. According to Maslow, the needs that make up the basis of an individual's motivation are graduated by nature. At their basis, at the bottom part of the pyramid are **physiological** needs, then the needs for **security** and **love**. The needs<sup>8</sup> for **self-assertion** and **self-realization** lie at the upper section of the pyramid. These needs can be transformed: the physiological need into the need for improved standard of living; the security need into efforts to establish law and lawfulness; the love and affiliation need into an aspiration for membership in a social group, movement, party or any structure; the self-assertion need into efforts to increase the social status and authority level; and the need for self-realization into activities aiming to achieve expression of one's own interests and their realization. The experience demonstrates that the noted motivations and factors also largely determine people's modes<sup>9</sup> of political conduct and participation.

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<sup>6</sup> D. McClelland *Human Motivation*, 2007, pages 258-262; 303-315; 372.

<sup>7</sup> See J. Atkinson, N. Feather *A Theory of Achievement Motivations*, N.Y. Wiley, 1966

<sup>8</sup> See A. Maslow, *Motivations and personality*, N.Y., 1954, page 45

<sup>9</sup> See H. Shapaghatyan, *Current Issues of Political Participation*, Yerevan 2007, page 54-55



Under different conditions, “the center of gravity” can shift within the system of motivations for both social groups’ and individuals’ activity level and political participation. According to the observation by the American social scientist Ronald Engelhard, stable and economically developed countries, where people’s material needs are satisfied, manifest a motivational shift towards post-material values. It is manifested through changes in the motivational system: qualitatively new motivations<sup>10</sup> come forward, such as the quality of life, environmental protection, citizens’ participation in decision-making processes, overcoming of bureaucratic obstacles, humanization of the governance system and others.

Other authors specify such motivations for political participation as a) interest in the sphere of politics, its appeal and romanticisation; b) cognitive motivations, since political perspectives, which shape a specific world outlook, suggest a convenient, but not understood by everybody, scheme to explain many phenomena; c) an aspiration to have power over people; d) ideological motives; e) motivation to transform the surrounding reality, which is connected with the imperfection of this reality and consistent striving to change it; f) traditional motivations, which are connected with the traditions typical of a given social group and layer or with family traditions; g) mercantile: mercenary-minded, utilitarian, profit-seeking motivations, and others<sup>11</sup>.

Some researchers note that for many, membership in political structures is determined by aspirations to improve one’s own material conditions, to gain certain privileges, to advance the social status and by career considerations. For others, getting engaged in politics is conditioned by belonging to a certain group and striving to overcome the psychological tension, the feelings of helplessness and uncertainty in complex social and political situations and to gain protection.<sup>12</sup>

After all, motives to deal with both any (particularly scientific) activity and politics can be divided into two groups: “internal” and “external motivations”. Components that make up the internal motivation are interest in and love of a given activity, the factor of being proud of one’s work results and feeling psychological satisfaction, and the satisfaction with realization of one’s usefulness for society. The external motivation is composed of the aspiration towards public respectability, ambition, the desire to achieve material welfare, career, having privileges and other.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the motivations to engage in politics can be divided into two groups: **hedonistic-egoistic** (personal gains, interests, use of power for self-seeking purposes) and **altruistic aspirations** (serving the common good, placing one’s own knowledge and abilities at the service of social progress).

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<sup>10</sup> See R. Engelhard, *A Cultural Shift in the Mature Post-Industrial Society*, New Post-Industrial Wave in the West, edited by V.L. Inozemcev, M. 1999, page 249-260. See also [http://ir-mp.narod.ru/books/inozencev/page\\_1245.html](http://ir-mp.narod.ru/books/inozencev/page_1245.html).

<sup>11</sup> S.V.Golev, *Political Psychology*, Dictionary-Reference Book, M. 2004.

<sup>12</sup> V. Bobkov, E. Brahim, *Politology*, 2003 <http://uchebnik-besplatno.com/uchebnik-teoriya-politiki/politicheskoe-uchastie-formyi-motivyi.html>.

<sup>13</sup> See the essay manual *Creativity and Life of a Scientist, Creative Personality in Science*, M., 1988.

## What are the Political Participation Motivations of Armenian Political Figures?

Analyzing the evaluations by participants in the focus groups and the results of in-depth interviews, one can divide the primary motivational factors that lie at the basis of the desire to become a deputy to the National Assembly into five groups. **The first group** includes *personal, self-seeking (hedonistic) aspirations*: personal gains, the desire to use power for self-seeking purposes, to insure one's own business against failures, and to improve material conditions. **The second group** is composed of the (altruistic) *desires to be useful to the country and society*, to help the solution of the existing problems, and to improve the socio-economic and moral-psychological situation. **The third group** is one of *self-assertion*: the *motivation* to overcome competition and difficulties, to advance the social status and, as related to this, to achieve psychological satisfaction. **The fourth group** is made up of the desire to realize one's own experience, abilities, professional knowledge and skills. And finally, **the fifth factor** for candidates for the NA deputation is *the party's decision*.

The first three of the noted motivations, as per their importance and similar proportional weight, make up the first horizontal of the motivational factors lying at the basis of a political career. *See Table 1.*

**Table 1.** Motivations of political figures to become a National Assembly deputy according to evaluations by focus group participants

Motivational Factors	Proportional weight according to evaluations by focus group participants
Personal, self-seeking motives	27.2%
Desire to be useful to the country and society	27.2%
Self-assertion aspirations	27.2%
Motivations for self-expression, realization of one's own knowledge and skills	12.2%
Party's decision	6.2%

### ANAHIT BAKHSHYAN

"I am accountable..."

*Anahit Bakhshyan entered politics with a clear determination to continue the work of her husband, a former National Assembly Speaker Yuri Bakhshyan, who was killed as a result of the October 27<sup>th</sup> 1998 terrorist act. "They should not be allowed to think that they have achieved their goals by shooting at the Parliament." In 2002, the newspaper Aravot published her first public statement, and some time later she*

*became a member of the Heritage Party Council. She advanced in her political career in 2007 when after years of working as a school principal she became a deputy to the National Assembly.*

*This year, right before elections, Anahit Bakhshyan published her book “I am Accountable...” dedicated to the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of her husband. “I dedicate this account of mine to him in front of our people. He would always say that ‘Anahit is my pro-independence, principled and then would repeat is my pro-independence associate’. Yes, I think the same way as Yuri and I am happy about it...”*

*By the way, according to the factual account in the book, from 2007 up to January of 2012 the deputy Anahit Bakhshyan’s activities can be described through the following numerical expressions, “60 legislative initiatives, 22 922 solved problems of people, 155 statements and announcements from the NA tribune, 41 question and answer sessions with the Government, 1655 meetings with the RoA citizens in Yerevan and marzes [provinces], 329 articles and interviews to mass media outlets, 25 visits to the police and places of detention, on the basis of complaints by citizens...” Perhaps it is not redundant to note that people’s destinies are behind these figures...*

*For this reason, in April of this year, when the united proportional list of the Heritage-Liberal Democrats parties was released, a number of questions arose among public. One of the main questions was as to how it happened that activists who over the past five years had fought in the legislature on behalf of Heritage were not included in the first ten candidate positions in the list, including Anahit Bakhshyan, who appeared in the list as 14<sup>th</sup>. Bakhshyan herself hurried to deny all conversations around this issue. She said, “There can not even be a question about being offended.”*

*In addition to being a proportional candidate, Anahit Bakhshyan also participated in this election as a majoritarian candidate nominated in constituency # 12. She garnered 12 per cent of the votes. In her words, her electorate included parents concerned with their children’s education, especially mothers since in today’s families it is primarily mothers that are concerned about children’s education. “They are my electorate because I come to the National Assembly to fight for quality education,” said Bakhshyan, adding that her electorate knew her very well since school # 27 where she had worked for years was exactly there.*

*Although she became a deputy, today too she continues to struggle for quality education. Today she is Deputy Director of the National Institute of Education. She says that she has never been in opposition to education.*

### **1.1. Motivation to Become a National Assembly Deputy: Gender Peculiarities**

During the research, it was suggested that focus group participants discuss male and female motivations to become a National Assembly deputy.

Men included in the party proportional electoral lists manifest a more critical approach to analyzing the male motivational system for becoming an NA deputy and consider the female motives in a more “gentlemanly” way. Women too tend to be a bit more critical about men’s motives to occupy political posts and comparatively more confident about women’s constructive aspirations.

*“Businessmen go to the National Assembly to protect their businesses, and I am sure that were they protected by the state, they would not go.*

*Women go to the National Assembly to back up their husbands, and to both protect their businesses and solve social problems.”*

*Participant of the male politicians’ focus group*

*“Every man has his own aspirations: one to secure a shelter for himself, the other to gain immunity and so on. Everyone has his self-seeking purpose to enter the National Assembly.”*

*“Men are often guided not by ideas, but by career and other considerations.”*

*Opinions by participants of the male politicians’ focus group*

*“There is certain truth in the judgment that men’s motivation to join the National Assembly is to acquire an immunity status. But you cannot say the same thing about Armenian women. Women join the National Assembly for self-realization purposes.”*

*Participant of the male politicians’ focus group*

*“Men join the National Assembly to protect their own property, to gain a firm hold and to solve economic problems.”*

*Participant of the female politicians’ focus group*

Young people and representatives of non-governmental organizations speak more sharply about the motivations of both men and women to engage in political activities at the National Assembly.

*“Considerations of salary, privileges, power, and immunity play an important role for men in becoming a deputy to the National Assembly. Many have their own personal self-seeking aspirations....There are deputies that have hardly ever participated in the sessions, have never introduced any draft law and yet force their way through to the National Assembly for the third time. They have strictly personal concerns.”*

*Female participant of the focus group of NGO representatives*

*“The primary concern is that of making money and using power to one’s own advantage.”*

*“There is a very insignificant percentage of those who join the NA to change some things for the better. The rest enter the National Assembly to make money, to gain power and to govern.”*

*Opinions by male participants of the youth focus group*

Similar critical evaluations were also made about women candidates.

*“I know some women deputies very well, the businesses they own, the property acquired through unlawful means, their criminal background.... The motivations are the same. I follow the political process, and as a citizen I want to see how my parliament is being formed. Unfortunately, so far no woman has made any reasonable statement: no woman has said as to why she wants to join the parliament, what socio-economic issues she is going to raise there that have remained unaddressed during the past twenty years.”*

*Female participants of the focus group of NGO representatives*

Nevertheless, parallel to utilitarian, profit-seeking, and self-seeking purposes, **constructive motivations valuable for common good** were equally sounded and they were viewed to play an important role in the system of aspirations of Armenian political figures striving to become the National Assembly deputies. We mean here aspirations to solve the problems society is facing and to undertake the improvement of the socio-economic, political, moral-psychological situation in the country. In this respect, representatives of NGOs, student youth, as well as of regional activists are more reserved. Instead, more optimistic are political figures included in the parties' proportional electoral lists. Their observations and evaluations are most reassuring. Furthermore, women consider motivations of women candidates to become the NA deputies as more sincere and constructive.

*“I wouldn't draw a dividing line [between men and women]. The desire to join the National Assembly is first of all determined by one's civic and political stand, by the striving to have a role in the country's socio-political life.”*

*Participant of the focus group of male politicians*

*“I think that the motivational menu is the same for both men and women. There is only one difference: women being to some extent neophytes in this system are guided by more idealistic, self-assertive, spiritual factors than men.”*

*Participant of the focus group of women politicians*

*“Our goal is to use the NA tribune to have our and our people's voice heard by the authorities.”*

*Participant of the focus group of female politicians*

*“I was included in the proportional list taking into account my civic activism, taking into account that I am a blogger and have raised and solved certain issues....Today it is important for me to have levers to be able to speak with state bodies as their equal.”*

*Participant of the focus group of women politicians*

*“Women are striving to help men and to fill the gaps in their work and to correct the shortcomings.”*

*Participant of the focus group of women politicians*

*“In my opinion, women’s motivation is much more honest, much more patriotic when compared to men’s.”*

*Female participant of the focus group of NGO representatives*

**Self-assertion, competitiveness and the aspiration to overcome the difficulties** have been ascribed equal importance with personal, self-seeking motives and the desire to make one’s own contribution to the solution of societal problems. The focus group participants, especially women politicians and students, consider this motivation as most characteristic of men, connecting this fact with the existing stereotype in the public opinion that men must be dominant figures and decision-makers.

*“For men to be in the National Assembly is a way of satisfying their ambitions, an opportunity for self-realization and self-assertion; in this respect men are more enterprising.”*

*Participant of the male politicians’ focus group*

*“There is also another group of men that have self-assertion concerns and strive to solve economic problems.”*

*Participant of the female politicians’ focus group*

*“The same way as women are brought up since childhood to be meek and obedient, men are brought up to aspire to power. And this is the reason why today men are the majority in the National Assembly.”*

*Participant of the female politicians’ focus group*

*“They, men, are striving to firmly establish themselves, are striving to achieve higher positions vis-à-vis women and to dictate their rules of the game. And, naturally, becoming the NA deputies, men mainly want to demonstrate that they are stronger, that at least there they are stronger than women.”*

*Female participant of the focus group of NGO representatives*

*“The desire to have power and to rule is a specific trait in the character of men. In the RoA, among Armenians, it is accepted that men are head of the family and it is men that are considered to be the leaders.”*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*“In my opinion, this is the only reason. The same way as in the family the father is the head, he is also the head in the state as a big family....I don’t know, it is a peculiarity coming from long ago.”*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

**The aspiration for self-assertion**, though to a lesser extent than in case of men, is considered to be also typical of a certain group of women, and this is according to their own, women politicians’ opinion.

*“Another group of women seems to be trying to prove to men that they can have power equally with men and that they can make more proper decisions than men thanks to their more flexible mentality.”*

*Participant of the focus group of women political figures*

*“First of all, only brave women strive to become the NA deputies and officials. Perhaps they want to demonstrate to their environment, society that not only men can perform this work well and efficiently.... They join the National Assembly to prove to men that they too can rule.”*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

The next horizontal of the motivational factors conditioning the aspiration towards a political career is made up of **the self-realization desires**: motives to realize one’s experience, abilities, professional knowledge and skills. This motivation is characteristic of both men and some groups of women. However, according to the focus group participants, the manifestation of this motivation among female political figures is a little bit more telling than among men.

*“Men have much more time for self-education, refinement and naturally, they can present themselves at the National Assembly in line with their educational level.”*

*Participant of the female politicians’ focus group*

*“Women change and want to firmly establish themselves in their work....Those women were nominated for the National Assembly that had something to say. There are many issues that women can raise, while men might neglect those issues. Men might adopt a new draft law without taking into consideration many things, whereas women can look at it from different perspectives.”*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

*“No woman without internal aspiration, i.e. potential, will be nominated. This step is mainly taken for benign purposes, i.e. here there is no much striving for business opportunities or official positions, as is the case with men. Of course, this is true about women too, but overall women are probably trying to realize their abilities for good, better, fair purposes. It seems to me that they understand that they can. If this inner conviction were missing, no woman would ever allow herself to take part in such a contest; so there is the potential, there is the courage.”*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

The **affiliation** (being with others) motivation which, in this case, is manifested as a priority of the collective interests, the party’s decision, is the least pronounced and is almost the same with both men and women.

*“Some men just obey the party decision without thinking whether they are able or not. The party instructs and they do.*

*Women perform the 90% of their parties’ “dirty work”, but when it is necessary to include them in the first integer of five candidates, their work is forgotten... Women are captives of their parties.”*

*Female participant of the focus group of NGO representatives*

The results of the study demonstrate that there are certain differences between men’s and women’s motivations of aspiring to a political career. According to the evaluations by the focus group participants, **self-seeking**, **hedonistic aspirations** and **self-assertion** (competitiveness, overcoming difficulties, advancement of the social status) are more pronounced in the men’s motivational system. These are followed first by **the desire to be useful to society**, to help solution of the existing problems, and then by **the desire to realize and contribute one’s own experience, capacities and professional knowledge**.

According to the expressed opinions, the motivational system of women candidates for the National Assembly prioritizes the **desire to be useful to society** and to promote the solution of the problems society is facing. This is, in a priority order, followed by **self-assertion**: competitiveness, overcoming difficulties, advancement of the social status), and **the desire to realize and contribute one’s own experience, capacities and professional knowledge**; and only after the latter come **self-seeking**, **hedonistic aspirations**. **The party’s decision** occupies the last horizontal both in the men’s and women’s motivational system.

Nevertheless, the position of the focus group participants who believe that there are no significant differences between men’s and women’s motivations seems to be more realistic. We can rather speak about political figures in general, the existing atmosphere, value system, good and bad traditions and stereotypes and the necessity of changing and improving them.



*“The whole issue is about the rules. Those who come should either follow these rules or be left out irrespective of whether they are men or women. The problem is about changing the rules of the game: who will have the courage, who will want, and who will be able to change the rules of the game till the end. Because everybody comes forward with benign statements for the sake of the homeland and bright future, and begins to play according to the rules of that bad game. Both the best men and the best women are left out of the political field.*

*Serious people stay away from such games. We too keep away because we do not want to play according to the rules of this game: to join and to get soiled.*

*Female participant of the focus group of NGO representatives*

The analysis of the political activity motivation of the candidates for the RoA NA deputation reconfirms the viewpoint and the research hypothesis that the increase in the number of women deputies in the legislature will lead to an increased level of concern and care for social issues, socially vulnerable layers of society, and problems of children and women.

Female politicians included in the parties’ proportional electoral lists see themselves primarily in those committees of the National Assembly which deal with issues of education and youth, social security, health, maternity and childhood, human rights protection, ethics, and international relations. Women politicians are planning to introduce their legislative initiatives in the spheres of socially vulnerable layers of society, protection of women’s and children’s rights, poverty elimination, and reinforcement of the principle of social justice.

Men prefer the NA committees on state and legal issues, finance-credit and budget issues, and economic, agricultural and environmental issues and present their legislative initiatives in these fields.

## ZARUHI POSTANJYAN

**“Our homeland lacks the most important thing-justice”**

*With a background in law, Zaruhi Postanjyan entered politics in 2007 becoming a deputy to the National Assembly through the proportional list of the Heritage party. “Our homeland lacks the most important thing-justice,” this is how she explains her motive for entering the political field, noting that today all layers of society come to clash with injustice, and therefore she is ready to serve all the layers. “There is one thing that makes you strong: you are honest and your struggle is just and you don’t have an alternative of looking back.”*

*She says that when in 2007 she entered politics, she was a little bit ridiculed; she was not taken seriously, a little bit.*

*“When we were, for the first time, distributing leaflets at the stadium, representatives of the National Assembly political ‘elite’ would say, ‘You are a politician now and should deal with serious matters. How can you act in such a way?’ But then the time comes when they begin to be afraid of you.”*

*This time she was number three in the proportional list and was also nominated as a majoritarian candidate in constituency # 4, where she had four contestants, including Satik Seiranyan, editor-in-chief of the newspaper 168 Zham (168 hours). Postanjyan came second immediately after the winning candidate. She had collected 20% of the votes in this constituency thus bringing a significant number of votes to her party too.*

*“My message to the electorate is as follows: do everything so that our generation does not doubt that they will be living in the RoA. Our children should have a homeland. My struggle is not just about having a political tribune at the National Assembly, but is a struggle for our homeland, for our freedoms and for the future of our children. There is no another road for me to give up this struggle and go back.”*

*Today, she is the only woman deputy in the Heritage group.*

## **PART II. BROADENING OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: DE JURE AND DE FACTO.**

### **2.1 The Legal Foundations of the Problem in International Documents**

Women's political participation, which is viewed today as a preference in all international documents concerning gender equality, is characterized by women's representation at the level of political decision-making on elections, by their active involvement in electoral processes, and by the real possibilities to influence state policies and to manipulate power levers.

The normative legal base, which guarantees de jure women's full participation in the political life of the Republic of Armenia, and specifically in electoral processes, includes:

- International documents concerning gender equality ratified by Armenia and the state obligations within their framework;
- The RoA Constitution, the State Concept Paper and the Strategic Program on the RoA Gender Policies (2011-2015), the RoA legislation, including the Electoral Code.

According to the international documents, the insurance of equal representation of women and men in governmental structures is considered to be an inseparable part of human rights, an element of social justice and a necessary condition for most effective exercise of democracy.

Moreover, women's participation in electoral processes is regarded as one of the most accurate indicators of democratization of society. The degree to which women's right to elect and be elected is exercised characterizes, on the one hand the stability of democratic processes and, on the other hand, the status of women and their influence on the formation of political institutions and on political decision-making.

According to international approaches, the percentage of women represented in the parliament is considered to be one of the most important indicators reflective of gender equality advance in the socio-political life.

The necessity of an equal representation of the two sexes in legislature is based on the following arguments justified by examples of international practice:

- Non-satisfactory representation of women casts doubt on the legitimacy of the parliament as a representative institution of democracy;
- The formation of a state's policy without taking into account the women's potential is viewed as ineffective use of human resources;
- Any policy needs a woman's vision, a woman's approach, and women need to express their interests in policies;
- A proper representation of women in the parliament leads to a change in the political agenda: with the presence of "the critical mass" the social nature of the adopted laws intensifies, the notion of politics becomes more humanized and a new culture of law adoption develops.

- A parliamentary deputy's career is often the first step towards higher-ranking positions, and those parliamentary parties which do not provide for a proper representation of women in legislature impede by that women's advance into high-ranking leadership positions of the state or the government.

The opinions voiced at the focus groups conducted within the framework of this research are consonant with the international approaches:

*If we pay close attention to statements by women deputies, we will be able to see that women speak more often about social problems. If their involvement in the National Assembly is larger, a great number of social problems will be solved...*

*Participant of the male politician's focus group*

*When women are involved in politics, they play a restraining role vis-à-vis men, which is the most important thing...*

*Participant of the male politician's focus group*

*Women have a stabilizing and centrist role in the parliament, which is very important...*

*Participant of the male politician's focus group*

*I agree that women are more honest about social problems and when reviewing any law the first thing what women notice are social problems. We should not forget the function that women have in the family either: they address budget administration problems*

*Participant of the male politician's focus group*

*We should not wait for the country to change and then have women enter [politics]. It is the women's participation that will change the country. This is my conviction. The Armenian society has a potential which we have not even come close to...*

*Female politician, Focus group with journalists*

## **IZABELLA ABGARYAN**

**"My political position has been shaped in the sphere of blogs..."**

*Unknown to many, however known in social networks, Izabella Abgaryan introduced herself to the public as a blogger. As per her own words, "it happened so that I was one of the first from this sphere who became a deputy candidate." She is a specialist of French, teacher, translator, and author of a French-Armenian legal dictionary. She is not a member of any non-governmental organization, she is nonpartisan. However, owing to her active political position, she received an invitation to cooperate from the Heritage party and was included in the ninth position of the party's proportional electoral list.*

*She said that this position was a very unexpected development for her, “I knew that I would be in the lists, but I learned about the position only on the day of publication...I got very happy that new horizons were opening up to realize the accumulated experience and knowledge, the purposeful struggle and those ideas which had so far remained confined to my blog. I had this feeling that I was shouting, but my voice could not be heard. Now, I will have the opportunity to have myself heard by society from a higher platform.”*

*Her entry into politics was not evaluated in a clear-cut and unequivocal way: in some cases, the response was indignation and surprise; however, more often the responses she received were positive... Isabella, who presents herself as iza1976 in social networks, wrote on her page, “Since my name appeared in pre-electoral lists I have constantly heard this question ‘And who are the bloggers? Since when have bloggers been involved in politics?’... and so on. It was even suggested to me to replace the formulation “non-partisan, blogger” with the formulation “translator of French, teacher”, which I did not agree to, since I believe that my political views were shaped in the sphere of blogs.”*

*As far as women’s issues are concerned, Isabella prioritizes provision of equal opportunities and the problem of combining career and family.*

*The Armenian woman is compelled to choose between work and family. It is all the more painful when women have to even give up the idea of motherhood since they cannot afford to lose the opportunity to earn money, she says.*

## **2.2 Armenia’s International Obligations with respect to Women’s Political Participation**

Having ratified a number of international documents on gender equality, the states, including Armenia, have undertaken certain obligations regarding a full exercise of women’s political rights and provision for certain indicators of women’s representation in governmental structures, and especially in the legislative body.

- a) **UN Documents** – The UN documents on electoral processes include:
  - *The UN Convention on Women’s Political Rights* (1954), which Armenia ratified in 2007 thus, for the first time, reinforcing men’s and women’s equality in the process of exercise of their active and passive electoral rights.
  - *The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), which Armenia ratified in 1993 and which obliges all participant states to “...take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; b) To

participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.”<sup>14</sup>

Article 4 of the Convention envisages temporary special measures to overcome the gender imbalance. The Convention also stipulates, for the first time, changes in the behavioral and cultural patterns underlying discriminatory practices impeding women’s advance (Article 5).

In 2009, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concern in its concluding remarks on the third and fourth periodic reports presented by Armenia that the 15% quota for women as envisaged by the RoA Electoral Code is not effective and suggested that the possibility of bringing that quota to the level of more than 20% be discussed.<sup>15</sup>

- **The Beijing Declaration (1995)** states that “women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”
- **The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)**, having set a strategic goal regarding women’s “full participation in power structures and decision-making”, identified concrete and coordinated measures to expand the opportunities of women’s political participation.

Although, according to the UN principles, gender equality in the government system is characterized by the 50/50 formula of gender representation, the Beijing Platform for Action notes also the notion of “the critical mass”, which delineates the minimum possibility for women to influence decision-making and implies at least 30% women’s representation, especially in legislature.

**The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (2000)**: within the framework of Goal 3 *Support to Gender Equality and Expansion of Women’s Rights and Opportunities*, the target indicators localized<sup>16</sup> by the Government of Armenia:

- Envisage that by 2015 women should account for at least 25% of the general number of the National Assembly deputies, ministers, deputy ministers and marzpets (regional administration heads). However, in 2010 this indicator stood only at 7%. In addition, this very insignificant positive shift took place during the 2007 elections thanks to the increase in the number of women in the National Assembly.

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<sup>14</sup> Article 7, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

<sup>15</sup> The Concluding Remarks of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the 43-rd session, 2009. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1

<sup>16</sup> “Localization of and Progress with the Millennium Development Goals”, National Report, Armenia 2005, page 12

- Envision that by 2015 women's proportion in the total number of community heads should reach more than 10%. However, in 2010 this indicator stood only at 2.7%<sup>17</sup>.

“The implementation of MDG 3 is impossible without broad measures targeting the elimination of discrimination against women. The current situation and the supporting environment are not satisfactory for the implementation of MGD 3 by 2015,” experts conclude on the MGD progress in the 2010 National Report<sup>18</sup>.

- b) **The European Documents** – The European documents, which Armenia joined as a member of the Council of Europe, ascribe special importance to women's participation in electoral processes and especially to mechanisms expanding this participation. Temporary special measures, specifically quotas, are considered to be a most effective mechanism to overcome gender imbalance. These include:
- **The guarantees of the EC Committee of Ministers.** *On Gender Mainstreaming* (1998)<sup>14</sup> and *On Balanced Participation of Men and Women in Political and Public Decision Making* Rec (2003) 3,
  - **PACE recommendations and resolutions.** PACE recommendation #1676 (2004) on women's participation in elections, PACE resolution #1489 (2006) on mechanisms guaranteeing women's participation at decision-making levels; PACE resolution #1706 (2010) *Increasing Women's Representation in Politics through the Electoral System*; recommendations # 273 (2009) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. Specifically, already in 2003 the Committee of Ministers of Member States of the Council of Europe defined the so-called “optimum threshold” of women's and men's representation in governmental structures as “40 to 60” proportion.

In 2006, in Strasbourg, at the sixth conference of EC Ministers the RoA Minister of Labor and Social Issues voted in favor of a resolution obliging the states to provide for the attainment of this threshold by 2020.

In 2010 the same threshold was fixed in the PACE resolution #1706 (2010) on *Increasing Women's Representation in Politics through the Electoral System*<sup>19</sup>, where the Assembly calls upon EC member states “...with a proportional representation list system, consider introducing a legal quota which provides not only for a high proportion of female candidates (ideally at least 40%), but also for a strict rank-order rule (for example a ‘zipper’ system of alternating male and female candidates.” The document also suggests that effective sanctions be applied (it is desirable that these be not in the form of financial penalties, but through non-acceptance of candidate lists).

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<sup>17</sup> Armenia: the National Report on the MDG Progress, 2010

<sup>18</sup> The same source

<sup>19</sup> Increasing Women's Participation in Politics through the Electoral System, Resolution 1706 (2010),

<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XreViewHTML.asp?FileId=17809&Language=EN>

In countries with proportional and mixed electoral systems the Assembly suggested introducing a number of innovative principles, including the principle “of choosing a candidate amongst at least one female and one male nominee, in each party district... or mandatory gender quotas within political parties, or ‘all-women shortlists’ or ‘twinned’ constituencies...”<sup>20</sup>

- **The 2004 OSCE Action Plan**, targeting support to gender equality. The concise approaches to expanding women’s representation in politics in the OSCE documents are reflected in the research requested by the OSCE/ODIHR and conducted at the end of 2010. The study is entitled *Gender Equality in Elected Office: a Six-Step Action Plan* and according to it, the following complex activities are envisaged to advance women’s participation in electoral processes:<sup>21</sup>

- 1) *Guaranteeing the constitutional rights of women and men to elect and to be elected;*
- 2) *Changing the electoral system towards dominantly proportional one, since this increases the probability of women’s election;*
- 3) *Reviewing the order of recruitment of party candidates through introduction of gender quotas;*
- 4) *Introducing gender quotas in electoral codes;*
- 5) *Implementing measures aiming to advance the qualifications of women aspiring to elected positions through, among other things, mass media, a network of knowledge exchange, training and retraining programs, and funding women candidates;*
- 6) *Altering internal parliamentary rules and procedures concerned with deputies’ working conditions in favor of women deputies with young children; the changes under consideration include, among other things, the timetable of sessions, principles of appointment to leadership positions and availability of day-care institutions for children.*

## LARISA ALAVERDYAN

### “I am the type that does not take offence and is constantly working”

*“For me, the most important trait of a politician is honesty and devotion to the interests of the people. Neither knowledge, nor skills [count], all that is achievable if desired; the important thing is that people enter the political field with honest intentions. That’s why, no matter how much people talk about pragmatism in politics, I think that starting with shady dealings will never yield positive results,” says a member of the Heritage faction in the past National Assembly and the first Defender of Human Rights Larisa Alaverdyan, whose absence in the newly-elected parliament is looked at with great regret by the public.*

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<sup>20</sup> The same source

<sup>21</sup> Gender Equality in Elected Office: a six-step action plan by Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook, Harvard University and Washington University in ST Louis; Baseline study for the OSCE/ODIHR *Handbook on Measures for Promoting Women’s Political Participation, 2011* <http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>



*Larisa Alaverdyan herself responds to the above observation remarking half seriously and half jokingly that “I proved with my own example that you cannot be a deputy permanently.”*

*After elections, Larisa Alaverdyan, who, to the surprise of many, had the 41<sup>st</sup> place in the Heritage proportional list, made up her mind to leave the team.*

*Specifically, she did not conceal that she did not agree to an alliance with Liberal Democrats since that, in her opinion, would not bring success to Heritage. To the question whether she feels offended that active deputies of Heritage, including herself will not be in the newly-elected parliament, she responds, “I am the type that does not take offence and I am constantly working.”*

*Speaking about the problem of women’s participation, Alaverdyan notes that only mass women’s entry can bring changes to the political field.*

*“One should not wait for the country to change and to have equal opportunities and then women enter active politics. It is through the entry of women that the country is going to be changed. ...” assures Alaverdyan noting that as far as women are concerned the Armenian society has a potential to which we have not even come close yet.*

*Today, Alverdyan is heading the newly-created Chair of Human Rights Protection at the Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, as well as continues her activities in the non-governmental organization Fund against the Law Arbitrariness.*

### **2.3 The National Legislation within the Context of Parliamentary Elections**

The principle of legal gender equality, defined as prohibition of gender-based discrimination is secured in the RoA Constitution and is reflected in the national legislation, which does not contain discriminatory norms either. However, constitutional rights secured de jure do not exclude de facto discriminatory practices.

Moreover, according to the sociological surveys conducted in Armenia, the society is especially aware that there is discrimination in the system of political elections and parties. According to the 2011 survey, this fact is pointed out by 36.6 per cent of the respondents<sup>22</sup>.

According to expert evaluations, despite the fact that the RoA Constitution provides for the principle of the legal equality of genders, women in Armenia do not have real opportunities of influencing the formation and development of state policies.

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<sup>22</sup> *Gender Dimension of Social and Political Participation in Armenia*, the UNFPA *Combating Gender-based Violence in the South Caucasus project*; *Caucasus Center for Sociological Research: Yerevan 2011*

The Republic of Armenia is significantly lagging behind the international indicators by its degree of women's representation in the National Assembly and in general at the decision-making level. This attests to the existence of discriminatory practices against women and completely ineffective use of human resources in the governance system, especially taking into account the fact that women account for 52% of the population of Armenia, and 60% of those with higher education.<sup>23</sup>

#### FACT

*In the world, one of every five deputies is a woman.*

*According to the recent data of the inter-parliamentary union, women average 205% representation in the world's parliaments, which means that in the whole world at least one out of five deputies is a woman.*

*The highest representation of women, 42%, in parliaments is in the Northern European countries. The OSCE countries average 23.4%. The highest percentage of women's parliamentary participation is in Arab (14.9%) and the Pacific Ocean (12.7%) countries.*

*Women's representation in Armenia's National Assembly is 10.7%.*

The sociological surveys conducted in Armenia demonstrate that there is a disparity between public expectations and actual representation of women in the National Assembly. According to the results of the survey conducted in 2008<sup>24</sup>, 85.5% of the respondents answered the question *How many women should there be in the National Assembly in your opinion?* by expressing themselves in favor of 20% to 50% proportion, i.e. they identified as desirable a much higher proportion of women than their representation was in the preceding and new convocation parliaments.

During this research, i.e. four years after the above noted survey, the participants in the focus groups noted that they would like to see 20% to 50 % women's representation in the National Assembly:

*I wish there was a competition, let's say they [women] would represent more than 50%...*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*We expect the 50/50 proportion; because we must definitely eliminate the notion male-female from political life: we have only citizens...*

*Participant of the male politician's focus group*

Within the framework of the commitments stipulated in the above noted international documents on expanding women's political participation, the Republic of Armenia has taken certain steps to implement the approaches envisioned by these documents, including the introduction of a gender quota.

<sup>23</sup> *Women and Men in Armenia. Statistical booklet, Yerevan 2010*

<sup>24</sup> *The Study of Women's Non-Satisfactory Representation at the Decision-Making Level*; the National Institute for Labor and Social Research, Yerevan 2008

Specifically, in 2010 the RoA Government endorsed its *Concept Paper on Gender Policies*, which defined the problem of ensuring balanced representation of women and men in decision-making at the levels of legislative and executive governmental bodies. The Concept Paper envisions that "...In line with Armenia's obligations, changes will be introduced in the RoA Electoral Code to set 30% gender quota, taking into consideration the Council of Europe's recommendation about "the equality **threshold**" of 40% and 60%, and measures will be undertaken to expand, stage-by-stage, women's representation in highest and chief positions at all levels of the executive power: ... To promote those parties, which base their activities on consistent development of intraparty democracy, take into account the gender factor when selecting leading bodies, and help women's advancement through provision of gender-balanced representation in electoral lists."<sup>25</sup>

**The RoA Gender Policy Strategic Program** (2011-2015) also envisages the expansion of temporary special measures: "To take special measures to provide for women's 30% representation in legislative and executive bodies at decision-making levels."<sup>26</sup>

However, the results of the parliamentary elections held in 2012 demonstrate that so far the measures undertaken in implementing the Gender Policy Concept Paper have not yielded the desired results: the situation is not yet in keeping with democratic criteria and current challenges.

According to expert evaluations, the main problem with the de jure secured equal rights and de facto realization of these rights is the absence of equal opportunities for women. This gap in the national legislation is to be filled by the *Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities*, the draft of which is currently undergoing second reading at the National Assembly. The bill is included among the measures provided for in the *Eastern Partnership* program of the European Union with Armenia and should have been adopted two years ago.

Before the law is adopted, the national legislation guarantees to some extent women's participation in electoral processes. Specifically, the Electoral Code stipulates a number of provisions ensuring gender sensitivity in electoral processes. These provisions relate to the formation of election commissions and party election lists.

- a) The gender quota defined by Articles 40 and 41 of the Electoral Code in the formation of the Central Election Commission and Territorial Election Commissions (TECs).

"The two members appointed for each [commission] at the suggestion of the Chairman of the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Armenia and the Chairman of the Chamber of Advocates of the Republic of Armenia should be representatives of different sexes."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Concept Paper on the RoA Gender Policies (2010) [http://www.gov.am/u\\_files/file/kananc-xorth/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf](http://www.gov.am/u_files/file/kananc-xorth/Gender-hayecakarg.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> The RoA Gender Policy Strategic Program (2011-2015) [http://www.e-gov.am/u\\_files/file/decrees/kar2011/05/kar60\\_1.pdf](http://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/kar2011/05/kar60_1.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Article 40, the RoA Electoral Code

“The Territorial Election Commissions should include no fewer than two representatives of each sex.”<sup>28</sup>

## FACT

### Women in electoral commissions

*The Central Election Commission has seven members, three of which are women; one of them is Deputy CEC Chairperson.*

*Women’s representation in Territorial Election Commissions stands at about 30.5%: 34% in Yerevan and 28% in marzes (administrative regions).*

*Women account for only 16% of all members of the leadership of TECs. Three of them are chairpersons, 8 are deputy chairpersons, and 9 are secretaries. Women are not in leadership positions in 25 out of the 41 Territorial Election Commissions.*

*Women’s representation is especially significant in Precinct Election Commissions (PECs): 44% of those involved in these commissions are women. At the same time, 32% of 1,982 Precinct Election Commissions have women as their chairpersons.*

## OPINION

*“The gender quota was maintained in the organization of the May 6th parliamentary elections. Non-governmental organizations dealing with women issues were also very active in electoral precincts, a great number of domestic observers were women, which is very commendable.”<sup>29</sup>*

*Radmila Sekerinska,  
Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission*

b) The gender quota defined by Article 108 of the Electoral Code at the time of nominating deputy candidates to the National Assembly through the proportional system of election.

“The number of representatives of each gender should not exceed 80 per cent in each integer of five candidates starting with candidate number two in the electoral list (2-6, 2-11, 2-16 and thus continuously till the end of the list) of a party, a party alliance and each party involved in the alliance which are elected to the National Assembly through the proportional system of representation”...<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Article 41, the RoA Electoral Code

<sup>29</sup> Radmila Sekerinska, interview to WomenNet.am, 05.7.2012 / <http://womennet.am/>

<sup>30</sup> Article 108, the RoA Electoral Code

## FACT

*Percentage-wise, women's representation in the newly-elected parliament is 10.7%, which means that by applying the 20% gender quota and presenting to the public proportional lists with on average 22.9% female candidates, the parties have de facto brought to the Parliament fewer women than half of those registered.*

## OPINION

*During the past elections, through application of the 15% quota, 12 women (9.1%) were elected to the Parliament on the basis of proportional representation, and none was elected on the basis of majoritarian representation. If we take into account the fact that during these elections two of the elected 14 women became deputies on the basis of majoritarian representation, it turns out that the parties have made no progress. Moreover, the 20% quota stipulated in the Electoral Code has lost its value. Were this quota to apply, the public could have expected at least that high representation of women in the National Assembly.<sup>31</sup>*

**Table 1**

Women's Representation in the Party Proportional Lists and in the National Assembly Fractions<sup>32</sup>

PARTY	Percentage of Women In Electoral Lists	Number of Women Among the 1-st 5 Candidates	Number of Women Among the 1-st 10 Candidates	Number of Women Elected to the NA	Percentage of Women in the NA Fractions	Percentage of Women In Electoral Lists
PROSPEROUS ARMENIA	21,8%	0	1	2	37	5,4%
HERITAGE	24,6%	1	2	1	5	20%
ARMENIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS ALLIANCE	20,3 %	0	1	1	7	14 %
ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION	31,7%	0	1	0	5	0
DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ARMENIA	24,4%	1	4	-	-	-
COMMUNIST PARTY OF ARMENIA	21,1%	0	1	-	-	-
REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ARMENIA	21,3%	0	1	7+2*	69	13%

<sup>31</sup> WomenNet.am Review, <http://womennet.am/>

<sup>32</sup> According to the CEC data [www.elections.am](http://www.elections.am)

UNITED ARMENIANS	37,9%	1	3	-	-	-
RULE-of-LAW COUNTRY	20,2 %	1	1	1	6	16%
TOTAL	22,9%	4	17	14	131	10,7%

*\*The Republican Party of Armenia faction has 7 women elected on the basis of proportional representation, and 2 women elected on the basis of majoritarian representation.*

Analyzing the election results, according to which only 10.7% of women are involved in the newly-elected parliament, we can argue that this means that the quota envisaged in support of women by law did not work.

As to why “it did not work” implies at least three main explanations:

- 1) Women were represented extremely low among the first integer of five candidates<sup>33</sup> (the number of mandates corresponding to the minimum passable threshold) and even among the first ten candidates. Significant regress has been recorded as compared to the previous elections: in 2007 the inclusion of women in the first integer of five candidates in party lists was four times higher, and among the first ten candidates more than two times. At the same time, both in the preceding and the 2012 elections those parties which included women to the maximum extent in electable positions were not elected to the Parliament.
- 2) The quota was neutralized as a result of shifts and self-withdrawals due to intraparty considerations, which in many cases was incomprehensible to the public.
- 3) In order to abide by the requirement of the law the parties included women in their lists. The latter, however, were actually not ready to work in a legislative body and for this reason withdrew their candidacy leaving their positions to others.

*Quotas are formalistic by nature, they should be reinforced by some mechanisms so that the parties do not include and leave out women just to shut someone up, but actually help them grow and give them [women]opportunities to express themselves and include these women. So that they will not be afraid of women...*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

*I believe that it is not moral when women allow their names to be used and first agree to be included in party electoral lists and then easily withdraw their candidacy, thus preventing other women, women of principle, from entering the legislative body...<sup>34</sup>*

<sup>33</sup> The majority of parties have interpreted the requirement “in each integer of five candidates starting with candidate number two: 2-6, 2-11, 2-16 and so on till the end” in a peculiar way and have brought in women especially from the sixth position.

<sup>34</sup> Jemma Hasratyan, interview to WomenNet.am

*I know one candidate from our party who is now nominated in the proportional list. I spoke to her and she says that if elected will relinquish her mandate: as she is not yet ready...*

*Participant of the women politician's focus group*

The ineffectiveness of the applied quota in Armenia is especially striking within the context of the fact mentioned in the joint report by the Inter-parliamentary Union *Women in Politics 2012* and the *UN-Women* structure. Seventeen countries out of 59 where elections were held last year used quotas. In these countries women came to occupy 27% of parliamentary seats. At the same time, in those countries which did not use quotas women accounted for only 16% of all elected Members of Parliament.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, in terms of women's representation Armenia's parties have been much more conservative than the republic's citizens, who, according to all public opinion surveys, including this one, are ready to see more women in the Parliament than the parties were able to nominate in their lists.

### **Peculiarities of Majoritarian Struggle**

Out of 139 candidates taking part in the majoritarian struggle eleven (about 8%) were women. It is noteworthy that seven out of the total number of nominated women were nonpartisan. According to their employment, three were political journalists, three were deputies and two were education-sector employees.

The following facts can qualify as manifestations of a positive trend:

- The number of women participating in elections through majoritarian representation doubled as compared to the previous elections;
- There was only one woman among 41 candidates who applied self-withdrawal before election;
- According to journalists and experts, the public noticed the election campaign of especially those women who were nominated through this representation, at a time when it remained almost not privy to the election campaigns of women included in the lists of major parties since the advocacy was carried out primarily at the level of party heads.
- And finally, the majority of women nominated through this electoral system garnered quite a number of votes in their constituencies; many came second immediately following the winning candidate.

At the same time, the fact that 32 out of 41 constituencies had no female majoritarian candidate (78 per cent) was problematic, which the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission has assessed as follows:

#### **EVALUATION**

*“... While women have the right to stand as a candidate, realization of this right and opportunity to stand is problematic. Furthermore, 3 of the 12 female majoritarian*

<sup>35</sup> Michelle Bachelet Highlights Quotas to Accelerate Women's Political Participation;

<http://www.unwomen.org/2012/03/michelle-bachelet-highlights-quotas-to-accelerate-women's-political-participation>

*candidates reported no campaign expenditures, which casts doubt on the genuineness of their candidacy.”<sup>36</sup>*

Of concern was also the fact that two women were nominated in each of the three constituencies and they apparently interfered with each other. Only two women achieved success: Karine Poghosyan, Director of school #1 in Artashat, in constituency #17, and Marine Marabyan, Executive Director of the limited liability company *International Masis Tabak*, in constituency #40. Both of them were candidates nominated by the Republican Party of Armenia.

## **LILIT GALSTYAN**

**“My electors are those citizens who do not want to leave Armenia”**

*Being a candidate of philological sciences, a member of the ARF party, a deputy to the National Assembly of the previous convocation who has, over a period of five years, fought for justice in the National Assembly and other fields of public life, Lilit Galstyan is somewhat surprised at the question as to how she has come to find herself in the center of politics.*

*“I have always been in politics since I understood a long time ago that politics is a type of thing and principle, as well as a world outlook which prompts to change something. I connected my imagined Armenia and my realization as a citizen and political figure with the ARF and joined the ARF membership at the time when the party actually did not carry out any public activities in Armenia.”*

*At the same time, Galstyan confesses, it is very difficult for a woman to establish herself in big politics in our political reality. She says that Armenia has still to go a long way to, in the first place, overcome the stereotypes about equality and to understand that women’s participation in politics is not only permissible, but also necessary.*

*She was the 20<sup>th</sup> in the ARF proportional list (a fact that remained incomprehensible to the public). Nevertheless, she took a very active part in the party’s electoral campaign, “My electors are those citizens who do not want to leave Armenia, who are not going to allow to be spat at for five thousand drams and those citizens who want a dignified life for their children...”*

*Evaluating women’s opportunities, she said after elections, “Unfortunately, Armenia is seriously very far away from a model of a democratic country. Under these circumstances, to be frank, it is a fairy tale to talk about sound mechanisms for women’s entry into Parliament and advocacy campaign, as well as about intraparty democracy...A normal woman, civilized and thinking in terms of democratic criteria is unable to play in accordance with the rules of the existing political game...”*

*Do her comments refer also to her own party? While answering this question, Galstyan insists that her party has internal democracy and women accounted for 32 per cent of the candidates in the party list.*

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<sup>36</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, June 26, 2012; <http://www.osce.org/odihr/91643>



*At the same time, she cannot assess positively the fact that as a result of these elections the ARF party, for the first time in its history, entered the parliament without women deputies. “But we have what we have,” says the former deputy.*

*Today, Lilit Galstyan is actively involved in the political and public life publishes sharp articles in the press and is an organizer of the Help Your Brother initiative providing assistance to Syrian Armenians.*

## 2.4 Gender quotas in Armenia: Background, Efficiency Assessment

Women’s NGOs have played an active role in the process of securing a gender quota in the Electoral Code. However, the NGO suggestions have been adopted only partially.

The proposals were based on the results of sociological surveys, Armenia’s obligations under international documents, and the Concept Paper on the RoA Gender Policies adopted by the Government in 2010. Women’s NGOs had also participated in the development of the Concept Paper.

### FACT

*According to the sociological study on Gender dimension of Social and Political Participation in Armenia,<sup>37</sup> 57% of the respondents expressed a positive attitude towards the idea of setting a quota in different structures of political and state governance. Moreover, according to the respondents, the optimum gender quota should average 36.5% in a legislative body.*

The focus groups and individual conversations with political figures have demonstrated that the absence of a clear-cut attitude to quotas is connected with their use in the Soviet period, as well as with a number of counterarguments, among which the main one is that use of quotas violates the principles of democracy.

*I myself am very much against quotas and in general against any discrimination, but I have come to the conclusion that a quota mechanism compels the parties to consider more seriously their internal democracy.*

*Participant of the female politician’s focus group*

The necessity of applying quotas becomes more obvious when considering the dynamics of women’s representation in the Parliament, based on the results of all elections held since independence. This causes a serious concern since there have consistently been very low indicators of women’s representation in the republic’s legislature.

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<sup>37</sup> *Gender Dimension of Social and Political Participation in Armenia*, the UNFPA Combating Gender-based Violence in the South Caucasus project, Caucasus Center for Sociological Research, Yerevan 2011.

To illustrate the point, we should note that the number of women in the National Assembly composition increased from 6.3% (the first convocation) to 10.7% (the fifth convocation), i.e. only by 4.4 per cent.

#### **FACT**

*As of 1975, the number of women in the world parliaments did not exceed 11% on average; in 2012 it averages 20%. According to European experts, if this number continues to increase at this pace (0.20% annually) and is not accompanied by any special measures, women parliamentarians will be able to achieve equality with men only in one century and a half.*

*Women's representation in the RoA National Assembly has increased at almost the same pace over the past twenty years and that largely thanks to quotas. This means that Armenia will achieve women's 20 per cent representation, as is today the case in the world parliaments, at best in fifty years.*

The suggestions presented to the National Assembly by 23 women's NGOs in 2011, during the stage of discussing final amendments to the Electoral Code, envisage the preservation of 70/30 gender proportion in party lists, with alternation of men and women not exceeding three candidate seats.

Almost similar suggestion was made by the RoA Public Council's Commissions on *Issues of Development of Civil Society* and on *Demographic and Gender Issues*. Another group of women's NGOs, Forum of Women Leaders, proposed 50/50 gender proportion.

As a result, the National Assembly adopted a proper wording for the gender quota, but in essence set it to be only 20 per cent. The principle of candidate alternation was rejected. Rejected was also the suggestion to preserve the quota in case women candidates relinquish their mandate, i.e. "A female candidate relinquishing her mandate should be replaced by the next female candidate in the party electoral list."

An analysis of the recent parliamentary elections, and especially the manifested practice of giving up mandates by a large number of women, demonstrated that in case of securing the suggestions made by NGOs at the time, it would have been possible to prevent the application of a technology impeding women's participation.

The initiative undertaken, within the framework of this research, by the NGO sector to prevent possible relinquishing of mandates by women also remained without response.

*Yesterday I heard something. I don't remember where I heard it from: on radio or on television. They were saying the following, "...dear women, do not give up your mandates..." It was very interesting. I began to think... I know that a quota has been introduced into parties, that every fifth candidate should be a woman in the lists. And now it turns out that it is very likely to be just formalism... I believe that those women who are forced to give up their mandates should receive full support of women's non-*

*governmental organizations. In this case we can see the true value of women's NGOs, how strong they are and how fair their goals are and this will show their solidarity...*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*It seems to me that they will not give up at this moment. There is society and NGOs, the previous experience, and this issue has been raised so often that suppose such a situation comes about, I will be ashamed to give up... We can also struggle...*

*Participant of the women politician's focus group*

Taking into consideration the practice of giving up mandates, for different reasons, by some women already back in 2007 after the RoA National Assembly elections, the *Caucasus* Center for Sociological Research and the Civil Society Cooperation Network, which unites 30 Oxfam partner NGOs, organized collection of signatures in advance of elections and appealed to the parties, their leaders and proportional female candidates in an attempt to prevent mandate relinquishing by women included in the lists. (*See Attachment 1*)

Besides, immediately before and after these elections radio and television PSAs<sup>38</sup> were prepared and broadcast in an appeal to female candidates. Nevertheless, after the elections more than two dozen women activists relinquished their mandates citing different reasons.

#### **FACT**

*According to the data of the Central Election Commission, after the elections 102 deputy candidates submitted self-withdrawal letters. Twenty-six of them were women, including 14 women from the Republican Party of Armenia and 10 women from the Prosperous Armenia Party, who refused to enter the Parliament giving up their seats to men.*

Questions arise not so much because of the number of self-withdrawals among women, though their number increased by about three times as compared to previous elections, but because of the fact that the process of presenting withdrawals is not transparent: not only motives are not announced, but they cannot be logically explained.

Thus, if the overwhelming majority of self-withdrawals by men are conditioned by candidate's taking up a high-ranking position within the executive power, in case of women this justification applies only to one third of them. The reasons for the remaining number of female withdrawals remain unknown to public at large.

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xKv1HamWHO>

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission has given quite a negative assessment of the withdrawal practice as such. According to expert observations, “The high number of elected candidates who withdrew (18 per cent of elected MPs) raises concern about the degree of respect for voters’ choice.”<sup>39</sup>

Quite a large number of women withdrawals were also registered prior to elections. In this case, though, the reasons became known to the public. The women who withdrew declared their motives. These withdrawals were primarily connected with the violation of the democratic principles during the compilation of party lists and as a consequence with women’s inclusion in the list as not electable, something which did not match these women’s many years of work in a given party.

*It is true that women’s representation in parties has been secured: every sixth candidate, but it is absolutely no secret what principles underlined the compilation of party lists in Armenia... To speak about internal democracy in the Republic of Armenia’s party system is to speak about an inglorious reality. A normal woman, civilized and thinking in terms of democratic criteria is not competitive under these rules of the game...*

*Female politician meeting with journalists*

Participants in all focus groups held within this research found unacceptable the practice of withdrawals, irrespective of the fact whether they were made at the request or at the diktat of the party or by an independent decision of women.

*If you as a political force have included and rated these people in this list and then post factum start to make changes, this is not only unpleasant, but also unallowable...*

*Participant of the women politician’s focus group*

*I believe that if the introduction of a quota to secure a gender balance was one step forward, relinquishing mandates are two steps back. This is dependent on the mentality of women politicians and on why in the first place they appeared in the lists. If the reason was the quota as such, then her role indeed is to withdraw. And if they [women] have really earned their places in the lists, I believe that these women activists will not give up their mandates and will be able to live up to...*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*[This practice] is unacceptable not only with regard to women, but in general when parties take in advance withdrawal letters from people included in their lists so that in case of a successful outcome they can promote other persons and make them deputies...Electors vote for first-place candidates, but*

<sup>39</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, June 26, 2012. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/91643>

*then those entered at the end of the lists come forward and become deputies. The list cannot be allowed to be deformed...*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

*There are at times situations when you cannot blame the person: health problems and other things. This is a different issue. But when it is forced upon... Then why had they included that person in the list while compiling it.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

According to the public opinion, women politicians and international observers, in the event of the absence of a gender quota secured by legislation, the number of women nominated for the parliament would be incomparably small. Yet, according to the same experts, this measure is not sufficient to provide for a gender balance at the decision-making level.

## EVALUATION

*...A review should be undertaken of the effectiveness of the candidate nomination quota as a temporary special measure for achieving de facto equality with regard to women's right and opportunity to stand as candidates.*

*...Political parties should be encouraged to have a gender policy and to publicly provide gender-disaggregated information on their numbers. Consideration could be given to political parties being required to have a proportion of women on their senior decision-making bodies and to having more transparent and democratic methods for candidate selection.<sup>40</sup>*

An analysis of the election process and results allows to conclude that parallel to the development of women's organizations and mass media, and the cooperation between them as well as between them and the parties and other factors which contribute to the improvement of the indicators of women's representation in legislature and women's political participation, **it is necessary that the RoA Electoral Code secure the principle that in case of mandate withdrawal by proportional female deputies they will be replaced by successive women candidates. This opinion was confirmed in all focus groups conducted within the framework of this research.**

*As of today, the 20% quota is not sufficient because there is no mechanism to ensure 20 per cent. In my opinion, today the quota should be 40% in order to ensure the de facto realization of 20 per cent. Next, quotas are very important for countries like ours. Quotas are temporary measures. But I don't*

<sup>40</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, June 26, 2012. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/91643>

*know why our men got scared of it. It took us exactly twenty years to understand that a quota should have been introduced...*

*Female participant of the NGOs focus group*

*If we consider Armenia a democratic state, the quota should be minimum 30-35%. However, under our living conditions and when there is no quality it is natural that we should strive to maintain at least this 20%. The problem is with developing mechanisms and not with the quota as such. Efforts should be exerted in this direction...*

*Female participant of the NGOs focus group*

*20% at the National Assembly and not in party lists. If a woman withdraws from the list, she should be followed by the next one. This is a legal issue. Had this provision been secured, they would be compelled to apply it...*

*Male participant of the NGOs focus group*

*I agree that the 20% should be maintained not in the party lists, but should de facto be in the National Assembly. When we discuss the issue of quotas, we should take into account the fact that we have 21 majoritarian seats, i.e. only 90 are proportional. For this reason, we need a higher quota to de facto have 20% in the National Assembly...*

*Female participant of the NGOs focus group*

## **LUDMILA SARGSYAN**

**“It is not easy for men to accept the existence of women leaders...”**

*Lyudmila Sargsyan, a member of the Armenian National Congress, Director of the Social Democratic Hnchak Party of Armenia says that she has never seen herself outside political processes because she has always been concerned about what is happening in the country.*

*“By nature, I am a social democrat. The Social Democratic Hnchak party (SDHP) is spiritually closest to me. I joined the membership of the party in 2003; in seven months I became the SDHP Chairperson. It was a very difficult time period. It is not easy for men to accept the existence and activities of a woman leader.”*

*Parallel to working, she studied. There were hindrances from the Diaspora because over its history of 125 years the party had never had a woman chairperson at any period of time, especially in the party’s structure in Armenia. Finally, the political field recognized her. In 2009, when the party split, she had serious problems. But, in her own words, there was a team, there were politicians who showed their appreciation and understood the importance [of her]; through their moral support, including also that of the Armenian National Congress, she remained in the party.*

*In her opinion, in both man's and woman's case, human appeal is very important. Maybe in case of women it is more important. The charm should come from inside.*

*"You must be feminine and persistent, beautiful and fighting; you should be able to create your unique image, without resembling anyone else. Society too, in its turn, should be able to accept that women are different. Not all women can be satisfied with being just a woman and working in the kitchen. There are also other kinds of women who can do more than dozens of men. For this reason, such a woman cannot be evaluated by the same criteria. One should be able to see that and differentiate. And today, this is a problem."*

*The story compiled based on media publications and interview to WomenNet.am*

## PART III. WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The social environment for women's political participation has been studied through issue discussion in focus groups, through gender analysis of political party programs, through gender analysis of public statements by the country's politicians and party leaders.

### 3.1. Public Opinion and Changes therein about the Phenomenon of Women's Political Participation

The public opinion about women's political participation has been the focus of attention of gender experts for a long time. Over the recent years, there have been positive shifts in this area. Thus, during the research carried out in 2011 the researchers tried to clarify as to how favorable public opinion was towards men and women pursuing a political career.<sup>41</sup>

It was found out that 85.5% of those questioned believed that Armenian public opinion was positive about men's political career, and only 46.5% about the women's. Only 7.8% of the respondents noted that public opinion clearly disfavored women's political career (the same indicator with regard to men was 0.9%); largely unfavorable- respectively 19.2% and 1.5%, and indifferent - respectively 22.4% and 8.8%. While the survey revealed a gender bias in public opinion on men and women pursuing a political career, the noted 46.5% was an advance as compared to previous surveys.

Earlier, the 2008 research recorded that 46.2% of those questioned agreed with the stereotype that "politics is not women's business".<sup>42</sup> These data points to the fact that over the recent years there have been some positive changes in Armenia's public opinion about women's political participation. In addition, there have been positive shifts in the republic from the perspective of state gender policies.

Since 2008 the RoA Government has recognized gender equality as one of its priorities.<sup>43</sup> Starting from the same year, political figures too, in their speeches, have begun to voice the necessity of establishing gender equality. On February 11, 2010 the RoA Government approved the RoA Gender Equality Concept Paper. In 2011, the Government endorsed its 2011-2015 Strategic Program on the Republic of Armenia's Gender Policies, which notes that special measures should be undertaken to ensure 30% women's representation in legislative and executive structures at the decision-making level. However, sounding the problem of gender equality and adopting important documents about it does not yet mean a solution to the problem. The entrenched political traditions and practice are changing slowly.

The achievement of gender equality is impossible without real promotion of women's political participation, without establishing gender equality at the decision-making level, and of course, without a favorable public opinion.

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<sup>41</sup> *Gender Dimension of Social and Political Participation in Armenia*, UNFPA CGBV, the *Caucasus Center for Sociological Research*, Yerevan 2011.

<sup>42</sup> *Study of Causes for Non-Satisfactory Representation of Women at the Decision-Making Level*, the National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Yerevan 2008.

<sup>43</sup> See the RoA Government's 2008-2012 Plan of Action.



This time the study of public opinion was made through focus groups. The following question was asked in all focus groups, “According to your assessment, what is the public opinion in our country about the phenomenon of women’s political participation? Are changes noticeable in this area?” Different opinions were voiced with regard to this question in all focus groups. However, most of those who expressed their opinions noted a positive trend both from the perspective of women’s social and political activation, political participation, and changes manifest in public opinion. Some explain this change by the market structure and related change in gender roles in the family.

*...when often men could not do it, women would take it up and earn their own and their families living and that wasn't surprising. The fact that she has a language specialty and had to become very good clerks, employees of different international offices and after this they advanced in their profession by a degree. The positive dynamics has brought about this educational idea. The positive dynamics in all probability will continue.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

*There has been a great change and it is very positive, there is even a leap forward.*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

Women’s activism in social and political life led to perception changes about the woman’s role and gender stereotypes, and an opinion began to form that

*Women can be fighting, women can be helpful, and a woman's profession can be in the same way equal to a man's profession...*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

These changes also impact the gender regimes<sup>44</sup> of different public institutions, slowly bringing about changes in them.

*Certain feminization of life is going on...That's why perceptions change...There is a positive tendency. The most important thing is that it is changing slowly, but in a stable manner.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

In the focus groups some opinions were even voiced that women’s role in parties has increased.

*I can say this not only about our party since I have paid attention to other parties, we can say that the number is proportionally increasing. This shows that the role of women in society is increasing and this is really connected with the democratization processes.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

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<sup>44</sup> A gender regime is a gender order established inside public institutions; it is based on division of labor, order of governmental ranks, sexuality, and social constructivism.

The voiced opinion is not confirmed by the statistical data. Over the recent years, women's corps has increased only in some parties. For example, in the Republican Party of Armenia the number of women increased by 20% in 2012 as compared to 2007 reaching 51 per cent. In other parties the percentage of women has decreased.

Thus, the percentage of women in the *Rule-of-Law Country* party has decreased as compared to 2007; however, it remains the highest: 63 per cent. The women's number has decreased also in the *Heritage* and *Armenian Revolutionary Federation* parties becoming respectively 45% and 14%.<sup>45</sup>

The role of women even in parties where they have large membership is not big. First of all, there is a small number of women in party leading bodies, there is little motivation of an interest in parties to nominate women and to strengthen the gender component in party election programs, and there is absence of nomination mechanisms.

However, an opinion voiced in a focus group can attest to the fact that nevertheless the number of leader women has increased in the parties. The activism of these women creates an illusion in public opinion and inside parties that their number in leadership positions is actually higher.

In the political field, due to a small number of active women, the attitude towards them is very personalized. It is not accidental that numerous opinions were voiced in the focus groups that the activism of women deputies (and their names were given) in the previous National Assembly had contributed to the change in the public opinion.

*It is thanks to the deputies themselves that the opinion has become positive. Larisa Alaverdyan, Zaruhi Postanjyan, Anahit Bakhshyan, and today nobody pays attention to the fact that they are women, that they are weak. They have proved that women have their place and can act even more effectively than men*

*Participant of the women politician's focus group*

At the same time, it should be noted that also pessimistic opinions were voiced, which denied any change in public opinion, and stressed the existence of double standards towards men and women in political life.

*The same mistake which both men and women make is not forgiven in case of women, whereas a man's mistake is forgiven. Here, there is a bit of increased danger; if you take up a responsibility, you should be as cautious as possible.*

*Participant of the women politician's focus group*

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<sup>45</sup> These data were received directly from party offices in 2012, prior to parliamentary elections.

We should note that the gender discourse manifest in statements by high-ranking politicians had not escaped the attention of the focus group participants.

By our observation, the gender discourse first appeared in speeches by high-ranking political figures in 2008. Statements on women's political activism have especially increased after Armenia's involvement within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. However, this has not impacted the actual party policies since no changes have been introduced in party programs, statutes, and no mechanisms have been created to promote women at least through the party hierarchy.

Statements made in focus groups emphasized that there was a real gap between public policies of party leaders and actual policies of the same parties.

*Nothing has changed over a period of twenty years. ...In my opinion, among officials and especially in upper echelons, the President comes out with a different statement, that women should be given space [for their activism], the lower tiers begin to twist all that. Instead of finding mechanisms to ensure post factum 20% women's representation, they do everything to impede it; they do everything to break it. It is shameful after all, how long is it going to continue?*

*Female participant of the Focus group with NGO representatives*

It is interesting that the focus group participants confirm that women should have major advantages, "be better than men", in order to be elected.

*If a woman and a man were equal in intellect and equal in their conduct, and their difference were only that of male and female, I am 100 per cent sure that our people would elect the man...*

*If they are equal as candidates, I will not select the woman, I will select the man, and in case of a woman having advantages I will elect the woman.*

*Male participant of the focus group with NGO representatives*

According to the focus group participants, there is a difference in opinion about women's political participation between the capital city and the regions. In the capital, changes in public opinion are significant, whereas in the regions, gender stereotypes are especially stable and enduring.

*In the capital and the regions adjacent to the capital city, only activism has been noticeable in recent years, since majoritarian nominations are almost very few or very low percentage-wise in rural communities, which is probably caused by women's extreme passivity: especially by lack of interest in politics in marzes; there are some mentality issues connected with the role of men in the household, there are obstacles, very often women are forbidden to express opinions, to participate in workshop discussions. These stereotypes continue to persist in marzes, but I think that in the territories close to the capital city there is activism.*

*Female participant of the focus group with NGO representatives*

Thus, overall, the research has confirmed that although slowly, some positive shifts with regard to women's political participation have been taking place in public opinion. These changes are, on the one hand, the result of the state gender policies and, on the other hand, are connected with the activities of women leaders in the political sphere. At the same time, there are some obstacles in the Armenian society, which need to be taken into account when developing state gender policies.

## **KARINE POGHOSSYAN**

**“The stereotypes have begun to yield their positions”**

*The former principal of school #1 in Artashat, a physicist by profession, and an RPA deputy elected through a majoritarian contest in constituency # 17, Karine Poghosyan is confident that the stereotypes are gradually leaving our society and women's active role is increasing.*

*“For many years I was the principal of school #1 in Artashat and at the same time carried out an active public work within the Republican Party of Armenia: I was the head of a territorial structure of the party for six years. I have been an RPA member for ten years and I can say that I started my active public and political work from here.”*

*The decision to nominate her as a candidate was made by the Republican Party of Armenia*

*“It was an honor for me. During the pre-election campaign when I had meetings in numerous communities of the marz [province], I understood that my nomination had been also demanded by the population. Really, you cannot imagine with what enthusiasm we were received in the communities; so our expectations came true to a much larger extent than we had anticipated.” ... Women's representation in the National Assembly is simply necessary since there were and are many questions which are brought to me not only because I am their elected deputy, but also because I am a woman.”*

*Talking about things to be accomplished by her in the National Assembly, she says, “Since for many years I was a pedagogue, school principal and currently am Deputy Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Educational and Scientific Affairs, it is understandable that as a priority I will focus on issues and gaps connected with the noted area.”*

### **3.2. Factors Impeding Women's Political Participation**

In different time periods and different societies, obstacles to women's political participation have been different. However, there are factors which are common for almost all societies. At the same time, the type and scope of their influence is different. Thus, institutional obstacles or social and cultural obstacles can dominate. During the research, participants were offered to assess, on a ten-point scale, fourteen

factors impeding women's political participation. The participants were also given the opportunity to identify other impeding factors.

And though different groups showed different approaches, factors impeding women's participation were prioritized in the following way, top 5s are:

	<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>AVERAGE RATE</b>
1	Women's overload of daily routine and family concerns	6,8
2	Wide prevalence of election bribes	6,5
3	Rudeness and aggressiveness of the political struggle (disrespectful attitude of contestants, the application of unacceptable technologies of libel, defamation, discrediting, and intimidation)	6,5
4	The existence of criminal elements in the political contest	6,5
5	The dominance of patriarchal attitudes in public life, the negative attitude of the social environment and relatives (husband, parents)	6,4

And the second 5 factors impeding women political participation are:

	<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>AVERAGE RATE</b>
6	Slender financial means of women	6,1
7	Flawed state policies aiming to overcome the gender imbalance	6
8	Lack of women's confidence in their own abilities, and psychological complexes and cautiousness	5,8
9	Lack of intraparty democracy, absence of party mechanisms for promoting women	5,7
10	The existence of stereotypes causing mistrust in women candidates	5,6

The last portion of factors includes:

	<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>AVERAGE RATE</b>
11	Lack of initiative and political activism among women	5,3
12	Lack of support by women's NGOs, the immaturity of women's social movement	5,2

13	Lack of experience in political processes among women, insufficient knowledge of political struggle and electoral technologies	5
14	Lack of mass media support to women candidates	4,3

These responses demonstrate that factors impeding women are both social and cultural, and institutional. However, there are essential differences between different focus groups. From the research perspective, of special interest are differences in viewpoints of men and women. Consideration should be given to the fact that both groups consisted of quite seasoned and established people holding active political and civic positions.

The members of the women’s focus group identified the following main factors as impeding women’s political participation:

1. The existence of criminal elements in the political contest (6.6%);
2. Wide prevalence of election bribes (6.2%);
3. Flawed state policies aiming to overcome the gender imbalance (6%).

The participants in the men’s focus group indentified the following main factors as impeding women’s political participation:

1. Women’s overload of daily routines and family concerns (7.4%);
2. The existence of criminal elements in the political contest (6.8%);
3. Slender financial means of women (6.6%).

Women and men had the same opinion only about the existence of criminal elements in political contests. It is interesting that “Women’s overload of daily routine and family concerns” noted by men in the first place comes seventh for women.

## LILIT GALSTYAN

“My electors are those citizens who do not want to leave Armenia”

*Being a candidate of philological sciences, a member of the ARF party, a deputy to the National Assembly of the previous convocation who has, over a period of five years, fought for justice in the National Assembly and other fields of public life, Lilit Galstyan is somewhat surprised at the question as to how she has come to find herself in the center of politics.*

*“I have always been in politics since I understood a long time ago that politics is a type of thing and principle, as well as a world outlook which prompts to change something. I connected my imagined Armenia and my realization as a citizen and political figure with the ARF and joined the ARF membership at the time when the party actually did not carry out any public activities in Armenia.”*

*At the same time, Galstyan confesses, it is very difficult for a woman to establish herself in big politics in our political reality. She says that Armenia has still to go a long way to, in the first place, overcome the*

*stereotypes about equality and to understand that women's participation in politics is not only permissible, but also necessary.*

*She was the 20<sup>th</sup> in the ARF proportional list (a fact that remained incomprehensible to the public). Nevertheless, she took a very active part in the party's electoral campaign, "My electors are those citizens who do not want to leave Armenia, who are not going to allow to be spat at for five thousand drams and those citizens who want a dignified life for their children..."*

*Evaluating women's opportunities, she said after elections, "Unfortunately, Armenia is seriously very far away from a model of a democratic country. Under these circumstances, to be frank, it is a fairy tale to talk about sound mechanisms for women's entry into Parliament and advocacy campaign, as well as about intraparty democracy...A normal woman, civilized and thinking in terms of democratic criteria is unable to play in accordance with the rules of the existing political game..."*

*Do her comments refer also to her own party? While answering this question, Galstyan insists that her party has internal democracy and women accounted for 32 per cent of the candidates in the party list. At the same time, she cannot assess positively the fact that as a result of these elections the ARF party, for the first time in its history, entered the parliament without women deputies. "But we have what we have," says the former deputy.*

*Today, Lilit Galstyan is actively involved in the political and public life publishes sharp articles in the press and is an organizer of the Help Your Brother Initiative providing assistance to Syrian Armenians.*

### **3.3. The Existence of Discrimination against Women**

Although discrimination against women was not mentioned among factors impeding women's political participation, the participants were, through open questions, given the opportunity to note this; however, none of the participants mentioned discrimination as a factor impeding women's political participation.

The issue of discrimination against women was raised in focus groups during the research through the following formulation: In your opinion, is there a discrimination against women in the political area? If yes, then where and how is it manifested?

The discrimination is primarily considered to be manifested in daily **routine** and the family.

*If it exists, it is just of local nature and an issue of daily routine, i.e. when a woman is told 'Why do you need that?' When she fills in her questionnaire and is nominated*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

Not understanding the phenomenon of discrimination is striking.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, one of the participants notes:

*Profession and professionalism have no gender; they do not have qualifications other than professional employees... On the other hand, the man's role should be dominant in family consultation issues and it is decided that the woman should not participate in the political process. One should accept this as natural. Perhaps women are not ready for a very active work.*

*Male participant of the regional focus group*

So, it is necessary to consider this phenomenon as normal: men have the opportunity to decide what they will do themselves, whereas in case of women the decision results from the “family consultation” process. This is not perceived as discrimination. Let us remind that according to the formulation given in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, “the term ‘discrimination against women’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civiler any other field.” To forbid a mature woman something as a result of “the consultation” is discrimination; to forbid selection of a desired profession by a woman is discrimination; to deprive a woman of the right to work is discrimination. In focus groups, these ideas were most clearly expressed by young people, and they were voiced by those students who had taken gender courses.

*Almost everywhere there is discrimination against women, and I think that there is discrimination also in the political field. But there is one difference here, there cannot be an overt discrimination here, it is covert.*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*There is discrimination even in the family*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

*There is discrimination in various spheres, but the worst one is against women working in the Defense Ministry*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

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<sup>46</sup> Lack of understanding of the phenomenon of discrimination was also confirmed during the above noted research. Thus, according to the research on *Gender Dimension of Social and Political Participation in Armenia*, 46.4% of all questioned responded positively to the question about the existence of discrimination, 41.1% negatively, and 12.5% found it difficult to answer. Twenty-three point eight per cent of those surveyed noted that discrimination existed in the system of political elections.



It is interesting that some of the participants noted as discrimination absence of mechanisms for equal opportunities in different spheres.

*The most important thing is that the work has not been adapted to women so that a working woman is able to have a baby*

*Female participant of the youth focus group*

Discrimination as such brings about self-discrimination, numerous complexes and phobias. Women are afraid of being discredited, of diverse conversations, they are afraid not to be able to do what is required of them.

*Most women would not like to become a subject of public discussion. It is a very difficult thing. So, we still lack the courage to overcome this psychological barrier, to be ready "to uncover oneself", to be ready to struggle and not to take into account all those petty conversations that might occur. This is because of our level of development; we have not yet passed that stage. We do not take a step to see whether we will be impeded or not.*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

The existence of gender-based segregation in the labor market is regarded as discrimination.

*Perhaps, many do not share this viewpoint with me, but the idea of women's spheres is also a form of discrimination.*

*Participant of the women politician's focus group*

The phenomenon of discrimination in the political area triggered an expression of different opinions. Some of the participants denied the existence of discrimination in the political sphere.

*I do not believe that there is discrimination against women from the political perspective. Women have always stood next to men and have carried the yoke equally. There is no discrimination.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

Others are more realistic about this issue and, analyzing the situation existing in the political field, accept the existence of discrimination.

*In reality I think that we have discrimination. Let's be honest to ourselves. To understand this, let us look at the number of women in the governing structures of parties... Based on this, we will be able to understand whether there is discrimination or not. It is one thing when we include in the list, it is a requirement [the speaker means the inclusion of women in proportional election lists on the basis of the gender quota] and it is another thing when we give them the opportunity to conduct policies, to*

*make decisions... In politics, there is discrimination against women when we come to decision-making, in terms of the governing bodies of parties.*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

*Let me say clearly that there is discrimination. Although there were active women [the speaker means active women in the political field, in parties], but they were not allowed...*

*Participant of the men politician's focus group*

Discrimination against women during the elections was also noted in the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report on the May 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 elections to the RoA National Assembly. According to the report, media has observed that the first Armenian channel made only 4% of the news coverage available to women, and the public radio 5 per cent. This is an incomparably low indicator, taking into consideration that women accounted for 21% of all candidates, as well as the fact that Armenia's state target was to have 30% women's representation in the legislature. This does not correspond to the OSCE commitment "to provide equal opportunities for full participation of women in all spheres of political and public life" and the State's obligation to encourage women's participation on the basis of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

## **NATALYA MARTIROSYAN**

**"If women's activism does not benefit our country, it won't harm it either"**

*President of the non-governmental organization the Armenian Committee of the Helsinki Civil Assembly and non-partisan, Natalia Martirosyan received an offer from Armenian National Congress to get involved in the ANC pre-electoral proportional list and she agreed. The deputy candidate started her political career years ago, back in the beginning of the 90s when she was elected a deputy to the Yerevan City Council. "Since 1988 I have actively participated in all public and political processes, so politics is not an alien field to me," she says.*

*Being a human rights activist, Natalia Martirosyan is also interested in gender equality issues. And all the more so, since in her time she used to be Vice President of the All-Armenian Women's Union. In addition, she has, for many years dealt with issues of involving women in peace-making processes in the South Caucasus.*

*"The main problem is that our society has a tendency to manifest all kinds of discrimination. For example, we have a marked discrimination against age: you are young, or you are old; we have social class discrimination: if you are not rich, you are nothing. There is also discrimination against women. When we say that the main thesis of the Armenian National Congress is to struggle against monopolies, we mean not only economic monopolies, but also political, social and other monopolies. It appears that*

*in our society power is men's monopoly. But we have equal rights, don't we? Equal rights are enshrined in our Constitution and legislation, but we must have also equal opportunities," notes Martirosyan.*

*It is her conviction that if women's activism does not benefit our country, it will not harm it either, "In Armenia 63 per cent of those with higher education are women. They should have public responsibility and place their knowledge at the service of this state."*

### **3.4 The Intra-institutional Environment and Factors**

Parties are the most important entities in the advancement of women's political career. Non-governmental organizations also play a certain role. And what is women's status like in parties and non-governmental organizations?

Focus group participants were given for discussion some data related to the noted issues. The *Caucasus Sociological Research Center* had obtained these data through mass survey conducted in 2010.

The survey results allow concluding that the field of civil society institutions in Armenia is not yet satisfactorily developed and that parties employ the strategy of inflating their numbers. As it turned out, the membership of non-governmental organizations is smaller (5.2%) than that of political parties (10.7%). The situation is the same as regards their sympathizers: 25.3% and 31.1% respectively. Whereas sound logic prompts that in society the number of people with active stance in life must be higher than the number of politically like-minded persons and that the latter make up only part of socially active citizens.

Similar conclusions were also voiced by focus group participants.

*"Here we have an artificial inflation. A person can be formally involved in any party. He has been forced. And their number is quite large. However, the question is as to how many of them actively engage in politics."*

*Participant in the focus group of female politicians*

*"The involvement of many people in parties is also determined by the fact that people can engage not because they themselves want it, but because of, for example, friend's request, in the interest of a friend, even without sympathizing with that party. Similar cases are very frequent in our country. Say, a member of a family has personal gains from his/her membership in a party and ends up having all his/her relatives in that party."*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

*“Parties have only a numerical advantage, but real doers are NGOs. There are more real participants in NGOs. Whatever their number is, they all work and struggle for something, whereas in parties these are just numbers.”*

*Male participant of the youth focus group*

Nevertheless, in NGOs there are more women than men. In case of parties the opposite is true. See Table 3.

**Table 3.** The involvement of the surveyed men and women in NGOs and parties.

Type of Organization	Membership of Survey Participants			
	Men's	Women's	Men	Women
NGO	4.7%	5.5%	49.1%	58.1%
Party	13.3%	8.5%	57.0%	43.0%

In this respect, comments by focus group participants are also interesting.

*“It is natural that it should be that way because NGOs have a lesser role in society than parties. Parties are here to rule and divide, whereas NGOs service different types of social problems. For this reason, men have left that field open and women have a role to play there. Women's civic preferences can be easier realized there because men have lesser interest in the area.”*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

*“There are women who, being disappointed with parties because of their often not sincere and false activities, tend more towards non-governmental organizations. There are many women who are unemployed, want to socialize, to have their own milieu and together with their friends and acquaintances they create NGOs and invest in them for self-expression purposes.”*

*Participant in the focus group of female politicians*

The study results confirm that in both non-governmental organizations and parties' women mainly make up rank and file, are weakly represented in lower and medium level governing structures and have almost no representation in top governing bodies. The situation is comparatively consoling in case of

non-governmental organizations. However, here too, up the career ladder, women's number dwindles. In NGOs there are twice as many women in rank and file as there are men. The number of men and women at lower and medium level governing structures is almost equal, and in supreme governing bodies the number of men exceeds three times the number of women. *See Table 4 and 5.*

**Table 4. The status characteristics of men and women in non-governmental organizations**

Status	Men	Women
Member of rank & file	30.3%	69.7%
Member of lower & medium level governing body	41.2%	58.8%
Member of top governing body	75%	25%

**Table 5. The status characteristics of men and women in political parties**

Status	Men	Women
Member of rank & file	53.4%	46.6%
Member of lower and medium level governing body	90.9%	9.1%
Member of top governing body	99.2%	0.8%

*“Women perform the 90% of the “dirty work” of their parties, but when it is necessary to include them among the first integer of five candidates, their work is forgotten. Men again surpass them.”*

*Female participant in the focus group of NGO representatives*

Assessments by the survey participants demonstrate that a member has a larger possibility to influence the decision-making process in non-formal public movements (2.9 points) than in non-governmental organizations (2.1 points) and in political parties (2.0 points).<sup>47</sup> This reality once more confirms the necessity of democratization of the internal life of parties and non-governmental organizations.

<sup>47</sup> The survey participants were tasked to assess their own influence on decision-making processes inside their organizations on a five-point scale. “One” means that the given member’s voice has no influence at all, and “five” means “the voice has a decisive role”.

## SHUSHAN PETROSYAN

**“I am the Shushan [you know], nothing has changed.”**

*A member of the Republican Party of Armenia and the RoA Honored Artist Shushan Petrosyan was the 16<sup>th</sup> in the RPA proportional list. She motivated her entry into politics as follows:*

*“I made my decision to enter the Parliament because I cared. It is not important to rule; the important thing is to start something, to introduce changes. There are stereotypes, they must be overcome. I have a fight to make and the best way to make a fight is to be in legislature. I want a thinking disagreeing and debating National Assembly...”*

*Undoubtedly, she is not the first among artists who became a deputy, but she was the first one as a representative of show business. And this seems to be the reason why since her nomination she has become a center of attention of journalists. She did not conceal her dissatisfaction with this fact.*

*“Knowing my character, people who love me very much were naturally not especially happy. Why should they be happy? Because I was to be mainly stoned, especially by journalists. Stoned by those very journalists who see me as I am, without attitudinizing, without cheating, honest. I am the [same] Shushan: nothing has changed.*

*Shushan is working at the National Assembly Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Issues remaining faithful to her pre-election promise that “Upon entry into politics, I will definitely serve the culture.”*

### **3.5. The Extent to Which the RoA Gender Policy Concept Paper and Action Plan for its Realization Help the Improvement of Women’s Political Status**

On February 11, 2010 the RoA Government approved the RoA Gender Policy Concept Paper, which “defines the priority directions and general strategy of the state policy with regard to men and women and aims to provide equal rights and equal opportunities to all citizens, regardless of their sex, in all spheres of public life.” The Concept Paper put forth the objective of ensuring the accessibility of “resources and opportunities of political participation to women.”

In a year, to implement the Concept Paper the RoA Government endorsed its “2011-2015 Strategic Program on the RoA Gender Policy.”

The research also attempted to clarify:

- The degree of awareness of the RoA Gender Policy Concept Paper and its Action Plan;
- The extent to which the Concept Paper helps the improvement of women’s political status.

An analysis of the statements made in focus groups has demonstrated that overall there was very low awareness of the Concept Paper. On the basis of focus group participant approaches, the public opinion about this document can be divided into a number of groups:

1. The greater part of the public is unaware of the adoption of this important document;
2. There are people who are aware of this document, assess it positively and believe that it can advance women's political participation;

*Laws have impact, it is a fact. Lyudmila Sargsyan comes fifth or sixth in the list: it is a legal requirement. Without this legal requirement, she wouldn't be. The law compels. Afterwards we can present that we are so conscious that we allocate seats.*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

3. The document is evaluated positively, however, there is concern that it will not be realized; There is a conviction that it will not be realized since in Armenia even some laws are not implemented due to the absence of relevant mechanisms; An opinion exists that the concept paper will not be implemented due to the low political culture of party activists;

*The concept paper is very positive as such and all the points in it are close to our hearts. But is it possible to put it into effect? Otherwise, the Concept Paper itself is very positive, both as a phenomenon and as a legal document. It will be very good if we are guided by its points.*

*Female participant of the regional focus group*

*It is one thing when a concept paper is adopted and it is another thing when this law or concept paper is put into effect: here we have a problem with implementing mechanisms. In our society, in our country there are numerous laws which do are not enforced and they are always ahead of us and of our society and we never catch up with them. I think that this is a matter of time and this concept paper, which is, by the way, quite well-developed, will not yet yield tangible results for our society. In this sense, equal rights or equal opportunities will not change anything between men and women.*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

*Sometimes, representatives of the governing parties, that group of them which is not from the political field: oligarchs and others, having no political experience, sort of admittedly, prove that it is just a piece of paper.*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

4. The Concept Paper and the Government's decision are just the first step. After this, further steps should be taken.

*This law is a positive phenomenon, because women have, for a long time, been struggling for their legal equality, and earlier or later it should happen. And we are a civilized people with a history of five thousand years and in the advanced positions with regard to gender policy and women's role in society should be gradually increased.*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

*The Concept Paper is the first thing we have done; many things have changed after the Concept Paper. Institutions generally develop in that way: first it is put down on paper, and then it becomes a social law. In this sense, we have taken the first step, which perceived within new developments each year, will become, for the new generation, not a law on a piece of paper, but a social life law*

*Participant in the focus group of male politicians*

## **SATIK SEYRANYAN**

**“Let me say this in very simple words, humane and motherly ...”**

*Editor-in-chief of the newspaper 168 Zham; was nominated in constituency #4.*

*She entered the electoral contest with a professional slogan “Let’s edit the National Assembly.” However she formulated her address to the electorate as a mother, “Let me say this in very simple, humane and motherly words: I want my child to live in a normal country. I want my child to study in a good school, to live in a healthy society, to be surrounded by good people... When you think about all this, a question arises... What else can I do to have such Armenia?”*

*She says that in her capacity as editor-in-chief of a newspaper she has always dealt with politics, actually, on a daily basis. In this sense, her participation, in her words, in parliamentary elections is just a change of a format, and the deputy mandate a change of a political tool.*

*...I don’t want to leave this country. There are a lot of things that connect me with this place: my home, my work, my country. I differentiate between the interests of the state and those of authorities and I came to struggle so that nobody leaves this country...”*

*... By the way, in her constituency she garnered 11 per cent of the votes.*

*The story compiled based on media publications and interview to WomenNet.am*



## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. The analysis of the motivational factors underlying the political career of the candidates for the RoA NA deputation reconfirms the viewpoint of international structures and the research hypothesis that the increase in the number of women deputies in the legislature will lead to an increased level of concern and care for social and health issues, socially vulnerable layers of society, problems of children and women and humanization of policy and decision making processes.
2. The 2012 RoA National Assembly elections resulted in the 10.7% representation of women in the parliament; so no serious advance was made as compared to the indicator of women's representation in the previous parliament (9.1%). This attests to the fact that steps undertaken to increase women's representation in legislature, and specifically introduction of the 20% minimum quota in party electoral lists as stipulated by the RoA Electoral Code, are flawed and not satisfactory.
3. Taking into consideration that the RoA Electoral Code envisions 41 majoritarian mandates, and that women, as a rule, cannot compete for these places for different reasons, including, specifically, lack of sufficient administrative and financial resources, use of discrediting technologies in electoral contests, presence of criminal elements and other reasons, it is necessary to increase the quota defined for party electoral lists up to minimum 30% in order to ensure the 20% representation of women in the National Assembly.
4. Furthermore, it is necessary to define the principle of gender rotation by law to guarantee the actual enforcement of the quota and the process of increase in women's representation in the legislative body. The gender rotation principle implies that in case a woman's candidacy is withdrawn from a proportional electoral list or in case a woman gives up her deputy mandate, the next woman included in the list will replace her.
5. One of the important factors for ensuring women's political participation and gender balance in institutions of political governance must be steps taken to democratize the internal workings of political parties so as to create opportunities for women's advancement. Specifically, it is possible to define encouragement mechanisms for those parties which will set a gender quota to provide for women's representation in the party governing structures, will apply the principle of compiling separate, women candidates only lists and the principle of "twinned constituencies".
6. A positive shift is noticeable in the public opinion about women's political participation, which is, on the one hand, the result of the adoption of favorable documents by the RoA Government, and, on the other hand, the result of active work by the women deputies of the RoA National Assembly of the previous convocation.
7. Although some positive shifts are present and the Gender Policy Concept Paper has been adopted, the policies of the RoA authorities remain not **sufficiently gender-sensitive**. The Concluding Remarks of *the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*

about Armenia's third and fourth reports and *the Addenda*<sup>48</sup> are not fully implemented. The phenomenon of discrimination against women is not yet fully perceived by society, no satisfactory work is carried out to eliminate discrimination against women in political practice and customs.

8. Information about the Gender Policy Concept Paper and its fundamental provisions is extremely scant; it is not sufficiently covered in the press and discussed in political structures and the National Assembly.
9. Although the RoA Constitution stipulates the principle of gender legal equality, in reality women in Armenia have very limited possibilities to influence the formation of state policies. The problem with the de jure secured equal rights and their de facto realization is the absence of equal opportunities for women. This gap in the national legislation should be filled through adoption of a law on *Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities*, this is included in the list of measures envisaged by Armenia's *Eastern Partnership* program with the European Union and is necessitated by the interests of democratization of the political life.

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<sup>48</sup> CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/4/Rev.1/Add.1, November 2011.

## APPENDICES

*Appendix 1*

**APPEAL**  
**to political parties**  
**participating in the 2012 RoA National Assembly elections,**  
**their leaders,**  
**and women included in proportional lists**

We,

**NGO members of the Civil Society Cooperation Network,**

Appeal to

*Prosperous Armenia* party, whose proportional electoral list includes 21.8% of women,

*Heritage* party, whose electoral list includes 24.6% of women,

*The Armenian National Congress* alliance, whose electoral list includes 20.3% of women,

*The Armenian Revolutionary Federation* party, whose electoral list includes 31.7% of women,

**The Democratic Party of Armenia**, whose electoral list includes 24.4% of women,

**The Communist Party of Armenia**, whose electoral list includes 21.1% of women,

**The Republican Party of Armenia**, whose electoral list includes 21.3% of women,

*The United Armenians* party, whose electoral list includes 37.9% of women,

*The Rule-of-Law Country* party, whose electoral list includes 20.2% of women.

We wish success to all the parties in a fair electoral contest and express hope that the women included in the party electoral lists will be able to make their contribution to garnering votes of electors in an honest struggle.

At the same time, we hope that the winning parties, upon entry to the Parliament, will uphold that level of representation of women in their factions, which is secured in the electoral lists and defined by the RoA Electoral Code, thus ensuring at least 20% representation of women in the National Assembly.

**The demand to increase women’s representation in the National Assembly is not an end in itself.**

- The international experience of parliamentarism demonstrates that when women make up less than 10% of the deputies in a country’s legislative body, additional difficulties arise with respect to adoption of different social laws.
- The possibilities of influencing the decision-making culture, of improving the rules of the political game, and of humanizing politics come to the fore only when women make up no less than 25-30% of the parliament.
- The analysis by the inter-parliamentary Union attests to the fact that the more women there are in parliaments, the more issues of protection of children’s rights gain in importance.
- In addition, all those mechanisms that are created for defense of women’s rights positively affect the state of children.

**According to the recent data of the Inter-parliamentary Union, women’s representation in world’s one-chamber parliaments is on average 19.7%, which means that one of every five deputies is a woman.**

The highest indicator of women’s representation in parliaments is in the Northern European countries (42%), the average indicator in the OSCE countries is 22.6%, and in the countries of the Arab world only 16%.

Seventeen out of 59 countries where elections were held in 2011 have quotas. In these countries women account for 27% of deputies and in countries not applying quotas only 16%.

Although during the RoA NA elections the Electoral Code provided for minimum 15% quota for women’s representation in proportional lists and women, on average, accounted for 22.6% of candidates in party lists, women’s representation in the RoA National Assembly of the fourth convocation stood only at 8.3%.

And this is the case when yet in 2008 the 85.5% of the participants in nation-wide sociological surveys believed that women should account for no less than 37% of the National Assembly deputies. And the 2010 sociological research shows that there are positive shifts in Armenian public opinion as regards this issue.

According to the existing quota in Armenia, which is, by the way, the result of cooperation between women’s non-governmental organizations and parties, women’s representation in proportional electoral lists cannot be less than 20%, or according to the Electoral Code wording “the number of representatives of each gender should not exceed 80 per cent.”

**The public has the right to expect that women's representation in the National Assembly will at least double thanks to the existing quota.**

This year, when the Electoral Code provides for 20% gender quota, women, on average, account for almost the same 22.8% in the party lists presented to the Central Election Commission. Taking into consideration the undesirable practice during the previous elections when a number of women politicians gave up their mandates with different argumentation after elections, we appeal to women included in the 2012 proportional lists.

**Dear women politicians,**

**do not give up your mandates; the electors, having voted for you, have certain prospects with respect to you**

We appeal to party leaders and members:

**To enforce the legal provision, be guided by the principle of gender justice and create an opportunity for the next woman in the list to replace the one that has given up her mandate.**

It is unacceptable for society when mandates are given up upon party instruction or request. So, we appeal to party leaders:

**Do not offer to women included in the party pre-electoral lists to give up their mandates since society wants to see the politicians it has elected in the National Assembly.**

Support each other to establish a civilized society in Armenia and to help shape a modern system of political governance.

**We call upon the RoA electorate and organizations to join us by signing this address.**

*Appendix 2*

**The text of the video-clip public service announcement prepared by the experts of the project and broadcast by mass media**

In world parliaments, on average, one of each five deputies is a woman. Those countries where women account for 30% and more of parliamentary deputies adopt more social laws and protect women's and children's rights better.

Women account for only 8.3% of deputies in the RoA National Assembly of the fourth convocation.

Dear women politicians, do not renounce your mandates, you are needed in the National Assembly.

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## Internet resources

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