

Women in Local Administration in Armenia



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The Women in Local Administration in Armenia project is a sociological study of the involvement of women in local administration in Armenia which aims to identify incentives for and impediments to greater involvement of women in the system of local administration and evening out of gender misbalances in this sphere.



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Foreword

In this research paper, we offer the results of a study conducted by the Caucasus Institute in September – December 2011 with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the South Caucasus Bureau of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

This study looks at the gender aspect of local administration in Armenia. The young Republic of Armenia faces many challenges in its development. After 20 years of independence, the involvement of women in governance remains quite low. There are still relatively few businesswomen, and even fewer women in responsible administrative posts, including in local governance. And although many women work, their presence in decision-making is barely noticeable. The reasons of the gender misbalance are diverse; based on the study, the team came to a number of valuable conclusions, which were sometimes surprising and sometimes overturned our original hypotheses.

Based on the conclusions, we propose a set of recommendations on what various stakeholders can do to encourage women to engage and communities, to support them.

The research was conducted by a group of young researchers from the Caucasus Institute: Ella Karagulyan, Zara Harutyunyan and Margarita Zakaryan, led by Hrant Mikaelyan. The project was coordinated by Nina Iskandaryan.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to assess the extent of women's involvement in local administration, to identify existing incentives and obstacles, and to understand public perceptions of the role of women in governance.

At the first stage of the study, we decided to narrow down its scope. The situation in urban and rural communities strongly differs. None of Armenia's almost 50 cities has a woman mayor; in fact, the extremely weak engagement of women in urban administration merits a separate study using a different set of tools. Therefore, we decided to focus on small and average rural communities whose population does not exceed 5000 people.

As part of the study, we compiled a database of local elections that took place in Armenia since 2005. Our field work in the rural communities consisted of over 90 semi-structured interviews¹ and 10 focus-groups. We also conducted desk research, analyzing data from other countries and other studies.

Database

Our database exists in two formats: Excel and SPSS. It contains extensive information on local administration and local elections in Armenia, and can be used in the future for qualitative and quantitative study.

The bulk of the data in the database came from the website of the Central Election Committee of Armenia² (section on "local administration authorities"/"marzes (provinces)"). The CEC website contains data on all elections beginning from 2005, updated daily whenever elections are held; overall, there is data on about approximately 3500 elections.

Our database contains the following types of data on each election: 1) general information, 2) data on the results of the elections 3) information about the winner of the elections 4) information about the community. It should be noted that in communities in Armenia, two types of elections are held: the elections of the head of the community and the elections of the members of the Council of Aldermen. As a rule, elections of the community head and of members of the council are held at the same time; therefore, we put data on these two types of election in the same table.

General information about the elections included the following data: the day (date of the year) when the elections were held, the name of the marz (province), the name of the community, the type of elections (election of the Council of Aldermen or of the head of the community), the overall number of candidates and the number of women candidates who

¹In sociology, a semi-structured interview is one which doesn't just seek to get answers to a fixed set of questions but also to acquire information on a topic through a free-form conversation, not solely focusing on the need to prove or disprove the hypotheses of the study..

² Central Election Committee of Armenia / URL: [<http://elections.am>]

stood in the election (for some of the most successful women, we also put biographical information in the footnotes).

The results section included the number of voters, the voter turnout³, and gender data: for community head elections, we noted the gender of the winner, and for Council of Aldermen elections, the number of men and women elected to the council. If women stood in the election, we recorded the percentage of votes they got.

The information on the winner consists of the name and surname of the winner, their age (which was not published until 2007), party affiliation and the percentage of votes they got.

As the CEC website did not contain information on the gender of the candidates or the winners, we had to determine gender based on first names, as Armenian surnames are not gender-sensitive. For difficult cases, we used the *armenian.name* website that contains a database of over 1000 Armenian names.

The information on the community included population, percentage of women in the population and the index of the out-migration of men, which we calculated by dividing the difference between the official population and the actual population into the number of men in the official population⁴. The index of out-migration of men almost invariably exceeds that of women, sometimes by large factors. In some communities, up to a third of the resident male population is absent, whereas for women this indicator reaches about 10%.

We used the data of the 2001 population census, as it was the only relatively reliable dataset on community population. Migration is not always correctly taken into account in Armenia; data on the current population often includes people who have been absent from the country for 15 years, e.g. have probably left for good. At the same time, since the end of 2001 (when the census was mandated), the outflow of migrants was partly compensated for by natural population growth⁵.

Fieldwork

Our team conducted over 90 semi-structured interviews with community leaders, other contestants in the elections, local residents etc.

³ Until 2007, the website provided information on the number of voters and the number of ballots; after 2007, the information on the number of voters was no longer posted, so we had to calculate voter turnout based on the number of ballots.

⁴ Table 1.1. Current and resident population according to gender and administrative-territorial division / 2001 census data / Armenian national statistics service (ANSS) / URL: [<http://docs.armstat.am/census/pdfs/11.pdf>] (arm, en, ru)

⁵ Migration data, ref.: International passenger traffic by months and transport types / Migration agency of the Ministry of territorial administration of Armenia / URL: [http://smsmta.am/?menu_id=19] (arm) Births and deaths data ref.: table 1.5 Base indicators of natural movement of the Armenian population / Armenia, Demography, 2010, p. 27 / URL: [http://armstat.am/file/article/demos_11_2.pdf] (arm., en.)

We began by looking at statistics on the engagement of women in local administration in all the marzes of Armenia. We discovered that the percentage of women is notably above average in Lori and Syunik, and below average in Ararat, Vayotz-Dzor, Aragatsotn and Kotayk.

For fieldwork, we chose Lori, Syunik as marzes in which women engagement is higher, and Ararat as a marz where women are all but absent from local government. .

Our respondents can be divided into 5 groups:

- Women who won elections and currently lead communities. We interviewed the leaders of the communities of Yaghdan, Bazum, Meghvahovit, Pagaghbyur, Verin Dvin, Hacavan, Qarahunj and Shrvenants;
- Women who lead communities in the past or ran for community leader but lost in the elections (the villages Ashotavan, Noramarg, Dvin, Lori Berd, Karadzor);
- Men who lead communities;
- Men who ran for community leader;
- Village residents; 3-5 such interviews were made in each village.

Our selection of communities was based on the following principle:

- Communities currently lead by women;
- Communities that are led by men but neighbor on communities led by women;
- Communities in which a woman stood in the elections;
- Communities in which there are no women in the administration.

We composed one questionnaire for each of the following five categories of interviewees:

- Woman community leader;
- Woman candidate for the post of community leader;
- Man community leader;
- Man candidate for the post of community leader;
- Resident of the community.

The questionnaires for women leaders included questions about the community: type of economy, social-economic, demographical etc. situation; the moment when they began to engage in local politics, when and how the decision was made, what their program was and how far they were able to implement it; description of the campaign, description of the rivals, attitudes to the candidates; external factors: the reaction of families and of local administrations to the fact that a woman has been elected community leader; gender practices: how much are women involved in the social life of these villages and in which ways these women-led communities are different from neighboring communities. We also asked some personal and biographical questions.

We chose 19 communities, 9 of them in Lori, 5 in Syunik and 5 in Ararat.

Lori

- Yaghdan
- Bazum
- Karadzor
- Aznvadzor
- Metsavan
- Pakhaghbyur
- Meghvahovit
- Lori Berd
- Saratovka

Ararat

- Dvin
- Verin Dvin
- Verin Artashat
- Noramarg
- Sayat-Nova

Syunik

- Ashotavan
- Hacavan
- Khndzoresk
- Karahunj
- Shrvenc

We made over altogether 90 semi-structured interviews.

Women in Modern Society

Gender Roles

The division of *gender roles* is typical for human society. The feminine gender role is associated with expressiveness and gentleness; women are expected to be caring, emotional and sensitive towards other people's problems, to care for their family and spend more time at home. The masculine gender role is associated with instrumentality (efficiency, pragmatism, external orientation), independence and aggression; men are expected to be active, dominating and ambitious⁶. The polarization of gender roles varies across societies.

Apart from differences in social behavior, gender roles also predefine labor division. For example, in agricultural societies, men work in agricultural production: they cultivate the farmland, irrigate, harvest and bring the product to the market. They own and trade large animals, they are also responsible for the processing, storage and sale of wood. In fishing communities, fishing is nearly always a male activity.

Village women are first and foremost responsible for housekeeping. They raise children, store and prepare food, raise poultry, store firewood and water, participating in farming during sowing, weeding, harvesting and processing for sale⁷.

The man is still perceived as the main breadwinner in today's South Caucasus despite the reality, which, to various extents, but universally varies from expectations.

Table 1. Who should be the breadwinner in the family? / Who is the breadwinner in the family? CRRC poll, 2010⁸

	Who should be (%)			Who is (%)		
	man	woman	both	man	woman	both
Azerbaijan	84	0	16	75	6	17
Armenia	85	1	14	65	17	17
Georgia	83	2	14	36	39	20

Such attitudes are not confined to the South Caucasus. For example, polls in the UK show that despite current trends, much more men than women are breadwinners, and stay-at-home women are ten times more numerous than men⁹.

⁶ It should be noted, that the comparison of men's and women's characters according to the presented gender role image, was often encountered during the poll, which we conducted in the Armenian villages

⁷ What is "gender"? / Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations / URL: <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/ru/> (ru)

⁸ How Does the South Caucasus Compare? p.3-4 / Caucasus Research Resource Centers. Oct. 5, 2011 / PDF file. URL: <http://www.crrccenters.org/store/files/Reports/How%20Does%20the%20South%20Caucasus%20Compare.pdf> (en)

Traditionally, the male role prescribes work outside of home, and the female role, primarily inside the home. Leadership is part of the male role; that's why in societies with a strong division of gender roles, women wishing to become leaders need to acquire some distinctive traits of the male gender role.

Women on the labor market

As we see, in a society where a man is expected to be the breadwinner of the family, it is natural that men tend to hold well-paid positions, especially when they are encouraged to do so by the society¹⁰.

In the last decades, the traditional system of gender-based labor division began eroding, weakening the dichotomization and polarization of gender roles¹¹. Women master “male professions” and achieve the same level of education as men, or even higher. The labor market is polarized in gender terms: in some spheres, women prevail, in others, they are almost absent. The involvement of women in education is high but misbalanced.

For example, in the USA, the ratio of women among elementary school teachers is 86%. Women account for 60% of secondary school teachers and 46% of university professors¹². That correlation is close to universal; in Armenia the engagement of women in the educational system is even higher: in elementary school, almost 100% of the teachers are female, and so are 59% of university professors¹³.

Among public officials and technical staff, women also dominate: 65% in Armenia, 55% in the USA. However, amongst senior officials and top managers, men dominate, with women accounting for just 24% in Armenia and 43% in the US.

Recent data from Russia offer a good illustration: 52% of its population are women; in Russia's education system, women also account for 52%. However, women account for only 7% of principals, 23% of branch presidents and vice-principals, and 31% of department deans. However, among junior teaching staff, 68% are women¹⁴.

This data proves that men, acting in accordance with their gender role, dominate in spheres that bring more income and social prestige. Although the representation of women

⁹ The rise and rise of Mrs Breadwinner: One in five women are main or sole earners as more fathers stay at home / Daily Mail Online, Oct. 29, 2010 / URL: [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1324645/Fathers-stay-home-women-main-sole-earners.html>] (en)

¹⁰ For example, 62% of interviewed by CRRC in Armenia consider, that a man should have more rights for employment, with 35% against it.

¹¹ “Masculinity as a history” / I. S. Kon. Changing men in a changing world / URL: [<http://www.owl.ru/library/047t.htm>]

¹² United States – Country Profile / Gender Gap Report 2011, p. 345 / World Economic Forum / URL: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2011.pdf] (en)

¹³ Armenia – Country Profile / Gender Gap Report 2011, p. 97 / World Economic Forum / URL: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2011.pdf] (en)

¹⁴ Gender-distribution of the teaching personnel in state educational institutions, for the beginning of the 2003/4 academic year / Work: happiness in labor? / *Gender for Dummies*, p.134 Moscow, 2006, Heinrich Böll Foundation (in Russian).

in various spheres is growing, no country has reached equality in all spheres, which begs the question if it can in fact be reached.

Women in Politics

Executive positions have traditionally been a man's sphere. That is especially true for politics. With the exception of a few outstanding individuals, women did not participate in politics until the 20th century, and could only do it via an intermediary, e.g. by marrying the right man or helping their husbands up the social ladder¹⁵.

The current erosion of the traditional system of gender-based labor division has affected politics. In the 20th century, many countries adopted laws giving women rights to vote and to be elected. In some countries, women became leaders, and lately, some countries have been supporting wider engagement of women in politics via educational policies, quotas etc.

When gender roles in politics are discussed, the parliament attracts most of the attention. In the Armenian parliament, women only hold 12 of the 131 seats, just over 9%. Globally, women account for 18% of all MPs, significantly varying from country to country: some parliaments have no women, and in two countries (Andorra and Ruanda), more than half of the parliament consists of women.

Other indicators are also illustrative: for example, globally, only 3 of 20 government ministers are women. The variance is large: the government of Finland is predominantly female but there are no women in the government of Qatar.

Among 18 ministers in Armenia, 2 are women¹⁶. Typically, they are in charge of social and cultural issues (Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Diaspora), and, notably, their declared incomes are significantly smaller than those of their male colleagues¹⁷.

To be more precise, we can look at the gender composition of the government and state administration in Armenia.

¹⁵ Masculinity and Femininity, p. 2 / Krugosvet Encyclopedia / URL: [http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/nauka_i_tehnika/biologiya/MASKULINNOST_I_FEMININNOST.html?page=0,1] (in Russian)

¹⁶ Full list: World Leaders / CIA / URL: [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/world-leaders-a/armenia.html>]

¹⁷ See Income and assets declarations of the ministers of Armenia / Freedom of information center / URL: [http://www.foi.am/u_files/file/naxararner_2010.doc] (am)
Minister of Health leads in income among Armenian ministers / Caucasian Knot, September 9, 2011 / URL: [<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/192293/>] (ru)

Table 2. Women and power in Armenia, statistics

	2010 ¹⁸			2008 ¹⁹		
	f	m	% f	f	m	% f
Politics, governance						
... Parliament	12	119	9.2%	11	120	8.4%
... Ministers, junior ministers	8	70	10.3%	5	66	7.0%
... Ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions	0	34	0.0%	1	25	3.8%
... Top positions, civil services	15	128	10.5%	14	115	10.9%
... Presidential administration	133	206	39.2%	108	190	36.2%
... State administration	172	282	39.0%	113	158	41.7%
Local administration						
... Governors ("marzpets")	0	10	0.0%	1	9	10.0%
... Vice-governors, local administration heads	3	41	6.8%	4	37	9.8%
... Local administration staff	492	748	39.7%	499	774	39.2%
Yerevan City Council						
... Yerevan City Council, top positions ²⁰	6	84	6.7%	4	203	1.9%
... Yerevan City-Council administration	162	207	43.9%	120	151	44.3%
... Local municipalities administration	623	685	47.6%	763	825	48.0%
Judicative authority, republic-wide						
... Judges	45	166	21.3%	46	170	21.3%
... Lawyers	380	638	37.3%	319	543	37.0%
... Members of the Constitutional Court	1	8	11.1%	0	9	0.0%
Other						
... Scientific councils in state universities	263	342	43.5%	220	613	26.4%
... Members of the central bank council	1	4	20.0%	2	3	40.0%

Table 3. Women-employees in ministries²¹

Ministry of Education and Science	67.2
Ministry of Diaspora	61.5
Ministry of Health	58.9
Ministry of Culture	54.8
Ministry of Labor and Social Problems	53.7

¹⁸ Women and men in Armenia, 2011. P. 142-155 / National Statistics Service of Armenia. Yerevan, 2011. (am, en)

¹⁹ Women and men in Armenia, 2009. P. 104-110 / National Statistics Service of Armenia. Yerevan, 2009. (am, en)

²⁰ Yerevan mayor, vice-mayor, city council, head of administration, head of administrative district, vice-head of administrative district, community councils

²¹ Women and men in Armenia, 2011. P. 150 / National Statistics Service of Armenia. Yerevan, 2011. (am, en)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs	53.2
Ministry of Economy	51.9
Ministry of Defense (non-military only)	50.7
Ministry of Territorial Administration	50.5
Ministry of Sport and Youth	48.9
Ministry of Finance	48.3
Ministry of Environmental Protection	46.8
Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources	44.4
Ministry of Law	43.0
Ministry of Urban Development	35.7
Ministry of Emergency Situations	35.4
Ministry of Transport and Communication	31.0
Ministry of Agriculture	27.1

Local Administration in Armenia

System of local administration in Armenia

The system of local administration in Armenia was created at the same time as the state administration in 1995, after the adoption of the Constitution. The first elections of local authorities were held in 1996²².

Armenia's system of territorial administration consists of several levels. According to the Armenian Constitution, Armenia has 10 marzes (provinces), and a special administrative unit – Yerevan city. The governors (province heads) are appointed by the president. The marzes are divided into urban and rural municipalities. There are altogether about a thousand settlements in Armenia, forming 926 municipalities: 48 urban, 866 rural²³ and 12 district municipalities of Yerevan city controlled by the bodies of local administration.

The bodies of local administration comprise a municipal council (“Council of Aldermen”) and the head of the municipality, elected every 4 years (until 2008 the elections were held every three years). The number of council members depends on the size of the community and can vary from 5 to 15.

The size of the population has some significance for governmental policy with regard to the community, for example, when determining communal subsidies according to the Law on financial equalization. Apart from that, the location of the community also matters; frontier and highland communities have special status²⁴.

Although formally, the power of the governor is restricted to the coordination of the activity of executive bodies at the level of the marz, experience shows that the governor has much more power. Taking into account the financial weakness of the communities, the levers that the governor has, i.e. defining development priorities of the marz, distributing grants and exercising financial oversight, give governor strong authority over local administrations²⁵. The non-formal power of the governor is also based on his/her right to initiate the resignation of the community head and appoint a temporary replacement.

The local administration system in Armenia is based on electivity, which means that the functioning of the municipal authorities must rely on democratic principles, and the local authorities must represent the people living in their community. In practice, the

²² Local administration system / Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration / URL: [<http://www.mta.gov.am/ru/the-lsg/>]

²³ See: POPULATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA / Marzes of the Republic of Armenia and Yerevan city in figures, 2011. P. 18 / National Statistical Service of Armenia. Yerevan, 2011 (Armenian and English).

²⁴ Tumanyan D. Local Government in Armenia / Local Governments in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus, in the Central Asia / URL: [<http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2001/84/Ch-6-Armenia.pdf>]

²⁵ Conclusions. / Thesis work, Vahe Manoukyan. “Local and Marz Administrations in the Republic of Armenia”, Moscow, 2007/ URL: [<http://www.dissercat.com/content/mestnoe-samoupravlenie-i-oblastnoe-upravlenie-v-respublike-armeniya>]

situation varies across communities and strongly depends on the quality of the elections held in the community.

The local administration system in Armenia is still evolving: if in some communities local authorities function successfully and address some local concerns, such as providing running water and gas supply to households, paving roads etc., in others, the role of local authorities is still not understood and the hopes of the population are vested in central administrations or international organizations.

Relations between the mayor and the municipal council

With the local administration structured according to a “presidential model,” it is common for communities to have a strong mayor and a subordinate council of aldermen. Depending on the size of the community, the mayor has a staff of 2 to 7 (average 5): vice-mayor, secretary, accountant and other employees.

The municipal council (“Council of Aldermen”, “avagani khorhurd²⁶”) is supposed to be part of a system of checks and balances. The mayor must meet the municipal council once a week to discuss budget issues and development priorities.

The municipal council is usually elected at the same time as the mayor, and for the same term. A typical Council of Aldermen has 5 members in small communities of under 1000 residents, 7 in medium-sized communities (1000 to 3000 residents); 11 in large rural communities with over 3000 residents, and 15 in urban communities.

Whereas the mayor and the mayor’s staff get salaries, members of the municipal council do not. This is one of the main reasons why the municipal council does not execute the functions expected from it²⁷. In reality, the head of the community is the head of the executive power who determines expenditure and community development priorities.

Members of the Council of Aldermen are often ignorant of their rights, a fact that further weakens the council. In the communities we visited, all adult residents knew the name of their current mayor and remembered the names of previous ones. However, few could name the members of the Council of Aldermen in their village. In some communities, members of the municipal council don’t see this as a job but merely as a status that allows them access to benefits. Since others do not usually share this perception, this serves to further discredit the institution.

²⁶ *Council of Aldermen* is the name used in the Armenian local administration system. *Avagani khorhurd* is its transliteration from Armenian

²⁷ We should note that the involvement of municipal councils varies greatly across communities.

“... The avagani don't know anything. Once, I voted for an avagani woman, but they [village residents] don't deserve anything: they think that if they're on the avagani [council], they are entitled to privileges, for example, one woman wanted to jump a lottery queue on the grounds that she's an avagani.”

Man, previously head of the Karadzor community (Lori), a candidate in the last election

15 However, municipal councils formally exist and are re-elected, if only because, under the law, the mayor's budget policy must be approved by the council. It is not easy to understand in which communities the councils actually function and in which they are mere puppets of the mayor. In those communities in which there is no grassroots demand for the Council of Aldermen, it only exists so that the mayor can report to the governor and central powers. In some cases, the mayor has to persuade community residents to become involved in the municipal council²⁸, but in others, the mayor tries to limit their activity.

“... They secretly decide who will be avagani: they don't announce it openly, so people don't know, and then they say there were no volunteers.”

Woman. Previous head of the Ashotavan community (Syunik), candidate at the last election

Meanwhile, the current head of Ashotavan said quite the opposite: “*nowadays one can't solve a single problem without the municipal council*”.

In both models (“involvement” and “exclusion”) the municipal council usually ends up consisting of people loyal to the mayor; in fact, it becomes the mayor's “team.” Competitiveness during elections to municipal councils is low. Often, there is no struggle, or worse, not enough candidates. In other cases, there is strong competition in one election but none at all in the next one. This happens either because the municipal council as an institution loses its reputation, and people are no longer interested, or because incumbent council members or the community head limit the competition. We were rarely told that a village Council of Aldermen was very active; this happened approximately in every fourth community that we visited (it should be taken into account that our selection was not representative for the country).

Participation in elections to Councils of Aldermen is especially low when they are held separately from elections of the mayor, which is most probably the result of low trust towards municipal councils: the difference cannot be explained by other factors, such as seasonal migration. For example, on October 12, 2008, an election to the Council of Aldermen was held in the Aygestan community of Ararat marz. With a turnout of 192

²⁸ Recruiting the right number of people to sit on municipal councils can become a real problem in some communities.

persons, only 9% of the ballots were used²⁹. Just two weeks later, on October 26, the same community elected its mayor. 1319 voters turned up, using up 60% of all ballots. This is, of course, an extreme case, with the turnouts varying by a factor of 7 partly as a result of the high competitiveness of the community head election (4 candidates) and partly due to the total lack of competitiveness in the Council of Aldermen election (6 candidates for 7 positions). However, throughout the country, turnouts at mayor's elections were much higher than at municipal council elections³⁰.

The law does not limit the number of terms to which the leader of the community can be elected; that's why in some cases, leaders have not changed for the last 15 years or more. Personality-centered government, including on municipal level, is typical for Armenia and many other post-Communist countries. In a personality-centered system, executive bodies dominate, and the representative body can become a "democratic" veil for the omnipotence of the administration³¹.

Informal relations can become a powerful regulator of local administration governance, sometimes conflicting with norms prescribed by the law. That's why, in this study, we paid special attention to informal practices and their impact on women's participation in local administration. In a 2005 study of local governance in Armenia, sociologist Tatevik Margaryan identified three groups of factors determining the current situation in the community³²:

- Norms stemming from pre-Soviet traditions,
- Informal norms that appeared during Soviet times,
- Post-Soviet conditions that force people to come up with new adaptation strategies.

Extent of women's participation in local governance in Armenia

The existing legislation does not restrict or encourage the participation of women in local administration. As of early 2011, there were 17 561 persons engaged in the system of local administration of Armenia, including city and rural municipalities, the mayors with their staff and the Councils of Aldermen. Of these, 4 665, or 28.2%, were women.

A more detailed approach shows that presence of women varies across levels of power. There are also differences linked to geography (marzes), the size of the community

²⁹ Data on the number of voters in communities has not been published on the Central Elections Committee since 2007 and can only be estimated based in the number of ballots published for each election. This can lead to errors of several percent during calculation of turnouts, because there are usually slightly more ballots than voters.

³⁰ The average difference ranges from 20 to 50% but can get as high as 200%.

³¹ Conclusions./ Thesis. Vahe Manoukian. Local and Marz Administration in Armenia. Moscow, 2007/URL: [<http://www.dissercat.com/content/mestnoe-samoupravlenie-i-oblastnoe-upravlenie-v-respublike-armeniya>]

³² Tatevik Markaryan, "Formal and non-formal Practice of Local Administration in Armenia" / *Identity, power and City in Works by Young Researchers from the South Caucasus*. - Tbilisi: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2005. - P 263

etc. also stands out. Some data about men and women in local administration is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Engagement of Women in Local Administration in Armenia, 2010³³

Marz	Municipal staff			Councils of Aldermen			Senior officials ³⁴			Mayors		
	f	m	%	f	m	%	f	m	%	f	m	%
Aragatsotn	271	393	40.8	13	613	2.1	0	69	0.0	0	114	0.0
Ararat	632	636	49.8	22	663	3.2	5	48	9.4	1	96	1.0
Armavir	354	439	44.6	17	710	2.3	3	96	3.0	4	93	4.1
Gegharkunik	256	572	30.9	50	579	8.0	6	69	8.0	3	89	3.3
Lori	525	500	51.2	89	575	13.4	13	65	16.7	6	107	5.3
Kotayk	461	541	46.0	29	460	5.9	8	54	12.9	1	66	1.5
Shirak	667	646	50.8	46	612	7.0	4	65	5.8	2	117	1.7
Syunik	462	293	61.2	84	493	14.6	31	70	30.7	4	105	3.7
Vayots Dzor	232	666	25.8	9	314	2.8	2	15	11.8	1	43	2.3
Tavush	322	313	50.7	26	395	6.2	2	42	4.6	2	60	3.2
All	4182	4999	45.6	385	5414	6.6	74	593	11.1	24³⁵	890	2.6

The above table includes statistics of women's participation in municipal councils; the next one shows its breakup into urban and rural municipal councils.

Table 5. Participation of women in municipal councils, 2010³⁶

	City councils			Village councils		
	w	m	%	w	m	%
Aragatsotn	2	30	6.3	11	583	1.9
Ararat	1	52	1.9	21	611	3.3
Armavir	0	41	0.0	17	669	2.5
Gegharkunik	3	56	5.1	47	523	8.3
Lori	8	68	10.5	81	507	13.8
Kotayk	4	77	4.9	25	383	6.1
Shirak	1	36	2.7	45	576	7.3
Syunik	0	79	0.0	84	414	16.9
Vayots-Dzor	1	32	3.0	8	282	2.8
Tavush	3	54	5.3	23	341	6.3
Altogether	23	525	4.2	362	4889	6.9

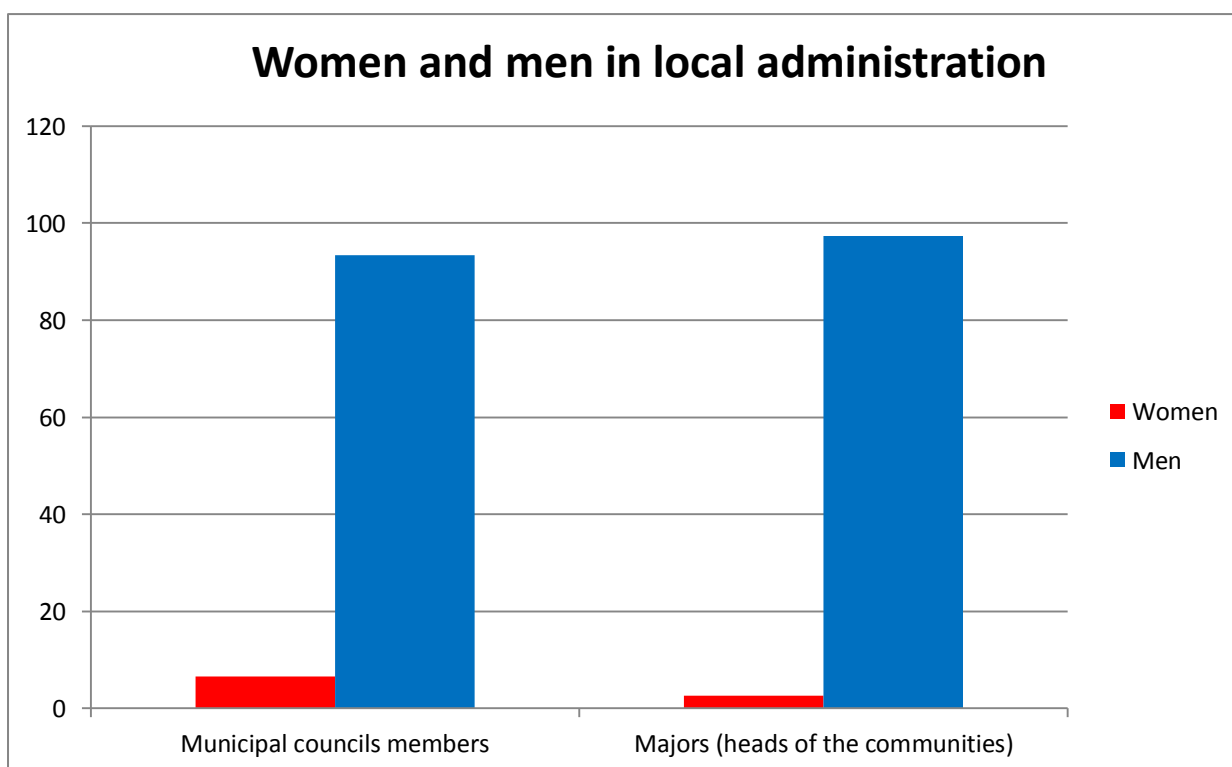
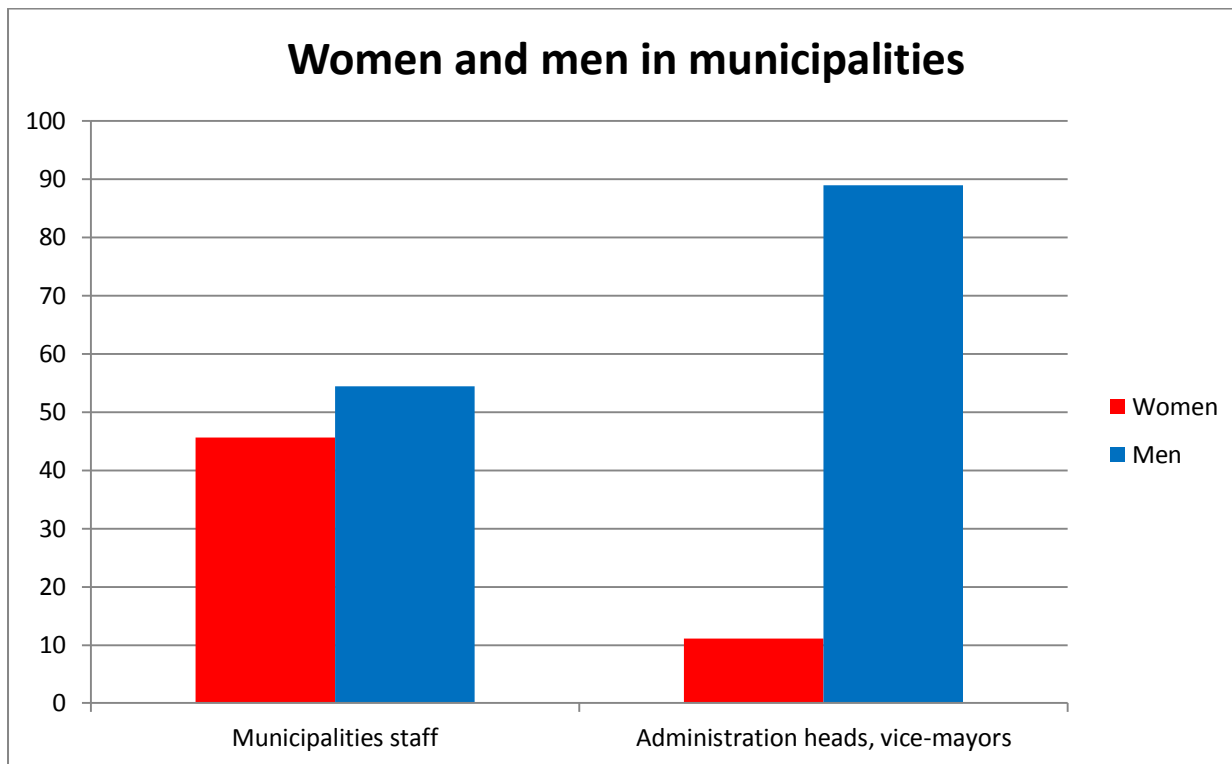
³³ Source: Women and men in Armenia, 2011. National Statistical Service of Armenia. Yerevan, 2011.

³⁴ Includes vice-mayors and chiefs of staff.

³⁵ According to 2011, this number has lowered to 22

³⁶ Source: CI database, based on CEC website www.elections.am

As you can see, the overall participation of women is smaller in towns than in villages; exceptions are explained by statistical errors. For example, there are so few towns in Aragatsotn that just 2 women stand for over 6% of all town council members.



The two diagrams above are based on Tables 4 and 5. They show that while men and women are almost equally represented among municipal employees, the misbalance grows with the hierarchy and reaches its maximum at the top, i.e. among community leaders: only one in 40 municipalities is lead by a woman.

If we go into even more detail, even among these 2.6%, positions held by women are far from the best. None of the 48 city mayors is a woman. None of the 24 communities that were led by women at the beginning of 2011 had over 2500 residents. We can thus say that the glass ceiling for women lies at roughly that size of community.

Table 4 shows that the participation of women in social life is stronger in the Lori and Syunik marzes, followed by Gegharkunik, Shirak and Tavush with average figures. Armavir and Kotayk lag far behind. Finally, Ararat, Argatsotn and Vayots Dzor have the lowest figures for women's engagement. There is a clear trend: Shirak, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Lori and Syunik are further from the capital and less prosperous than the rest. Meanwhile, marzes with low participation of women are better developed and closer to the center of the country.

Taking into account urban and rural local administrations are different in many ways, we decided that the two types of administration need to be studied separately, and, given that there are no women amongst city mayors in Armenia, we focused our study on women in rural administration.

Reasons for low participation of women in social life

Gender roles. Marital status

The differentiation of gender roles in Armenian rural society is quite high and clearly manifest in the economy. The perceived ideal family is one in which decisions are made by a dominant male, the father. The position of the woman varies (see “Factors, affecting women involvement in local administration”) and can range from equality to her husband to complete inferiority, but altogether, leadership and authority are not part of the feminine role in Armenia.

In “a perfect family” according to men, the man is the main breadwinner. He works in the field and does repair work at home. The woman in this model is busy with childcare, household chores and the kitchen garden, although women often help their husbands with farming too. A woman can have a day job³⁷ but it is usually part-time. A woman’s wish to get a full-time job can be opposed by her husband or older family members. That way, a woman is usually financially dependent on her husband, which puts her in a dependent position in the family.

During some of the interviews we made, a woman would delegate the right to answer questions to her husband; this happened quite seldom, approximately once in 5-7 interviews, and only when the husband happened to be in the same room during the interview. Sometimes women’s answers to questions about gender roles varied depending on whether the husband was in the room. But most often, women expressed their own opinions, independent of their husband’s position. This was more distinctive in Lori and Syunik, in contrast to Ararat, where the husband appeared to have more authority in the family.

However, one cannot always have a “perfect family”; sometimes poverty is the obstacle, and sometimes, the shortage of men. The gender misbalance in the Armenian villages is quite strong. Although more boys are born than girls³⁸, by the time they reach adulthood, the ratio changes in favor of females. By the ages of 35-55, the disproportion progresses to a stage where women can prevail by 20 to 40% in some communities. Contrastingly to some other post-soviet countries, the key reason for the gender misbalance in Armenia is apparently the emigration of males and not their shorter life span. A family in which the man is absent is dramatically different from the “perfect” one. Given the shortage of land, many men give up the idea of making a living with farming, and

³⁷ We should note that as we discovered from the results of the poll, in villages, a town-type job with fixed work time – in a school, governmental service, economical enterprise or road works, on factories or plants is understood by the word “job.”

³⁸ Armenia occupies one of the first places in the world by the disproportion of boys and girls born. 115 boys to 100 girls were born in 2010; approximately 114 in 2011. See. 5.2. Demographic situation / Social-economic situation of Armenia in January-December 2011, page 125/Armenian National statistics service / URL: [http://armstat.am/file/article/sv_12_11r_520.pdf] (am - http://armstat.am/file/article/sv_12_11a_520.pdf)

get involved in seasonal migration³⁹, creating a “women-only villages” phenomenon⁴⁰. In such villages, women often combine farming and housework, fully accepting responsibility for their families. However, women-only villages are the exception, not the rule, accounting for less than 1% of all the villages in Armenia; the population of such villages is not large.

A woman’s marital status is an important factor affecting her potential engagement in governance. Some respondents told us that their families prevented them from having a career:

21

“ ...I wanted to run for village mayor but then I changed my mind because my family was against it...”

Woman, refugee, member of the Council of Aldermen of Sayat-Nova community, Ararat province

In other cases, the family did not oppose a woman’s political career and even supported it. Most female mayors told us that their family did not oppose their running for the post of the community leader, and in many cases, their husband or son helped them run the campaign. In some cases, her entire family including distant relatives campaigned in favor of a woman and helped her to get elected. However, this is more of an exception than a rule: family clans usually nominate men, not women, for the mayor’s office.

At the same time, we encountered quite a few men who did not oppose the idea of having a female mayor but ruled out the possibility that their own wife could run for that office. Quote:

“ ... I was against my wife becoming the school headmaster, we had three small children, many cares, and I could not allow her to become the village mayor either... It is not that we don’t trust women. As long as there is someone to look after the children, it is ok for women to work.”

Man,45, Resident of the Yaghdan community, Lori.

Another result of the gender roles is the relatively low social activity of women. Whereas men are usually active outside of home and participate in community life, women

³⁹ Called *khopan* in Armenian, seasonal migration is a traditional method of making a living. The number of Armenian men going abroad (mostly to Russia) in search of seasonal employment reaches 60-80 thousand a year. Armenian migrant workers usually leave home in March-May and return in October-December, spending 6-8 months a year abroad. Some migrant workers stay abroad for longer than a year or even forever; in the latter case, the man either brings his family with him or starts a new family abroad.

⁴⁰ In some communities, almost the entire male population is involved in a particular arrangement for seasonal work abroad. Such communities are located all over Armenia except the Ararat Valley, but most often in Lori. See: Armenia Migration Exodus Creates Women-Only Villages. Oct. 8, 2011. URL: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/10/armenia-migration-exodus-_n_923832.html] Damien McGuinness. Armenia migration: The villages of women left behind. Aug. 10, 2011 / BBC / URL: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14386472]

usually communicate with each other during home visits. Consequently, in average-sized and large communities, some men are acquainted with the majority of locals but very few or no women are.

Gender Stereotypes

The gender stereotypes and strict gender roles are often considered the main reason for the low representation of women in politics. During interviews, we encountered various degrees tolerance towards female leadership, ranging from full support to total opposition.

When there was no opposition to female leadership, respondents usually said that the gender of the leader does not matter: what matters is the quality of his/her work. Those who supported female leadership referred to women leaders of various countries and at various stages of Armenian history. Opponents of female leadership often appealed to gender roles, saying that a woman should care more about her family than politics, often having in mind the women of their own family.

They also mentioned the workload of community mayors, saying that a woman could not handle the responsibility or would be unable to react adequately to problems in extreme conditions, and that a women could not communicate properly with men who lead other communities or sit on the governor’s community heads’ council.

As reference, we present the result of a poll conducted by the CRRC on a topic related to our research focus:

Table x. How would you feel with a woman as your immediate boss?^a

	Comfortable		Uncomfortable	
	Absolutely	Partially	Partially	Absolutely
Armenia ⁴¹	54	22	9	11
Azerbaijan ⁴²	39	19	15	11
Georgia ⁴³	28	32	13	9

^a The sum of percentages by country is below 100% because some people did not answer.

According to the data of the CRRC poll, among South Caucasus states Armenia is the most tolerant towards women leadership. Interestingly, Yerevan has the most proponents of women leadership – 78% and also the most opponents – 21%. If we look at the gender of respondents, we see that more women than men feel comfortable having a female superior (83% women vs. 69% men) and more men than women dislike this option (28% men vs.

⁴¹ COMFWBS: How would you feel with a woman as your immediate boss? / Caucasus Barometer 2010, Armenia / URL: [<http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=5&row=157>]

⁴² COMFWBS: How would you feel with a woman as your immediate boss? / Caucasus Barometer 2010, Azerbaijan / URL: [<http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=6&row=149>]

⁴³ COMFWBS: How would you feel with a woman as your immediate boss? / Caucasus Barometer 2010, Georgia / URL: [<http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=4&row=158>]

11% women). It is noteworthy that this data has been disaggregated from a wide range of factors. E.g. the percentage of internet users prepared to work under a woman's authority is approximately the same as of those who don't use the web. The figures vary very little across age groups and are only slightly affected by a person's level of education: those willing to work under a woman's authority account for 71% of respondents with secondary education or lower, and 79% of respondents with higher education⁴⁴.

Here are some illustrative quotes from our interviews:

23

“ ... Gender does not matter, it's important that the leader should be a decent person and care about people. However, the job will be hard for a woman if she is not helped by men: there is the farming to organize...”

Man, 50, catholic, resident of the Metsavan community, Lori.

“ ... Gender does not matter, what matters is how well they do their jobs. There wasn't much talk about this there [in neighboring Hatsavan village]... Women are more quick-tempered than men, it's easier to hurt their feelings, and men are calmer. Everybody is so advanced in that village, many get an education...”

Woman, resident of the Ashotavan community, Syunik.

“ ... Generally, it is not a woman's job, but if she can handle it, why not. If there was a smart woman, I would vote for her...”

Man, resident of the Lori Berd community, Lori.

“ ... Women village mayors do not have any problems, it's the other way round, they are encouraged. A woman cares more about her village than a man.”

Woman, about 35, resident of the Meghvahovit community, Lori.

“ ... Were Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi poor leaders? Some women are much better leaders than men. I would elect a woman. Men often drink and hang out while a woman works hard.”

Man, 35, Resident of the Verin Dvin community, Ararat.

⁴⁴ URL: [<http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=5&row=157&column=212>]

“ ... Today, a man would manage the village's problems better, I wouldn't elect a woman, let them do their housework. ”

Man, 45, resident of the Karadzor community, Lori

But even though some of our data show relative tolerance to women leadership in Armenia, in any case, the average advantage of males is about 25%, strongly varying across communities. Besides, some respondents may have been insincere with CRRC interviewers or with us. A possible motive for insincerity is that many people associate women leadership with progress and education, and domination of men over women, with an outdated lifestyle. Therefore, some respondents may have denied the existence of such phenomena in order to protect the reputation their community.

However, although gender prejudice lowers a woman's chance to be elected, it is not the main reason for low engagement of women in governance.

Lack of rotation in local authorities

Another factor affecting a woman's chance to be elected, is the low mobility of the local authorities, sometimes even total absence of rotation. This narrows the field of competition for everybody, especially for women.

There are 113 communities in Lori province: 105 villages and 8 towns. Since 2005, local authorities only changed in 30 communities out of the 113⁴⁵. In three communities, the elections were held after a long interval, and it was impossible to understand from the published data whether or not a new person was elected community head. In the remaining 80 communities, the incumbent mayor was re-elected for a new term, including, in 45 cases, without an alternative candidate⁴⁶.

In 17 of the 30 communities which had a changeover of power, the new community head defeated the incumbent one in an election, and in 13, the incumbent community head did not stand in the election, including in one village in which the incumbent mayor's wife ran for mayor and was elected⁴⁷.

For comparison, let us look at the situation in Aragatsotn. Of the 114 communities in Aragatsotn, incumbent mayors were re-elected for another term in 88 and were not reelected in 26; of the latter, incumbent mayors lost elections in 14 communities, and did not stand in 12, including two villages in which the mayor's sons won elections.

Since incumbents win two of three elections, an average community head serves three terms in Lori and closer to four terms in Aragatsotn. In individual cases, mayors hold

⁴⁵ The elections results from 2005 are available on the Central Elections Committee website. "Re-elections" should be understood as elections of the second or further stages, which took place nearly everywhere, from 2008 to 2011, although in some exceptions – in 2006-2007.

⁴⁶ In 22 from the other 36 cases, the community head had two opponents, in 12 – three, and in one – six (Vanadzor, the third largest city in Armenia)

⁴⁷ According to the elections database, composed during the research

their post from one to even five terms, i.e. some mayors have remained in office since the establishment of local administration in Armenia,.

Such political longevity is sometimes the result of the high level of trust and respect of the community towards the mayor. In other cases, it can be due to general apathy and mistrust towards the institution of local administration. Finally, it can be the result of a paternalistic attitude of the community, which feels the need for a “strong leader,” or of the mayor’s authoritarian personality.

It should be noted that when the incumbent does not stand in an election, a window of opportunity opens for other candidates. The reason is that when the incumbent runs for his post again, there are very often no alternative candidates. However, if he does not run, the number of candidates often grows abruptly, despite the fact that the incumbent usually campaigns in favor of a particular candidate.

For example, in 53 communities in Lori, the incumbent community head ran against one or several opponents in the last round of the elections (in 2008-2011, mostly autumn 2008). In 36 communities, the incumbent won, in 17, he/she lost. Even taking into account the fact that the opponents are often unequal (different background, origin, age etc.) the difference is quite high.

According to the way the communities build their authorities, we can break them up into three groups. The first group has more or less democratic traditions of electing the community head in a competitive election. This group includes about a third of all communities in the country, although the ratio varies across marzes. The second group comprises authoritarian, or paternalistic communities. Their residents express a paternalistic disposition by voting for their mayor in non-alternative elections. Leaders of communities in the third group are elected in a competitive struggle but often with the help of external resources or bribes. Once elected, they to prevent competition, sometimes using the same methods they used to get elected, especially if they lack legitimacy. It should be noted that village mayors in Armenia lack resources for complete consolidation of authority in their hands; this has not yet happened, and mayors have not publicly expressed the wish that is should.

Factors affecting the involvement of women in local administration

We noticed that the level of women engagement in governance varies depending on the type of community, not just the type of person. We discovered several patterns that affect a woman's chances to be elected village mayor.

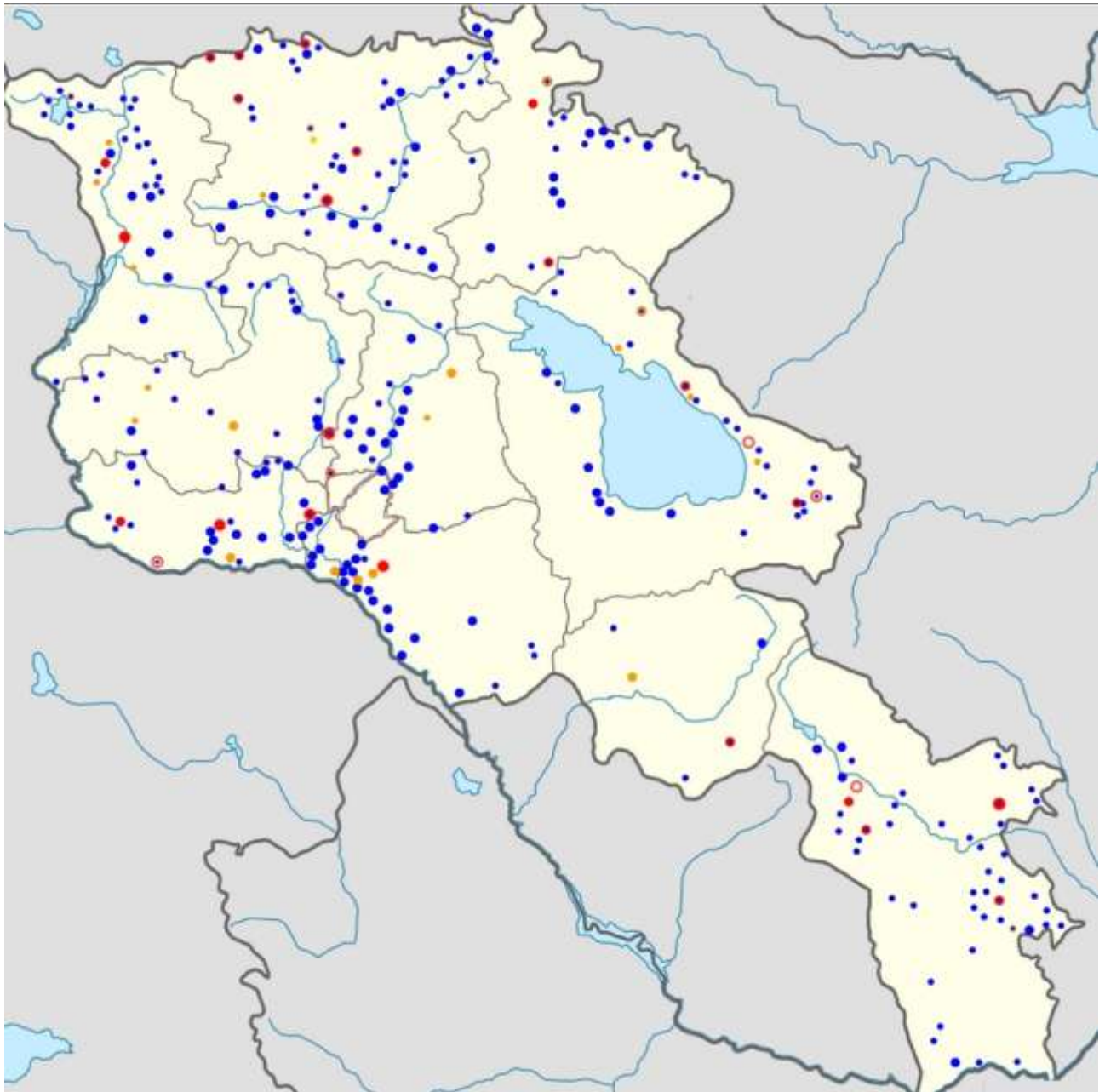
Does geography matter?

As noted before, the activity of women in local administration is inversely proportional to the distance of the community from the capital (Yerevan), and directly proportional to the distance from the border. That's why we had the hypothesis that chances for women leadership in the community are affected by its geographical and transportation situation.

During the study we found some proof of this hypothesis but also some proof to the contrary. Indeed, there are more women leaders in remote communities. To demonstrate this fact, below we have put a map of Armenia showing the communities in which women are engaged in local administration. Red dots represent communities in which the current mayor (as of December 10, 2011) is a woman; larger dots represent communities, the population of which exceeds 1000 people. Blue dots represent communities that have women in their Council of Aldermen. Orange dots show the ones in which a woman stood in the last election. Finally, red circles show communities previously led by a woman.

The only community lead by a woman in the Ararat marz is Verin Dvin, apparently in immediate proximity to Yerevan. But in reality, it is situated on the mountain foothill, and the road connecting it to other villages was only paved recently. The seeming concentration of blue dots in Ararat and Kotayk is deceptive: because of the high density of population, the dots are close together but in fact represent about a quarter of all the villages in the marz. Those communities are large, in contrast to the small ones in Syunik, and the participation of women in the local councils is usually nominal because women are a minority (often 1 out of 11).

There is a clear difference between the western and eastern parts of Gegharkunik: in the near-border eastern part, two villages have female mayors and another two recently did; in another four, women ran for the post, but unsuccessfully. In the western part of the marz, which is more populated and has better transportation, not only are there no women-lead communities but there hasn't been one recently, and women did not even run for mayor in any of them.



Four out of the six communities in Lori that have female mayors are located in the mountains close to the border. Roads are unpaved and intercity transport reaches those villages average once a week. Another community, Yaghdan, also has critical issues with transportation, as the roads leading to it slowly get worse as you approach the village, and the pavement disappears entirely at some point.

Two communities lead by women in Shirak, and one of the two in Tavush are also in immediate proximity to the borders. The same is true for Syunik and Vayots-Dzor.

Apparently, this is no coincidence but a consistent pattern. Why do women lead exactly those communities⁴⁸? The geographical position itself cannot be the only condition

⁴⁸ It is important to note that in some of these communities not only the mayors are women but also the entire municipality staff and sometimes the entire Council of Aldermen.

for women's activity; there are communities with female mayors in which the situation with transport is relatively good.

During our study, we distinguished other factors that correlate with women's engagement in local authorities.

Type of economy

It is a well-studied fact that the position of women in traditional horticultural and livestock-farming communities is significantly different. It also differs in the mountains vs. the flatlands, i.e. in livestock-raising mountain communities women typically enjoy more freedom and more involvement in social life, whereas in the lowlands, female roles are more restricted⁴⁹.

Most communities in our selection were located in the mountains and engaged in livestock farming, or belonged to a mixed type (both livestock farming and horticulture). The only exceptions were the village Bazum in Lori and villages in the Ararat valley.

In conversations with us, local residents often expressed the opinion that the sex of the leader does not bear any significance. On the contrary, in large agricultural communities of the Ararat valley, participation of women was minimal: if in a small highland community, there would be 10-15 women activists, in flatland villages with population of 2000 and more, there were often no socially active women at all, and the residents of such villages often expressed the opinion that public administration is not for women. Overall, the horticultural villages that we visited were more authoritarian and often had an authoritarian leader elected in a non-competitive poll, whereas in highland livestock farming communities the elections were usually legitimate and competitive.

It should be observed that most of the large villages of the Ararat Valley were founded in the first half of the 19th century. They are populated by immigrants from Khoy, Salmast, and other regions of Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Part of the population of these villages were returning deportees (deported in the beginning of the 17th century by Shah Abbas) and part settled on these lands for the first time. Apart from Ararat, communities of this type are a majority in western Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Armavir and Vayots Dzor.

A situation when the community head has not changed since the 1990s is common in such villages, and often the elections are not competitive. Current community heads usually belong to a well-to-do family clan descended from former Soviet-time village elders or heads of collective farms. We could not find out if those family clans dated back to pre-soviet times.

Among villages of that type, the representation of women in local administration is the lowest. It may be connected to their flatland location - mainly in Kotayk and in the

⁴⁹ Levon Melik Shakhnazaryan thus describes the difference between highlanders and flatland residents in his essay *On the Armenian National Character*: "amongst highlanders, the influence and significance of women in the family seriously exceeds that amongst flatland residents. Moreover, in the Armenian mountains, wives, and especially mothers, are often the true family leaders."

Ararat Valley - or to the political culture that they brought with them from their previous place of settlement.

The post-Soviet transformation of the Armenian economy gave birth to villages that do not belong to any of the types listed above. Those post-Soviet post-industrial villages are semi-urban communities strongly hit by the closing down of factories in the cities. Such communities include Bazum in Lori and Karahunj in Syunik. Both communities are quite large: they have about 1200 residents. In Soviet times, most of them had jobs neighboring cities (Vanadzor for Bazum and Goris for Karahunj), and have poor farming skills, whether in horticulture or cattle-breeding. Besides, the fields near these villages are small and not sufficient to provide for the populations. Consequently, seasonal labor migration, mostly to Russia, is a very important type of economic activity in such communities.

Migration is a major concern for all communities in Armenia, but, while migrants from poor highland communities try to help all their relatives migrate, from the richer lowland villages, emigration is smaller and directed primarily to Yerevan. Migration affects the post-industrial communities more than others, also distorting their gender structure, because it is chiefly the young and healthy men that go away for seasonal labor. In such communities, the election of a woman is more probable than in flatland communities.

Naturally, the type of economy is not the only factor, and horticultural communities do not fully exclude women from social life. However, the type of economy should be taken into account alongside other factors that affect the engagement of women in politics.

Ethnographic parameters and their impact on political culture

Apart from the type of economy, ethnographic characteristics of villages also have a certain effect. According to the origin of current residents, Armenian villages can be divided into the following categories:

- “Old-timer” villages.

About 5-10% of all villages of Armenia are populated by “old-timers,” i.e. Armenians whose ancestors lived there before the Russian Empire. These villages were not affected by deportations; most of them are located in the Syunik marz, some in Tavush, and some in Lori in Shirak. These territories had self-administration back in the later Middle Ages, in contrast to Armenian-populated regions of the Ottoman and Persian Empires.

Perhaps due to older self-governance traditions, in “old-timer” communities, the representation of women is higher than the national average. For example, the Karahunj and Torunik villages in Syunik, Voskepar in Tavush and Ashotavan, led by a woman until recently, are communities with mostly “old-timer” population.

- Villages founded in the 20th century.

Young rural communities created in the 20th century by the Soviet Union form another group. Some of them were founded in the 1920s and 1930s by refugees and

immigrants, some in the 1940s-1950s. Most of those communities are located in Armavir, although they exist in all parts of the country.

In such villages, the representation of women is relatively high. Possibly because of their shorter history, the social structure in these communities stays more mobile and offers women more opportunities for engagement in local politics. Such villages exist among large agricultural communities: for example, the villages Nor Erznka in Kotayk and Arevashat in Armavir, which have about 1500 residents each, were founded in 1946 and 1949.

- Villages populated by ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities account for just 2.1% of the country's population. Amongst rural population, this ratio is higher, reaching 3%. The main rural ethnic minorities in Armenia are Russians, Pontic Greeks, Assyrians and Yezedis. When Armenia acquired independence, most of the Greeks repatriated to Greece. Many Assyrians and Russians went to Russia. Yezedi villages were mainly preserved: emigration affected them in the same way as it did the rest of the nation. Today there are quite a few villages in Armenia that have mixed populations as a result of partial emigration of ethnic minorities and repopulation with Armenian immigrants. From the point of view of our study, mixed villages fall into the group populated by ethnic minorities.

Representation of women in villages populated by ethnic minorities and mixed villages is higher than average. The Yaghdan village had once been Greek but now it is mixed; Verin Dvin is an Assyrian village preserving its mainly Assyrian, population. It is hard to judge how this trend is connected with the status of an ethnic minority; it may even be a coincidence, as more material is needed.

- Villages populated by refugees from Azerbaijan

The last, rather large group consists of communities populated by refugees from Azerbaijan. Most of them were established in former Azerbaijani villages as the result of population exchange. These villages are chiefly located in Shirak, Gegharkunik, Syunik and Lori, although they are also present in all the other marzes.

Almost all of these villages faced constant emigration in the 1990s and 2000s, and have not formed stable local elites. This could be the reason why in the villages populated by refugees and founded in 1988-1991, women participation in local administration is the highest. For example, the village Aghavnavank, located on the border of Tavush and Gegharkunik, was founded in 1988, and is populated by refugees. The only village in Vayots-Dzor lead by a woman is also populated by refugees.

Does religion matter?

The effect of religion on the engagement of women in local authorities is disputable. In the 90+ interviews that we made, not a single interviewee mentioned religion as a factor that affects the gender of the community leader. Though flatland residents appeared more

religious than highlanders, it was not clear if this affects the participation of women in social life.

The opinion of the church on the matter is also complicated. According to Shmavon Ghevondyan from the Ararat Eparchy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, *“a woman should not participate in politics, if she was assigned the role of the homemaker. Christianity views men and women as equal, but God gave them their roles⁵⁰.”* Somewhat earlier, Aram the 1st, the Catholicos of the Great House of Kilikia, announced in his encyclical that 2010 is the year of women, calling to boost the role of women in the society: *“[women and men] are equal in the eyes of God, and are equal partners in care towards the world and people⁵¹.”* Table 7 shows a list of communities led by women now and in the recent past.

Table 7. Communities with women leaders

Community (marz)	Woman-mayor ^a	Council		Population				Geography					Found. date k	Ethnographic structure
		m	w	R ^b	C ^c	%W ^d	E ^e	H ^f	S ^g	D1 ^h	D2 ⁱ	D3 ^j		
Aregnadem (Shirak)	Hazryan Aghunik	5	0	425	379	53.6	13	1850	2.3	11	24	141	1988	refugees, immigrants
Akhurik (Shirak)	Gasparyan Varditer	5	0	1241	962	58.8	28	1480	9.2	2	5	131	1850	refugees Western Armenia
Karahunj (Syunik)	Avetyan Lusine	5	2	1305	1182	49.3	7.4	1250	20	36	61	258	стар.	old-timers
Hacavan (Syunik)	Margaryan Shushan	4	0	245	224	50.9	15	1730	8.0	12	126	228	1922	immigrants
Shrvenanc (Syunik)	Manoukian Armine	2	2	75	72	54.2	n/a	1140	5.8	34	20	340	1828	immigrants, Karabakh, Iran
Torunik (Syunik)	Hakobyan Anahit	3	2	124	157	51.0	13	1810	19	13	121	234	стар.	old-timers
Aghavnavank (Tavush)	Nersisyan Vardush	3	2	298	379	54.6	11	1120	14	24	36	125	1988	refugees
Voskepar (Tavush)	Aghbalyan Hrush	5	0	863	883	51.4	10	810	12	2	34	174	стар.	old-timers
Nor Yerznka (Kotayk)	Harutynyan Alina	5	2	1758	1470	51.0	12	1320	16	32	55	32	1949	immigrants
Arevashat (Armavir)	Gevorgyan Susanna	5	2	2194	1413	50.5	8.7	850	3.8	7	36	8	1946	immigrants
Arevik (Armavir)	Petrosyan Karine	4	0	2872	2473	50.0	3.1	850	12	12	8	56	n/a	n/a
Artamet (Armavir)	Davtyan Anahit	5	0	164	133	52.6	41	970	6.4	9.0	16	65	1982	immigrants

⁵⁰ “Priest: The less women in Armenian politics, the better for politics.” *News.am*, December 12, 2011. URL: [http://news.am/rus/news/85459.html]

⁵¹ “Aram the 1st proclaims 2010 the Year of Women.” *News.am*. December 12, 2011. URL: [http://news.am/rus/news/12018.html]

Tsapatagh (Gegharkunik)	Boyakhchyan Taguhi	4	1	414	274	51.8	0.8	1960	21	6	100	210	1988	refugees
Shatdjrek (Gegharkunik)	Gevorgyan Zoya	3	1	468	517	49.3	9.0	2020	6.9	16	82	177	1831 1991	n/a
Verin Dvin (Ararat)	Ludmila Petrova	5	0	2222	1866	54.1	16	960	61	11	13	16	1805, 1992	Assyrians immigrants
Gomk (Vayots Dzor)	Stella Akopova	3	1	263	260	54.2	-11	1880	38	7	35	154	1989	refugees
Bazum (Lori)	Harutynyan Srбуhi	4	1	965	1122	52.7	18	1550	35	36	110	138	1830	n/a
Hapaven (Lori)	Narine Sughyan	2	2	140	127	53.5	1.7	1700	3.1	1	68	196	1991	refugees immigrants
Dzyunashogh (Lori)	Yana Mamikonyan	3	1	153	258	56.6	10	1600	17	2	67	195	1989	refugees
Meghvahovit (Lori)	Hamest Shahbazyan	2	3	275	167	49.1	n/a	1670	14	10	63	191	1989	refugees, immigrants
Paghaghbyur (Lori)	Arusyak Dumikyan	1	4	153	131	50.4	3.0	1740	13	1	72	200	1989	refugees, immigrants
Yaghdan (Lori)	Valentina Kerkhanadjeva	4	1	97	276	55.4	26	1360	12	20	36	151	1821 1998	Greeks, immigrants
Ashotavan (Syunik)	Arevhat Hovnanyan	4	0	653	561	50.4	11	1690	17	14	112	225	стар 1828	old-timers,
Nor Kesaria (Armavir)	Hranush Serobyan	6	1	1600	1288	48.2	3.2	910	14	4	16	64	1949	immigrants
Geghamasar (Gegharkunik)	Emma Yeghiazaryan	7	0	1198	1068	52.3	1.4	2060	26	5	90	185	1988	refugees
Azat (Gegharkunik)	Kerina Melikyan	2	3	152	165	54.5	n/a	2050	8.3	13	88	183	1988	refugees

^a Surname of the current or last woman mayor

^b Resident population according to official data, 2011

^c Current population according to the 2001 census

^d Ration of women in the population according to the 2001 census

^e Index of men emigration (difference between the resident and current populations)

^f Altitude above sea level

^g Community area size, hectares

^h Distance from the actual border

ⁱ Distance from the marz center

^j Distance to Yerevan

^k Last continuous colonization of the village

Elite Inertia

In older villages (the ones founded before 20th century), the social and economical elites have already formed, changing form over time: in the Soviet times, they were school headmasters, heads of collective farms, village elders etc. Their families have preserved their weight in the society and their financial standing. Often, the son or nephew of a 1980s village elder became the head of the community in the 1990s.

Villages are often formed by a group of families that may be to various extents related to each other. This often becomes important during voting: some of the interviewees noted that “the more relatives you have, the more chances you have to be elected.” This primordial approach to voting often dominates on the local level. Since the family system relies on the patriarchal tradition, men dominate in it. Of course, sometimes women also rely on family clans and are promoted by them, but overall, this is a male world in which inertia is very strong.

In communities which are relatively new, populated by refugees or immigrants, or have experienced mass migration (primarily of men), the relatively larger representation of women in governance may be the result of the lower inertia of local elites.

However, although the “inertia of local elites” explains away the situation in the Ararat marz and in the communities consisting of 19th century immigrants, it does not explain the larger engagement women in “old-timer” communities. A possible explanation is that these communities have existed long enough to establish a system of measures that prevent one family from dominating in social life and ensure fairer distribution of benefits in the community. What is also significant, a whole range of factors is in play here: the old-timer communities are mostly highland livestock-raising ones but they may also have a different political culture resulting from political autonomy in the past.

The glass ceiling?

According to our respondents, on the marz and country levels there are usually no obstacles to the engagement of women. Sometimes the situation is the other way round: moral support is provided, community projects are supported and the case is cited as “good practice,” but usually no one interferes or participates.

“ ... I am a woman but I have never had any problems with the marz administration: People pay me every courtesy as a woman. ... Women even get a little support and I never met any obstruction ”

Valentina Kerkhanadjeva, Yaghdan community leader

Despite the generally positive attitude, women often feel as a minority on the marz administration councils (marzpetaran). Often, as noted by respondents, the allocation of grants to communities is discussed amongst men during a meal, so it can be harder for a

woman to obtain financing from central and marz administrations. However, women are often better at relating to international organizations and getting financial support from them.

Is economy a factor?

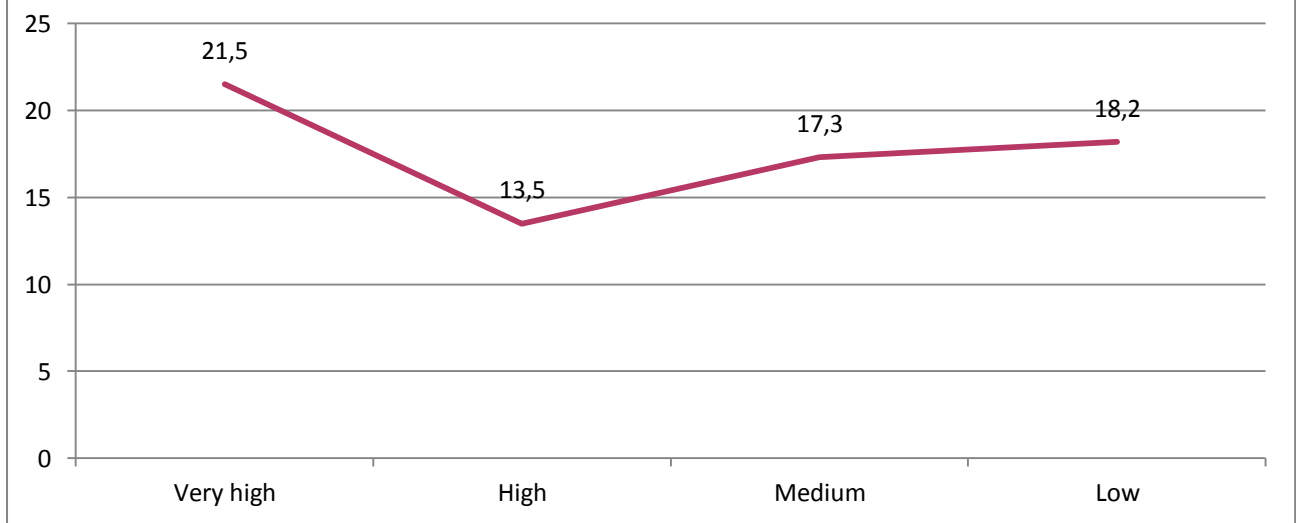
As described above, the geographical and transportation situation of a village affects the participation of women in the local administration, and so does as the type of economy. Obviously, these factors are directly connected to economic growth, and it would be logical to assume that economic growth would boost women's involvement in social and political life. In fact, it is just the opposite: in Armenia, the poorer the community the larger the participation of women. Poor highland borderland villages form the majority of women-lead communities.

Various explanations are possible. *First*, a poor community, in contrast to a richer one, cannot afford to let the traditional distribution of the gender roles cause the loss of human resources, including in the administration sphere: it is essential that someone does the job, and the gender doesn't matter much. *Second*, by leading a poor community a man cannot realize his gender role that dictates him to be the breadwinner for his family. The scarcity of financial resources in local administration reduces the incentives for men to engage in it. *Third*, poor communities face the constant outflow of males leaving for seasonal labor, which means that the number of women exceeds the number of men at any given moment. The absence or lack of men forces women to do "men's jobs".

This phenomenon is not unique for Armenia; to the contrary, it is widespread. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2011, in the least economically developed countries, the employment rate of women is higher than in the relatively developed ones. The same trend prevails in participation of women in the legislative assemblies of poor countries, corresponding to low development of the human potential⁵². To illustrate this fact, we can use the following diagram.

⁵²See: Gender Inequality Index and related indicators / human development report 2011. P. 142 / UNDP

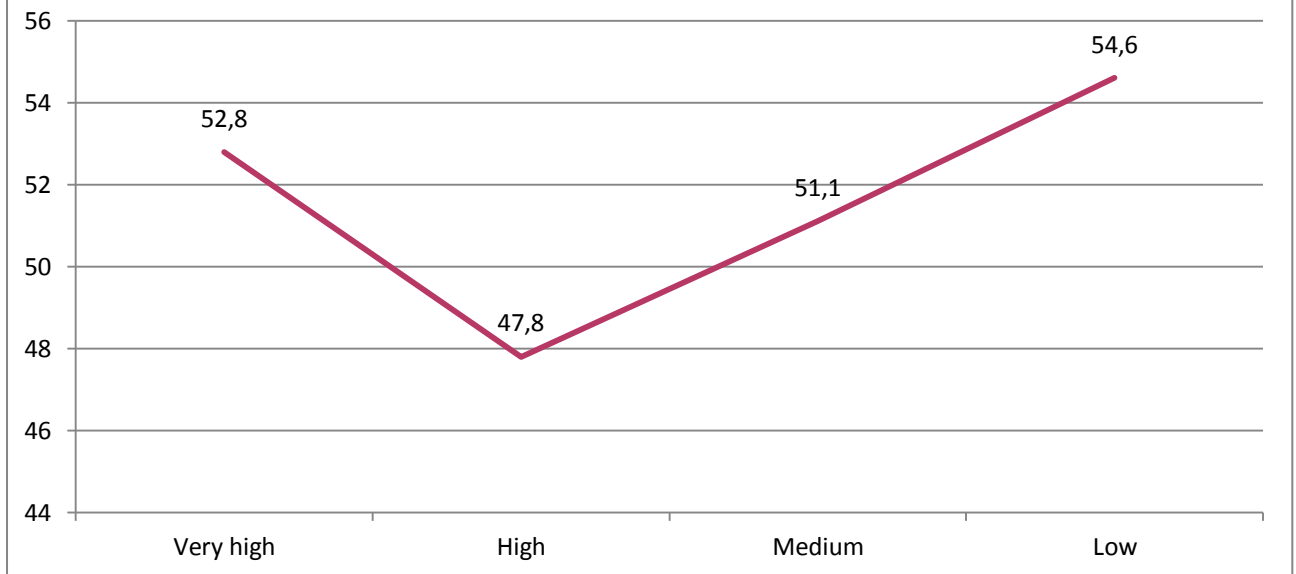
Percentage of women in the parliament, according to the level of human development



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The diagram of women’s participation in economics is even more illustrative:

Percentage of women participating in economy



Why does this happen? A possible explanation is that developing countries like Armenia, which have relatively high human development (and so do the richer Armenian villages), are going through an active growth process during which men are more active in the struggle for resources and keep women away from economic and political levers. It is only after a lengthy period of stable economical growth that a space for women involvement in the politics and economy can be created.

However, this is a mere hypothesis. In our case, it is enough to note that in the poorest countries, the participation of women in the economy decreases with economic

growth, and so does their involvement in social and political life, if we consider the percentage of women in the parliament as an indicator of their participation in politics.

The dichotomy of neighboring “patriarchal” and “matriarchal” communities in Syunik

For a more detailed comparison of the effect that various factors have on the role of women in the community and their engagement in competitive politics, we shall compare two villages located next to each other: Karahunj and Khndzoresk. We will try to identify the factors that affected the election of a female mayor in the first village, and will try to show why women are passive in the second village.

Geography and transportation

Khndzoresk is situated at the altitude of about 1500 m, on a highland, while Karahunj, is located about 200 m. lower, on a mountain slope, between 1150 and 1350 m above sea level. Karahunj lies very close to a city (Goris), Khndzoresk is a little farther. However, despite its proximity to the city, Karahunj has no road because of the complicated landscape. In Khndzoresk, with its convenient landscape, the roads reach the village and are asphalt-paved. Therefore, in our terms, Khndzoresk is a flatland village and Karahunj a highland one.

Type of economy

Generally, the type of economy in both villages is a mix of horticulture and cattle-raising, but the Khndzoresk community has more land. In Karahunj, the residents mostly rely on small patches of land adjacent to their houses, which is clearly not enough for financial sustainability. In fact, Karahunj is a post-industrial village: its residents used to make their living working in factories in the adjacent city of Goris.

Ethnographic characteristics of the villages

Both villages are populated with “old-timers” and have a long continuous history. However, they have different neighborhoods: while Khndzoresk used to border on Azerbaijani villages, and became a frontline during the war, Karahunj did not face such problems because of its complex landscape. Interestingly, Karahunj still has a monument to local communists, including one woman, who died fighting against Dashnaks. In the Soviets, Karahunj became a “red,” i.e. Communist, village, which was quite unusual for Armenia, and its atmosphere was more conducive to Soviet ideas about emancipation of women. In Khndzoresk, there is a monument to combatants killed in the Karabakh war. Even outwardly, Khndzoresk comes across as a more patriarchal village than any other we visited during the study.

Head of the community

The head of the Karahunj community is a young woman, which is quite unusual for a female mayor. She was a businesswoman and owned a shop even before the elections; she was very familiar with the problems of the village. According to the residents of the village,

she has many relatives and they also helped her to become elected head of the community. She had six rivals in the first election, fewer in the next, and none in last election. The head of the Khndzoresk community fought in the Karabakh war as a volunteer, and has the reputation of a war veteran. He never had any rivals in the elections and has lead the community since 1999. Both mayors are university graduates.

The mayor of the Karahunj community primarily focuses on human development projects, like renovating the school and the nursery, founding a women's club and a youth center. Khndzoresk, thanks to its mayor's efforts, has running water. These two avenues of activity reflect the typical difference in the priorities of male and female mayors.

Economy

In Khndzoresk, many families have a car, and there is a lot of farm machinery taken trophy during the war. Karahunj has none of this. There are about 5 cows per household in Khndzoresk, and just 2, in Karahunj. Overall, Khndzoresk the richest village in the marz, and Karahunj, one of the poorest.

A woman as a head of a rural community

We described the external factors that affect the chances of a woman to be elected. However, her chances are also affected by her personal qualities. Here we shall describe the parameters of women in local politics, based on data collected from various sources and systematized.

Portrait



Despite the large geographical scatter of the villages in which women won elections, and the big differences in the conditions that supported or hindered those victories, the winners themselves have a lot in common.

Age and family

The average age of female mayors is higher than that of male mayors by almost 10 years. To be elected, it is enough for a man to be 30 years old, and the average age of male mayors is about 45. However, a woman needs more social capital for politics; a 30-year-old and sometimes even a 40-year-old woman can be considered too young and inexperienced to lead a community⁵³. The average age of female mayors is 55.

By her marital status, a female mayor is in no way different from fellow villagers. She is clearly more educated: if the village is very small, the mayor may be the only woman with a university degree in the village. In most cases, she got her degree in Yerevan, in an agricultural institute, and returned to her home village or to the nearest city.

Many mayors are married and have 2 or 3 children, although we encountered single and childless mayors, and a mother of 8. But as her average age is 55, even a married mayor she has relatively more free time with her children already independent.

“... If you don't liberate a woman from her family and social restrictions, it will be difficult to involve her in politics. A woman thinks about her household, about milking the cow etc., there is no room for politics.”

Valentina Kerkhanadjeva, Yaghdan community leader.

She can be a member of a large family or family clan that has high standing in the community, but it is not obligatory. Most often, a female mayor is a dedicated and motivated leader prepared to face difficulties. This often requires assuming a male gender role. For example, one of the popular answers of the interviewees was “there are women like men and men like women.”

Background

Her previous occupation can vary. But most often, women who stand in elections already work in the municipality, e.g. as secretaries of the village administration. The second candidate pool is the school. Female candidates are usually women who are respected in the community and educated, which is perceived as needed for the job.

The political competition does not have the same significance for her as for most men. Women are often too shy to campaign, but when they do, they do it in public, whereas men often prefer to operate on informal levels. A woman can only win an election which is competitive, but she still needs support from her relatives to mobilize voters.

⁵³ The first ever female mayor of a relatively large town was Catherine Trautmann, elected in 1989, later appointed Minister of Culture and elected member of the European Parliament. In an interview with us, she recalled that in 1989, when she was 38, the majority was sure that she would not be elected, because she was 1) young 2) female 3) a socialist. However, she won as a result of protest voting.

Most of the female village mayors are respected in their villages, and often easily get reelected. Some of them have held this post since its establishment, while others only stay for one term.

The path to election and subsequent activity

Women present a program to their voters and then try to implement it. Whereas male community heads focus on large-scale infrastructure projects (limited by financial possibilities), women prioritize human development. Primarily, women turn their attention to education: the school and the nursery; the next step is usually the organization of leisure for the community residents (founding of a club, youth and women's centers, reconstruction of the soviet community centre, organization of community events etc.), and only after that does a woman start implementing infrastructural projects such as paving roads or building gas and water supply lines.

*“ ... I have organized repairs at the community centre where we hold annual events, resumed the activities of the school and the nursery, organized a collective farm, repaired the post office, and I consider the peace between the communities to be one of my accomplishments ...
... now we need to build a gas supply line (it's in progress) and pave the road.”*

Valentina Kerkhanadjeva, Yaghdan community leader.

The humanitarian dimension of women's activist is manifest in many villages:

“ ... There are problems that won't be shared with a man; it is easier to share them with a woman. For example, we once complained to Elena Davtyan about not getting our welfare allowance. She helped us with the paperwork and solved the problem. Sometimes you just cannot approach a man with a problem like this.”

Sasha Shakhnazaryan, Aznavadzor community leader.

The decision to stand in elections is usually hard for a woman, as it implies adaptation to the male gender role. The head of the community is expected to be actively involved in irrigation and other activities connected to farming, which can be hard for a woman.

The family can provide help and support to a female candidate, or become a barrier. Approximately one half of the men we interviewed would not want their wives to stand in elections; the other half said they would not mind and would be ready to help. In practice, all women mayors get the support of their families, first of all their husbands, sometimes sons or more distant relatives.

In large communities, the struggle for votes gets heated, and women are often not prepared to fight, and therefore do not run for mayor. Besides, in small communities,

school teachers and municipal staff are sufficiently prominent and popular to get elected. In large communities and especially in cities, you have to be a public politician to be known. Since there are hardly any female public politicians in the cities, the vicious cycle goes on.

Still, motivation is the key difference between men and women in local politics. The main incentive for a woman running for village mayor is not just getting a job but rather, a chance to change something in her community and improve living standards, whereas men are more often just looking for a job, or trying to get access to money and power.

Recommendations

Short-term

1. The main candidate pool for municipal councils and mayors is the staff of local administrations (deputy mayors, secretaries, accountants), and to a lesser degree, employees of the school and the medical station. Therefore, one can stimulate the engagement of women in local authorities by increasing the numbers of *female deputy mayors, assistants etc.*, by means of quotas or other methods.
2. According to our data, for some women, *help with the election campaign* played a key role in their election. Those women went to local women NGOs for help and encouragement. It would, however, be more efficient if the NGOs do not wait for the women to step forward but become proactive, identifying potential female leaders and offering their assistance and advice on the conduct of an election campaign.
3. The most suitable candidates for leadership on a local level are women *aged 40 and older, with higher education, respected in their community*. Sometimes all such a woman needs is encouragement to stand in the election, and later, consultations on successful campaigning.
4. Should a *senior position in the Ministry of Territorial Administration be filled by a woman*, this would send an important message to the communities. This female senior official should not be responsible for “gender issues,” but, preferably, for social issues or community development.
5. Quota allocation and other means of stimulating the participation of women must be *implemented differently in different marzes and villages*. The ministry could use our database or ask us for help. The further from Yerevan, the poorer, the closer to the border, the larger the quotas can be. Efforts will be more effective in villages populated by refugees, ethnic or religious minorities, and in ones founded after the 1940-s. We are ready to help with elaborating strategies for specific cases.
6. Since women most often achieve success in small communities, the *enlargement and merging of rural communities can drastically reduce the presence of women in local bodies*. Whenever communities led by women are merged with other communities, the women will need to be encouraged to run for mayors of the enlarged community. Moreover, women can be hired as vice-mayors; the more female vice-mayors there are, the better the chances that more communities will have female mayors.
7. In the process of merging, *schools and nurseries will shut down in some villages*, and since school staff are usually women, they should be encouraged to stand in elections to local administrations.

8. Examples of successful women leadership *must be advertised, popularized and encouraged*. The more people find out about them, the more women will decide to stand in elections. It is also important to advertize good practices, e.g. cases when local authorities improved living standards in a village, especially if the effort involved women (not necessarily formal leaders).
9. Women only win fair elections. Accordingly, whenever a woman is one of the candidates in a local election, *extra-careful supervision of the election campaign and voting* may contribute to the victory of the woman-candidate, provided, of course, that she is a true participant of the election race, not a dummy.
10. The women that have already been elected village mayors or local council members must receive *help from NGOs and/or administrations*, primarily in the form of consultations, networking etc.

Long-term

1. Women participation in local administration will grow once municipal councils begin to fully exercise their authority as prescribed by law, especially with regard to *allocation of finances and control over expenditure*. The less financial power a mayor has, the more chances that a woman will fill this post.
2. The community head remains dependant on the marz administration, which often has its protégés on local level and has the right to initiate the resignation of a mayor. Meanwhile, many women lack the skills which are vital to establishing relations with the usually male governor and his apparatus. *Distancing of the community heads from the marzpet will make the post more available for women*.
3. Women can only win fair elections. A *competitive environment on the local level* is essential. For that purpose, the authority of the Council of Aldermen must increase, and that of the mayor, decrease, as prescribed by law. Nowadays, the mayor often decides who will sit on the council, and has full control over it.
4. Active women in the villages usually join NGOs, not local administrations. Encouragement of women's participation in local administration will be good for both for the NGOs and the society at large. *NGO activists are a potential human resource* for the local administration.

Women in Local Administration in Armenia

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