




The role of education and health systems in prevention of gender-biased sex selection (GBSS) in Armenia

Policy brief




The Republic of Armenia (RA) is among the countries with the largest deviation in the sex ratio at birth. According to the data of the RA Statistical Committee, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) was 108.8 boys per 100 girls in 2021, while the natural level of SRB in the world is 104-106 boys per 100 girls. Although the SRB decreased reaching 108.8 boys in 2021 in comparison to the rate in 2012 (115 boys per 100 girls) as a result of the programs implemented in recent years, in 2022 according to the data of the first semester, the indicator has increased again by 3 points in comparison to the data of the same period of 2021(108) reaching to 111.

Ongoing efforts towards improving the situation can ensure the sustainability of achievements, prevent backsliding, and promote progress. Continuous inter-sectoral cooperation and promotion of the involvement of various state and non-state actors positively impacted the reduction of sex imbalance. In particular, the coordinated work of state authorities local and international organizations within the framework of the RA 2020-2023 program on prevention of the gender-biased sex selection, which includes policy development, capacity building, and awareness raising, has proven to be essential. In this context, it is particularly important to develop the capacity of healthcare workers and promote their gender sensitivity. Therefore, there is a need to ensure the sustainability of already recorded progress and further reinforcement of the established mechanisms to make the efforts towards prevention of GBSS in the spheres of education and healthcare more coordinate.

Hence, this policy brief presents recommendations based on the results of the survey aimed to assess the prevalence and causes of sex-selective abortions conducted in June 2022 in Armenia.

Findings from the Survey

According to the results of the survey, the level of education of the respondents, in this case - women who have ever been pregnant, affects the planning of pregnancy and the preference of the child's sex. In particular, in the families of respondents with higher and postgraduate education, the attitude towards children of both sexes is more identical than in the case of respondents with a lower educational level.




The Republic of Armenia (RA) is among the countries with the largest deviation in the sex ratio at birth. According to the data of the RA Statistical Committee, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) was 108.8 boys per 100 girls in 2021, while the natural level of SRB in the world is 104-106 boys per 100 girls. Although the SRB decreased reaching 108.8 boys in 2021 in comparison to the rate in 2012 (115 boys per 100 girls) as a result of the programs implemented in recent years, in 2022 according to the data of the first semester, the indicator has increased again by 3 points in comparison to the data of the same period of 2021(108) reaching to 111.

Ongoing efforts towards improving the situation can ensure the sustainability of achievements, prevent backsliding, and promote progress. Continuous inter-sectoral cooperation and promotion of the involvement of various state and non-state actors positively impacted the reduction of sex imbalance. In particular, the coordinated work of state authorities local and international organizations within the framework of the RA 2020-2023 program on prevention of the gender-biased sex selection, which includes policy development, capacity building, and awareness raising, has proven to be essential. In this context, it is particularly important to develop the capacity of healthcare workers and promote their gender sensitivity. Therefore, there is a need to ensure the sustainability of already recorded progress and further reinforcement of the established mechanisms to make the efforts towards prevention of GBSS in the spheres of education and healthcare more coordinate.

Hence, this policy brief presents recommendations based on the results of the survey aimed to assess the prevalence and causes of sex-selective abortions conducted in June 2022 in Armenia.

Findings from the Survey

According to the results of the survey, the level of education of the respondents, in this case - women who have ever been pregnant, affects the planning of pregnancy and the preference of the child's sex. In particular, in the families of respondents with higher and postgraduate education, the attitude towards children of both sexes is more identical than in the case of respondents with a lower educational level.

- 
- Ensure the involvement of husbands and older family members in training sessions and campaigns on gender-biased sex selection to shift their attitude;
 - Provide adequate premarital counseling and capacity building opportunities, including sexual education, family planning, and parenting;
 - Develop pre-abortion and post-abortion counseling capacities of healthcare workers, as well as transfer knowledge and information about harmful practices resulting from gender stereotypes and demographic issues caused by gender-biased sex selection;
 - Focus on the work of healthcare institutions, in particular, to study the cases of fetal removal after 12 weeks to understand the reasons for the latter.

The study on gender-biased sex selection includes a survey among 1,920 women who have ever been pregnant, and a qualitative analysis based on focus group discussions.

The survey was implemented in the frames of the “Addressing gender-biased sex selection and related harmful practices in South Caucasus: support for regional, national and South-South interventions” project. The project is implemented by UNFPA Armenia in partnership with OXYGen Foundation. The project is funded by the European Union and UNFPA. The survey was conducted by Breavis.