

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN WITH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
GENDER STUDIES CENTER

**WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN THE 2007 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC
OF ARMENIA**

Analytical Overview

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University Education**

This analytical survey on **“Women’s Political Participation in the 2007 Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Armenia”** *was prepared by a group of experts from the Gender Studies Center of the Association of Women with University Education, with support from the OSCE Office in Yerevan.*

**Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction.....	8
Political Participation As an Issue of Democracy	8
Goals, Structure and Methods of the Study	10
Stating the Problem	11
General Characteristics of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections.....	12
Chapter 1: Women in Electoral Processes	13
Women Candidates in the Proportional System	13
Women Candidates in the Majoritarian System	15
What Kind of Women Run for Parliament?	16
Scenarios for Women's Entry into Politics	19
Women's Motivation for Entering Politics	20
Quotas as a Constitutional Opportunity for the Advancement of Women.....	21
Gender Composition of the National Assembly of the Fourth Convocation (2007).....	22
The Assessment of International Observers of Women's Political Participation in the 2007 Election	23
Chapter 2: Gender Aspects of the Activities of Political Parties	25
Gender Composition of Political Parties and their Governing Bodies	25
Gender Analysis of Party Platforms	27
Political Parties' Role in Training Candidates for Future Advancement.....	28
Women's Councils in Political Parties	29
Party List Compilation Mechanisms	31
Chapter 3: The Role of Women NGOs in Election Processes and their Support for Women's Political Participation	33
Women NGOs as an Institute of Women's Political Socialization	33
What Do NGO Activists Think of the Role of Parties as Institutes of Women's Political Socialization	35
Political Activities of NGOS during the 2007 Election Campaign	35
Election Results and the Issue of Gender Equality as Assessed by Women NGOs ..	37
Assessment of Women's Participation in the Election as an Issue of Democratization of Society	37
Barriers to Women's Political Activity.....	38
The Attitude of Society and Family towards Women's Political Participation.....	39
Going Into Politics: Gender Aspects and Motivation	40
The Opinion of NGOs about Parties' Interest in Promoting Women.....	40
Attitude of Women NGO Activists toward Quotas as a Means to Promote Women in Politics.....	40
The Assessment of the Effectiveness of NGO Participation in Election Processes....	40
Cooperation between Women NGOs and Political Parties	41
The Position of Women NGOs to Support Women-Candidates for Parliament.....	41
Chapter 4: Analysis of Obstacles for Women's Political Participation by Women - Before and After the Elections.....	43
Factors Contributing to the Low Competitiveness of Women during the Elections and Preventing their Political Career	43
Problem of Awareness of Discriminatory Practices	43
Analysis of Stereotypes.....	44
Chapter 5: Women-Candidates in the Media	46
Women's Political Participation in the Electronic Media	46
Women's Political Participation in the Print Media (Qualitative Analysis).....	47

Instead of Conclusion	51
Post-Election Realities.....	51
Recommendations	52
Annex I. Methodology of the Research on Women's Political Participation in the 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Armenia	54

Executive Summary

The 2007 parliamentary election was the first election after the November 2005 constitutional reform that was aimed at expanding the authority of the National Assembly and increasing its role in the formation of the government.

The Electoral Code changed the ratio of proportional vs. majoritarian seats in the parliament, decreasing the number of majoritarian seats from 56 to 41, and set the length of the parliament's term at 5 years.

The 15% quota for women's representation in party lists, mandated by the Electoral Code, created an opportunity for expanding women's participation.

These factors helped increasing the "value" of each mandate and made the fight for seats in parliament tougher and more uncompromising, which in turn made the campaign tougher, thus affecting women's participation and opportunities in the election, especially under the majoritarian system.

5 parties were elected to the parliament, with following results – *The Republican Party of Armenia* - 32.9%, *Prosperous Armenia* - 14.7%, *ARF Dashnaksutyun*- 12.75%, *Orinats Yerkir* -6.9% and *Heritage* - 5.82%.

Even though the number of women in the National Assembly increased from 7 (5.3% in 2003) to 12 (9.2% in 2007), which shows that the quota ensured some progress, only **two factions in the fourth National Assembly have 15% or more women-members: ARF Dashnaksutyun** has 3 women out of 16 members (18.7%) and the **Heritage Party** has 3 women out of 7 members (42.8%). Prosperous Armenia has 3 women out of 25 members (12%), and Orinats Yerkir has 1 woman out of 8 members (12%). Thus, the 15% gender quota mandated by the law failed to ensure adequate gender representation in all political parties. *We are concerned that the ruling Republican Party, which numerically is the biggest faction in the parliament, only has 2 women (3.1%) out of its 64 of parliament members.* Naturally, such gender imbalance of this faction will negatively affect the possibility of advancing gender-sensitive policies not only in the parliament, but also in the government policy as a whole.

In addition to this, another positive factor is the election of two women as chairwomen of two of the nine standing committees - the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Public Issues (Arevik Petrosyan) and the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports (Hranush Hakobyan).

The analysis of the results of voting for women-candidates under the majoritarian system revealed that the common opinion about the public not supporting women-candidates and women not voting for women is groundless. The women running in three single-mandate districts came in second after the winning candidates, in terms of the number of ballots cast for them. Heggine Bisharyan, who ran against three other candidates, received 8406 votes; Hasmik Baghdasaryan, who ran against six candidates, received 5289 votes; Larisa Paremuzyan received 5514 votes.

It is noteworthy that 12% of women included in the top positions in party lists were non-partisan; as a rule, these were women who are quite successful in their respective professions and have high potential. Some of them were elected to the National Assembly. These include ex-ombudswoman Larisa Alaverdyan (Heritage), lawyer Zaruhi Postanjyan (Heritage), member of all previous parliaments Hranush Hakobyan (Republican Party),

former Deputy Chairwoman of the Civil Service Council Arevik Petrosyan (Prosperous Armenia) and the journalist Naira Zohrabyan (Prosperous Armenia).

In our research, we identified a number of problems that raise barriers for women to participate in Armenian party politics:

- Most of the political parties do not show any concern for developing women's resources. The few parties that organize seminars and schools for its members do not aim at increasing the gender awareness of their members, activating and promoting women's advancement both within the parties and in leadership positions/elected offices.
- Despite the fact that many political parties have created women's councils, following the experience of the West, they do not play a significant role in women's development and advancement. Until recently, many chairpersons of women's councils were not members of their party's leadership, but, being in a minority, did not have any effect on party decisions, including on party lists, which is an evidence of a deficit of democracy within the party.
- Women's contribution to the election campaign is not adequate to their representation in the parliament. In many round-table discussions and interviews it was said that 80% of all the work connected with elections was performed by women.
- Women in the parties are beginning to realize the need for increasing the role and responsibility of women's councils for promoting women in the political sphere.
- A process of cooperation between women's councils of different parties with NGOs creates a basis for joint actions for increasing the political/legal literacy of women-members of the parties, teaching them to use modern technologies of political participation and for developing women's political activity.

Factors that make women less competitive than men in the political sphere are:

- ***Imperfection of the electoral processes:*** the high degree of commercialization of elections, lack of financial resources among women, toughness of the political struggle, use of black PR, criminalization of the political struggle, insufficient knowledge of modern electoral and campaign technologies on the part of women.
- ***Specific mentality and stereotypes:*** domination of patriarchal attitudes that do not encourage women's political activity, gender stereotypes causing mistrust of women-candidates, society's and women's unawareness of discriminatory practices.
- ***Lack of political experience and low self-esteem of women:*** lack of political experience, inner psychological barriers and low self-esteem among women as a result of political socialization, orientation of men and women toward different roles in society, lack of a differentiated system of training for women and promoting women's leadership, limited representation of women in the walks of life from where people are recruited into politics, double burden on women who have to combine family responsibilities with a political career when the system of pre-school institutions is extremely underdeveloped.
- ***Insufficient political culture of society and the weakness of democratic institutions:*** lack of state gender policy aimed at advancing women and

overcoming gender imbalances, weakness of women's organizations, the underdevelopment of the women's social movement, lack of democracy within parties, lack of party mechanisms for promoting women, lack of media support for women's political participation, which cultivates stereotypes about the role of women in social and political spheres.

Based upon the study, a number of recommendations can be made that would help remove the barriers for women's political participation and increase their representation both in the legislative and in the executive branches of power:

- It is necessary to develop comprehensive measures for putting gender issues on the political agenda and in the activities of political parties, and to build gender awareness of party members.
- It is necessary to support the training of women in the political parties, help develop mechanisms for advancing women into the leadership of parties and deepening the inner democracy within parties.
- It is necessary to promote wider cooperation of women's councils in political parties and women NGOs on issues of women's political advancement.
- It is necessary to ensure wide control over the fulfilment of the state's international commitments on gender policy, to examine the possibility of using the experience of European political parties in achieving the gender balance and using the methods of positive discrimination.
- It is necessary to increase the quote of women's representation in party lists to at least 25% based on the final results, i.e. 25% of women in parliamentary factions.
- It is necessary to develop and implement comprehensive programs to prepare women for election campaigns, including giving them more legal/political and economic knowledge and knowledge of electoral campaign technologies, psychological training on leadership and skills for working with the media.
- It is necessary to develop mechanisms of state motivation of political parties that implement gender-balanced policies and promote women's participation.
- It is necessary to support NGO initiatives aimed at creating women's leadership schools in the capital and in the marzes, using the principle of selecting the most competitive women leaders.
- It is necessary to continue the introduction of gender courses in the system of school and university education, to develop and implement educational programs on gender education, and special educational programs for journalists on supporting women's leadership.
- It is necessary to encourage PR campaigns in the media aimed at overcoming the gender stereotypes and advancing women, especially during elections.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 2007 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Introduction

Political Participation As an Issue of Democracy

The development of democratic processes entails strengthening civil society institutions, political parties and NGOs. Through improvement of their effectiveness, the active engagement of citizens in politics can be promoted, including the exercising of effective participation in the organization of elections.

Under the conditions of complicated socio-political and socioeconomic transformations, the effective operation of all civil society actors in Armenia is impossible without the reliance on impartial analysis of the real situation in the country.

Given this necessity, during the last couple of years, the Association of Women with University Education has conducted sociological surveys of different aspects of public and political life. They have focused on the achievement of balanced gender participation in the political and administrative structures of Armenia, political and civil activeness of women and monitoring the implementation of international documents on overcoming gender discrimination and the advancement of women in the political decision-making system of Armenia.

The survey conducted in the pre-election period in Armenia in 2002 focused on the issues of electoral culture in the context of the political and socio-economic situation. That study enabled the AAWUE to identify the respondents' opinions about the prospects for democratization and their electoral preferences, and to ascertain the role and place of civil society institutions in the consolidation of electoral democracy.

An important follow-up of that study was the survey that targeted a number of the most important aspects of the social and political situation in Armenia in the period between the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2003. That survey examined citizens' electoral attitudes, preferences and expectations, the impact of the post-electoral situation on civic activism and the role of civil society institutions in the development of a democratic political culture.

The study conducted in early 2004 by AAWUE examined opinions of a political and civic active group of respondents. The focus was on the tendencies of democratic changes and legitimacy of the principal democratic institutions, the dynamic of gender relations in society and obstacles to the democratization of Armenian society in the post-election period.

In 2005, the Association did a study of the gender situation in Armenia. The study revealed the dynamics of the advancement of gender equality in Armenia, clarified women's socio-political status and identified the underlying causes that give rise to a gender imbalance in the socio-political life in Armenia, which is undergoing transformations.

That study examined the issues of women's political status such as gender-based representation in the legislative and executive branches of government at the national and regional levels and women in political parties and in electoral processes.

Another study conducted in the beginning of 2006, with a focus on gender aspects of political participation in Armenian society was a natural outgrowth of the survey-based studies done in previous years.

The studies on issues of political participation reveal a pattern which could be described as persistent exclusion of women from participation in political positions in government and decision-making.

The last 16 years, which were a period of democratic changes on the political arena, revealed a trend of reduction in women's presence in Armenian politics, in the Armenian National Assembly as a body of representative democracy and in top positions such as Deputy Ministers.

In April 2004, the Armenian Government adopted a *National Plan of Action on Improvement of Women's Status in the Republic of Armenia and Enhancement of their Role in the Society in 2004-2010*. Section I of the Plan lists measures that are aimed at the attainment of gender equality and empowerment of women. Nevertheless, women's presence in both national and regional bodies of the state administration and in local governments continues to be low and confirms the persistence of a patriarchal pyramid of power. That pyramid is characterized by a lack of women in top decision-making positions responsibility, but with a broader presence in middle- and lower-level positions.

The process of the de-feminization of power in Armenia has become dynamic. It is grounded in patriarchal-totalitarian traditions of political culture, gender stereotypes and is a result of the transformation process since the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The political advancement of women requires a comprehensive approach and political will on the part of the power structures and political parties to take a broad range of measures to overcome the gender imbalance.

Armenia is among those countries that signed the UN Millennium Declaration. Therefore, as a country with a transitional economy, it should within the framework of a democratic, rule-of-law state implement a whole set of measures for ensuring a gender balance in all socio-political spheres.

Political practices that aim at the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment should be examined as inseparable components of the progress of Armenian society.

Among the most important international standards, it is necessary to consider the modern conception of human rights, the concept of gender equality and gender approaches to the analysis of social problems formed on the basis of these concepts and the concept of human potential development. All three conceptions are closely interrelated: they are oriented towards women and men as equal subjects of contemporary history. Each of these conceptions assume consideration of gender constituents of public development, gender orientation of state acts, programmes, decisions.

A crucial importance of this study on women's political participation in the 2007 parliamentary elections concerns the reasons for the gender imbalance in the political and socio-economic spheres in Armenian society, which are significant also in relation to the conduct of the 2008 presidential elections.

Political participation is a key element in the democratization of any society. It is particularly important, primarily for a transition society. Elections are an important component of political processes. Participation in elections is a demonstration not only of civic awareness and of the political will of the people, but also of their responsibility to further the democratic process in general. Political participation in elections is a powerful factor for democratization of society and for enhancing citizens' responsibility to stimulate the further unfolding of participatory democracy.

There is no democracy without gender equality. Basic for democracy is equal participation of men and women in the political processes and their equal responsibility, and the political system be able to reveal discrimination, its prevalence, reasons and conditions contributing to its development.

The current survey allowed revealed the consistency level between the reality and stereotypical perceptions about the causes of actively spread myths about gender. The myths that “women do not want to engage in politics”, that “women do not vote for women” and that “present day Armenian society does not support politically active women and their election to policy-making positions” are frequently reiterated by politicians. Responses to a number of questions were to elicit unbiased and real opinions about women’s political participation. Answers to these and other questions enabled identification of the real situation and the real public attitude and not the intentionally spread myths having negative influence on women’s political participation, revealing the reasons hampering gender equality, as well as preconditions for the future active participation of women.

Goals, Structure and Methods of the Study

Goals of the study:

To examine women’s participation in the preparation and conduct of the 2007 parliamentary elections, to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of the participation of women-candidates in the elections, to identify the negative practices and stereotypes preventing the formation and development of women’s political participation.

The following objectives have been achieved in the course of the study:

- The gender situation in the country has been studied and the reasons for the gender imbalance in the political sector in Armenia have been identified.
- The whole range of objective and subjective reasons affecting the formation of women’s political participation have been identified, the accumulated women’s political experience has been evaluated, factors and preconditions determining women’s electoral behaviour have been studied.
- Ways of overcoming the obstacles for increasing the number of women in the legislative branch and possibilities of a balanced gender representation in the National Assembly as the institution of representative democracy have been identified.
- Recommendations on the activation of women’s participation in the political sphere have been developed, based on the study of the political practice and real data on the work of civil society organizations in promoting women’s political leadership and political participation.

The necessary information was collected in three phases, during the election campaign, the day of voting and during the post-election period.

The following methods were used in the course of the study:

- Studying the situation on women’s political participation before and after the May 2007 parliamentary elections in Armenia,
- Round-tables and focus group discussions,
- Interviews with women-candidates, women-leaders and activists from political parties and NGOs,
- Analysis of statistical data on women’s political representation,
- Analysis of the media coverage of women’s political participation.

To reach their conclusions, the researchers have used a number of other sources of information as well, including public statements by women-candidates and discussions with them, results of opinion polls conducted in the country in the period of elections and media monitoring, opinions of international and local observers and data from some earlier studies on women's political participation.

The study contains the following blocs:

1. Gender cross-section of the parliamentary elections. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of women-candidates (in the proportional and majoritarian systems). The peculiarities of the electoral behaviour of women-candidates.
2. Gender composition of the newly elected parliament. Women-members of the National Assembly.
3. Assessment of women's political activity in the preference of the electorate. Gender stereotypes in public opinion. Women-candidates in the mass media.
4. Women and women's unions in political parties. Gender approaches in campaign platforms of various political parties. Gender strategies in the personnel policies of various parties, gender balance within parties as a factor of internal democracy.
5. Women's NGOs in the election process. Strategies for supporting women leadership.

Stating the Problem

The dynamics of Armenian elections since 1991 reflects the tendency of pushing women away from real power. This is typical for countries in transition. Despite the principle of equality of the sexes, enshrined in the Armenian Constitution, women have been excluded from the process of formulating state policy. The process of de-feminization of government has affected both the elected positions and the top positions in the executive branch of power. Considering the facts that women make up 52% of Armenia's population and that, on average, about 40% of the members in political parties are women, the current situation can be regarded as a democratic deficit and an indication of the ineffective use of human resources in the government.

Table 1. Dynamics of Women's and Men's Representation in the RA National Assembly

Year	Percent	
	Women	Men
1995	6.3 %	93.7 %
1999	3.1 %	96.9 %
2003	5.3 %	94.7 %
2007	9.2 %	90.8 %

The issue of women's representation in the legislature is particularly important in light of the recent parliamentary elections which took place with an amended Electoral Code requiring a mandatory 15% quota for women in party lists. An analysis of party lists and the increase of the number of women in the National Assembly from 5.3% in 2003 to 9.2% in 2007 indicate that the quota has ensured some progress. However, Armenia not only remains far behind the world average in terms of women's representation in the legislative branch of power (17%), but also occupies the last place among the republics of the South Caucasus: the Georgian parliament has 9.4% women and the Azerbaijani

parliament has 11.3% women.¹ It is well known that women's representation in parliament is a basic systemic criterion that demonstrates the peculiarities of party systems and the attitude of various parties towards gender development programs.

General Characteristics of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections

In the parliamentary election of 12 May, 2007, 22 parties and one political bloc contested 131 seats in the National Assembly – 90 seats by party lists and 41 seats in single-mandate districts. 132 candidates ran under the majoritarian system (about three candidates per seat). In order to be elected, parties had to get at least 5% of the votes, and blocks had to get at least 7%. A relative majority of the votes was sufficient to secure a victory in single-mandate districts.

53 local organizations with 13,808 people and 6 international missions with 767 people observed the conduct of the election.

1,371,540 (59.98%) out of 2,319,722 eligible voters participated in the election.

Five parties were elected to the parliament as a result of the vote:

The Republican Party of Armenia – 457 032 votes (32.9%)

Prosperous Armenia – 204 443 votes (14.7%)

ARF Dashnaktsutyun – 177 192 votes (12.75%)

The Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir) – 95 256 votes (6.9%)

The Heritage Party – 80 890 votes (5.82%)

The 2007 parliamentary election of 12 May, 2007 was a regularly scheduled election, the fourth since Armenia's independence and the first since the constitutional reform of November 2005, which expanded the National Assembly's authority, increased its role in forming the government and increased the parliament's term to 5 years.

The amended Electoral Code changed the proportion between the number of proportional and majoritarian seats, reducing the number of single-mandate districts from 56 to 41. Another characteristic of these elections was that they came before the upcoming presidential election in 2008, and experts thought of them as a sort of "primaries" before the presidential race. All of these factors contributed to increase the "value" of each mandate and made the race tougher and more uncompromising, which could not but affect women's participation in the election, especially under the majoritarian system.

According to international observers, the elections in Armenia "demonstrated improvement and were conducted largely in accordance with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic elections."² However, the observers also expressed a number of concerns, particularly with vote counting procedures, connections between business and politics and insufficient transparency of campaign financing.

The observers noted the positive effect of the mandatory 15% quota for women's representation in party lists, introduced by the Election Code.

Nevertheless, the study of complaints submitted to the Central Electoral Commission for both the proportional and majoritarian systems, revealed a significant amount of worrying patterns. This makes it necessary to evaluate the recent elections from a gender point of view and develop ways to overcome the negative practices and to increase the effectiveness of quotas.

¹ This data is taken from a report by Anders Johnson, the Secretary-General of the UN Inter-Parliamentary Union, March 2, 2007.

² Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions on the 12 May 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Armenia, www.osce.org/odihr

Chapter 1: Women in Electoral Processes

Women Candidates in the Proportional System

Out of 1313 candidates included in party lists of the 22 political parties and one bloc running for parliament, 297 (or 22.6%) were women. For comparison, the number of women-candidates running for parliament in party lists was 162 out of 1143, or 14.1%.

Among the top ten candidates in all lists, there were 27 women in 2003 and 37 in 2007. Given the five percent threshold for political parties, the first five candidates in the lists have the best chances of being elected. In 2003, there were only 6 women in the top five positions, compared to 17 in 2007; however, only 11 parties showed an initiative on this issue. Women were represented in lists starting from the second position, with the only exception of Lyudmila Sargsyan, the leader of the Social-Democratic Henschakyan party, who headed the party's election list (see Table 2). Analysis shows that the quota generally helped promote women, but that the issue of including them among the top five positions remains a problem for at least half of the parties running for parliament.

Analysis of the party lists shows that all the parties fulfilled the 15% quota required by law. The parties running for parliament can be divided into three groups in terms of the level of women's representation in their election lists:

The first group includes the 7 parties whose lists contained between 26% (*Youth Party of Armenia*) and 44% (*United Liberal-National Party*) of women. Both parties position themselves as youth parties, and both parties tried to follow the so called zigzag principle when distributing men and women in their lists (see Table 2). Four parties in this group had women among their top five candidates: *National-Democratic Party*, *Social-Democratic Henschakyan Party*, *Democratic Party of Armenia* and *Youth Party of Armenia*. None of the parties in this group got elected to the parliament.

The second group includes 9 parties that had between 20% (*People's Party of Armenia*) and 25% (*ARF Dashnaktsutyun*) women-candidates. Five parties in this group had women in the top five of their lists - *United Labor Party*, *Heritage Party*, *Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir)*, *ARF Dashnaktsutyun* and the *Impeachment Bloc*. Three of them - *ARF Dashnaktsutyun*, the *Heritage Party* and the *Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir)* - were elected to parliament.

The third group includes 7 parties who had between 15.3% (the *Republican Party of Armenia*) to 18.4% (the *Alliance*) women candidates. This group includes the two parties that received the most votes during parliamentary elections – the *Republican Party of Armenia* and *Prosperous Armenia*. Only two parties in this group had women-candidates in the top five of their lists (*Prosperous Armenia* and the *Alliance*).

The correlation of women's representation in party lists and the number of votes received by these parties during the election confirms, to a certain extent, the well-known principle of “the more power, the less women” (see Table 2).

Table 2. Women's Representation in Party Lists

	Political Parties	Total Number of Candidates in the List	Number of Women in the List	Percent of Women in the List	Positions of Women Candidates	Election Results by Percentage
1	The United Liberal-National Party	18	8	44.4%	6,7,9,11,12	0.19%
2	The Republic Party	55	19	34,5%	10,12,22,26,29	1.62%
3	The National Democratic Party	73	24	32,8%	2,5,18,23,26	0.61%
4	The Social-Democratic Henchakyan Party	18	6	30%	1,11,12,14,17	0.07%
5	The Democratic Party of Armenia	33	10	30,3%	3,7,9,11,16	0.27%
6	The New Times Party	58	17	29,3%	10,12,20,24,25	3.38%
7	The Youth Party of Armenia	19	5	26,3%	3,8,12,14,16	0.16%
8	ARF Dashnaktsutyun	113	29	25,6%	4,11,23,30,36	12.75%
9	The Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir)	120	28	23,3%	3,19,30,33,37	6.85%
10	The Christian Popular Revival Party	20	4	22,7%	8,15,19,20,22	0.25%
11	The Marxist Party of Armenia	9	2	22,2%	7, 9	0.2%
12	The People's Party	40	9	22,5%	8,11,18,27,33	2.66%
13	The Heritage Party	51	11	21,5%	2, 4, 7, 11,24	5.82%
14	The United Labor Party	77	16	20,7%	4,5,9,17,22	4.26%
15	Impeachment	59	12	20,3%	4,15,19, 23, 26	1.28%
16	The People's Party of Armenia	64	13	20,3%	6,8,12,28,37	1.7%
17	The Alliance Party	38	7	18,4%	2,11,21,30,40	2.38%
18	The Popular Accord Party	11	2	18%	9,11	0.3%
19	The National Unity Party	71	12	16,9%	10,16,20,36,49	3.58%
20	The Communist Party of Armenia	49	8	16,3%	7,17,28,31,38	0.63%
21	The Democratic Way Party	31	5	16%	9,15,25,29,30	0.6%
22	Prosperous Armenia	112	18	16%	3,11,20,23,28	14.71%
23	The Republican Party of Armenia	111	17	15,3%	8,12,23,37,46	32.89%

Women Candidates in the Majoritarian System

The number of women running in single-mandate districts has been decreasing steadily with every new election. Moreover, this decrease is much faster than the decrease in the number of these districts. As a result of amendments to the Electoral Code, the number of single-mandate districts has dropped by about half compared to 1999, but there were ten times fewer women running under the majoritarian system in 2007 than in 1999. The reason lies in the toughness of the race and the high level of commercialization of these elections. Women's descriptions of majoritarian districts need no comments: *"Majoritarian districts are closed to women, and let no woman brag that she can break that wall"*³, *"Women running under the majoritarian system are doing a heroic thing, something like self-immolation, suicide, hara-kiri..."*⁴

18 women ran under the majoritarian system in 2003, which was 4.4% of all candidates. Only one of them got elected – the parliamentarian of all previous parliaments Hranush Hakobyan. Only 5 women (3.7% of all candidates) ran in the 2007 election. It must be noted that 11 women-candidates had been nominated in the first stage of the elections, but half of them later withdrew from the race (the number of male candidates who withdrew from the race was 36). As a rule, the real reasons for withdrawing remain equally obscure for both men and women. Susanna Harutyunyan, who was nominated by civil initiative to run in the 19th district (town of Vagharshapat) was taken off the race by a court decision because of irregularities found in her documents submitted to the Territorial Electoral Commission. The candidate herself thinks that she became the victim of political technologies. It is worth mentioning that Susanna Harutyunyan had also ran for the post of mayor of Vagharshapat in the 2005 local elections, but did not get elected.

The five women who stayed in the race were nominated by political parties and were members of political parties, mostly from the opposition. Three women were members of the Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir), one was from the People's Party of Armenia, and one was supported by the Youth Party of Armenia. This fact indicates that women do not dare entering the race in single-mandate districts without support from political parties. It must be noted that the same pattern prevailed among most of the male candidates running in the 2007 elections under the majoritarian system.

In two districts – the 12th district (Shengavit, Yerevan) where the candidates included **Hasmik Baghdasaryan** (Country of Law) and **Zhasmen Asryan** (Youth Party of Armenia), and the 31st district (Alaverdi) where candidates included **Victoria Harutyunyan** (Country of Law) and **Larisa Paremuzyan** (People's Party of Armenia) – women essentially competed against each other. In the first stages of the election, there were two women-candidates in the 11th district as well. One was **Heghine Bisharyan** (Country of Law), and the other one later withdrew from the race. Specialists in political technologies think that competition between women in the same district is undesirable, as it is thought that they can take away each other's votes. However, the candidates themselves do not agree with this, claiming that their electorates do not overlap and that the decisive factor is their party affiliation.

Three of the women running in single-mandate districts came in second after the winning candidates in terms of the number of votes they received as a result of the election. Heghine Bisharyan (11th district) competed against three candidates and received 8406 votes (her rivals received 16598 and 5543 votes), Hasmik Baghdasaryan (12th district) came in second among six candidates with 5289 votes (the winner received 11180 votes), and Larisa Paremuzyan (31st district) received 5514 votes in the race against four competitors (the winner received 21468 votes). The other two candidates were less successful, with Victoria Harutyunyan (31st district) receiving 4511 votes and Zhasmen

³ From a speech by the Member of Parliament Alvard Petrosyan (ARF Dashnaktsutyun)

⁴ From an interview with Inessa Adamyan (National Unity)

Asryan (12th district) receiving 1269 votes. Unfortunately, Zhasmen Asryan was not able to run a proper campaign, since her husband - who she considered to be the inspiration and the organizer of her campaign - died in an accident during the campaign.

Heghine Bisharyan, who got elected to parliament on a party list, tried to contest the election results in the Constitutional Court, but she later withdrew her claim. Larisa Paremuzyan also went to a court of first instance. The reason for her court appeal was the high number of irregularities in the vote counting in a number of precincts of her district. During the court hearing, the defendants cited the insufficient level of competence of commission members responsible for the irregularities. The court did not overturn the decision of the Territorial Electoral Commission.

None of the parties, who were front-runners in the elections, nominated women-candidates in single-mandate districts. Hranush Hakobyan, who had been elected under the majoritarian system several times, preferred to enter the 2007 parliamentary race on a party list. Being non-partisan, she was included in the Republican Party's list, in the 8th position.

As a whole, based on the opinion of women surveyed in the course of the study, one can state that the possibility of women being elected under the majoritarian system is gradually decreasing, and even experienced women-politicians rule out electoral success if nominated in single-mandate districts. Most of the political parties share the negative attitude towards single-mandate districts. Many politicians think that dirty technologies are practiced and most of the election violations take place in single-mandate districts. In many single-mandate districts, there is often only one candidate running in any given election. Because of this, many party strategies call for having a 100% proportional system.

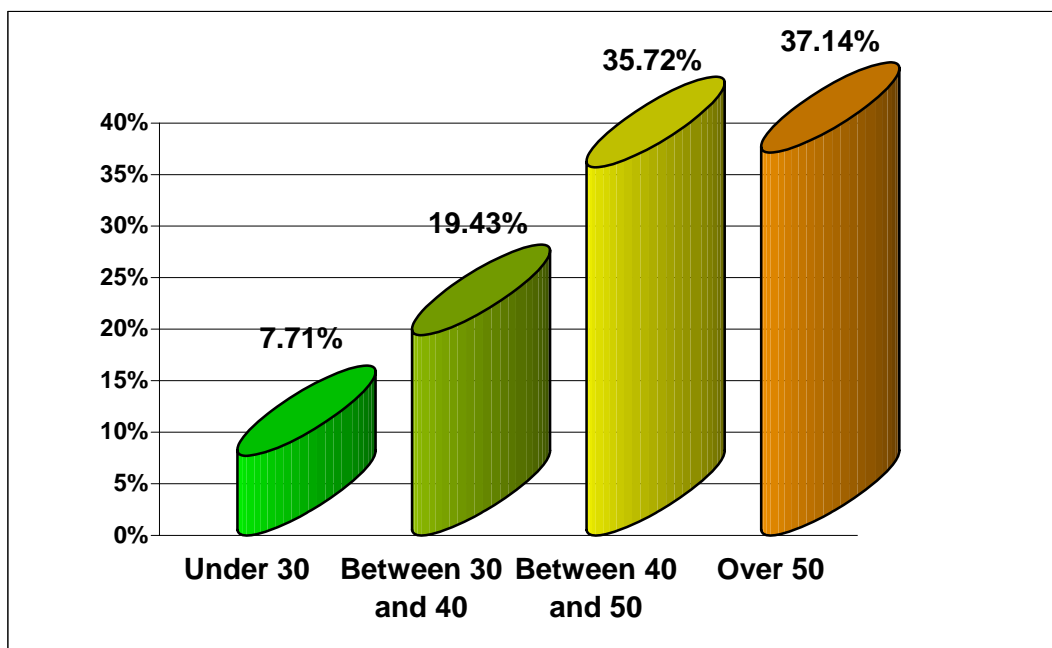
What Kind of Women Run for Parliament?

An analysis of the lists of candidates, allows to draw conclusions about the professions and ages of women running for parliament. Like in many post-Soviet countries, today's women leaders in Armenia use resources developed back in Soviet times. Most active are older women, who have experience working in the executive and legislative branches of power. This is confirmed by analyzing the age of women-candidates running for parliament under both proportional and majoritarian systems.

72% of the women-candidates running for parliament in 2007 were in the age group above 40 (see Diagram 1). The smallest age group was the group of women under 30, while 19.4% of the candidates were in the age group of 30-40. Experience is, undoubtedly, an important factor determining the age distribution of politically active women and men, but it is not the only such factor in the case of women.

As a rule, young women have small children, causing the all sorts of difficulties, as many of the surveyed women noted. Those who are more than 40 years old have grown-up children and a well-organized family life, which women themselves think is an important factor giving them an opportunity to realize their potential both in their profession and in politics. However, this common stereotype is not always confirmed in real life in recent years. There are quite a few politically and professionally active women who have small children. The example of the former deputy minister of Lilit Asatryan, who used to go on official visits abroad with a small child, is still very rare for Armenia, but it indicates that the stereotype is being broken. We saw a number of women in the course of the study who had three or four children of pre-school age. In particular, the current parliament has three women-members who have many children.

Diagram 1. Age Distribution of Women-Candidate



The women surveyed in the course of this study emphasized that support and understanding from their families and relatives is imperative for being politically active. *“My husband and my children helped me during the campaign”*⁵, *“My husband was the main inspiration of my campaign”*⁶, *“All members of my family have already come to terms with my political activity, and they know I can't live any other way.”*⁷ These are the most typical answers indicating family support. The fairly common stereotype about women-politician's personal life being in disorder is not always supported in real life. The thing is that a strong back is equally important for any politician, be it a man or a woman. However, while men usually have no problem ensuring that they have a strong back, not many women and not always can count on constant understanding and support from their husbands. If any conflicts arise between political career and family life, women chose family, whereas men remain focused on politics despite any such conflict. According to the Member of Parliament Arevik Petrosyan, *“a woman always remains a woman, she has to be sure that her home, her family members are fine,”* and this is a necessary condition for getting into politics.

An analysis of professions of women-candidates (see Diagram 2) shows that the biggest number of candidates come from the education sector (25%). The second largest group is the group of party officials from various levels, i.e. women who indicated various party structures as their place of employment (13.2%). 10% of the women-candidates are civil servants. The existence of women-candidates who work for international organizations confirms the assumption that a highly paid job strengthens self-esteem and increases the motivation to continue the career, including in politics. 7% of the candidates are employed by businesses, and only 2.4% are private entrepreneurs and business managers. This last professional group is the biggest among men, and in many cases it includes representatives of large businesses. About 4.6% of the women came to politics from the NGO sector, a number that has grown in recent years. Women, who have developed good organizational skills in the years of independence, are starting to demonstrate their potential in politics as well.

⁵ From a speech by Heghine Bisharyan (Country of Law)

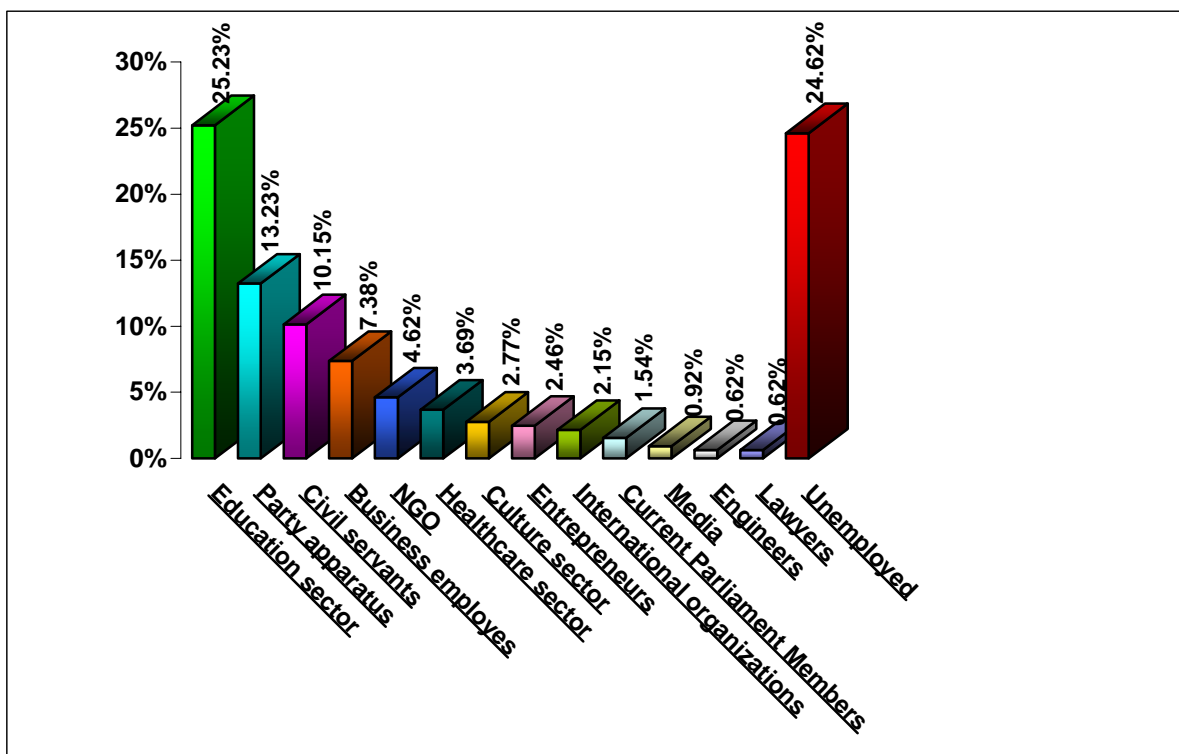
⁶ From an interview with Zhasmen Asryan (Fatherland)

⁷ From a speech by Gohar Martirosyan (People's Party of Armenia) at the round-table discussion in Artashat

Analysis shows that the lists of candidates contain a considerable number of men and women who are temporarily out of work. This category includes a number of people who are involved in party work, but do not consider it to be a permanent full-time job. Female representatives of the opposition parties note quite often that they had lost their jobs because of their political affiliation. In any case, unemployed candidates are disadvantaged in the eyes of the electorate, since voters think that they wish to enter the parliament simply to get a job.

About 12% of the women in party lists are non-partisan. As a rule, these are the women who are well-accomplished in their professions and have high potential. This explains the parties' interest in their resources. Some of the non-partisan women were included in the lists of the most powerful parties and were consequently elected to the National Assembly. These include the former Human Rights Defender Larisa Alaverdyan (Heritage), the lawyer Zaruhi Postanjyan (Heritage), the member of all previous parliaments Hranush Hakobyan, the former Deputy Chair of the Civil Service Council Arevik Petrosyan (Prosperous Armenia) and the journalist Naira Zohrabyan (Prosperous Armenia).

Diagram 2.



A desire to get re-elected for another term, which is typical for many male parliamentarians, is not alien to women either. Five of the incumbent women-parliamentarians ran again and four of them got re-elected. The previous experience of working in the parliament, undoubtedly, increases these women's competitiveness. Also, experience shows that re-elected women, who are already used to lawmaking, are usually more active in raising gender issues and working with women's NGO sector, with few exceptions.

Scenarios for Women's Entry into Politics

The experience of gender studies in the post-Soviet countries shows several typical scenarios for women's entry into politics. An analysis of the biographies of women-candidates and women-members of the National Assembly shows that, in most cases, they fall under the typical scenarios for coming into politics; at the same time, none of these ways can be considered a prevailing trend.

- I. *The “**politics as profession**” scenario is typical for women who have been active since their childhood, who have gone through good party schools and have strong leadership qualities. The following variations are typical for this scenario:*
 1. *Women who have been active since the Soviet times (in Komsomol, official trade unions or the Communist Party) – this is a small legion of women whose names are well-known, as a rule. A representative of this category is the Member of Parliament Hranush Hakobyan, whose political career started in the Soviet period and which has not been interrupted since. For some of the women in this group, there has been interruptions in their political career because of the transition/transformation processes. For example, the Member of Parliament Gohar Yenokyan, who came into politics in the Soviet times, first left active politics in the early 1990s and then returned after she became the director of a well-known garment factory named “Garun”.*
 2. *Women who came into politics on the wave of independence – this is the biggest and a fairly varied group of women-candidates. The assessment of their real potential in terms of a political career requires more detailed study. Women who came into politics from the NGO sector may be considered to be in this group. For example, Larisa Alaverdyan, who was the leader of a famous human rights organization, became the first Human Rights Defender of Armenia, and then, after she left that position, she was elected to the National Assembly on the Heritage Party's list.*
 3. *Representatives of the “new generation” – these are well-educated young women, often educated abroad. Many parties are interested in their potential; they get them involved in the activities of youth unions and are happy to include them on their party lists. It is difficult to be certain about their commitment to a political career; their party membership may be part of their quest for their own way in life, an attempt to show themselves in public politics. Young women, who have received gender education and who did not hide their intention to build a political career, stand out among them in terms of have more clear-cut goals.*
 4. *Women's advancement in politics through schools of women leadership – this is a relatively new scenario for women's entry into politics, but it already produces certain results thanks to the women NGO sector. 6.8% of the women running for parliament on party lists (9 political parties) and some candidates in single-mandate districts have attended, at some time or another, the women leadership schools of the Association of Women with University Education.*
- II. *The “**politics as continuation of a professional career**” scenario is typical for women who have made successful careers in the government, business or any other area before coming into politics. They do not necessarily regard their professional career as a jump-off point for their political activity. The following variation are possible for implementing this scenario:*
 1. *Recruitment into the party from a traditional type of professional career, i.e. a managerial position. Thus, the Member of Parliament Arevik Petrosyan came into*

politics while she was the Deputy Chair of the Civil Service Council; earlier she was the Deputy Minister of Justice.

2. *Recruiting into politics from a successful professional career.* Examples: Members of Parliament Ruzanna Arakelyan and Naira Zohrabyan came into politics while pursuing careers as journalists. “A journalist and a politician are the same thing”, Ruzanna Arakelyan thinks. The MP Zaruhi Postanjyan came into politics as an accomplished lawyer.
3. *Coming into politics for the purpose of lobbying certain professional interests.* This group includes women who came into politics from private business. For example, the Member of Parliament Hermine Naghdalian was the chairwoman of the Union of Entrepreneurs of Armenia.

III. The “**politics as a consequence of a woman’s biography**” scenario is typical to a fairly common type of woman’s political career realized through a well-known image of a woman who is a fellow party member. The following variations are possible in current condition:

1. *Politics as a result of a woman’s active role in the family.* This option is typical for representatives of traditional parties with historical roots, like ARF Dashnaksutyun or the Communist Party. However, other parties also have examples of women coming into politics in the footsteps of their fathers, husbands and even children. For example, the Member of Parliament Anahit Bakhshyan came into active politics from being a school principal, after the tragic death of her husband, Yuri Bakhshyan, who was killed during the shooting in the parliament in 1999. The MP Lilit Galstyan has been inspired by ARF Dashnaksutyun ideology since she was a child, under her father’s influence.
2. *Politics as a result of a woman’s active role in society.* This scenario is typical for women whose activity is manipulated by men. This situation is a result of discriminatory practices in society that women themselves do not realize exist. Such women make up the obedient and dedicated majority in parties, they are not oriented towards any career growth in politics, but are always ready to obey the decisions of party leadership that promoted them. Party lists contained quite a few such women, who admitted in private conversations, that they did not want to be involved in politics and did not see themselves as politicians. Women in this category are included in party lists simply to fill the 15% quota required by the law.

Women's Motivation for Entering Politics

The question of why a woman should be involved in politics was not raised in the course of the study, which is natural, considering that the focus-groups consisted of representatives of a politically active layer of the population. However, during the conversations and round-tables, the participants often brought forth many arguments supporting the need for women in politics, in general, and in the National Assembly, in particular. “*Harmony and a stable balance in society is possible only if a woman’s perspective and issues raised by women are taken into consideration.*”⁸ “*There is a certain amount of social demand for women’s political activity in Armenian society, because society is tired of crudeness, stupidity, vulgarity and ignorance.*”⁹ There have been no unequivocal opinions against women’s presence in politics, but moving the problem of women’s representation in the National Assembly to another level is a rather common

⁸ From a conversation with the MP Ruzanna Arakelyan (ARF Dashnaksutyun)

⁹ From an interview with Ruzanna Khachatryan (People’s Party of Armenia)

approach: *“It doesn't matter to me who pushes the buttons in the parliament, a man or a woman. The important thing is that it is an educated, honest and worthy person.”*¹⁰

An examination of reasons inducing women to go into politics has revealed that the motivations, as expressed by women-candidates themselves, and their expectations from going into politics coincide, on the whole. Hence the most common answer is that women go into politics to make it purer and softer, and to make societal life in Armenia better and more moral. *“Women's judgment of any situation is more sober. They think about children and their future, and cannot allow themselves to do some things that some politicians do,”*¹¹ *“As the keeper of the family hearth, a woman tends to conserving and augmenting things rather than squandering and destroying them. A woman is interested in the preservation and prosperity of the family, and hence of the state. She is more careful, more restrained and, despite the common viewpoint (shared mostly by men), is governed by the real situation rather than by emotions.”*¹²

According to the surveyed persons, men's motivation is more pragmatic. Men are motivated by material interests, a desire to build a career and to reach power. A third option, though less common, is also not ruled out – that is, that both men and women want to get into the government for the same reason, in search of personal benefits.

It is interesting to see the correlation between the answers to the question of “why do women and men want to become parliament members” and the expectations that society has of them. According to the surveyed persons, most men want to get parliamentary immunity and a “roof” (protection) for their private business, to become an MP as an element of prestige, to achieve personal success and to pass laws in the interests of their own business. This motivation, a priori, discredits most men, and it becomes impossible to draw any conclusions about society's expectations from their work in the parliament.

The situation with women is different. The surveyed persons think that women, in addition to wanting to show themselves and make their position heard more loudly, are motivated by a desire to make government policies kinder, fairer and more human, to change the political atmosphere and the nature of laws, to address social issues. This assessment shows society's wish to change the situation, to have more socially oriented laws, and this is what they expect to happen with women coming into the National Assembly. However, as a rule, it is never said that such changes are possible only if there is an optimal level of representation of women in the National Assembly. According to most of the respondents, “optimal” means between 25 to 35% of women in the parliament. The possibility of an equal 50/50 representation was not raised, because it is unrealistic, according to respondents.

Quotas as a Constitutional Opportunity for the Advancement of Women

The focus-groups and personal interviews with women from political parties have confirmed the opinion that the 15% quota for women in party lists has had a favourable effect. The vast majority of the interviewed people noted that the number of women running for parliament would have been significantly lower, had it not been for the requirement to include a certain number of women in party lists, in at least every tenth position.

By far, not all the parties were ready to put women on their lists. *“Positive discrimination in the form of quotas for women in party lists is unacceptable, and we shouldn't contribute to women's involvement in politics with unnatural methods,”* said the

¹⁰ From a public speech by the Member of Parliament Alvard Petrosyan (ARF Dashnaktsutyun)

¹¹ Opinion of candidate Ruzanna Khachatryan (People's Party of Armenia)

¹² Opinion of the Member of Parliament Gohar Yenokyan (Prosperous Armenia)

Speaker of the National Assembly Tigran Torosyan, despite the fact that the Republican Party, as part of the ruling coalition, had supported the idea of the 15% quota.

The main reason for not accepting the quotas is the lack of political will, because none of the respondents said that the parties had difficulties finding women-candidates. However, this does not mean that parties do not experience problems with the lack of politically mature human resources, including women, who would be ready for lawmaking activities. Several interviews with women included in party lists show that some of them are absolutely not ready for working in the legislative branch. There are cases, when women included in party lists are even unaware of their own party's election platforms. Moreover, the information collected during the study reveals that some parties found it difficult to comply with the 15% quota requirement, after all. Also, considering the lack of a clearly defined gender-sensitive system of preparation and the advancement of human resources within most of the parties, one can already predict that some parties are going to face serious problems if the said quota is increased.

The study has revealed that the use of quotas as a method for increasing women's representation in the parliament is controversial for many people in society. This measure has quite a few opponents within political parties, including among women. *"I don't like it when women talk a lot about being neglected. In such cases, men start thinking that they really do have some advantages compared to us, and that women are second-class beings. And, because we are second-class beings, they have to do us favours to allow us to move along with them. Perhaps it is women's fault that they are considered second-class? Perhaps we need to change ourselves rather than introduce quotas?"*¹³ The most common viewpoint is that the so-called "artificial" methods are unacceptable and there is a concern that they will open the parliament doors to the "unworthy." Opponents of quotas also include quite a number of people who tend to move the problem to another level, connecting the issue of women's advancement with the victory of democracy in all the areas of public life, on the one hand, and considering quotas to be a violation of democratic principles, on the other hand.

An analysis of opinions expressed by participants of focus-groups before and after the elections shows that most women, especially the ones who were put on low positions in the party lists, think that the quotas must be increased. Most think the optimal quota for women's representation is 25%. Before the election, they talked about quotas in party lists, whereas after the election, for the first time, they started talking about requiring parties to ensure that a certain number of women actually get a seat in the parliament. This had to do with the fact that the number of women in most parliamentary factions turned out to be well below 15%.

Gender Composition of the National Assembly of the Fourth Convocation (2007)

Only two out of five factions in the newly elected National Assembly have more than 15% of women: ARF Dashnaktsutyun has 3 women out of 16 members of parliament (18.7%) and the Heritage Party has 3 women out of 7 members of parliament (42.8%). The Prosperous Armenia faction has 3 women out of its 25 members (12%) and the Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir) has 1 woman out of 8 members (12%). The largest faction (Republican Party) has only 2 women out of 64 members (3.1%). Thus, only the parties that had women in the top five of their party lists were able to ensure that at least 15% of their faction members are women. Five of the women elected to the parliament by party lists are non-partisan.

¹³ From a conversation with the Member of Parliament Hranush Hakobyan (Republican Party of Armenia)

Four of the twelve women-parliamentarians are re-elected for a new term - **Heghine Bisharyan** (Country of Law), **Hranush Hakobyan** (the Republican Party), **Hermine Naghdalyan** (the Republican Party) and **Alvard Petrosyan** (ARF Dashnaktsutyun). The last three have served for more than two terms.

Three of the elected women-parliamentarians used to have high-level positions before the election: **Gohar Yenokyan** (Prosperous Armenia) is the director of the garment factory Garun, **Arevik Petrosyan** (non-partisan) was the Deputy Chair of the Civil Service Council, and **Anahit Bakhshyan** was a school principal.

Two of the women have human rights protection experience - non-partisan **Larisa Alaverdyan** (the Heritage Party), who is the former Human Rights Defender, and professional lawyer, non-partisan **Zaruhi Postanjan** (the Heritage Party).

Two of the women who have been elected for the first time are representatives of the media – the Editor-in-Chief of Yerkir-Media **Ruzanna Arakelyan** (ARF Dashnaktsutyun) and the journalist **Naira Zohrabyan**, non-partisan (Prosperous Armenia).

In terms of its gender composition, the National Assembly of the Fourth Convocation is better than the previous National Assembly not only because of the number of women (12 as opposed to 7 women in the previous parliament), but also because two out of its nine standing committees are headed by women – the Chairwoman of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Public Issues Arevik Petrosyan and the Chairwoman of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, Hranush Hakobyan. There is gender imbalance in the standing committees on defense, national security and internal affairs, financial and budget affairs, and international relations, which corresponds to the usual stereotypes. Two women expressed a desire to work in the committee on economic affairs and two women wanted to work in the committee on European integration. Women ignored the committee on social issues, healthcare and environment, which contradicts the expectations of social nature. Five women are included in the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, headed by Hranush Hakobyan, resulting in the classical formula of gender balance (50/50) in that particular committee.

The Assessment of International Observers of Women's Political Participation in the 2007 Election

In their assessments, European election observation missions paid special attention to the issue of women's participation. This position adopted by the observers is in tune with the logic of a number of documents on the equality of men and women agreed by the member-states of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. One of the main such documents is the OSCE Action Plan on Supporting Gender Equality, which looks at the issue of equal rights and opportunities for men and women in the context of national security. In their preliminary report on the elections, the OSCE/ODIHR observers already made comments about the gender composition of election commissions and voter lists. Information on the gender composition of electoral commissions was submitted shortly. As for the comment on the gender breakdown of voter lists, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Tigran Torosyan, expressed his bewilderment about the criticism in a letter to the head of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission Boris Frlec about some of the provisions in the preliminary report.

In their statement of preliminary findings, European observers dedicated a separate chapter to women's participation in election processes. In it, they expressed concern with the low number of women running for majoritarian seats, as well as with the low number of women in the Central Electoral Commission and among chairpersons of Territorial Electoral Commissions.

An analysis of the gender composition of electoral commissions showed that there were only two women in the Central Electoral Commission, 15% of members of Territorial Electoral Commissions were women and only three of Territorial Electoral Commissions were headed by women. The situation was more balanced at the Precinct Electoral Commission level: 38% of the members and 23% of chairpersons were women.

When presenting their findings, representatives of European election observation missions noted the positive influence of the 15% quota for women required by the Election Code. However, considering the number of women in the new parliament, they recommended to increase the quota in the future and to use other mechanisms for the advancement of women. *“Despite the fact that, thanks to the political will, the situation with women’s representation in the new parliament was improved, the 15% quota for women is not effective enough, because it does not lead to a real increase in the number of women in the parliament.”*¹⁴

According to members of the election observation mission, the future advancement of women depends on many factors, including a more active civil society, strengthening of inter-party contact and determination on the part of women themselves. According to Leo Platovet, who headed the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the advancement of women would also be helped by the introduction of a 100% proportional system, which *“is not only more democratic and perfect for fighting against falsifications, but also allows to preserve the balance between men and women, thus helping implement programs aimed at eradicating discrimination against women.”*

¹⁴ Opinion of Claudia Wollmer, specialist-analyst on gender issues of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission

Chapter 2: Gender Aspects of the Activities of Political Parties

Both this study and the analysis of the last few years have demonstrated that the most realistic way for women to go into politics and government is through political parties. It is well-known that parties successfully use women's potential in election campaigns, but do they actually support the idea of putting women on top positions in their lists? In order to answer this question, focus-groups with party members and interviews with women-candidates were conducted before and after the elections.

Gender Composition of Political Parties and their Governing Bodies

Being one of the basic factors for civil society development, the Armenian political parties should be advocates of gender equality, they should “develop and implement a policy for achieving balanced representation of the sexes within parties and their governing apparatus, and identify measures that would help achieve that goal,”¹⁵ to encourage women's active participation in politics.

However, despite some improvement, women's participation in politics in modern Armenia did not produce new women-leaders, and this results from the fact that women's representation on the level of party leadership remains low. The reasons for this situation lie in the male domination of the party leaderships. Parties actively recruit women and widely use their resources in their organizational work, especially in election campaigns. However, as was noted earlier, they show no interest in ensuring any growth of women's political careers, they do not support them during elections as candidates, arguing that women have no political knowledge, necessary political experience and skills. The following table shows the current gender imbalance in the decision-making levels in various parties.

Table 3. Women among Members and Leadership of Political Parties

Party Name	Number of Party Members	% of Women in Parties	% of Women in Party Leadership	% of Women among Leaders of Regional Organizations of Partis
The Republican Party of Armenia	55000 ¹⁶	30	2.8	3.3
Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir)	-	68.3	30	41.5
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun)	7000	25	9.5	20
The Heritage Party	5340 ¹⁷	52	22	30
The National Unity Party	46700 ¹⁸	32.5	15	12
The Social-Democratic Henchakyan Party	4530 ¹⁹	30	28.6	20
The People's Party of Armenia	30300 ²⁰	40	17	8

¹⁵ From an annex to declaration “On Equality Between Women and Men as the Main Criteria of Democracy” adopted at the 4th European conference on gender equality (Istanbul, November 13-14, 1997)

¹⁶ Parties participating in the 2007 National Assembly elections, Yerevan, page 82 (in Armenian)

¹⁷ Ibid, page 35

¹⁸ Ibid, page 16

¹⁹ Ibid, page 114

The National-Democratic Party	3000	30	4.5	30
The United Labor Party	17000 ²¹	44	17.6	3.6
The Youth Party of Armenia	7960 ²²	40	20	7
Prosperous Armenia	370000 ²³	40	11.4	-

The above data shows that women account for between 30 to 40% of party members (up to 70% in some parties). At the same time, there is an obvious gender imbalance in the leadership of practically all the parties. According to focus-group participants, *“Women do all the dirty work; they are the driving force... Women do the work, but men are the ones who are seen... Our problem is that there are few women at decision-making levels in the parties.”*²⁴ Hence the comparison of women to “infantry in political battles.”

Women’s contribution to their parties is often acknowledged by the party leadership. Women’s role is particularly apparent in difficult situations, such as during times of splits within the party or political failures. As a rule, women do not give up their party membership, even if other members of the party leave it en masse. This conclusion is confirmed by the examples of various parties, such as the National Democratic Union, the National Self-Determination Union and Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir), whose leaders publicly admitted that they were able to preserve their parties only thanks to the women who did not leave them during the difficult times. Despite their dedication and sufficient representation in political parties (on average, women make up about 40% of party members), women have a low status in most parties and are not represented on the level of decision making in the parties, which, undoubtedly, indicates a lack of democracy within the parties.

Leaders and activists from the opposition parties tend to explain the absence of women among regional party leaderships by strong pressure on the opposition from local governments. *“The People’s Party of Armenia has about 1200-1300 local organizations (cells) that have many women in the leadership: 7 out of 53 regional organizations are headed by women. This is a very big number, considering that leaders of local branches are the ones who experience the most pressure from local governments.”*²⁵ However, this explanation does not reflect the whole range of reasons for the shortage of women among party leadership and is partial, because it does not apply to the ruling parties.

Gender imbalance in the party leaderships has deep roots. It is directly connected to the society’s gender culture and is manifested in imbalances at decision-making levels in all areas of public, political and economic life. International experience shows that the possibilities of change largely depend on how actively political parties promote equality between men and women. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between gender imbalance in politics and the problem of internal democracy within parties. Achieving equality in Scandinavian countries became possible thanks to the changes in public awareness and the pursuit of a balanced state policy, both initiated by political parties through deepening their internal democracy, overcoming the gender imbalance within the parties and including women’s issues in party platforms. These approaches became integral attributes of official party policy. Experience shows that political parties in Armenia are not ready for this; moreover, women in political parties themselves are often not ready.

²⁰ Ibid, page 74

²¹ Ibid, page 99

²² Ibid, page 70

²³ Ibid, page 7

²⁴ From a speech by Dustrik Mkhitarian at a round-table in Yerevan

²⁵ From a speech by Ruzanna Khachatryan at the round-table in Yerevan on May 8, 2007

Women themselves do not completely realize the need to overcome the gender imbalance in their own party leadership. However this understanding is gradually coming through improving their political knowledge during seminars, their participation in women leadership schools, as well as thanks to more active contacts with women from the NGO sector and with European colleagues. For example, in the last 2-3 years, changes in women's positions on these issues became more apparent in ARF Dashnaktsutyun, as a result of active contacts with the Women's Organization of the Socialist International, and in the People's Party of Armenia, thanks to their connections with the Leftist-Feminist Party of Sweden. Thanks to these contacts, women's self-esteem grows, they become more sensitive towards gender topics, they begin to see the discrimination inside the parties, and some of them suggest introducing quotas for advancing women into parties' governing bodies.

Analysis of the situation shows that programs aimed at increasing women's role in political parties are not being implemented sufficiently in the country. Women in political parties need more consistent and long-term support than they get in women leadership schools ran by some women's organizations or through initiatives of various international foundations. For example, the Woman-Leader forum, created a year before the election with support of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) with the aim of bringing together women representing political parties, NGOs, government and businesses, essentially failed in meeting the goals and was unable to acquire any significant reputation in the eyes of the public. The Forum's proposal to increase the quota for women in political party lists to 25% was belated and was not considered in either political parties or the parliament, since the Electoral Code amendments were already passed by then. Also, the Forum, essentially, repeated the earlier initiative proposed by women from political parties and NGOs, the discussion of which had led to the adoption of the 15% quota by the National Assembly. This fact indicates that the Forum was somewhat detached from the processes taking place in the political and NGO sector. However, NDI's experience in strengthening the parties and increasing the level of democracy within parties through activation of women could have been undoubtedly useful in Armenia.

As a whole, the problem is that the efforts of international organizations and programs aimed at increasing women's political participation that exist in Armenia are not sufficiently coordinated and consistent, and they do not always take into consideration the results achieved by similar other programs in the process of their implementation. As a result, resources directed at supporting women's participation do not achieve their goals. An analysis of the situation shows that the problem cannot be solved with separate initiatives and actions. Results can be achieved only by comprehensive activities of all civil society institutes – political parties, women NGOs and the media. A good example in this regard is the UNDP's program "Gender and Politics" that has been implemented for three years that failed to achieve any significant progress in terms of women's representation on the decision-making level.

Gender Analysis of Party Platforms

A study of programs and election platforms of the Social-Democratic Henchakyan Party, the People's Party of Armenia, the Republican Party of Armenia, the National Democratic Party, the New Times Party, Prosperous Armenia, Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir), the National Unity Party, the Heritage Party, the United Liberal National Party, the Alliance and ARF Dashnaktsutyun²⁶ shows that they mainly talk about mother and child

²⁶ Election platforms collected in the period of elections, as well as party programs and bylaws posted on the following websites were examined: www.ajk.am, www.amiab.am, www.bhk.am, www.heritage.am, www.ppa.am, www.hhk.am, www.ulp.am, www.dashink.am

care, emphasizing women's reproductive role, or contain some provisions on benefits to working mothers. In most party programs, the role of women is limited to the family; they emphasize physiological differences between women and men (particularly the reproductive function) and stress that social policy should correspond to this difference. Provisions on strengthening the family, protecting motherhood and childhood, protecting women's rights and improving their working and living conditions were also included in the election platforms of the **National Democratic Party, the National Unity Party, the Heritage Party, Country of Law** and some other parties.

Gender problems in modern Armenian society were reflected in the election platforms of some parties. Thus, the platform of the **National Democratic Party** expresses concern about the decreasing birth rate, the rapid ageing of the population and disparity between the number of women and men of marrying age. There is an interesting provision on education reform in view of an increase in the number of children from “**single-parent families**.”²⁷ One of the priorities in the **Prosperous Armenia** party platform is professional education, training and employment of women, young people and the disabled.²⁸

The 2007 platform of the **Republican Party of Armenia** underwent certain changes, and did not contain any points on protecting the family and motherhood. A possible explanation for this is the passage of the new Labor Code in 2004 with the active involvement of the party. Perhaps the party thought that it had completed its mission by including a number of provisions on motherhood and childhood in the new Code.

The platform of **ARF Dashnaktsutyun** is substantially different from the others. It has a separate section on the equality of men and women, which talks about legal guarantees for achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men and eradicating sexual discrimination, which is considered a factor of stability and harmony in the country. Measures aimed at achieving equality include:

- Introduction of programs to create mechanisms for increasing women's competitiveness in the labor market and help them combine work with family responsibilities;
- Creation of effective quota mechanisms for exercising women's political rights;
- Support for the passage and implementation of programs to increase women's role in the society and for civil society initiatives aimed at ensuring the equality of the sexes.²⁹

Thus, the study has shown that parties' election platforms envision factual equality between women and men in economic and social areas. These platforms do not contain any provisions on developing women's political participation and advancement to the top positions of power. With very few exceptions, parties do not have the goal of overcoming the gender imbalance in the government.

Political Parties' Role in Training Candidates for Future Advancement

Parties' success does not depend so much on the quantity, but also on the quality, of their personnel resources. Therefore, parties must act as some sort of “political schools” for preparing the personnel reserves they would need in case they come to power.

The study has revealed that most of the parties do not perform this function of “political schools” of personnel. Only a few of the parties, such as the Republican Party of Armenia, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), the People's Party of

²⁷ Program of National Democratic Party, Yerevan, 2007, page 8

²⁸ Program of Prosperous Armenia Party, Yerevan, 2007, page 41

²⁹ Program of ARF Dashnaktsutyun, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 17-18

Armenia and the Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir) have regular trainings for their activists. The training system within parties is usually gender-neutral and does not have the goal of increasing the role of women in the parties. None of the parties has a gender-sensitive system of training that would promote women through special training programs or increase their representation among the leadership of regional organizations and party headquarters. Even though some parties regularly conduct training on gender issues (the People's Party of Armenia) with the participation of foreign experts, these trainings do not produce the desired results, because they are often not adapted to the gender problems of Armenian society, they are conducted without taking into consideration local mentality, and also because they are fragmentary in nature. Recently, many parties have started to realize the need to have a systematic training program for preparing female reserves for future advancement. This is confirmed by the fact that women are being sent to the Women Leadership School organized by the Association of Women with University Education, and also by seminars organized by women NGOs. Some parties have also started organizing seminars on gender issues themselves.

Thus, ARF has organized several seminars on gender issues with the participation of experts from the Socialist International. The purpose of these seminars was to train the trainers, who would later conduct seminars in various regions of the country. According to the women, these seminars not only increase their awareness, but also weaken the psychological barriers on the way to a political career. According to the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, member of the Bureau of Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) Vahan Hovhannisyan, the number of women in various parties and especially among their leadership is really low, *“we shouldn't go to extremes, since various types of gender and feminist/suffragette programs and movements cannot be useful in the Armenian conditions. Political forces must develop the political sector in such a way, so that women do not feel intimidated and do not avoid fighting for their rights. We have to open up that sector for them...”*³⁰ This position is fairly common in political circles and is frequently expressed by women themselves, who think that the attempts to promote the idea of gender equality in conditions of insufficient democratization of the society make no sense.

Women's Councils in Political Parties

Following Western experience, the Country of Law, Prosperous Armenia, the Republican Party of Armenia and the Social-Democratic Henschakyan parties have created women's branches, or women councils.

Fairly active are the women councils of the Republican Party of Armenia (chaired by Hermine Naghdalyan) and the Country of Law Party (chaired by Margarita Petrosyan). The content of the work and programs of women's councils reflect the ideological orientation of their respective parties. Thus, the women's council of the Republican Party of Armenia, established in 2001, has the following goals:³¹

- Advancement and propaganda of the party program
- Propaganda of national and pacifist ideas
- Raising and addressing various women's issues, as well as issues related to the protection of motherhood, childhood and family to the benefit of the nation and the Fatherland
- Contribution to the development of a democratic civil society.

³⁰ From answers to questions by readers of Yerkir newspaper on March 28 – April 4, 2007, www.yerkir.am

³¹ www.hhk.am

The women's council of this party has a committee on organizational, ideology/propaganda and social issues, as well as on issues of culture, education, healthcare, women's entrepreneurship and the **increasing the role of women in society**.

The women's council of the Country of Law Party, which has existed for more than 10 years already, has a more liberal action plan.³²

- Advancing women to government positions and increasing the use of their intellectual, scientific and organizational potential
- Ensuring the implementation of commitments under the UN Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform of Action, the Millennium Goals Declaration and other international documents ratified by Armenia
- Concentrating on issues of education, healthcare, legal and social protection of women, creating working systems and institutional mechanisms to achieve these goals
- Eradicating the existing stereotypes about the role of women that do not conform to a democratic society, through active cooperation with the media, NGOs and international organizations
- Contributing to the establishment of rule of law in Armenia and real equality between women and men.

Over the years, this women's council has organized round-tables, seminars, discussions and five conferences.

Women's councils work on the development of women's leadership, keep in touch with women's NGOs and are engaged in charity work. Women's councils carry out an enormous amount of organizational and social work. Parties make active use of the women's council's potential during election campaigns. The same was true for the 2007 elections, when women's councils and their branches became particularly active. They did a lot of work to promote their parties, including so-called "door-to-door work," which was very labor-intensive. Many party leaders think that some jobs are not prestigious for men, whereas women are very good at them, especially during campaigns; these jobs include going door-to-door to promote their party. This opinion allows one to speak of a clearly manifested "gender segregation" in party work.

In Armenia, where there are no traditions of a feminist movement, women's councils are not an effective means of putting pressure within parties to establish the parties' "women's agenda", and the recent elections have confirmed that. This explains why the gender composition of factions (particularly of the Republican Party of Armenia and Prosperous Armenia, both of whom have women's councils) leave much to be desired. At the same time, various parties like the Heritage Party, the Democratic Party of Armenia, the United Labor Party and the United Liberal National Party, who do not have women's councils, had three women each in the top ten of their party lists.

Women-members of parties do not always realize the existence of discriminatory practices within their parties. This is confirmed by an opinion expressed by a female activist from the Republican Party of Armenia: ***"We are happy with our position in the party... The number of women will increase as a result of the election. The attitude is gradually changing. But our party is more of a masculine party."***³³

Women's councils have huge resources; potentially, they can be an effective means of putting pressure within parties and a good basis for advancing women to decision-making levels both within parties and in all the branches of power. However, it is important that women within parties realize that. Otherwise, judging from the functions assigned to women within political parties, there is a real danger of neutralizing the political activities of women by limiting them only to the confines of women's councils.

³² www.oek.am

³³ From a statement at a round-table

Party List Compilation Mechanisms

Parliamentary elections under proportional and majoritarian systems in Armenia were conducted in 1995, 1999 and 2003. The number of candidates running for parliament had doubled over the years, but the dynamics of increasing the number of women-candidates under the proportional system did not undergo any significant changes (the number of women in party lists went up from 13.9% in 1995 to 14.1% in 2003), which indicates a persistent gender imbalance in party lists.

The number of women in the 2007 proportional party lists increased to 22.6%. The number of women on top positions on the lists also went up. A number of factors contributed to this positive dynamic, the most important of them being the introduction of the 15% quota for party lists, on the one hand, and increased political activity of the women themselves.

A study of party list compilation mechanisms reveals a lack of democracy within most of the parties. The study has found that regular party members and even candidates included in party lists do not always clearly understand the principles behind the compilation of the lists. Often, party members are simply “informed” about the final lists at a meeting or an assembly. As a rule, regular party members do not participate in the compilation of party lists. A study in the marzes (Shirak, Lori, Ararat and Syunik) showed that the level of awareness of party leaders and activists in the regions is significantly lower than in Yerevan. At the same time, there have been some isolated cases of compiling the lists in a democratic way. For example, the party list of the National Democratic Party was compiled by means of a rating vote.

Quotas played a decisive role in including women in party lists, and only in some isolated cases was the inclusion of women a result of processes based on democracy within parties. Even though there has been some positive dynamics in the policies of various parties, the understanding of the connection between gender balance and democracy and human rights remains weak.

Thus, the policy of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun has traditionally been gender-neutral, with a conservative tendency. However, beginning in 2002, when the party started negotiations to join the Socialist International, it started to introduce “gender-sensitive” elements into its policies, and party leaders started saying in public speeches that under-representation of women in the government negatively affects the country’s international standing.

The party organized some events to discuss the society’s gender problems before its 2007 election campaign. The party’s women-candidates emphasized during interviews that the quota did not play any role and that the following criteria were considered when including people in party lists – “experience, biography, intellectual abilities and human qualities.”³⁴ However, it is worth mentioning that women made up only 5.7% of the party’s list for the 1999 election, before the introduction of the quota and before joining the Socialist International. The number of women in the list increased only in 2003 (to 25%), when negotiations with the Socialist International were going on, and then in 2007 (to 25.6%). There are three women in the National Assembly of the Fourth Convocation – **Alvard Petrosyan** (4th in the list), **Ruzanna Arakelyan** (11th in the list) and **Lilit Galstyan** (22nd in the list).

It is interesting to note that many women have negative attitude toward quotas, despite their positive effect. They see quotas as something that is humiliating. Also, they

³⁴ From an interview with Ruzanna Khachatryan (ARFD)

do not conceal their concerns that quotas may bring unknown women into power.³⁵ Representatives of the United Labour Party see the quota as nothing but a manifestation of discrimination. Often it is considered to be a sign of good form to deny that the quotas played a decisive role in including women in party lists. Thus, according to Dustrik Mkhitarian of the National Democratic Party, their party lists were compiled without any regard to the quota, instead considering only things like the intellect, potential and moral qualities of the candidate.³⁶ The leader of the Henchakyan party, Lyudmila Sargsian (the only female party leader during the election) stated that their party lists were compiled without any regard of the quotas.³⁷ Representatives of other parties also said that lists were compiled based on the personal contribution and level of activity of each candidate. These included the United Labour Party (women made up 20.7%, with 3 women in the top ten), the Country of Law (22.5%, with one woman, Heghine Bisharyan, in the top ten), and others.

The study has also revealed that, in most cases, the prevailing opinion is that the quotas are a temporary measure. Quotas are especially needed for women from “successful” parties, where the well-known pattern of “the more power, the less women” seems to be more pronounced. This was confirmed by women-members of the Republican Party of Armenia and Prosperous Armenia, which had the biggest chances of victory in the elections (for a number of reasons), who said that the quota definitely contributed to the inclusion of women in party lists. Very typical is the following opinion of a female member of the Country of Law party: *“An Armenian man will hardly give up his position (meaning leadership position) to a woman. He would respect the woman very much, treat her well, but as soon as they start talking about politics or top positions, he would not give up his place. 15% is too little for a quota, because we will not be able to address any issues being in a minority.”*

It is paradoxical that many opposition parties, who criticize the government for its lack of democracy, are themselves far from being examples of democracy. The fact that women-members found out about being included or not included in party lists only during party board meetings³⁸ shows lack of democracy within the party.

It is interesting to note that many party lists included women who were not party functionaries and were not even particularly active in the party’s activities, but who had a more or less high status in society, such as a scientific degree, a high post or being well-known. In these cases, female activists of these parties, who had worked very hard for themselves for years, felt cheated and thought that the position of their party leadership was undemocratic and unfair.³⁹ Some women in the marzes, who were included in party lists (even low on the lists), thought it was a stroke of luck, and they were very grateful to their party for not being forgotten.⁴⁰

Within parties, women competed for a place in the lists with each, rather than with men.⁴¹ In order words, claims to a place in a list were advanced not against men, who made up the majority, but against women, who claimed a place within the 15% quota. To a certain extent, this shows that women are marginalized in these parties; hence the usual state of competition within the marginalized group rather than outside its boundaries. This is a result of the fact that the system of nominating the candidates for parliament is sexist in nature, even though not many women inside parties realize and admit this.

³⁵ From an interview with Ruzanna Khachatryan (ARFD)

³⁶ Women made up 32% of that party’s list. The top ten included two women – Hranush Kharatyan (2nd in the list) and Dustrik Mkhitarian (5th in the list)

³⁷ Women made up 33% of the list, the top ten included two women (in the 1st and 10th positions)

³⁸ From an interview with Inessa Adamyan (10th in the list of the National Unity Party, 1st among women)

³⁹ From an interview with women activists from a number of political parties.

⁴⁰ From an interview with Hasmik Hakobyan (61st in the National Unity party list), Vanadzor

⁴¹ From an interview with Zaruhi Hovhannisyanyan (18th in the list of People’s Party of Armenia, 3rd among women) and Hasmik Hakobyan (61st in the National Unity party list)

Chapter 3: The Role of Women NGOs in Election Processes and their Support for Women's Political Participation

Women NGOs as an Institute of Women's Political Socialization

Within civil society, NGOs, including women's NGOs, are called upon to contribute to the development of democracy and the establishment of civil society. In the last fifteen years, significant changes have taken place in women's legal awareness, which contributed to their social self-organization, created the beginnings of a voluntary association of citizens and the formation of independent women's organizations as new types of political structure of Armenian society.

New types of women's organizations have been formed since independence, organizations that strived for active participation in the processes of political transformation. Political preferences, social positions and the motivation of women were formed under the influence of various factors, such as the Spitak earthquake of 1988 and the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, political transformation processes and difficult social-economic conditions, with the aim of achieving the goal of civil and political participation in practice. The transition from a humanitarian direction of work to the adoption of new democratic values and women's involvement in political processes was influenced by the Beijing World Conference on the situation of women in 1995. Starting from that period, the focus of the women's civil movement in Armenia was directed at women's involvement in civil-political activities for achieving gender equality through increasing the political participation of women and promoting them in decision-making positions.

Around 5280 NGOs are acting in Armenia according to unchecked data. Since the establishment of State Register of the Ministry of Justice 2726 NGOs have been registered since 2001. The rather common notion, which is often voiced in the media, that there are too many women's NGOs in Armenia does not have any objective grounds. Totally 76 women's NGOs are registered accounting for 2,8% of the total number of registered NGOs. And this is in case when women represent 51.8% of the total population in the country.

At the same time, sociological studies conducted by the Association of Women with University Education show that, despite their insignificant representation in the civil society sector, women's NGOs are the most active part of it and they make a noticeable contribution to the development of civil society.

As in other countries of the former USSR, women's NGOs were first formed as structures representing the interests of the opposition. The study shows that the main goal of women's NGOs is to achieve gender balance on the decision-making level and to expand women's opportunities.

The change in the direction of activities of women's NGOs has brought up new goals somewhat oriented towards more active women's political participation and women's advancement to the system of government and decision-making with the aim of overcoming the gender imbalance in Armenian society. In recent years, women's NGOs have significantly expanded their activities aimed at achieving gender balance in the civil-political area.

Throughout the years of democratic transformation, women's NGOs try to involve women in the processes of democratization and development of civil society. Women's NGOs consistently raise issues of women's political representation, demanding that the authorities implement gender-oriented policies.

According to many round-table and focus-group participants in Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor, the commitment to the goals of gender-balanced decision making has strengthened the democratic legitimacy to some extent and allowed women's NGOs to formulate strategies aimed at making women's political participation more active.

New trends are typical for the women's movement in Armenia in the last two-three years. An analysis of these trends allows for a realistic assessment of its opportunities and prospects of development. First of all, this concerns the "selection" of women's NGOs that have significant reputation in society due to concrete and real work and effective influence on developments. On the other hand, women-leaders and NGO activists noted that there is now an understanding that results can be achieved only by bringing together the efforts of women NGOs working alone. An example of such an approach is the lobbying of women's NGOs in supporting the draft law on making amendments the election legislation and setting a 25% quota for women in political party lists for National Assembly elections, as well as adopting the 2004-2010 National Program on Improving Women's Situation and Increasing Their Role in the Society, the first section of which is aimed at achieving gender equality in the Armenian society.

At the same time, having noted the low level of women's representation in the National Assembly and in decision-making positions, NGO leaders and activists think that women still do not play a substantial role in the country's political life. Focus-group participants unanimously agreed on the need to increase women's role in politics, which will ensure justice and democratic principles of participation in the society and will lead to humanization of government policies, make politics more socially oriented, less aggressive, etc.

The study has shown that, even though the Armenian Law on NGOs prohibits them to be engaged in political activities, in practice, NGOs, including women's NGOs, do participate in political processes, being one of the components of civil society.

At the same time, some NGO leaders and activists think that *"women have no special interest in politics"*⁴². *"Those, who have the sense of responsibility for the future of their country and consider it their duty to make their knowledge and experience serve the people, must participate in politics, regardless of whether they are men or women."*⁴³

Studies have shown that achieving women's equal political participation without involving NGOs is ineffective, because NGOs are often the places where women get their first political socialization and prepare themselves for active political life.

According to many NGO leaders, their work on overcoming gender stereotypes, and teaching the leaders and activists new public/political technologies has contributed to the development of women's political participation.

The study showed that many NGOs in Armenia have become effective tools for providing civic knowledge and skills. Many of them have also turned into an environment where women acquire leadership skills and experience of public/political activities.

The sector has accumulated significant experience in increasing political/legal knowledge and teaching leadership skills and ability to engage in public/political activities in the conditions of a transition society. NGOs recruit different strata of the female population, including youth, in their educational programs. The nature of the implementation of education programs has also undergone some serious changes. It has moved from one-time seminars to a more lengthy system of education.

Thus, the Association of Women with University Education has been running a Women's Leadership School since 2000. Starting from 2002, the school offers 48-hour-long advanced political courses for women, not only from NGOs, but also from political parties. In the past five years, more than 700 women-leaders and activists from NGOs and political parties have graduated from the school. The Republican Women's Council and

⁴² Anahit Bayandur, Coordinator of the Armenian Committee of Helsinki Civil Assembly

⁴³ Marina Aghajanyan, "Education Without Borders"

the Community and Youth NGO also have a Young Leaders' School that offers legal knowledge to high school students.

What Do NGO Activists Think of the Role of Parties as Institutes of Women's Political Socialization

Despite an increase in the number of women in political parties, the question of their representation in governing bodies of parties remains problematic. According to NGO activists, part of the reason lies with women themselves, who do not seek any political career growth, *"putting themselves in the position of executors"* and often sharing men's discriminatory opinions, and the other part of the reason lies in the lack of interest on the part of political party leaders to promote women. Women's resources are not engaged in decision-making on important and vital issues facing the parties, and the prevailing trend is to use women's intellectual resources for solving only current/routine problems.

At the same time, many people think that women's passiveness in parties is not so much a result of men's bias against women-politicians, but rather has to do with the low level of motivation among women themselves. *"Women do not believe they will be given an opportunity to show themselves in the area of politics and they do not think they will be understood correctly."* Also, *"women are less active in politics, because, unlike men, they have other and wider opportunities for self-assertion in NGO activities."*

According to many NGO activists, political parties and their women's councils do not carry out consistent work on developing women leadership within their parties, they do not promote women's growth and advancement to the leading positions within their parties. Parties do not have a system of party/political education and planned development of women leadership. Many NGO leaders thought this was the reason why party lists for the 2007 parliamentary election contained quite a few non-partisan women. On the other hand, many NGO leaders think that party leaders underestimate women-activists in their own parties. From this point of view, a suggestion was made that NGOs and women's councils should organized joint "shock" and other political actions that would allow them to introduce the most active women to public politics.

Some opinions were voiced on the need to increase gender knowledge among men, especially among leaders of political parties.

Political Activities of NGOs during the 2007 Election Campaign

The study showed that NGO activities in the pre-election period mainly focused on encouraging more civic activity and mobilizing the electorate with the aim of ensuring free, fair and transparent elections. NGOs worked with the public, actively engaging it in various information and educational programs, aimed at increasing the voters' knowledge about their rights and civic responsibility. A few NGOs participated in the nomination and support of individual candidates, monitoring of the election and the results, and served as local observers.

Some NGOs organized events to present various candidates to voters. The League of Women Voters, together with the Alliance, organized two meetings with women-candidates running for parliament in party lists. The meetings were held in Yerevan and were attended by women from various NGOs. They played a certain role in promoting women-candidates and increased the level of women-voters' information about the candidates. An organization called Saint Sandukht came up with a similar initiative and organized a round-table discussion with some candidates.

The Young Women's Association implemented education programs for members of electoral commissions, observers and various other members of the society. The Civil Society Institute NGO provided legal support to citizens through a hotline. Women-activists from the Civil Society and Regional Development Institute NGO organized dialogues, round-tables, discussions, including on television, thus trying to change the public's perception of women's political participation and create a positive image of a woman-politician.

NGOs from some other regions of the country also acquired some positive experience of participation in electoral processes. For example, eight NGOs in Syunik Marz implemented a joint program of support for electoral processes during the 2007 National Assembly elections. The program had a separate component dedicated to increasing the role of women in the elections. Under this component, they started a tradition of meetings/dialogues between women from NGOs, women-voters and women from political parties. *"On the one hand, these meetings became a good school of practical experience for women from political parties; on the other hand, voters got a chance to learn about election platforms of various parties."*⁴⁴

In Gyumri, an NGO called **Ajakits** [Supporter], together with Shant TV and Shirak TV, organized programs aimed at encouraging women's active participation in the elections.

At the same time, the study shows that the support of women-candidates has not become a tradition in the work of women's NGOs. This could be explained by the nature of the NGO sector's perception of its political functions.

The possibility of supporting specific women-candidates raises big doubts among the vast majority of women NGO leaders for a number of reasons. Many think that NGOs already contribute to the development of women's political participation by helping to create conditions that would ensure equal opportunities for civic and political activity. Other NGO leaders are doubtful about the need to support specific candidates running under the majoritarian system. Some of them thought it would be unethical to put pressure on members of their own organizations, thus limiting their freedom of choice.

According to the expert of the Democracy and Peace Center of the Association of Women with University Education, Vladimir Osipov, *"theoretically, NGOs are more neutral and more interested in the common good, than political parties. For NGOs, the important thing should be not **who** won, but **how** he/she won, because free, fair and transparent elections are important for the destiny of the nation and for democracy."*⁴⁵

The attitude of women NGO leaders and activists towards the participation in election observation missions of local observers during voting day is of a certain interest. The study shows that representatives of many NGOs claimed that the "the outcome of the election was pre-determined" and thought that participation in the election as a local observer was useless.

Also, many women activists did not try to hide the fact that they were not going to participate in the election in order not to give *"legitimacy to elections that are not free and fair"* and *"not to taint their reputation."*

This largely explains the fact that there were only 4 women NGOs among the 53 NGOs that participated in local election observation missions during the 2007 elections. It is worth noting that representatives of organizations that carried out the observation mission are reluctant to talk about the course and results of the election, noting in many cases that no significant violations were found.

⁴⁴ Ruzanna Torozyan, *Teachers Union of Goris* NGO

⁴⁵ Vladimir Osipov, "Elections and Democracy: Factor of Civil Society"

Election Results and the Issue of Gender Equality as Assessed by Women NGOs

One of the questions that the study focused on was whether the issue of gender equality became one of the priorities for women-candidates during the 2007 elections to the National Assembly.

What is the women's NGOs assessment of women's political activity in the process of election, how much were women able to organize themselves and use the election process for advancing their interests and achieving gender equality, and what role did they play in the process of elections?

The study shows that during the 2007 election to the National Assembly, women were somewhat more active than during previous elections, but the level of activity varied depending on regional and other peculiarities.

NGO leaders and activists from Gyumri noted that the 2007 elections lacked the apathy that characterized previous elections. Women showed interest in free and fair elections and many activists from women NGOs actively worked with voters.

In Goris, there was an increase in the level of activity of the female electorate, which allegedly was a result of work conducted by women's NGOs, among other things. In the period before the elections, these NGOs carried out a lot of activities aimed at increasing the level of women's knowledge about their rights, about the significance of elections for democratization of the society and about their responsibilities.

*"Women were not only enthusiastic about taking part in the elections, but also confident that their vote would affect the election outcome, and they made conscious choices. Women were able to show themselves as full-fledged voters, on an equal footing with me,"*⁴⁶ *"all the women not only actively participated in the election, but, unlike in the previous years, they came fully oriented, and one could feel that they had their own clear position and they were determined in their choice."*⁴⁷

Most of the women NGO leaders in Yerevan agreed that a certain increase in the level of activeness could be credited to women-candidates from various political parties, who actively participated in various televised discussions and dialogues.

At the same time, many NGO leaders thought that the general level of activity of women voters in the capital city was lower than in other regions. According to many focus-group participants in Yerevan, *"the election was pre-determined and decided in advance. Women voters were not interested in anyone, because they didn't see anyone who would represent their interests. Voting for ideas became secondary. They voted for friends, relatives or for whomever they were asked to vote ... or did not vote at all."*⁴⁸

Women activists from Gyumri NGOs noted the facts of vote buying and giving benefits to people campaigning for certain candidates, and they condemned these negative aspects of the campaign. At the same time, they linked these phenomena with the poverty of the electorate.

Assessment of Women's Participation in the Election as an Issue of Democratization of Society

According to NGOs, the 2007 elections did not have any significant influence on influencing public opinion about the need for women's political participation and forming a democratic political culture in society.

⁴⁶ Tina Hovhannisyan, *Young Entrepreneurs of Goris*

⁴⁷ Agnessa Darbinyan, Head of the Goris Branch of the Association of Women with University Education

⁴⁸ Susanna Vardanyan, Chairwoman of the Women's Rights Center

Despite the fact that the public did not anticipate that the elections would result in a significant increase in women's political participation, certain positive changes were expected in connection with the introduction of gender quotas in the election legislation.

The study shows that the issue of women's representation was perceived by Armenian society not so much in raising the issue of achieving gender balance in the parliament as an institution of representational democracy, but rather in the aspect of increasing the number of women among members of parliament. Analysis of the electoral processes shows that the most important issue was not raised, that is the timeliness and significance of women's political participation as a factor affecting the quality of democracy and ensuring the deepening of democratic processes.

According to NGO activists, this is confirmed by the fact that *"none of the party platforms raised the issue of gender equality. Women-candidates did not talk about it at all, gender problems were not vital for women-candidates."*⁴⁹

*"Compared to the last elections, women-candidates were seen more often, but they did not play any role. The elections did not demonstrate the specific role that women can play in politics, there was no new approach, no new understanding of women's participation. No new image of a woman-politicians took place. There were no new female faces..."*⁵⁰

During many party meetings with voters, there were few women; most importantly, although being represented in various party campaigning groups, women did not make speeches, and did not present women viewpoints on the development problems facing the society.

Barriers to Women's Political Activity

The study of factors contributing to, or hindering, women's success in elections helped identify the preferences and requirements that women NGOs have for candidates running for the National Assembly.

The study shows that the main requirement for candidates (both male and female) is professionalism and high level of political literacy. *"An amateurish level is no longer permissible today, it leads to a dead end"*, - stated Aghavni Karakhanyan, director of Civil Society Institute and Regional Development NGO.

The second most important requirement is experience of public/political work.

Factors contributing to the advancement of both men and women included: certain life experience, broad outlook on life and moral qualities, good public speaking skills, interpersonal communication skills, etc.

In addition, women were required to be able to combine public/political work with family responsibilities, to be successful in family life and in their professional career. According to NGO activists, a woman must not forget to be feminine, even if she possesses the entire set of business qualities.

The main reasons for this situation included: stereotypes in the public's perception of women's political participation and lack of political will on the part of the government institutions and in the higher levels of power dominated by men. *"Men in power are the obstacles, men who do not want to have a clever woman by their side, because they are more comfortable in their own circles; letting a woman into that circle would create additional troubles."*⁵¹

⁴⁹ Jeena Sargizova, NGO Center

⁵⁰ Natalia Martirosyan, Coordinator of the Pan-Armenian Women's Union

⁵¹ Anahit Bayandur, Coordinator of the Armenian Committee of Helsinki Civil Assembly

Realizing the responsibility of women NGOs as a channel for widening the political participation, NGO leaders and activists mentioned the following main reasons hindering women's political participation:

- women's political participation has not become the problem of a women's movement, which has not been able to consolidate its efforts and implement consistent actions;
- low self-esteem among women; many women are lacking the motivation for political participation.

The 2007 elections somewhat changed the opinion of NGOs about the hindering factors. To a lesser degree, the following factors were mentioned more frequently: limited financial resources for women, lack of confidence in themselves and in their chances and to a higher degree mistrust towards people around them and inability to form a "team".

Other obstacles included corruption, the power of the money, the criminal environment, familiar/informal relations in the electoral processes, where women have no place, the low social status of women, the double burden on women and the inequality of conditions between women and men.

Some people voiced the opinion that the main obstacle is the lack of a common single strategy of a women's public movement, the lack of solidarity and inability to unite and consolidate efforts.

The Attitude of Society and Family towards Women's Political Participation

Many NGO activists noted that public opinion has become more favorable towards women's participation in politics over the last few years. At the same time, it was said that the stereotype of politics being a man's job still persists and that society is not ready to accept woman-politicians yet. The level of acceptability varies depending on regional peculiarities. At the same time, according to NGO leaders and activists, the recent elections had a positive effect on improving the public's attitude towards women-politicians, which can be credited, to some extent, to more active participation of women in the elections.

There was another point of view that society was rather more indifferent than favourable towards women's participation, and that *"women's participation was regarded by the society as the last resort for getting out of the crisis."*⁵²

The study has also revealed a common opinion in Armenian society, according to which, *"if a woman has dedicated herself to public/political work, then she is unhappy in her family life and then she is a failed woman."* In order to succeed in the elections, it is very important to break that stereotype by demonstrating family happiness and family support.

However, very few of the women used this fact as a positive argument. Family support for women-candidates was never voiced or demonstrated in the process of elections, even for women running under the majoritarian system.

It is considered that if a woman has decided to run in an election, then her family supports her, because the assumption is that it is impossible to do without family support. Women did not use family support and family happiness as a positive factor.

*"There is no tradition of demonstrating one's "home front" in Armenian political culture. One cannot see the family by the side of a male politician either."*⁵³

"If by family support we mean "I will wash the dishes and make dinner and you can be in politics", then that support is absolutely not enough. Support is when the family

⁵² Jeena Sargizova, Board Member of NGO Center

⁵³ Armine Mkhitarian, Chairwoman of the Dialogue Center in Yerevan

*supports not only financially, but stands by your side in the whole process of the elections. And we didn't see that.*⁵⁴

Going Into Politics: Gender Aspects and Motivation

The study has shown the opinion of NGO activists about what motivates women to go into politics.

Before the elections, the vast majority of women NGOs thought that men who want to be elected as members of the National Assembly are driven by ambitions, protection for private business, the need to find a “roof”, whereas women in most cases are motivated by an aspiration “to have an opportunity for improving the quality of laws in order to create more favourable living conditions,” or “to benefit society.”

After the elections, the unanimous opinion is that both men and women are motivated by “personal interests and career growth.”

The Opinion of NGOs about Parties' Interest in Promoting Women

According to the participants of the round-tables, the elections showed that parties were not interested in promoting women and that women were included in party lists only because the law required 15% representation.

The Heritage Party is cited as the only exception. Its list was gender-balanced, but the party's position was nevertheless considered to be a “shrewd political calculation.”

According to many activists from the NGO sector, the election results demonstrated that gender equality did not become a priority for the political parties. The parties did not turn into advocates of the principle of parity democracy and did not contribute to the formation of a new egalitarian political culture in the society.

Attitude of Women NGO Activists toward Quotas as a Means to Promote Women in Politics

The elections demonstrated that the quotas played a certain role and had a certain influence on the process of women's political participation. At the same time, many NGO activists think that 15% is a very low threshold and that the quota needs to be increased to 25%, to be applied to the final number of women in the National Assembly. The conclusion of most of the focus-group participants was unanimous – *quotas are a possible way of promoting women in politics in Armenia and they need to be increased.*

The Assessment of the Effectiveness of NGO Participation in Election Processes

One of the goals of the study was to find out what women NGOs think about their own possibilities, what resources they have and how they see their future actions.

The study demonstrated that women NGOs turned out to be very self-critical in the assessment of their own activities. Having noted an increase in the level of activity of NGOs in election processes, many of them stated that they had no significant influence on the process and the results of the elections.

NGOs worked mainly with the public, focusing on mobilization of citizens, implementing awareness raising/educational programs, providing legal consulting and

⁵⁴ Gayane Avagyan, Program Coordinator for Surb Sardukht NGO

supporting the exercise of citizens' electoral rights. Analyzing electoral practices, and based on their previous experience of participation, some NGO leaders noted that the civic sector can become a powerful tool for influencing the level of activity of citizens and developing the public opinion in favour of women's political participation only if everyone in the sector combine their efforts together.

Cooperation between Women NGOs and Political Parties

The study showed that the cooperation between NGOs and political parties and their women's councils is in the process of development. As a concrete example of such cooperation, some leaders cited the experience of the Association of Women with University Education in the joint training for women from the NGO sector and from political parties in Women Leadership Schools. The result was that more than 300 women from various political parties have been trained at the School over the last 4-5 years.

The main obstacle for the development of this partnership between women NGOs and political parties is the lack of initiative on the part of the political parties. Women from political parties often underestimate the role of NGOs and look down on them. They do not find common ground for working together on the political advancement of women.

Obstacles for cooperation between women NGOs and political parties

There is mutual mistrust between political parties and NGOs, hence excessive carefulness in their contacts, which is largely explained by the fact that parties are not sufficiently aware of the role of NGOs. Parties and NGOs "speak a different language", using a different style of presenting information. Many parties do not accept gender issues, especially parties with mostly men in their leadership. This explains why women from political parties are active in their contacts with women NGOs only when their party leadership supports them.

In women's NGOs, women from political parties see opportunities for strengthening themselves. However, representatives of women NGOs do not always see women from political parties as like-minded individuals and do not support them in elections.

NGOs, and especially women NGOs, are afraid of being manipulated by parties for narrow political purposes. The cooperation is somewhat hindered by the high expectations that parties and NGOs have of each other.

Despite a certain increase in the cooperation between women's councils, women's branches of political parties and women's NGOs, the idea of "women's solidarity" has not yet been supported by positive and significant precedents of joint activities and actions.

At the same time, the fact that there has been a recent increase in the number of women, who are members of an NGO and a political party at the same time, creates preconditions for a new level of relations and cooperation.

The Position of Women NGOs to Support Women-Candidates for Parliament

In recent years, women NGOs have discussed the subject of supporting women-candidates in elections on several occasions. The NGO sector realizes the need to support women-candidates, but there is no common approach or common understanding in the sector as to how this support is to be manifested, considering the differences in the principles of NGOs and political parties.

Many NGO leaders are doubtful about the need to support specific women-candidates during the elections. *"I do not think it is right to support specific candidates. It*

would be more appropriate for the women NGO sector to lobby for women's representation in the National Assembly. Specific women may be supported only if their election platforms contain provisions that are in tune with the mission and the strategic directions of the NGOs."⁵⁵

*"The NGO sector must continue to do what it has been doing so far: to work with all segments of the population in order to change the attitude to elected representatives. There must be professionals in politics; if people are not professional, then they have to be replaced. The most important thing is to increase the accountability of parliamentarians."*⁵⁶

Women NGOs think the following is necessary in order to promote women in politics:

- to implement awareness raising/educational programs for the widest segments of the population in order to create a favourable acceptance of the image of woman-politicians;
- to create a favourable atmosphere for women's political participation.
- to develop women-leaders through increasing their political/legal knowledge and teaching them new public/political technologies;
- to provide gender education for NGO members and to increase the gender awareness of the public;
- to lobby for increasing the quotas for women in party lists to 25%, to be applied to the final number of women in the National Assembly;
- to create a database of potential women political leaders, to identify potential leaders and prepare them for next parliamentary elections through public/political socialization;
- to involve professionally accomplished women in NGO activities, to create an environment for their growth through increasing their knowledge and giving them skills and experience of public/political work.

⁵⁵ Jeena Sargizova, NGO Center

⁵⁶ Nata Martirosyan, Coordinator of the Pan-Armenian Women's Union

Chapter 4: Analysis of Obstacles for Women's Political Participation by Women - Before and After the Elections

Factors Contributing to the Low Competitiveness of Women during the Elections and Preventing their Political Career

Imperfection of election processes: high level of commercialization of elections, women's lack of financial resources; toughness of the political struggle, use of "black PR technologies", criminalization of the political struggle; women-candidates' insufficient knowledge of modern electoral technologies and campaigning techniques.

Mental peculiarities and stereotypes: domination of patriarchal arrangements that do not encourage women's political activity; gender stereotypes promoting mistrust of women-candidates; society's and women's unawareness of discriminatory practices.

Lack of political experience and women's low self-esteem: shortage of political experience; women's internal psychological barriers and low self-esteem as a result of lacking political socialization and orientation of men and women towards different roles in society; lack of a differentiated system of training for women and supporting women leadership; limited representation of women in the sectors where recruiting of people for politics takes place; double burden on women, combining family duties with a political career, given the highly underdeveloped state of preschool institutions.

Insufficient political culture of society and weakness of democratic institutions: lack of state gender policy aimed at the advancement of women and overcoming the imbalance; weakness of women's organizations, underdevelopment of women's social movement; shortage of democracy within parties, lack of party mechanisms for promoting women; lack of support for women's political participation on the part of the media, which cultivates stereotypes about women's role in the social and political sector.

Problem of Awareness of Discriminatory Practices

When studying the reasons preventing the political careers of women, special attention was paid not so much to the existence of obvious and covert discriminatory practices, but rather to the problem of women being aware of the facts of discrimination. The conducted interviews and focus-groups have led to a conclusion that the problem of being aware of discrimination exists even for politically active women.

Many female party members said that there was no discrimination in Armenia⁵⁷, but then gave examples of covert discrimination, without being aware of it. The reluctance to call things by their names can be explained, first, by the purely psychological unwillingness to identify oneself with the object of discrimination and, second, it is a manifestation of a widespread phenomenon of being unaware of discrimination. For example: *"I do not accept the word "discrimination"... I think men appreciate women, and that's why they bloc*

⁵⁷ From an interview with Inga Harutyunian from United Liberal National Party, Ruzanna Arakelyan and Lilit Galstyan from ARF

women's way, using arguments like "a woman has nothing to do in politics"⁵⁸ or "There is no discrimination, but there is something else. A woman's word is not taken seriously."⁵⁹

The study showed that the moral and psychological barriers for women's political participation are often a result of self-discrimination. There are invisible mechanisms at play that make many women remain in the shadows. This can be seen from the following interview: "When 15 men get together and we discuss an issue, and you, **being a woman, feeling like a woman, trying to stay a woman**, are trying to prove something in this noise... First I couldn't do it, because **it is not easy to hear a woman's voice**, plus you are not appreciated properly. But, with time, things sort themselves out. That's why I am saying that you need time to overcome this."⁶⁰

This brief interview contains a number of complexes forced upon women by society. The most common among women-politicians is the **complex of losing femininity**. The respondent thinks that "a woman can be active, but must always remain feminine," "if a woman has a potential, it is easier for her to become **visible** among men, since there are few women on the political arena." She says that she was first accepted as a woman, people made compliments; it was more difficult to be **heard**, to be accepted as a politician. Women find it difficult to do things that male leaders could do without any effort. "First of all, ...I demand a serious attitude towards me, and this is something you can just demand. **You have to achieve this serious attitude towards oneself**. And I managed to achieve that."⁶¹

Some politically active women pointed out that they had witnessed an interesting mechanism aimed at neutralizing their attempts to resist the discriminatory practices or even simply to talk about that subject. "Why do you need gender equality? You are not like all those people who stand up for their rights for no reason. You have experience, brains, intelligence, you have no problems."⁶²

One must note that this mechanism is rather efficient, and many women in power easily succumb to it and start thinking in the same way, denying the existence of discrimination and distancing themselves from their gender.

Paradoxes observed in a number of cases can be attributed to the results of this mechanism. For example, when a woman-politician states that she is not a woman in politics. It means that she does not associate herself with women's interests, she fully adopts the style created by men's rules and feels comfortable in it. Another paradox is when a woman-politician states that she does not consider herself to be a politician; this can be explained as an attempt to distance herself from the rules of the game imposed by men.

Analysis of Stereotypes

The problem of the stereotypical approach to women's political participation has many sides. This study analyzed only some of the most common stereotypes. Despite the fact that most of the public opinion polls show a high level of public interest in women's representation in the government, about 30% of the men and 10% of the women support the stereotype that politics is not a woman's business, according to various estimates.⁶³ "Women in politics are regarded as a foreign body, and people start thinking, without hiding the implication, "how did she get here?". Men barely tolerate women standing side

⁵⁸ From an interview with Tamara Gevorgyan

⁵⁹ From an interview with Ruzanna Arakelyan

⁶⁰ From an interview with X.

⁶¹ From an interview with X.

⁶² From an interview with Larisa Alaverdyan (Heritage)

⁶³ According to polls conducted by IFES (2003) and Association of Women with University Education (2003 and 2005)

by side,”⁶⁴ *“The mentality of Armenian men is incapable of even imagining that they can be governed (and governed well) by a woman.”*⁶⁵ These opinions confirm the existence of this stereotype.

The stereotype that women do not vote for women is not nearly as unambiguous as it seems, since opinion polls produce varied results. According to a 2006 Gallup poll conducted in Armenia, 61% of respondents said they would vote for a man and only 7% said they would vote for a woman, when asked “Who would you vote for, a man or a woman, if both candidates had same qualifications?” 31% of respondents said that the gender did not matter, and this is the reserve that women can count on if they conduct their campaign properly.

When asked by Sociometer Center “What is the likelihood of you voting for a woman, if all the candidates have the same qualifications?”, negative answers came from 65% of the female respondents and 70% of male respondents.

A similar poll conducted by the Association of Women with University Education among respondents with higher education showed that 82% of men and 94% of women are prepared to vote for a woman-candidate in parliamentary elections. Thus, it is difficult to determine how male and female voters vote, given that there are no official election statistics by gender.

In the course of this study, the statement that women do not vote for women was supported by those female candidates who had experienced mistrust on the part of women voters. *“Men are more willing to vote for women; I don’t know why, but getting support from women is much more difficult,”* said Ruzanna Khachatryan (People’s Party of Armenia), who has ran not only in parliamentary, but also in local elections. Many of the respondents doubted that statement, yet noted that women-voters demanded much more from women-candidates than from male-candidates. *“Women forgive men for any stupidity, but they never forgive women for even the smallest mistakes,”* – this is a fairly common position confirming that women are held up to a much higher standard. At the same time, many respondents, who stated that society is much more demanding of women than men,⁶⁶ saw it as a good thing, an incentive to increase the level of women-candidates.

⁶⁴ From a conversation with Member of Parliament Naira Zohrabyan (Prosperous Armenia)

⁶⁵ From a public speech by Member of Parliament Gohar Yenokyan (Prosperous Armenia)

⁶⁶ From an interview with Ruzanna Khachatryan

Chapter 5: Women-Candidates in the Media

Women's Political Participation in the Electronic Media

The number of women-candidates appearing or mentioned on TV and radio during the campaign on two radio stations (Public Radio and Radio Liberty) and six TV channels (Kentron, Yerkir, ALM, Shant, Armenia and Public TV) was no more than ten percent, according to *the monitoring of campaign coverage in the Armenian media conducted by the Caucasus Media Institute*.⁶⁷ Some 500 programs were monitored. The highest number (10%) was on Kentron TV, the lowest (3%) on Armenia TV. Women appeared or mentioned on Radio Liberty made up 4%, on Public Radio – about 5% (See Diagrams 3 and 4).

Women were mostly mentioned in news programs and, more frequently, in talk shows (Fifth Wheel, Person of the Year, Perspective, etc.). The topics of conversations focused on elections, and women-politicians did not position themselves as women and did not profile women's issues.⁶⁸ The subject of gender equality was mentioned three times, and several other times women talked about social problems and the economy. Nevertheless, according to the experts, women-politicians, who talked on radio and television, were not inferior to their male-colleagues in any way, and sometimes even showed more commitment to their principles.

Not many parties running for parliament sent their female representatives to appear on TV on the party's behalf. Women, who appeared or were mentioned on TV, represented 12 parties, including most of the parties who got elected to the National Assembly. TV stations chose themselves who to invite to appear in their programs. Thus, ALM preferred to invite women from the Republican Party of Armenia, Public TV frequently featured Hranush Kharatyan, Yerkir invited women from the Country of Law, Dashnaktsutyun and the Henschakyan parties. The monitoring showed that women from the Republican Party appeared on the air more often than the others (27%), followed by women from Prosperous Armenia (18%), Country of Law (14%), United Labor Party (12%) and Dashnaktsutyun (10%).

In terms of the amount of air-time given to women-politicians, the leader was Lyudmila Sargsyan, the only female party leader during the 2007 election. In terms of popularity on TV, other women are not far behind – Alvard Petrosyan (appeared or mentioned 44 times) and Ruzanna Arakelyan (both from Dashnaktsutyun), Hranush Kharatyan from the National Democratic Party, Larisa Alaverdyan (the Heritage Party), Gohar Yenokyan (Prosperous Armenia), independent candidate Susanna Harutyunyan, who withdrew from the race, Hranush Hakobyan and Hermine Naghdalyan from the Republican Party of Armenia... One can conclude that if the woman is a real active politician, then she was included in the top ten in the lists and therefore appeared more frequently in the media. Only one woman-candidate running under the majoritarian system appeared on the air.

⁶⁷ [Http://www.caucasusmedia.org/doc/Armenia_Final_report_Am.doc](http://www.caucasusmedia.org/doc/Armenia_Final_report_Am.doc)

⁶⁸ Opinion of the expert from the Caucasus Media Institute, Nina Iskandaryan

Diagram 3. Gender Balance of Politicians Presented on Television

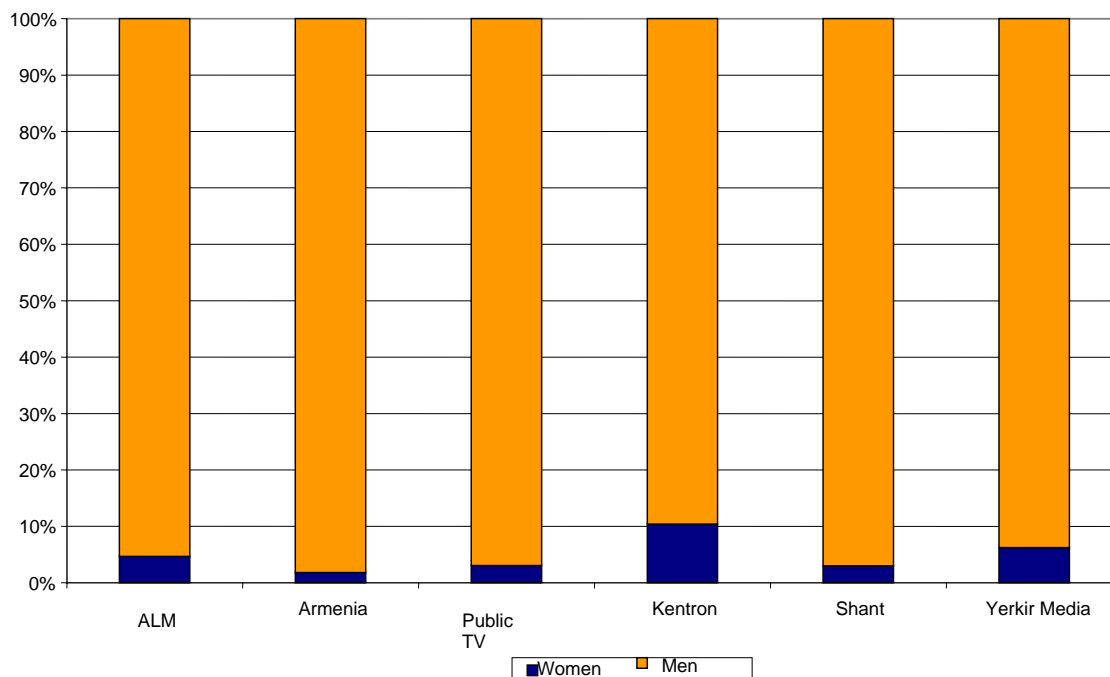
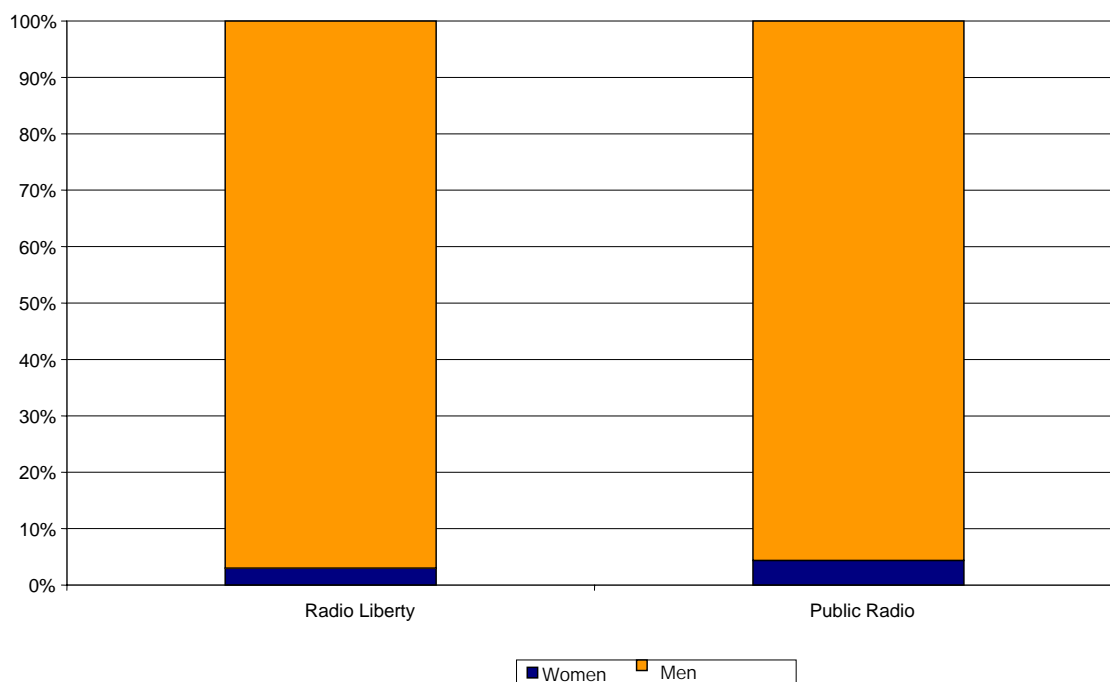


Diagram 4. Gender Balance of Politicians Presented on Radio



Women’s Political Participation in the Print Media (Qualitative Analysis)

A qualitative analysis of women-politicians’ representation in print media is of great interest. More than 10 national publications were monitored during the election campaign – Hayastani Hanrapetutyun, 168 Zham, Golos Armenii, Aravot, Haykakan Zhamanak,

Chorrord Ishkhanutyun, Hayots Ashkharh, Yerkir, Respublika Armenia, Azg and Iravunk. The materials can be divided into three categories – reports from briefings, interviews and reports from the location. The content of most of the interviews is of symptomatic nature in terms of traditional questions for women-politicians about the possibility of combining family and political career. The most popular question was – why do we really need women in politics? Practically all the interviewed women had to answer that question.

The campaign started with a scandal in one of the districts, and one of the persons involved was a woman. The name of that candidate Susanna Harutyunyan, running in the 19th single-mandate district, appeared in print media only “thanks” to this scandal, whereas other women running under the majoritarian system were practically never mentioned in the press.

Chorrord Ishkhanutyun (11 April), Hayots Ashkharh (9 and 10 April) and Azg (9 and 11 April) reported in a series of articles about Harutyunyan’s campaign headquarters being set on fire. Then her name is mentioned in connection with the forging of signatures of citizens who nominated her. This information is presented without comments and there was journalistic investigation. However, the mentioning of the candidate’s name in the same context as with an infamous parliamentarian with a nickname created a negative feeling.

The campaign period coincided with a holiday period between 8 March (International Women’s Day) and 7 April (Mother’s and Beauty Day), which affected the nature of publications and the frequency of raising the subject of women. Azg (9 April) published an article with the title *Women Occupy Less Than A Quarter of Top Managerial Positions (22%)*, where they cited data from a business report by Grand Thornton International on the occasion of 8 March, which said that there are few women among company leaders. 4 out of 10 companies around the world have no women in their top leadership. Then the article reports that 60% of Armenian companies include women in their top leadership. Women in Armenia occupy 22% of top managerial positions in companies. Then they report that in the next few years women are going to play an important role in society, like Angela Merkel in Germany, Segolene Royal in France, Hilary Clinton in the US. On a different day (12 April), the same newspaper published an article entitled *The Abuse of Women’s Image and Beauty in Armenian Advertisements*, which is not related to the subject of the study per se, but is interesting from a gender point of view.

Respublika Armenia (13 April) published an article about an event dedicated to Mother’s and Beauty day, with a message from the First Lady, Bella Kocharyan. The article quoted the opinion of the Minister of Culture, Hasmik Poghosyan, who talks about women’s functional role in society. *“A woman carries out the role of not only mother, but of peace in a wider sense of the word: she is the carrier of kindness, protector of the home hearth and of balance in society.”*

There is also a quote from the MP Hranush Hakobyan, who speaks in a traditional style, in tune with the spirit of the holiday: *“For centuries, our people have worshiped not so much the woman, but the Mother, who was held up and protected as a crown. I am proud that Armenian women are involved in all areas of life: they work, they want to contribute to the development of our statehood, they take responsibility, yet at the same time serve as the bastion of the family, protector of the hearth, the first teacher of the new generation and of the society as a whole. May our Armenian mothers be happy, healthy and beautiful, so that we always feel to be side by side with our children.”*

At another press conference in Yerevan, Hranush Hakobyan expressed confidence that Armenian women are going to have a more significant role in politics. *“Men and women must have equal participation in all areas of life, including in politics,”*- she said. At the same time, she noted that the Armenian people are not yet ready psychologically to have a female president.

Well-known parliamentarians and candidates like Alvard Petrosyan, Hranush Kharatyan, Hermine Naghdalyan, Ruzanna Khachatryan, Heghine Bisharyan, Tamara Gevorgyan and Larisa Alaverdyan prevailed among women-politicians who appeared frequently in the press during the election. In other words, the press featured mostly women who have been in politics or in government service for many years. There were practically no new women faces in the press.

What problems and issues were raised by women in the press? They mostly voice the position of the party they represented. Here are some typical examples. In the Yerkir newspaper (11 April), which is Dashnaktsutyun's party newspaper, there is a report about Ruzanna Arakelyan campaigning in Meghri, saying that there are many women in the ARF list not because it is required by the law, but because the party has always emphasized the importance of women's participation in public and political life. The 18 April issue of the same newspaper reports on Alvard Petrosyan's press conference, where she talked about some parties artificially increasing the number of their members and about other political problems facing the society. Alvard Petrosyan brought up two issues from the party platform –care for the villages located near the borders (especially concerning women's problems) and the development of industry with the aim of job creation.

On the eve of the elections, Hayots Ashkharh newspaper published an article called ***Our Women Parliamentarians***, briefly introducing Hranush Hakobyan, Emma Khudabashyan, Armenuhi Hovhannissyan, Hripsime Avetissyan, Heghine Bisharyan, Alvard Petrosyan and Hermine Naghdalyan.

The 12 April issue contains an article about a meeting with candidates in the Sundukyan theater, organized by the Women's Union and League of Women Voters NGOs. The material was presented in a positive and informative way.

Hayots Ashkharh newspaper (28 April) published an article named *An Advocate of a Liberal Model*, about Hermine Naghdalyan, said that the Republican Party of Armenia advocates a liberal model of development and presented the party's election platform. The 2 May issue of the Hayots Ashkharh newspaper contained an article called *Woman's Mind* about the candidates Hranush Kharatyan and Ruzanna Khachatryan. Presenting some points from the National Democratic Party's platform, Hranush Kharatyan talked about the need to create a mechanism by which people can recall the parliament and the government. Ruzanna Khachatryan said that her party (the People's Party of Armenia) often raised moral problems rather than concrete programs in the parliament, because it did not have opportunities. At the same time, she said that, unlike many other parties, the People's Party of Armenia did not have a problem overcoming the 5% barrier, that the people's attitude towards them had not changed, but the demands had increased.

The 5 May issue of the Hayots Ashkharh newspaper quoted Hranush Hakobyan as saying that, with the exception of 10 parties, others have no electorate, but they will criticize the government for losing the election. The same issue had an article called *Why is Country of Law Making A Lot of Noise* about Heghine Bisharyan's statement in one of the newspapers alleging that the authorities had cut the electricity off in Noyemberyan during a Country of Law rally, so that they cannot use the microphones. The article presents explanations from the Marzpet (Governor) about this incident. The same issue reported the former Human Rights Defender and candidate from the Heritage Party, Larisa Alaverdyan saying that, unlike in previous elections, this time the citizens' votes will not be misrepresented, they will not be lost.

The 8 May issue reported Alvard Petrosyan's opinion that *"you can't turn people into nothing by saying you can either go to the polls or not, because you do not decide anything. That is not the right approach."* The same issue contained an article called *Either We All Win or We All Lose* about a press conference with Alvard Petrosyan and Ruzanna Khachatryan at the Zerkalo club, about parties and vote buying and voter intimidation in

the country. Alvard Petrosyan noted that elections in Armenia are turning into a small civil war.

The 10 May issue of the Hayots Ashkharh newspaper contained an article called *Treason Increases a Person's Reputation*, presenting Heghine Bisharyan's opinion about wiretapping, persecution of the party and death threats against the party's leader. Creating a negative attitude towards women the article ends with the words, "Lying has become a habit for this teacher".

Practically all newspapers reported on a number of press conferences by women-candidates. In some cases, debates and criticism is also presented. Thus, Heghine Bisharyan said at the 2 April press conference that the number of women will increase after the upcoming election. *"I hope they will include women who will occupy significant posts in the country,"* – she said. She added that *"men give big bribes for high posts, which means that very few women will be able to reach political heights."*

In a report from the same press-conference, former Deputy Minister of Social Welfare Karine Hakobyan, running on the Democratic Party list, said that many women characteristics can be useful for the effectiveness of the future parliament. She thought that, on many issues, women are more principled than men, which may have a positive effect on finding solutions to many problems.

Raising the issue of gender equality is of interest. An article called *Armenian Women Are Traditional and Slowly in a Hurry* presented an interview with Alvard Petrosyan in the 10 May issue of Hayots Ashkharh. When asked about gender equality, Alvard Petrosyan said she wished she lived in a country where society was so civilized and had such a high level of thinking that this question would not even be there. But, since we are in the process of development, she thought the **problem was both important and dangerous**. *"It is dangerous not to take into consideration the cultural, traditional and spiritual values of the people, to have foreign values dictated to you. The family institute plays an important role. Germany has a woman leader now, Great Britain had one before, and a woman tried to become the leader in France. But it is early to talk about that here. Not because we don't have such women, but because society is not ready yet. I don't accept the idea of women being equal to men. If we mean strength, intellect, will power or being principled, then these qualities are feminine as well. Politics must have a more of a feminine face – there will be less aggression then, it will become wiser and more stable."* Then, when asked whether Armenian women have leadership qualities, she said: *"Nora Hakobyan, Aida Topuzyan, Karine Danielyan, Hranush Hakobyan are highly principled, smart and organized women. There are many women in the shadows. It is more difficult to get a woman into illegal transactions, they are purer.* The article also quotes the Minister of Culture, Hasmik Poghosyan, as saying that family values are being destroyed because of gender equality and that women and politics are incompatible, and then it quotes Hranush Hakobyan, who thinks it is barbarian to differentiate between the sexes.

As a whole, in the period of the elections, the press merely presented the opinions expressed by women themselves, without commenting on their statements, including on the issue of gender equality; it remained neutral to the problem of political participation and to advocating gender equality, among other things.

Instead of Conclusion

Post-Election Realities

The analysis of the situation, interviews and focus-groups with representatives of political parties permit making certain conclusions and forecasts about the development of women's political participation in the conditions of post-election realities.

The results of the 2007 parliamentary elections showed that the newly introduced quota contributed to increasing the number of women in party lists, but was not sufficient for a real 15% representation of women in the parliament. As was mentioned in many interviews, women once again did about 80% of the routine work connected with the elections, but their contribution to the campaign is inadequate considering their representation in the national parliament.

During the 2007 parliamentary elections, the Republican Party received the majority of seats in the parliament, thanks to which the situation within the party remains stable. But this stability is based on access to government resources; there is some disappointment with party policies among its members, especially women, which may become more pronounced in the future. The Republican Party of Armenia, with its conservative ideology, was created in the years of the war, on the basis of military structures, which left its mark on the gender regime in the party. The number of women in the party and in the party leadership has started to grow in recent years. A women's council in the central organ of the party has become more active, as well as many women's councils in the regions. There was more desire for cooperation with women's NGOs and experience on educational programs and other joint activities was gained. The Chairwoman of the Women's Council, the MP Hermine Naghdalyan, cooperates with women's organizations.

The Prosperous Armenia party was created before the election as yet another "government party", and immediately got a large number of members, including women. Despite the fact that the party got elected into the new parliament and has access to political and economic resources, it did not achieve the forecasted results, which made a certain number of party members to leave its ranks. This also has to do with the fact that women-members' expectations for a special niche for women's political participation within the party have not been met. The party's women's council, headed by the MP Gohar Yenokyan is taking its first steps towards cooperation with NGOs. The level of the women's council's independence and its future activities will largely depend on the general policy and strategy of the party towards achieving gender equality.

There has been some increased activity of women's political participation in ARF (Dashnaktsutyun) as a result of adhering to the elements of gender-sensitive politics, as well as in the Heritage Party, because of its democratic background and the high number of women in its faction.

The Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir) party is experiencing a certain amount of outflow of its members, not only because the party left the ruling coalition and turned into an opposition party, but also because of violations of democracy within the party, ignoring the opinion of party members, lack of attention to party members and inability to identify their role in the new post-election reality, as well as because of the techniques used by government institutions against "objectionable" parties on several occasions. The party is undergoing a reconstruction of party structures, and the proportion of women in the party still remains intact, thanks to the existence of an active women's council. The party's women's council and its chairwoman, Margarita Petrosyan, actively work with NGOs, many party members participate in various events organized by women's NGOs. The MP, Heghine Bisharyan, came up with an initiative to draft a law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, which was discussed by the standing

committee on human rights and public affairs of the National Assembly, but was declined after being included into the agenda of the parliament. One can conclude from this situation that the party tried to work alone to resolve a problem that is rather complex for Armenian reality, without public discussions of the draft law and without support from the NGO sector and other parliamentary factions, especially women-MPs.

The situation in the parties that did not get elected varies. Parties previously represented in Parliament – the People’s Party of Armenia, the National Unity Party and the United Labor Party – experienced a strong shock. There has been an outflow of men from the first two mass opposition parties. This resulted in an increase in the number of women in the central apparatus of the People’s Party of Armenia.

In some parties, whose chances to get elected were low (the Social Democratic Henchakyan Party, the United Liberal National Party) there has been no particular disappointment, they are optimistic and women’s activity in these parties tends to grow.

On the eve of the 2008 presidential elections, political parties are interested in maintaining the activity of their members. Therefore, one can assume that there will be attempts to activate women’s political participation throughout the entire informal pre-election period.

In these conditions, the goal of women is to use the momentum for political self-organization. Moreover, as the study has demonstrated, women in parties are beginning to realize the need to join their efforts and use the potential of women’s councils for their own goals. Also, there is gradually more awareness of the need to have solidarity between women from political parties with women from the NGO sector.

Armenian women NGOs are in a stage that can be characterized, on the one hand, as a period of analysis and understanding of their role in the period of elections, analysis of mistakes and shortcomings, of the realization that NGOs were unable to get fully involved in election processes and get their intellectual potential involved in the process of the democratization of the elections. Analysis of the situation shows that women’s organizations were unable to rally around a common goal, to consolidate their resources and actively participate in the election campaign. Women’s organizations and women’s groups expressed the interests of different social groups with different social experience and unequal opportunities, thus the level of their activity in the election campaign was different. Only the NGOs with previous experience and with commitment to the development of the civic activity of women were prepared to take practical action during the election campaign, promoting women’s political participation by different ways and forms.

To conclude, it should be noted that the study has shown that, women’s political participation in Armenia can become more active, provided that there is a balanced approach on the part of the government, democracy within parties is developed and strengthened with social partnership with NGOs, the media and the interested international institutions, and national and international experience is used appropriately.

Recommendations

The study allows to make a number of recommendations that would help remove the barriers for women’s political participation, increase their representation both in the legislative and in the executive branches of power:

- To increase the quota for women in party lists to at least 25%, with a provision that women must make up 25% of parliamentary factions as well.

- To have more active gender education for members of political parties, to develop comprehensive measures for including gender issues in the political agenda and activities of political parties.
- To promote the deepening of democracy within parties and create mechanisms for the advancement of women into the party leaderships to prepare a reserve of female personnel.
- To develop mechanisms for encouraging the parties to adopt policies that promote the development of an egalitarian gender culture.
- To increase cooperation between women's council of political parties and women's NGOs on issues of promoting women and overcoming the gender stereotypes.
- To study the experience of European political parties in achieving gender balance and using the methods of positive discrimination.
- To support the initiatives aimed at creating women leadership schools in Yerevan and in the marzes, for selection and education of women-leaders who would be most competitive during elections.
- To develop and introduce new approaches and programs for long-term (the whole period between elections) education of women-candidates, including on new campaign technologies, working with the media and psychological trainings.
- To carry out qualitative and quantitative analysis of electoral preferences by gender and to work with the electorate to overcome gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices.
- To take real measures to support women's NGOs in terms of providing them with necessary equipment, internet access, teaching them the technologies of public/political work in the conditions of social transformation and democratic changes.
- With the help of international foundations and organizations, to promote the development of a network of women's groups and organizations both in the regions and in the capital, to expand grant support for NGO activities aimed at stimulating women's political participation.
- To support educational programs of NGOs aimed at increasing the level of political/legal literacy and teaching electoral technologies, with the goal of preparing women-leaders of a new generation.
- To continue working on introducing gender courses in secondary schools and higher educational institutions, as well as on gender education of the general public in order to overcome gender stereotypes.
- To help the media to conduct a gender-balanced policy and to encourage various PR-campaigns in the media aimed at promoting women and overcoming the gender stereotypes, with a focus on widespread campaigns especially in the period of elections.
- To develop special educational programs for journalists on PR-support of women leadership.

Annex I. Methodology of the Research on Women's Political Participation in the 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Armenia

Goals, objectives and methods of the study

Goals of the study:

- To examine women's political participation in the preparation, conduct and the period following the 2007 parliamentary election, to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of participation of women-candidates in the election, to identify the negative practices and stereotypes preventing the formation and development of women's political participation.

The following objectives have been achieved in the course of the study:

- The gender situation in the country has been studied and the reasons for the gender imbalance in the political sector in Armenia have been identified;
- The whole range of objective and subjective reasons affecting the formation of women's political participation have been identified, the accumulated women's political experience has been evaluated, factors and preconditions determining women's electoral behaviour have been studied;
- Ways of overcoming the obstacles for increasing the ranks of women in the legislative branch and possibilities of a balanced gender representation in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia as the organ of representative democracy have been identified;
- Recommendations on activation of women's participation in the political sphere have been developed, based on the study of the political practice and the real data on the work of the civil society institutes in promoting women's political leadership and political participation.

The following methods have been used in the course of the study:

- Following the situation on women's political participation before and after the May 2007 parliamentary elections in Armenia;
- Round-tables and focus group discussions;
- Interviews with women-candidates, women-leaders and activists from political parties and NGOs;
- Analysis of statistical data on women's political representation;
- Analysis of the media coverage of women's political participation.

Phases of the Study

The study of women's political participation was conducted in the pre-election, during the elections and the post-election period.

First Phase of the Study

1. We tracked the process of women's participation in the election campaign in the period of the formation of electoral commissions on all levels, registration of political

parties participating in the election, compilation of party lists for elections under the proportional system and their registration in the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), and nomination of candidates under the majoritarian system.

The practice of women's participation in the advocacy campaign and of NGOs in the election campaign have been studied.

A gender analysis of the statistical data on the composition of electoral commissions and party lists has been conducted.

- 5 round-tables/focus group discussions were organized during the **first phase**:
- There were two round-table discussions with parliamentarians from political parties represented in the current parliament, representatives of political parties and activities of the women's movement in Yerevan.
 - Three round-table discussions took place in the regions: two with representatives of political parties in Vanadzor and in Artashat, and one with voters in Vanadzor. A total of 42 representatives from 10 political parties participated in the three round-tables with representatives of political parties; 15 voter-citizens participated in the Vanadzor round-table.

Two round-table discussions/focus-groups were organized in the period before the election, with representatives of NGOs in Yerevan and in Goris, with the participation of 26 leaders and activities representing 15 NGOs. Questions were developed in advanced which included main problems for discussion.

2. Women's political representation in the RA National Assembly, on the decision-making level of the leadership and in the governing organs of political parties was examined, in order to determine the extent of women's influence on the development of internal democracy in the party and on election processes as a whole.
3. Expert interviews were conducted with the following 18 women-candidates running for the National Assembly under proportional and majoritarian systems: Hranush Hakobyan, Hermine Naghdalyan, Heghine Bisharyan, Hripsime Avetisyan, Lilit Galstyan, Ruzanna Arakelyan, Ruzanna Khachatryan, Hasmik Baghdasaryan, Dustrik Mkhitaryan, Hranush Kharatyan, Tamara Gevorgyan, Lyudmila Sargsyan, Zhasmen Telyan, Inessa Adamyan, Inga Harutyunyan, Lyudmila Azizyan, Zaruhi Hovhannisyan and Hasmik Hakobyan.
4. In order to identify the role of NGOs in promoting women's political participation, interviews were conducted with leaders of 5 NGOs – Natalya Martirosyan (All-Armenian Women's Union), Jina Sargizova (NGO Center), Anahit Bayandur (Armenian Helsinki Civil Assembly), Astghik Avetisyan (Armenian PR Association) and Lilit Asatryan (Young Women's Association).

Based on the round-tables and interviews, qualitative analysis of women running for parliament under proportional and majoritarian systems was conducted and peculiarities of their electoral behaviour were identified.

The dynamics of women's representation in the legislative branch of power and on the level of decision-making in the Executive in the past 15 years of democratic reforms in Armenia was also studied.

Experts analyzed the gender strategies in the policies of political parties; the issue of gender balance in party leadership and the practice of women's councils was examined, as well as their influence on internal democracy within parties and the process of

promoting women to leadership positions within parties. Also examined was the presentation of gender issues in the platforms and election campaign of political parties.

The analysis of election platforms of most of the parties running for parliament in 2007 showed that they are gender-neutral and do not seek to overcome the gender imbalance in the authorities. The study of the platforms of a number of parties (Social Democratic Henschakian Party, People's Party of Armenia, the Republican Party of Armenia, National Democratic Party, the New Times Party, Prosperous Armenia, Orinats Yerkir, National Unity, Heritage , United Labor Party and Dashink) did not reveal any provisions aimed at developing women's political participation and advancing women to decision-making positions in the government.

Only the **Armenian Revolutionary Federation's (Dashnaktsutyun)** platform had a special section entitled "Equal Rights for Women and Men" that talks about legal guarantees for achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men and elimination of gender-based discrimination, which is regarded as a factor of stability and harmony in the country. Other measures to ensure such equity include the need for introducing programs that would create mechanisms for increasing women's competitiveness in the labour market and for combining family responsibilities with professional and public duties, as well as the need for effective quota mechanisms for promoting women's political rights, the need to support the development and implementation of programs for increasing the role of women in the society and developing the civil society initiatives that are aimed at ensuring the legal equality of sexes.

Platforms of the **National Democratic Party, National Unity , Heritage and Orinats Yerkir**, include such priorities as care for mother and child, family and women's reproductive rights, benefits for working mothers, whereas **Prosperous Armenia** talked about "professional education, training and employment of women, young people and the disabled."

5. Qualitative analysis of publications in 11 periodicals (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun, Respublika Armenia, Azg, Aravot, Yerkir, Golos Armenii, Haykakan Zhamanak, Hayots Ashkharh, Iravunk, 168 Zham, Chorrord Ishkhanutyun) and programs on 8 TV channels (Public Television, Yerkir Media, Kentron, ALM, Shant, Armenia, Prometheus, AR) was conducted.

In addition, in the course of implementation of the project, experts visited round-table discussions, meetings of party candidates and majoritarian candidates with voters, public appearances of women-candidates and discussions with their participation and with other players in the electoral process, press conferences and other events organized by parties and NGOs, and they also studied the relevant materials on websites.

Experts also used other sources of information, including the results of public opinion polls and media monitoring carried out in the period of election, opinions of international and local observers. The data collected in this way was compared to the previously conducted studies on women's political participation.

The study revealed a positive dynamics in women's representation in party lists: compared to 2003, when only 162 of the 1143 candidates were women (14.1%), in 2007, there were 297 women candidates among 1313 candidates in party lists, or 22.6%.

This positive dynamics can be explained by a number of factors, including the passage of a 15% quota for women in party lists and increased political activity of women.

At the same time, in 2007, there were 37 women-candidates in the top ten in party lists, compared to 27 in 2003. Given the 5% threshold for political parties, the top 5 candidates in party lists have the highest chance of being elected. In 2003, there were only 6 women among the top five in party lists, compared to 17 in 2007.

Meanwhile, the number of women running under majoritarian system is steadily decreasing; this decrease is much faster than the decrease in the number of single-mandate districts. As a result of amendments to Electoral Code, the number of single-mandate electoral districts decreased by half compared to 1999, but the number of women nominated to run under majoritarian system in 2007 was ten times smaller than in 1999. The main reason is the tough campaign and high degree of commercialization of elections under majoritarian system.

Second Phase of the Study – Election Day

The analysis showed that 22 parties and one political bloc fought for 90 seats under proportional system on May 12, 2007. 132 candidates were running in 41 single-mandate districts, which, in average, is three candidates running for one seat.

Together with members of the Association and other NGOs, experts/researchers monitored the election process on the election day. Special attention was paid to districts with women-candidates running under majoritarian system.

The voting process was observed by 13 808 people from 53 local NGOs, which was much more than in 2003.

Third Phase of the Study – After Elections

6 round-tables/focus-groups were conducted after elections – three with representatives of political parties in Yerevan, Vanadzor and Artashat, and three with NGO activists in Yerevan, Gyumri and Goris, as well as one round-table with the participation of voters and NGO activists in Sevan.

A total of 46 representatives of 8 political parties took place in the three round-tables with political party representatives.

Three round-tables/focus-groups were organized with NGO representatives in the post-election period in Yerevan, Gyumri and Goris, with the participation of 46 leaders and activists representing 40 NGOs.

In addition to the 6 round-tables/focus-groups scheduled by the project, the Center for Democracy and Peace of the Association organized two round-table discussions on the link between gender balance in the leadership of political parties and development of internal democracy within parties (in Yerevan) and on the strengthening of cooperation between women's councils of political parties and women NGOs as a factor of women's solidarity in support of democracy (in Vanadzor).

In order to study women's political participation in election processes as evaluated by research and sociological centers and to learn about the opinions of respondents, meetings and expert interviews with the following leaders of sociological research centers were conducted – Gevorg Poghosyan (Armenian Sociological Association), Aharon Adibekyan (Sociometer Center), Karine Nalchajyan (psychologist), Nina Iskandaryan (Caucasus Media Institute), as well as with women who ran for the National Assembly – Lyudmila Sargsyan (leader of the Social Democratic Henchakian Party), Victoria Harutyunian (member of Orinats Yerkir who ran under majoritarian system).

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN WITH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
GENDER STUDIES CENTER

**WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN THE 2007 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC
OF ARMENIA**

Analytical Overview

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Director of the Gender Studies Center

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