

## United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Women in Development (74/235)

### Question posed by the Resolution

*Providing equitable and universal access to affordable and quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, for women and girls in order to achieve the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly in contexts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 (paragraph 17-19)*

### Response

Pursuant to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 318-N of 4 March 2004 "On free medical aid and services guaranteed by the State and provided under privileged conditions", in case of pathological pregnancies, childbirth, postnatal period and extragenital pathologies, medical aid shall be provided in the required full volume, within the scope of government sponsorship, except for related non-medical services.

Order of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Armenia No 198-L of 22 January 2020 "On approving the procedure for organising outpatient obstetric and gynaecological medical aid and services, the volume of examinations for fifteen-year-old girls at outpatient medical organisations and the methodology for implementation within the scope of free medical aid and services guaranteed by the State" lays down the procedure for organising outpatient obstetric and gynaecological medical aid and services and the volume of examinations for fifteen-year-old girls and the methodology for implementation.

Order of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Armenia No 80-N of 29 November 2013 "On approving the criterion for organising outpatient obstetric and gynaecological medical aid and services in hospitals within the scope of free medical aid and services guaranteed by the State" defines the criterion for free obstetric and gynaecological medical aid and services guaranteed by the State in hospitals.

At the same time, the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 568-N of 27 May 2015 "On establishing the procedure for free medical aid and services through the application of assisted reproductive technologies and provided under privileged conditions, and defining the requirements for beneficiaries" lays down the volumes with regard to examinations guaranteed by the State that are provided free or under privileged conditions and the medical aid and services provided through the application of assisted reproductive technologies, the requirements for beneficiaries, the procedures, the relations pertaining to them and the procedure for record-registration and listing of beneficiaries within the scope of the "Overcoming infertility" budget plan.

The Ministry of Health, through close cooperation with civil society organisations, people with HIV and representatives of communities vulnerable to HIV, international organisations and other interested parties, is taking steps to fulfil the commitments adopted under the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to AIDS by 2030.

In the context of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, within the scope of the National Programme for Combating HIV/AIDS, in 2021, several events were held to reduce the vulnerability of women, including women of vulnerable groups to HIV and raise awareness.

In particular, the National Centre for Infectious Diseases of the Ministry of Health held the following events:

An educational seminar entitled "HIV virus" was organised for 257 women in rural communities. Informative-educational talks about HIV were held for 13675 women in rural communities. In the cities of Martuni, Vanadzor, Gyumri, Armavir and Hrazdan, 868 women were engaged in the activities of support groups. In 50 rural communities, 13675 women were tested for HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B and syphilis. In municipal communities, 17 public events were held, during which 488 women received information about and were tested for HIV.

In 2021, the "National Institute of Health after Academician S. Avdalbekyan" of the Ministry of Health conducted 4403 tests for HIV for migrants and their wives in Yerevan. The Institute also conducted training courses entitled: "Key Issues of the HIV Virus: HIV Consulting and Examination", for medical workers. The courses were held with the participation of 401 medical workers, and women comprised 68.27% of the medical workers.

### **Question posed by the Resolution**

*Promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education and ensuring their safe and equal access to and participation in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels, given the prolonged suspension of educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and redressing the attrition of women and girl students (paragraph 24)*

### **Response**

*Enrolment ratio at different levels of education and in scientific-technical activities in 2020*

The gross enrolment of children in pre-school institutions (from the population of 0-5-year-old) comprised 24.3%, 28.6% in cities, 16.2% in villages. The enrolment ratio of girls comprised 24.8%, the enrolment ratio of boys — 23.9%. The gross enrolment ratio of 3-5-year-olds was relatively high — 43.5%. The low enrolment ratio of children in the pre-school education sector is mainly due to the fact that pre-school institutions are not operating in all communities of the Republic of Armenia.

The gross enrolment ratio in the general education sector comprised 83.2%; moreover, in elementary school it comprised 93.2%, in basic school — 90.6%, in high school — 57.9%. The gender equality ratio of pupils comprised in total 1.04; in elementary school — 1.01, in basic school — 1.01, in high school — 1.20.

In primary vocational educational institutions, 23.3% of the students were women. The gross enrolment ratio of students comprised 6.2% (the gross enrolment ratio for women — 3.1%, the gross enrolment ratio for men — 8.9%), the gender equality ratio — 0.35.

In secondary vocational education institutions, 50.9% of the students were women. The gross enrolment ratio of students comprised 13.9% (the gross enrolment ratio for women — 15.1%, the gross enrolment ratio for men — 12.8%), the gender equality ratio — 1.18.

In higher vocational education institutions, 53.4% of the students were women. The gross

enrolment ratio of students comprised 54.4% (the gross enrolment ratio for women — 61.1%, the gross enrolment ratio for men — 48.3%), the gender equality ratio — 1.27. The total number of post-graduate students comprised 911, of which 54.4% were women. In the total of doctoral students, women comprised 37%. The total number of persons engaged in scientific work and development studies comprised 4.499, of which 53% were women.

### *Legislation, prohibition of discrimination and guarantees for education*

Pursuant to Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, "Discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited."

The state guarantees for the right to education in the Republic of Armenia are prescribed by several articles of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On education", according to which:

The Republic of Armenia shall ensure the right to education, irrespective of national origin, race, gender, language, religion, political or other views, social origin, property status or other circumstances. Restrictions on the right to professional (vocational) education shall be provided for by law.

The State shall ensure for the citizens of the Republic of Armenia free of charge general secondary education, as well as free of charge primary vocational (handicraft), secondary vocational, higher and post-graduate professional education based on a competition, at state education institutions.

In the Republic of Armenia twelve-year secondary or primary vocational (handicraft) or secondary vocational education shall be compulsory until the learner attains the age of 19, where that right has not been exercised earlier.

Secondary education at state education institutions shall be free of charge, and in case of learning at primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions on the ground of general education, free of charge and paid education shall be organised based on a competition.

The requirement of compulsory secondary or primary vocational or secondary vocational education shall not apply to certain groups of children in need of special conditions for education prescribed by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

As already mentioned, the policy in the education sector is universal for both genders, and it does not imply any discrimination. However, in spite of the overall efforts being made by the State, nevertheless, due to problems with access and availability at different levels of education, divergent enrolment ratios are shown among learners, according to gender, social status, etc. The State is implementing certain measures to solve the mentioned problems.

### *Expansion of the network of pre-school services.*

Currently, pre-school institutions are not operating in nearly 270 communities of the Republic of Armenia. And to make pre-school education available, pursuant to point "4.4" of the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, it is envisaged to expand the network of pre-school services by the year 2023, making the enrolment of children in pre-school institutions reach 70%. Within the scope of this process, the alternative cost-efficient models of pre-school education and the procedure for introducing those models have been approved under Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as "the RA MESCS") No 20-N of 26 January 2021. Through a grant competition, alternative cost-efficient models will be introduced in the settlements lacking pre-school services, making pre-school services available for vulnerable communities as well.

At the same time, in 2020, the list of communities proposed for construction of modular kindergartens was drawn up and the programme for introduction of modular kindergartens was developed jointly with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia. For the introduction of alternative pre-school services, 10 communities won the grant competition declared in 2021.

The aim is to make pre-school services as available as possible, helping to expand the opportunity of children to receive education at an early age and to increase their enrolment in pre-school services. At the same time, there are two things emphasised in the programme — the programme contributes both to the enrolment of pre-school age children and the solution of the problem of employment and the social issue of their parents. The mothers of the beneficiary children of the programme may also be engaged in the process of pre-school education, by taking a relevant professional training course at the expense of the funds allocated by the RA MESCS, as a result of which they may work as educators at the institutions providing pre-school service.

#### *Introduction of the system of universal inclusive education.*

The Republic of Armenia has introduced the system of universal inclusive education, as a result of which the number of special schools has been reduced, the children in need of special conditions for education learning at former special schools have been transferred to general education schools, by attending the general education schools that are the nearest to their respective settlements.

As a result of introduction of the system, territorial pedagogical-psychological support centres have been set up in the Republic of Armenia, positions of teacher assistant, psychologist and special pedagogue have been introduced in general education schools; there is a scale for the increased funding for children in need of special conditions for education, adequate to the intensity of the needs of the child. Parallel to universal inclusiveness, 6 special schools will continue to operate as resource centres in order to provide education to children with specific needs.

Within the limits of the opportunities available at the schools, children with disabilities (who have been identified as children in need of special conditions for education) receive environmental, standard adjustments for general education.

In the marzes (regions) that have made the transition to the system of universal inclusive education, training courses devoted to inclusive education, the toolkit for assessment of children and the provision of pedagogical-psychological support services have been conducted for the specialists and teacher assistants of general education schools and territorial pedagogical-psychological support centres.

#### *Introduction of a system for identifying children left out of compulsory education.*

The largest gross enrolment ratio in the general education is in elementary school, but there are cases of being left out of elementary school. Thus, to identify students being left out of general education, as well as children not having attended general education schools and in order to engage them in general education, a *"Procedure for identifying and guiding children left out of compulsory education"* was adopted upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 154-N of 2 February 2021. The electronic sub-system of "Identifying children left out of compulsory education" will be launched in 2022. The data on 6 to 18-year-old children and teens not registered in any institution is presented in this system. The lists of identified children, as well as the unified electronic database are available for interested organisations.

The expected outcome in case of application of the legal act will be exercise of the right of every child to education, regulation of the process of registration of school-aged children.

#### *Building conditions of schools.*

Every year, appropriate funds are allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for capital renovation and reconstruction of general education schools.

At the same time, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has approved the "2015-2030 Programme for Improvement of Seismic Safety in the State Schools of the Republic of Armenia" and has established the list of 425 educational facilities that need capital renovation, reconstruction, strengthening and modernisation first. The preparation work for construction or strengthening of nearly 46 schools within the scope of the "Improvement of Seismic Safety in State General Education Schools of the Republic of Armenia" (with the support of the Asian Development Bank) and within the "Improving Education" Programme (with the support of the World Bank), is in progress. The norms for planning earthquake-resistant construction have also been modernised.

In the second stage of the new "Improving Education" loan programme carried out with the support of the World Bank, 12 high schools were fully renovated and equipped with natural science laboratories and appropriate furniture and equipment.

While implementing the design activities for capital renovation and reconstruction of general education schools, all the criteria are taken into consideration in order to ensure an environment that will be as accessible and customised as possible from the perspective of inclusive education.

The 2021-2026 Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia envisages the

following steps until the year 2026:

- to build or carry out capital renovation of at least 300 schools and 500 kindergartens;
- to take measures for the enrolment of 3-5-year-old children in pre-school institutions to reach at least 85%, etc.

*Socially focused initiatives for students and teachers.*

- The Sustainable School Food Programme — The programme for providing children of pre-schools and elementary grades of general education schools with food. The Program is financed by the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia and it is gradually expanded each academic year.

Currently, the "Sustainable School Food" programme is launched in 8 marzes (regions) of the Republic of Armenia: Ararat, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Tavush, Shirak, Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik and Lori. By 2023, the Programme will embrace also the Armavir and Kotayk marzes. The United Nations World Food Programme will continue to support the Programme, including the renovation and furnishing of canteens and kitchens in schools in transitional marzes. In 2023, the number of beneficiaries of the Programme will reach 110000.

The aim of providing healthy food to the students of elementary grades of general education schools in all the marzes of the Republic of Armenia is to improve their health condition and to overcome poverty, thus contributing to the increase of attendance of children and acquiring universal elementary education.

- Regarding the compensation of transport expenses for teachers and children of general education schools:
  1. the expense for transport services for students is compensated, irrespective of distance, if a child is involved in a school located in another settlement due to lack of educational institution in his/her actual settlement or due to lack of certain educational programme;
  2. the expense for transport services for general education school teachers who reside in different settlements (distance: 5 km) and have a 0.5 or more staff rate, or without restriction on rates, is compensated, if they are the only teachers of a particular school subject.

The aim is the inclusion in secondary education of all children residing in the settlements which lack educational institutions that provide educational programs at certain degrees, as well as to ensure compensation for the transport service for the teachers who are not residents of certain settlement, which makes impossible the teaching of certain given subjects.

- Compensation of the fees for textbooks for children of border communities of the Republic of Armenia who receive social support upon the decision of the Government is provided to the students of 5-12 grades of general education schools operating in 81 settlements of 23 borderline communities.
- Pursuant to Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On education", the State

shall, at the expense of the State Budget, provide students of the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> grades of general education schools with free of charge textbooks for elementary general education programmes. The Law is being implemented for every academic year.

*Teaching of Information and Communication Technologies and Digital technologies.*

The MESCS of the Republic of Armenia is implementing a programme for establishing "Armath" Engineering Laboratories jointly with the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE). In total, within the scope of this Programme, 921 groups, 50 groups of UAV educational programme are formed and functioning at the engineering laboratories, 22 groups are functioning at the robotics circles; students receive free-of-charge engineering education and acquire robotics skills. At "Armath" Engineering Laboratories, children aged 10-18 are taught science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through interactive after-school courses, interesting competitions, and innovative camps. Our young engineers are provided an opportunity to design, build, test, and improve their own solutions in a safe and fun environment while making new friends and jointly founding start-ups. Both boys and girls are included in these circles. The circles also serve a good platform among the students for professional orientation and choice of professions that deemed to be non-traditional.

Training courses for teachers of general education schools in various marzes of the Republic of Armenia have been conducted in these fields, and 80% of the participants are women. Online and in-person courses are organised on various Web programming languages, "Microsoft" and "Google" educational tools, "Microsoft Math", "OneNote" and "MIX" programme hardware and other topics.

*Awareness-raising among the learners on professional orientation issues, aimed at overcoming gender stereotypes and forming motivation among boys and girls for professions that are not traditional to their gender.*

Students are being informed about professional orientation issues during master classes by class teachers with the aim to overcome gender-based stereotypes and to form a motivation among boys and girls for the professions that are not considered as traditional to their respective gender.

12 regional colleges of the Republic of Armenia conducted profession orientation events in career centres aiming also at sharing information about labour market, as well as to overcome gender-based stereotypes among girls and boys on the choice of profession.

Besides, 95 primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions conducted introductory courses on career orientation. Persons responsible for the career orientation in these educational institutions were hired to work on constant basis.

The annual "Education & Career EXPO" exhibition is being organised in Yerevan. Great interest toward the exhibition is expressed particularly by youth, who try to become informed on the opportunities of the labour market and search for a desired profession. This is also a good platform for sharing information on new professions, on exchange

programmes and educational institutions, for learning about success stories and innovative minds, as well as for stimulating of interest towards the professions that are considered non-traditional among girls. Each year, many educational institutions in Armenia and abroad, as well as international donor organisations participate in the EXPO.

There is also a Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation that organises career fair, Open House events, and a Professions Day. Within this framework, the Centre offers women's leadership and entrepreneurship capacity-building guidelines, taking into account the peculiarities of a given profession or professional qualification. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia is also involved and fulfil comprehensive programs to promote professional orientation at general education schools.

115 teachers of 80 schools of Tavush Marz of the Republic of Armenia benefited from trainings offered by the Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation in 2021-2022 academic year.

Upon the Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, the following projects for teachers were developed by the Methodological Centre:

- "Educational and Methodological Manual for Specialists Conducting Professional Orientation Works at General Education Schools";
- The standard and curricula for pilot course entitled: "Professional Orientation", developed for 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades.

The Methodological Centre maintained consultations on effective organisation of the professional orientation clubs at general education schools of the Tavush Marz, to make the professional orientation compulsory.

Currently, that component is being piloted in the schools of Tavush Marz until its full implementation by 2026 in all schools of Armenia. This approach is clearly enshrined in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

#### *In the sector of primary vocational and secondary vocational education (PSVE)*

The share of women among the teaching staff at PSVE institutions comprises around 80%. The subject "Basics of Law", the modules "Basics of Political Science and Technology", "Communication", "Safety and First Aid", "Entrepreneurship" have been included in all PSVE public education curricula. These courses include components on human rights, democracy and issues related to gender equality and prevention of gender discrimination.

Each year, training courses are organised by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD) for the administrative and teaching staff of VET education institutions, which address issues of gender equality and gender-sensitivity. Career centres function at all primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions. To promote equal opportunities in choosing a profession by women and men, these centres create opportunities for entrepreneurial capacity-building, elaboration of instructive and non-formal modules on topics related to non-discrimination of choice of



gender-based professions and occupations in professional orientation and professional orientation. They also conduct discussions on women's leadership and entrepreneurial capacity-building within the curriculum of "Career Management" module.

In addition to formal education, non-formal education programmes are implemented at VET institutions, in particular, programmes on cooking, embroidering and lace-making, hairdressing, tailoring, design, makeup, etc. This is implemented within the scope of the employment programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia in accordance with the needs of the labour market and based on the demand of the private sector. Educational institutions have relevant contracts with employers representing the mentioned sectors, and conduct job orientation or training courses jointly with them.

#### *Professional education of persons with disabilities*

The following policy is currently being implemented in the sector of professional education to ensure the access to education for persons with disabilities:

- pursuant to the "Procedure for granting student benefit and state scholarship in public education institutions of the Republic of Armenia, implementing primary vocational and/or secondary vocational education programmes" approved by the Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia No 1784-N of 4 November 2021, persons with disabilities and children with the status of disabled persons shall be admitted under secondary vocational education programme regardless of the competition-based admission, at the expense of reserve seats. The scholarship to these persons shall be paid upon successful regular examinations and tests irrespective of the benefit received, pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On social protection of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia";
- any citizen, including persons with special needs may apply for admission to public primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions, unless their study in the given professional field contradicts the legislation;
- around 80 tuition-free seats are allocated each year to students of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> groups of disability, as well as to students under the age of 18 disabled since childhood, who successfully passed at least the passing score for admission in paid system at public education institutions for secondary vocational education programmes of the MESCS of the Republic of Armenia;
- Pursuant to paragraph "b" of sub-point 2 of point 5 of the "Procedure for refunding (fully or partially (discount)) tuition fees in the form of student benefit at higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia" approved upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1183-N of 27 July 2006, the State shall grant full refund of the tuition fee in the form of benefit in compliance with the number of seats approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The State shall grant full refund of the tuition fee in the form of benefit to relevant social groups provided for by law, among which are persons with disabilities of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> groups and persons with the status of a disabled child.

Admissions for free-of-charge and paid tuition at primary vocational, secondary vocational and higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia shall be carried out on a

competitive basis; hence, no gender discrimination is traced in this sector.

*Instruction on topics on human rights, equality of men and women, healthy lifestyle and gender violence*

Topics related to human rights are taught at general education schools within the scope of the subjects: "Me and the Surrounding World", "Homeland Studies", "World History" and "Armenian History", "Geography of Armenia", "Sociology" and other subjects and courses. In particular, thematic units on fundamental human rights, gender equality, rights of national minorities, tolerance and civil society have been included in the curriculum of the subject "Sociology". Instruction on human rights has been complemented by teaching other knowledge and skills, such as healthy lifestyle and the fight against narcotic drugs and trafficking in persons. Various international and non-governmental organisations provide support on this matter. Also, a teacher's manual on teaching tolerance has been introduced in various grades at general education schools.

At the same time, in 2020, the MESCS of the Republic of Armenia carried out revision of the public general education standard within the scope of the project "EU4Innovation in Armenia: Enhanced Education focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)" implemented jointly with the World Bank. As a result of the revision of the public general education standard, the new subject standards and curricula for primary, secondary and high schools have been elaborated, the list of subjects taught has been reviewed, and new textbooks to be introduced – to ensure also gender balanced and gender sensitive approaches.

During the mentioned revision of the public general education standard and curricula, the gender element has been included in secondary education capabilities and the expected final outcome of the study of the graduate of general education programmes. The gender element has also been included in the requirements for elaboration of relevant topics and illustrative materials in textbooks. The new general education standard has been approved upon the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 136-N of 4 February 2021. Currently, it is piloted in Tavush Marz.

This year, within the scope of the new general education standards, teacher's manuals for teaching the circle introduced in piloting classes of Tavush Marz of the course "Healthy Lifestyle" have also been elaborated, wherein separate topics ensuring the gender elements are envisaged in all classes. Topics on human rights and democracy are included in the pilot standard as well as in the curriculum of the subject "Sociology" taught at secondary schools and representing the field of society and social sciences.

After the pilot programme, the curricula and methodical materials will be reviewed, after which new textbooks will be designed. The new standard will be fully introduced in 2023. Sociological subjects and topics on healthy lifestyle are taught at primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions as well. Discussions on the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights and the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On ensuring equal rights of and equal opportunities for women and men" have also been held, films have been screened, debates on topics related to gender equality have been organised at these educational institutions.

Human rights, gender equality are taught within the "Law", "Political Science", "Physical Culture", "Healthy Lifestyle" and other courses at higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia. The Yerevan State University offers a two-year Master's programme on Women, Leadership and Development since 2015.

*Raising the professional qualification of directors, deputy directors, and teachers of general education schools, primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions in terms of gender-based knowledge.*

The module of the course on the topic: "Gender Equality and Gender Violence", was developed for teachers, psychologists, social workers and administrative workers of educational institutions with the support of non-governmental organisations. Topics on legal equality of women and men, prevention of gender-based violence have been included in the modules of training courses for teachers of general education schools and in the curricula of attestation subjects.

Topics related to human rights, legal equality of women and men, prohibition of discrimination have been included in training programmes for teachers of primary vocational and secondary vocational education institutions (955 participants in total in 2021).

In 2020, the "Module of the course on gender-sensitive and gender-responsive teaching" was elaborated by the Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Centre of the MESCS of the Republic of Armenia within the scope of the project: "Promoting Gender Integration in Teachers' Capacity-Building Programmes and Community Engagement Initiatives" of "Teach for Armenia", with the support of the UNICEF. Within this framework, there were the series of training modules of the programme: "Ensuring Development of Teaching Skills of Teachers and Teacher's Aides of General Education Schools" in 2021. In same year, 593 teachers of Tavush Marz of Armenia benefited from the trainings on new public standard in education and new curricula, with a gender element as well.

In 2021, 53 mentors were trained by the mentioned modules, who, in turn, trained 1171 teachers and teacher assistants in total.

The teachers' training programme, that includes human rights education, was also elaborated and approved upon Order of the Minister of ESCS of the Republic of Armenia No 1162-A/2 of 7 September 2020.

The Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Centre (RPC) implemented a training on the topic: "Prevention of Bullying in General Education Schools" for teachers of 5 schools of Yerevan, Lori Marz, Shirak Marz and Tavush Marz of Armenia, which included topics on

gender equality.

*In the scientific field.*

In recent years, Armenia registered progress in terms of women's engagement in the scientific field. The 2020-2021 statistical data shows that around 53% of employees of scientific institutions were women (the worldwide indicator is less than 30%). At the same time, only around 25% of leadership of these institutions were women. To promote advancement of women in this field and to fill the gap, the Minister of ESCS of Armenia, by the Order No 847-A/2 of 2 July 2020 established a competition for applications on scientific research topics, with the condition that the supervisors of the research groups should be women under the age of 35. The Science Committee received 50 applications, and 15 research groups, led by women, were selected within funded projects for 36 months term. The topics covered natural science, engineering and technology, medical science and agricultural science. The project continued in 2021, as well, 10 research groups were selected for funded research activities.

The detailed information is available in the electronic database of the Science Committee on researchers who conduct their research with the support of the Science Committee funding.

*Education of children belonging to vulnerable groups and to national minorities.*

Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia states, *inter alia*, features such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, etc., with regard to prohibition of discrimination based on language and affiliation to national minority. Pursuant to Article 56 of the Constitution, "Everyone shall have the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity. Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language and culture".

Article 2 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On language" prescribes that in communities of national minorities of the Republic of Armenia, the general education can be organised in their native language by compulsory instruction of the Armenian language, in compliance with the public programme and public funding.

Pursuant to the procedure for admission to general school, a student belonging to a national minority shall be admitted to a school which provides teaching in the student's national (native) language or be admitted to a school (class) that provides a course in that language. In case of lack of such possibility, the choice of the language of instruction shall be made by parents of the student.

The textbooks in national minority languages for primary, secondary and high schools are published at the expense of the State budget. The electronic versions of the textbooks, as well as the curricula are available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia.

In settlements with mixed population, where the number of people belonging to national minorities is small, there is an opportunity for the optional instruction of the language.

*COVID-19 pandemic context.*

The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges for the fields of education and science. To ensure the continuity of education, on March 16, 2020, all general education institutions of the Republic of Armenia shifted to distance learning. That was unprecedented challenge for Armenia, especially in term of necessary technical equipment. A number of international and domestic organisations, foundations and private companies provided more than 3 thousand computers and other technical equipment to the general education institutions of Armenia.

Around 100 additional courses were organised by the MESCS of the Republic of Armenia on 3-20 August for children who left out of distance education in March-May 2020.

The online platform for distance learning [/https://heravar.amedu.am/](https://heravar.amedu.am/), the electronic register, as well as the comprehensive database of online educational resources were created a very short time period by the "National Centre of Educational Technologies" SNCO (hereinafter referred to as "NCET").

The MESCS of the Republic of Armenia has co-operated with TV companies on this matter, to ensure daily broadcasting of public lessons on various subjects from 8:30 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. on the Public TV Channel ("1tv" Channel).

The "Procedure for organising distance learning in general education institutions" was approved by Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia No 09-N of 20 May 2020.

The NCET organised a distance accelerated course (with a duration of 2 weeks) on the topic of "Skills for Conducting Distance Learning" for teachers of all the subjects, throughout the academic year (2020-2021). Around 7600 teachers have been trained to learn distance teaching. The NCET also developed the courses "Google Classroom" and "Microsoft Teams" "Universal Design for Learning" within the "E-school Armenia" project, available in "Armenian Educational Channel" of Youtube, as well as webinars within relevant Facebook communities.

Currently, the education process in general education institutions of the Republic of Armenia is organised in accordance with the requirements of Order N24-N of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Armenia of 18 September 2020 "On approving the sanitary rules SK N 3.1.2-004-20 applied in educational institutions implementing general education (except for pre-school) programmes, to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Republic of Armenia".

During the period of COVID-19 epidemic, primary vocational, secondary vocational and

higher vocational education institutions also switched to distance learning.

The above-mentioned actions were implemented irrespective of the nationality, race, sex, language, religion, political or other views of students and teachers, their social origin, property status or other circumstances. There was no discrimination with regard to the right of women and girls to education in the educational system of the Republic of Armenia.

### **Question posed by the Resolution**

*Improving and systematizing the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable disaggregated data, with a focus on women's employment, informal employment, access to decent work and social protection, entrepreneurship, and unpaid care and domestic work through time-use surveys and satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income (paragraphs 49 and 50).*

### **Response**

Since late 90s, Armenia attaches particular attention to the gender-sensitive statistical indicators.

The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (Armstat) releases the Statistical Booklet entitled: "Women and Men in Armenia", on an annual basis (<https://armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2439>). The booklet includes, to the extent possible, the quantitative statistical indicators recommended by the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators (<https://gender-data-hub-2-undesa.hub.arcgis.com/>) segregated by thematic fields (demography, healthcare, education, labour market, etc.).

Due to the improvement of information resources and tools and new statistical research methodology, the gender statistics is also improving each year. Both the thematic segments and the structure and scope of the published indicators have been expanded. However, there are still some specific sectoral indicators, which are beyond the scope of regular data collection. They are produced either at certain intervals, within the scope of international cooperation programmes (for instance, creation of satellite accounts to assess the contribution of the unpaid work to national income), or being fulfilled partially (for instance, statistical data on entrepreneurship, access to dignified work), or are not conducted at all due to lack of necessary resources (for instance, employment indicators according to ethnic background, etc.).

The indicators mentioned in 49 and 50 paragraphs of the Resolution in question, with the part disposed by Armstat, are presented in numerous publications posted on the official website of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, some of which are presented below:

- The Statistical Booklet "Women and Men in Armenia" (published in 2021 in Armenian and English), link: [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2021.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2021.pdf) (starting from page 58);
- The Statistical Booklet "Labour Market in Armenia" (2021, in Armenian and English), link: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2447>, see Sections 4.1, 4.2., 4.3, 4.4, 5., 6;
- Armstat Platform for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), link:

- <https://sdg.armstat.am/8/> , see indicators 8.3.1 and 8.5.1.a;
- The Statistical Booklet "Women and Men in Armenia, 2021" (in Armenian and English), link: [https://armstat.am/file/article/gender\\_2021.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2021.pdf);
  - The "Demographic Handbook of Armenia, 2021", Part 7. Migration (in Armenian and English), link: [https://armstat.am/file/article/demog\\_2021\\_7.pdf](https://armstat.am/file/article/demog_2021_7.pdf);
  - "Social Situation in the Republic of Armenia in 2020", link: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2414>;
  - Armstat Platform for SDGs, link: <http://sdg.armstat.am/am/3/>;
  - Armstat Platform for SDGs, link: <http://sdg.armstat.am/am/4/>;
  - Armstat Platform for SDGs, link: <http://sdg.armstat.am/am/16-2-2-a/>.

## Questions posed by the Resolution and Responses by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

### Question 1

*Strengthening and implementing gender-responsive poverty eradication strategies, including social protection systems, to help ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraph 10).*

### Response

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as an agency coordinating the gender policy in the country, gives particular importance to the protecting women's rights, to investments in the economic empowerment of women and girls to ensure gender equality, eradication and defeminisation of poverty, and to ensure inclusive economic growth.

The Government of Armenia continues its policy towards filling the gender gap in the economic field. The 2019-2023 Gender Policy Strategy of Armenia defines the priority directions of the gender policy and is aimed at creating favourable conditions for exercising the rights and equal opportunities by women and men in all the sectors of social life. The 2021-2026 Programme of the Government includes a number of steps, which relate to the equal participation of women and men in social life, including management, decision-making, women entrepreneurship promotion programmes, equal access to educational and healthcare programmes. The Program also envisages actions to strengthen the national mechanism for the advancement of women by adopting inclusive and participatory approaches. A priority is also given to the state programmes on developing the opportunities for young people, people with disabilities and women in the labour market.

### Question 2

*Increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and decent work for all women, including their participation in and access to labour markets, and addressing women's disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis (paragraphs 31 and 32).*

### Response

The gender-sensitivity component had been applied for all the programmes included in the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia since 2020. As a result, the State Budget reflects the objectives of gender equality and social justice by distributing the funds and generating incomes so that the interests of all groups of the population are taken into consideration while planning the budget expenditures. The gender-sensitive indicators have been added to the programmes of all state agencies, as well.

Actions aimed at preventing gender discrimination are also a priority for the Government in general terms (awareness-raising, legal reforms, advocacy, etc.) and of a targeted and specific nature (expanding opportunities of employment and education for women, elimination of sex-based termination of pregnancy, etc.). The mentioned actions are implemented by the State in cooperation with non-governmental and international organisations.

Vocational training programmes for women create the increasing opportunities for non-competitive young mothers in terms of their access to the labour market through vocational training and mentoring programmes offered by employers. Such programmes are being implemented both at the expense of the State Budget and with the support of international partners.

In 2021, to ensure the economic activity and employment of women, 2600 women received support from the Unified Social Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia through the active state employment programmes, which are currently at the stage of reforms. See also point 1 (paragraph 10).

#### **Question 4**

*Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including in the world of work, including against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities (paragraphs 16, 43, 44, 47)*

#### **Response**

On 10 September 2019, the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia was amended to comprehensively define the concept of discrimination in employment/industrial relations and to stipulate the prohibition of discrimination by the Labour Legislation.

The Armenian authorities, in cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations, develop and implement gender equality policy, including improvement of legal framework, involvement of gender-sensitive component in the policies and budgets, improvement of employment and protection of vulnerable women, building relevant capacities in the labour market, holding campaigns for fighting against the gender stereotypes, preventing domestic violence, fighting against trafficking in human beings and fighting against gender-based discrimination.

#### **Question 5**



*Promoting and protecting women's labour and human rights in the workplace through targeted measures, including universal minimum wage, social protection and equal pay for work of equal value, reducing occupational segregation and gender pay gaps and ensuring collective bargaining and recruitment, retention and promotion of women (paragraph 28).*

### **Response**

As mentioned earlier, gender-sensitive indicators have been added to the programmes of all state agencies, and a gender-sensitive budgeting approach has been introduced by reflecting the vectors of gender strategy of the Government.

Pursuant to part 3 of Article 180 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia (remuneration of work) the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia stipulates that in case of a job qualification system application, the same criteria shall apply to both men and women, and this system must be elaborated to eliminate any form of discrimination based on gender.

At the same time, part 2 of Article 178 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia clearly enshrines that "men and women shall receive equal pay for equal or equivalent work" (according to part 3 of Article 178 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia "The salary shall include the basic salary and any additional salary paid by the employer to the employee for the work performed by him or by her").

### **Question 6**

*Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and representing and rewarding women's paid care work, especially given the increases in the unequal burden on women and girls during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 29, 33 and 44).*

### **Response**

Pursuant to part 1 of Article 173 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia, "Leave for taking care of a child under the age of three shall be granted upon the request of the mother (step-mother), father (step-father), or the guardian who is actually taking care of the child." The leave may be taken as a single-period one or be used in parts. An employee entitled to such benefit can receive it out of turn.

At the same time, pursuant to part 1 of Article 176.1 of the same Code, within 30 days after the date of birth of the child, and upon the request of the father of the child, a paid leave for the duration of five working days shall be granted to the father, with no change to his salary.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia has initiated draft amendments to the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia, including on regulations for child care for female employees, in particular:

- an opportunity to reduce the working time for female employees with children under age of one and under age of two years old;
- an additional break for the breast-feeding women, once in every three working hours

for feeding the child, upon the decision of women on exact timing for such a break.

#### **Question 7**

*Supporting women's entrepreneurship, expanding existing women-owned and -led micro, small and medium enterprises and facilitating opportunities for new women entrepreneurs (paragraph 37)*

#### **Response**

To promote economic independence equally of women and men and to eliminate the barriers to the women's participation in the labour market, a Programme called "Economic Development of Women: Accelerator for Economic Empowerment" has been implemented jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, UNDP and the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. One of the main goals is to promote women entrepreneurship and increase of the demand for women in the labour market by strengthening their competitiveness.

The Programme will contribute to the development of women entrepreneurship and opening more women-led enterprises to ensure actively participation of women in the efforts made for the economic recovery through gender-sensitive actions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that the "Accelerator" will become an effective tool for increase in employment opportunities for everyone through building capacities and short-term targeted trainings.

#### **Question 8**

*Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls, including at work places, and addressing the increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraphs 16 and 35).*

#### **Response**

In line with its international obligations, Armenia made a significant progress in legislative and political reforms to promote gender equality and combat violence against women.

Support centres for victims of domestic violence have been operating in all marzes (regions) of Armenia since 2020, two shelters have been created for providing the victims with relevant services, including social-psychological and legal assistance.

In 2021, around 1516 victims of domestic violence received assistance from these support centres, 160 women and children used the shelter service, and 88 women were provided with jobs. All the specialists of the sector have been trained to provide quality assistance to victims, and the trainings are still underway with the support of domestic and international partners.

Pursuant to the 2021-2026 Programme of the Government, the assistance provided to vulnerable women will continuously expand country-wide with a particular attention to strengthening the capacities of women living in rural areas.

In 2021, support centres and shelters for those subjected to domestic violence continued in all marzes and in the Capital City of Yerevan due to co-financing from

the State Budget.

Besides social-psychological and legal assistance, persons subjected to violence in their families, the support centres have also guided and assisted the victims in the process of acquiring skills, building their capacities and finding a stable job, as it is envisaged by the legislation. As a result, 88 women have been provided with stable jobs in 2021.

The Government of Armenia elaborated a draft Decision "On approving the 2021-2023 Action Plan for Fighting against Domestic Violence in the Republic of Armenia and Actions for Implementation thereof", based on research of causes, conditions and consequences of domestic violence. The draft is presented to general public for consideration and public discussion.

The awareness-raising campaigns on fight against domestic violence have continued in cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of the Council of Europe, has started a public awareness-raising campaign jointly with the Ministry of Justice entitled: "Silence in Violence".

The authorities are doing steps to create a comprehensive electronic information system for collection and registration of domestic violence cases. The gender-disaggregated data is crucial in understanding the causes of violence and to elaborate a gender-sensitive policy.

In 2021, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia, with the support of international partners, conducted a series of training courses on the topic: "Prevention of all forms of domestic violence and violence against women" for social workers, lawyers and psychologists working at the support centres and the two shelters for persons subjected to domestic violence operating in all the marzes of Armenia, as well as the social workers and psychologists of 16 State Non-Commercial Organisations operating under the subordination of the Ministry (link: <https://www.mlsa.am/?p=27850>). Training courses have also been conducted for the employees of the sectoral subdivisions of the Ministry, as well as the employees of "114" and "911" emergency hot-lines. Overall, 110 employees have participated in the aforementioned training courses.

Besides, in 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of the Council of Europe, conducted a three-day course for the social workers of the non-governmental organisations, focusing on awareness-raising on domestic violence, the main concepts of violence, identification of domestic violence, psychological empowerment of persons subjected to violence etc.

In April-May 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of the Council of Europe, is also holding inter-agency meetings in the marzes for specialists working on cases of violence in the primary circle, with the purpose of identifying the current mechanisms for cooperation between various agencies. Identifying the existing problems will contribute to more effective revision of the legal framework related to fight against domestic violence and violence against women and girls.

**Question 9**

*Integrating a gender perspective into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and providing adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all levels of decision-making and implementation in these areas (paragraph 48).*

**Response**

One of the priorities of the Government is ensuring legislative framework for balanced gender-based programmes that are targeted at environmental sustainability, flexibility development, adaptation to climate change and mitigation of crises.

In 2021, a conference was held devoted to the key gender issues in the actions for mitigating the impact of climate change in Armenia and the possible solutions thereto. The action was organised by the Climate Change Programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and the UNDP.