



United Nations Population Fund

COMBATING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS /
AZERBAIJAN



Combating Gender Based Violence Project in Azerbaijan is a 3-year initiative that aims at creating an enabling environment for reducing gender based violence in the society in order to support protection of human rights, gender equality and women's participation in decision-making processes.

FEBRUARY 2010

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Organizations specializing in gender related issues must strengthen collaboration with mass media

Journalists attending the training course organized by CGBV project are ready for cooperation

Media plays an enormous role in forming opinions on gender issues and women's rights as well as sensitizing the public towards such important topics as gender based violence (GBV), educating the society on the causes and consequences of GBV, forming the stereotypes regarding women's rights. However it is with regret that gender issues, violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence which constitute one of the most actual realities of the day to day lives of many women in Azerbaijan are not among the frequently addressed topics in the country's media. While looking through the national media outlets we can observe that media is more oriented towards publishing only news of sensational character about above-mentioned violence cases. The numbers of any journalist investigations, analyses and interviews are very limited.

Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project (UNFPA) organized three day training course on "Media coverage of gender based violence: principles and standards" aimed at increasing the journalists' awareness on GBV and providing the journalists with important theoretical and practical knowledge that has the potential to play an enormous role in improving the quality of stories regarding GBV and women's rights. The organizational support for the conduction of the training that was held on December 4-6, 2009 was rendered by the local NGO "Guzaran".

During the three day training the representatives of mass media were



provided with comprehensive information on GBV, its causes and consequences, the level of GBV in society, its negative impact on women, men and children; role of media in forming opinions regarding GBV and women's rights in society; adhering to the principles of anonymity and sensitivity while reporting on cases of GBV; the United Nations Convention on Elimination Against Women; etc. A total of 17 journalists representing national and local media agencies attended the training.

Overall, the training consisted of two sections. The first part of the

training aimed at providing the participants with background information on general gender issues while the second section was predominantly oriented to media coverage of gender issues.

Upon the training completion an evaluation was held among the participants. All journalists emphasized that the Azerbaijani media has allocated very little space to gender and GBV issues. According to more than half of journalists (88 percent), gender issues are interesting only for a certain group of audience. 30 percent of the participants attributed this to the level of the importance of the topic, 35 percent to the priority

areas identified by the editors, and the remaining ones linked this to the preferences of the audience. Only 23 percent of training participants said that they had seen any journalist investigation or comprehensive material on this topic in the media. Same number of journalists stated that they reported at least 2-3 news regarding GVB issues per month, while 41 percent reported this issue once in 3-4 months. The rest did not even

remember if they ever reported any GBV cases. 47 percent of respondents could not mention any journalist in the Azerbaijani media specialized in gender issues versus 23 percent saying that journalists reporting on general human right issues cover gender topics too. According to the rest of the audience, the specialization was not of importance and the journalists could report on everything. Finally, 77 percent of

participants emphasized the need for various organizations specializing in gender issues to improve collaboration with media to increase journalists' knowledge on this topic.

Taking this into account the CGBV PCU plans to conduct more coordinated activities with mass media representatives in the third project year.

CGBV project will strengthen collaboration with media

NGOs and journalists working in the filed of gender were brought together

On February 3, 2010 UNFPA's Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project organized a round table with participation of NGOs operating in the filed of gender and journalists specializing in gender issues as a follow-up to the December 2009 training. The partners of the CGBV Project and participants of the three day training course on "Media coverage of gender based violence: principles and standards" held in December 2009 attended the meeting devoted to strengthening the NGO-mass media cooperation.

The invitees shared their opinions on gender and GBV coverage in media, the level of awareness of journalists regarding the issue, reasons due to which media organizations allocate little attention to gender problems, collaboration between NGOs specializing in gender issues and journalists, lack of gender experts who can provide journalists with useful and relevant information and so on.

Touching upon the relations between mass media and NGOs Matanat Azizova, chairwoman of the Woman Crisis Center said that poor cooperative links between NGOs and media representatives are caused by



the omissions on both sides. "Journalists want to get comprehensive information and as much as possible opinions on the issue. However, in the majority of cases NGOs are not able to properly address this demand. On the other hand, in several cases, we meet inexperienced journalists that seek to get any news, however do not know what to ask, as they do not possess any background information on the topic", Azizova said.

Aynur Elgunesh, a free-lance journalist emphasised that journalists cannot find qualified gender specialists while reporting on gender, gender based violence (GBV), violence against women (VAW), domestic violence (DV) etc. "I know only few NGOs and experts operating in this filed. Therefore I have to work with

the same gender experts each time. NGOs are always dissatisfied with the low level of awareness on the work they do. However, they do not provide us with information regarding the implemented projects and activities, they think that what they do is intended for the donor only and of no interest to the local public," she added.

At the end of the round table the representative of the CGBV Project reminded that establishment and maintenance of good working relations with media was among the main project components. Therefore, the Project CU would keep on its efforts on increasing gender awareness and gender sensitivity of journalists' reporting on gender issues and attracting media's attention to the gender and GBV problems in Azerbaijan.

30 years has passed since the adoption of CEDAW

CGBV Project/UNFPA organized round table discussions devoted to the last state report to CEDAW Committee

December 18, 2009 marked the 30th Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Convention is often described as an international bill of rights for the women worldwide. The Convention entered into force on September 3, 1981 after being ratified by the 20th state party. The document consisting of the preamble and 30 articles clearly defines discrimination against women as well as sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." (Art.1) According to the document, discrimination against women violates the principles of equality between women and men and therefore the Convention appeals to the member states to adopt all necessary measures in order to ensure women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life - including the right to vote and to stand for election - as well as education, health and employment.

The implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.



The Republic of Azerbaijan has acceded to the Convention in 1995. The Government presents the periodic reports on implementation of CEDAW to the Committee once in four years.



On December 21, 2009, the Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project (UNFPA) organized a round table on "The last state report presented by the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the respective Concluding Observations of the Committee". The representatives of the State Committee on Family, Woman and Children Affairs, several ministries, education agencies, public organizations and parliamentarians as well as the Ombudsman attended the event.

The briefs from the forth periodic report of Azerbaijan Republic on implementation of the Convention were presented by Ms Sadagat

Gahramanova, the deputy chairwoman of the State Committee on Family, Woman and Children's Affairs. Speaking about the activities implemented during the last reporting period Ms Gahramanova stated that the State Committee had undertaken several important efforts jointly with the UN Country Office in order to ensure better protection and promotion of women's rights in the country. The Law on Domestic Violence aiming at providing the necessary guidelines for ensuring that the cases of domestic violence are effectively combated was specifically mentioned in this respect.

Mr Faig Gurbanov, the head of the Human Rights and Public Relations Department took on the panel following the presentation and spoke of the importance of media involvement in combating GBV in the country. Speaking about increased cases of violence against women, Mr Gurbanov emphasized that the numbers of violence cases are quite high in remote regions of

Azerbaijan as compared to the capital Baku city. According to him, this is closely connected to insufficient numbers of awareness campaigns in regions and also to the existing attitudinal barriers among the people living in the regions.

Ms Elmira Suleymanova, the Ombudsman in her turn spoke of the legislative initiatives directed at better protection and promotion of women's rights in the country. The latter session was facilitated by the representative of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the President of Azerbaijan Republic, Ms

Rena Mirzazade. Ms Mirzazade stressed the importance of legal intervention into the cases of domestic violence issues saying that the establishment of family courts is very important in Azerbaijan as well as in many other countries.

The event continued with the discussions on the report as well as the Concluding Observations of the Committee that have called upon Azerbaijani government to adopt the Law on Domestic Violence, continue the efforts on rehabilitation of victims of violence and human trafficking, conduct public awareness

campaigns via mass media and enlightenment programs in order to effectively combat all forms of violence against women.



The CEDAW Committee has requested the government of Azerbaijan to respond to the concerns expressed in the latest concluding observations in its next periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee has invited the State party to submit its fifth periodic report by 9 August 2013.

The first stage of the information meetings on GBV is over

1800 people have been covered in the frames of the meetings organized in Baku and the regions

The initial stage of the Target Group Education series on gender based violence (GBV) held in the frames of the Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project (UNFPA) as of November 2009 has come to an end. The information sessions have covered approximately 1, 800 people in capital Baku as well as other cities and regions of the country. The meetings constitute one of the major components of the project's public awareness activities. Several target groups (13-18 year old young girls, 18-28 year old young boys and teachers) were educated on common gender issues, gender sensitivity, gender based discrimination and GBV through the sessions held until the end of February, 2010.

The information sessions were conducted by the team of educators trained during the Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions held in the framework of the Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project during April and May 2009. The



training modules used at the events had also been developed in the frames of the project by the experienced experts and trainers on gender issues.



The information sessions for 13-18 year old young girls were conducted with technical assistance of the local NGO "Yuva" Humanitarian

Center in Pirakushkul, Yashma, Masazir villages located around Baku, IDP school and hostels in Baku, Sumgayit, Shirvan and Shamakha cities. About 600 young girls have been educated through the sessions. Particular consideration during the meetings was paid to ensuring the representation of participants from vulnerable groups of population in these meetings (refu-

ges and IDPs, the people with disabilities, children deprived of parental care).

Information sessions for teachers have been organized by another local NGO "Potensial" Sumgayit Specialists Union in secondary and technical schools of Sumgayit city as well as Siyazan, Guba, Khachmaz districts. Approximately 20 female and male teachers attended the meetings. The

role of secondary school teachers in the process of eliminating the GBV through educating the boys was among the most important issues emphasized during the meetings.

The Social Development Public Union "Taraggi" was responsible for conduction of information sessions for 18-26 year old young boys with low income residing in Masalli, Lenkaran, Astara, Sheki, Gakh, Za-

gatala, Guba, Gusar and Khacmaz districts.



UNFPA's Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project will continue public awareness campaign on gender based violence for various target groups (three thousand people) during the current project year.

Series of radio shows were produced and broadcasted in the frames of the 16 days of activism against gender violence campaign

UN gender projects have worked in close collaboration within the campaign

Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project (UNFPA) produced three radio shows in the frames of the 16 days of activism against gender based violence campaign in close cooperation with the project on Elimination of Gender Violence among IDPs and refugees (UNHCR) implemented by the Women Association for Rational Development. The radio shows covered the issues of domestic violence, current situation with women's rights in Azerbaijan as well as human trafficking and were broadcasted on Baku Bureau of "Radio Liberty", Azerbaijan State Radio channel and radio channel of Baku Slavic University respectively. Representatives of Milli Mejlis (the parliament), national gender machinery and local NGOs specializing in the field of gender addressed some of the major questions of concern in regards to the abovementioned topics and highlighted the most recent developments on gender, GBV and women's rights in the country.

Of particular interest is the fact that the need for the law on domestic violence has come out once again during the broadcast of the radio

show on GBV. Thus, speaking about the importance of adoption of the respective legislation on the "Radio Liberty" Elmira Akhundova, a member of the Azerbaijan Parliament said that "the Draft Law on Domestic Violence has already been presented to the Parliament. I hope that the Draft Law will be adopted whether the males want it or not".

The radio show produced and broadcasted on the radio channel of Baku Slavic University mainly focused on the issues of women trafficking. The broadcast was preceded by the demonstration of the documentary "Life Betrayed" representing a story of a woman who became a victim of human trafficking and produced within the frames of CGBV and "Prevention and Response to the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence for IDPs and Refugees/Asylum Seekers in Azerbaijan" (SCFWCA, UNHCR, EC, Ward). A mini-poll aimed at revealing the students' level of awareness on human trafficking was also held. According to the results, only few young girls are informed about the cases,



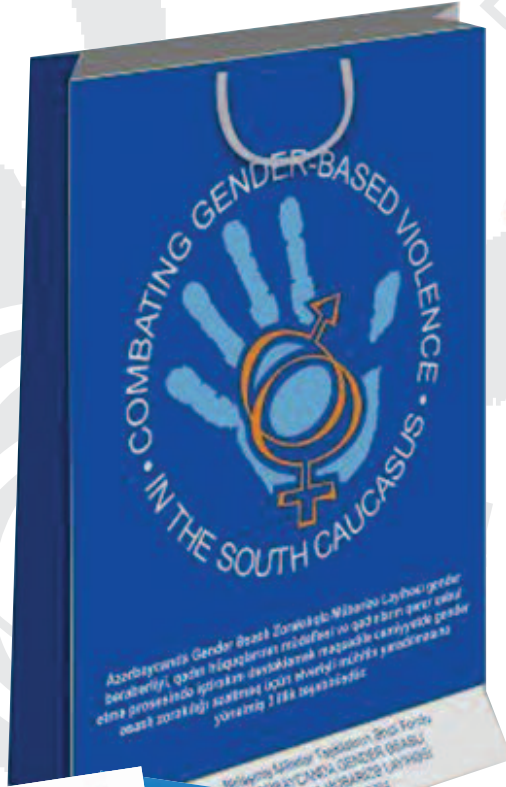
causes and consequences of human trafficking in the country. The results of the poll were announced on the radio show that hosted Ms.Mehriban Zeynalova, one of the renowned gender experts and the head of the NGO "Clean World".

The representative of the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Affairs Ms. Talehe Ibrahimova as well as the Chair of the Research Union on Women's Problems Ms.Sajida Abdulvahabova were guest speakers at the third radio show that was broadcasted on Azerbaijan State Radio Channel. The experts spoke of major issues on the gender related policy agenda in the country and highlighted key challenges encountered in this respect.

Series of publication materials were produced have been produced in the frames of the 16 days campaign

Combating Gender Based Violence in Azerbaijan Project (UNFPA) initiated series of print information materials such as newsletters in Azerbaijani and English, booklets, calendars, notepads, pens, etc.

to be disseminated in the frames of the 16 days of activism against gender based violence campaign. The materials were distributed among international and local NGOs, state agencies, journalists, and project's target groups.





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About UNFPA

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. For more information please, go to www.unfpa.org

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