Armenia Survey of Women's Organization

December 2012 – March 2013

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International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Introduction

The International Foundation for Electoral System's (IFES) Applied Research Center (ARC) conducted a global survey of practitioners in gender equality and women's empowerment in 40 countries where IFES is active. The survey identifies key issues and challenges affecting women and girls and examines priorities for advocacy on gender issues. The survey also assesses the effectiveness of women's organizations and their capacity-building needs to improve future gender program interventions. This report presents the results from the Armenia survey based on responses from nine Armenian civil society organizations working on women's issues.

Survey Findings

High levels of perceived discrimination against women

Survey respondents overwhelmingly believe Armenian women face discrimination in exercising their rights, relative to men. A full 78% believe that women face slight discrimination, versus 22% who believe there is severe discrimination. None of the respondents say women enjoy equal rights as men. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: *"How would you generally evalute women's rights in Armenia as compared to men?"*

Women face **slight** discrimination in their rights relative to men, 78%

Women face **severe** discrimination in their rights relative to men, 22%
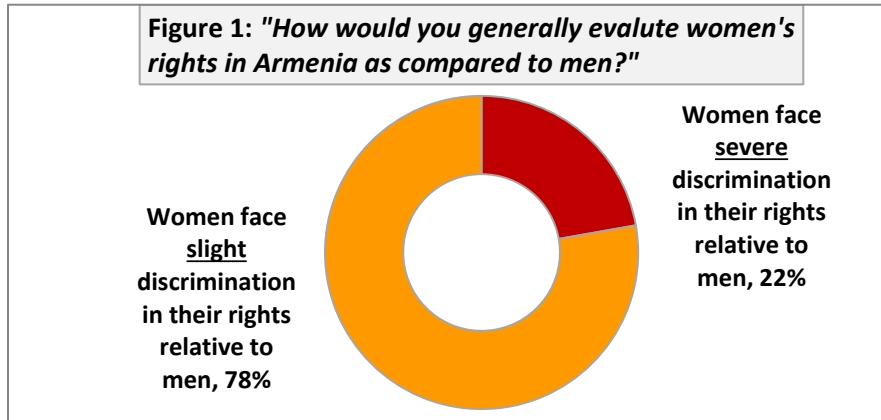
Women's political representation is considered poor, girls' education very good

When looking at five key metrics aimed to assess the status of women in terms of their political engagement, economic participation, physical safety, health access, and education access[1] we find that access to education scores highest according to respondents' ratings; followed by health access, physical safety, economic participation and political engagement. These scor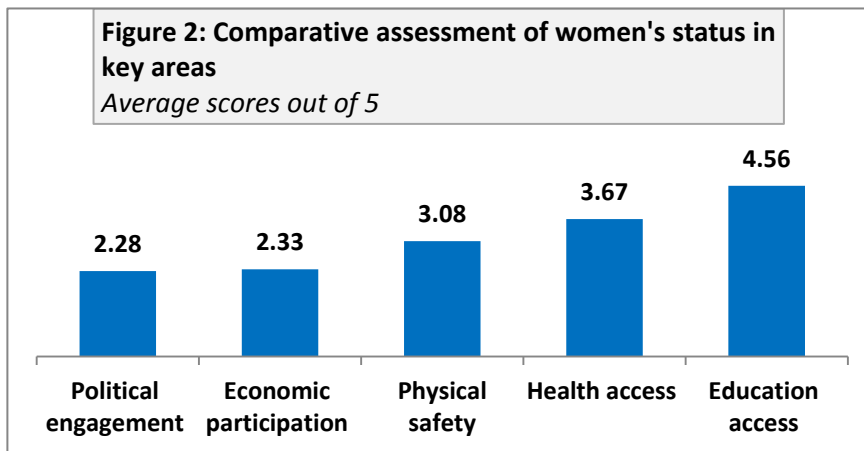es are based on respondents' assessments on a scale of one to five: where one means very poor, two means poor, three means fair, four means good and five means very good (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparative assessment of women's status in key areas
Average scores out of 5

Political engagement	Economic participation	Physical safety	Health access	Education access
2.28	2.33	3.08	3.67	4.56

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[1] The political engagement category includes: women's political and civic representation and women's representation in decision-making bodies at the national and local levels. Physical safety includes women's physical safety and security in both the private and public spheres. Health access includes access to reproductive healthcare and healthcare in general. Education access includes girls' access to primary, secondary and college education.

Respondents believe women's status in Armenia is particularly poor in the areas of women's political representation in decision making bodies at both national and local levels. Most respondents also judge women's civic and political participation and women's economic opportunities as poor or very poor. Meanwhile, respondents assess girls' access to education at the primary and secondary levels to be very good, and their access to college education to be good. Assessments of other areas are mixed. For instance, one third of respondents believe women's physical safety in public areas is good, and a similar proportion believes it is poor; the rest believe it is fair. Assessments of access to reproductive healthcare and healthcare in general are perceived to be fair to good. See Figure 3 for a detailed assessment of each area.

Figure 3: Please evaluate the status of women in Armenia in each of the following areas
Ranked according to areas judged most poorly to most good

Area	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
Women's political representation in decision-making bodies at the national level	33%	56%	11%		
Women's political representation in decision-making bodies at the sub-national level	22%	56%	22%		
Women's political and civic engagement	11%	44%	44%		
Women's economic opportunities/ participation in the labor force	22%	33%	33%	11%	
Women's physical safety and security in private spheres	11%	33%	44%	11%	
Women's physical safety and security in public spheres		33%	33%	33%	
Women's personal status laws (ex: marriage, custody, citizenship, family, inheritance, etc…)	11%		44%	33%	11%
Women's access to healthcare in general	11%		44%	33%	11%
Women's image in society and social status	11%	11%	22%	56%	
Women's access to reproductive health services	11%		22%	56%	11%
Girls' access to college education				67%	33%
Girls' access to secondary education				33%	67%
Girls' access to primary education				33%	67%

Women's stereotypical image tops list of challenges facing women in Armenia

The stereotypical image of women's role –reinforced by cultural beliefs, the media and religious views –

is considered the most critical challenge facing women in Armenia, according to three-quarters of respondents. This is followed by a low level of women represented in elected bodies, low economic participation, poverty and violence against women in the private sphere (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Most critical issues facing women in Armenia	
1	Stereotypical image of women's role
2	Low level of women representation in elected bodies
3	Low economic participation
4	Poverty
5	Violence against women in the private sphere

When asked what the main obstacles to preventing the advancement of the status of women were, 88%

mention cultural beliefs, social attitudes or patriarchal mentality, followed by weak political influence of women (63%) that stands in the way of addressing these challenges (Figure 5).
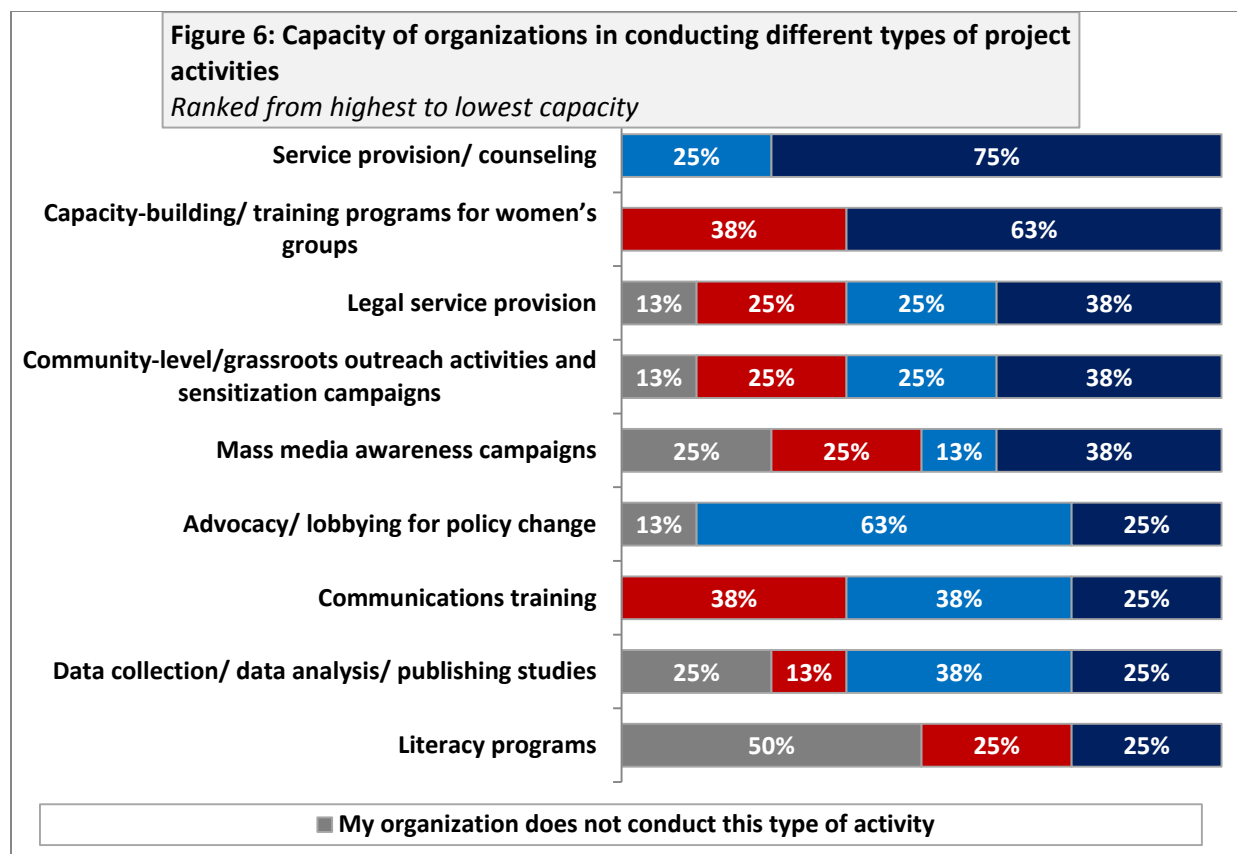
Figure 5: Main obstacles preventing the advancement of the status of women in Armenia	
1	Cultural beliefs, social attitudes, patriarchal mentality
2	Obstacles relating to the political influence of women

Women living in rural areas in Armenia are considered by all respondents to be the most vulnerable category of women, in terms of facing challenges. Older women (above 55) and women with disabilities are also considered among the most vulnerable populations of women.

Women's organizations rate their service provision and counseling capacity highest

To assess the capacity of women's organizations in Armenia, respondents were asked to rate their organizational capacity in carrying out different types of activities on a three-point scale: weak capacity, medium capacity or strong capacity. All surveyed respondents rate their organizations' capacity to provide services or counseling as strong or medium. Organizations' ability to provide capacity-building exercises or training programs to women's groups are rated strong by 63% of respondents, versus 38% who rate it as weak. Sixty-three percent of respondents rate their advocacy or lobbying for policy change capacity as medium and 25% rate it as strong. In terms of data collection capacity, 25% say it is strong, 38% say it is medium, 13% say it is weak and the remaining 25% indicate that they do not carry out this type of activity. (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Capacity of organizations in conducting different types of project activities
Ranked from highest to lowest capacity

Activity				
Service provision/ counseling			25%	75%
Capacity-building/ training programs for women's groups		38%		63%
Legal service provision	13%	25%	25%	38%
Community-level/grassroots outreach activities and sensitization campaigns	13%	25%	25%	38%
Mass media awareness campaigns	25%	25%	13%	38%
Advocacy/ lobbying for policy change	13%	63%		25%
Communications training		38%	38%	25%
Data collection/ data analysis/ publishing studies	25%	13%	38%	25%
Literacy programs	50%	25%		25%

■ My organization does not conduct this type of activity

Organizations need more skills in proposal writing, awareness campaigns and network building

When asked how their organization could become more effective in advocating for change or reform to improve women's status, a full 63% of respondents say their organization needs to learn how to write successful proposals to obtain foreign assistance. Meanwhile, half of respondents say their organization needs to learn how to design and conduct successful public sensitization campaigns and learn how to better coordinate with other groups and build coalitions. Figure 7 shows the top six capacity -building areas cited and the percent of organizations that mentioned each area.

| Figure 7: *"What types of skills, knowledge, or assistance are most needed and would be most beneficial for your work?"*	
Learn how to write successful proposals to obtain foreign assistance	63%
Learn how to design and conduct successful public sensitization campaigns	50%
Learn how to better coordinate with other groups/ coalition building	50%
Learn how to do fundraising for activities and programs	38%
Learn how to effectively advocate to parliament	25%
Learn how to effectively advocate to local government	25%

Armenian organizations often use research in their work and need more data on specific indicators

Armenian organizations often use research or data when working on a specific campaign, project or intervention: 62% say they often use research or data, and 38% say they sometimes use research or data. When asked if they have a wish list of indicators or data that would help improve their organizations' effectiveness, respondents mention the following:

- Number of women victims of domestic violence
- Number of divorces/separations due to domestic violence
- Deaths due to domestic violence
- Victims of psychological and sexual abuse
- Percent of women who voted in the elections
- Number of women involved in national peacekeeping programs

Limited funding tops list of deficits characterizing women's organizations

All surveyed respondents cite limited funding as the number one deficit characterizing women's organizations in Armenia. The data also indicates that a large majority of respondents (71%) believe women's organizations do not get adequate societal support in their activities, and 57% believe they have weak access to government and weak bargaining power vis-à-vis government. Significantly fewer respondents (29%) mention lack of appropriate skills or competing agendas as the main weaknesses characterizing women's organizations in Armenia. (Figure 8)

Figure 8: Three main deficits or weaknesses that characterize women's organizations in Armenia	
1	Limited funding
2	Lack of societal support for women's organizations
3	Weak access to and bargaining power vis-à-vis government
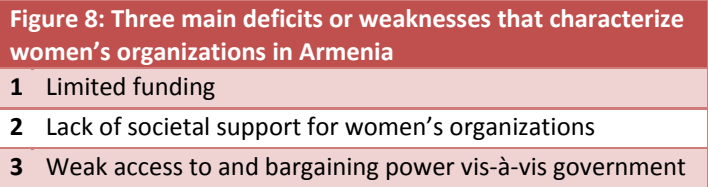
When asked in an open question about ways the government can help support women's organizations in Armenia, and whether the Armenian government is receptive to these organizations, respondents gave the following answers:

"The government does not adequately support women's organizations. It should support them both financially and through actual support of organizations' programmatic activities."

"[The government should]:

- *Implement obligations under signed international conventions*
- *Adopt domestic and sexual violence law*
- *Have quotas of women representation in government*
- *Adopt anti-discrimination law*
- *Financial support for shelter(s)*
- *Forbid demeaning and degrading representation of women on popular TV programs*"

"[The government can help] by close cooperation and being interested in supporting women's issues. The government must have a political will to play a significant role in improve the status of women."

"[The government can help] by supporting gender equality in general."

"The role of the government is not currently supportive in this respect."

Armenian organizations tend to collaborate to some extent in their activities

A large majority of respondents (71%) indicate that Armenian women's organizations are somewhat collaborative in their activities and programming, while 14% say they are somewhat competitive. The remaining 14% say it depends on the topic or region where the program is taking place. None of the respondents say women's organizations are mostly collaborative in their work. This shows there is room for improving networks

Figure 9: *"Are women's organizations in Armenia mostly collaborative or competitive in their activities and programming?"*

Depends on the topic or region 14%

Somewhat collaborative 71%

Somewhat competitive 14%
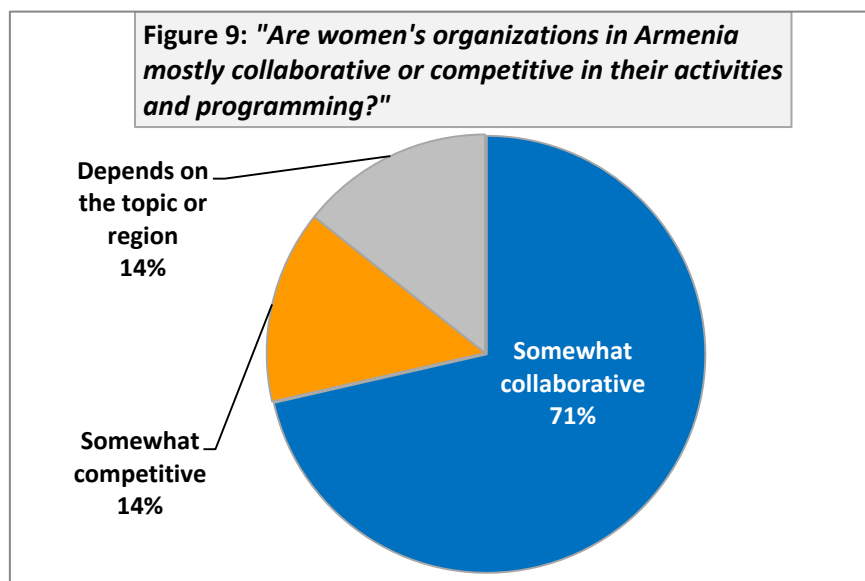
between women's organizations to help strengthen collaboration when working on specific policy issues (Figure 9).

International community can help through funding, pressuring Armenian government for reforms

When asked in an open question what can the international community to support women's organizations in Armenia, respondents gave the following answers:

"[The international community should] finance women NGOs, work with government to make them responsible and speed up obligations under international treaties, and raise the issue of the severity of domestic violence and the need for domestic violence laws and proper action."

"The international community should foster the government to support and encourage women's organizations to support development of women's movement in the country."

"[The international community should] finance [women's organizations]."

"I think for sure, the international community can do a lot to support women's organizations through financial support together with advocacy."

Majority expects status of women in Armenia to improve

A modest majority of respondents (56%) expect the status of women in Armenia will improve in the near future, while a third of respondents believe it will stay the same; 11% believe it will become worse. This data shows cautious optimism on behalf of respondents and calls for greater support in the area of women's equality (Figure 10).

Figure 10: *"What are your expectations regarding the status of women in Armenia for the near future?"*

Become worse 11%

Stay the same 33%

Improve 56%