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բռնության կոալիցիա
Coalition to stop violence
against women



COALITION TO STOP VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020

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Yerevan 2021

Dear Reader,

2020 was a very challenging year for Armenia due to the pandemic, the war, and the post-war developments.

Crises, of course, affect all members and groups of society, but not in the same way.

Both in Armenia and around the world, the pandemic has been a catalyst for an increase in domestic violence cases, significantly affecting women's social and economic security.

As a result of the war, hundreds of women and children faced displacement, deteriorating physical and mental health, and immense human losses.

The Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, a platform for 11 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to join forces in combating violence and discrimination against women, strived to address conditions caused by these crises by standing firmly by the women of Armenia and Artsakh.

We have ensured a humanitarian response and provided financial, psycho-social, and legal assistance to our beneficiaries throughout the year through emergency fundraising and by tapping into the savings of member organizations.

The work of member organizations was aimed at guaranteeing, to the greatest extent possible, the physical and psychological safety and dignity of women and children affected by the war and pandemic.

At the same time, the Coalition has been consistent in its work against gender-based violence: We have carried out fact-based advocacy; raised awareness on cases of oppression, discrimination, and sexism against women; and worked with government agencies and CSOs to develop necessary structures and strengthen legal guarantees to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination in Armenia.

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START OF THE YEAR: WOMEN'S MARCH AGAINST FEMICIDE IN GYUMRI

[March]

The case of Marine, who was killed in a brutal, hours-long beating by her partner on March 4, 2020 in Gyumri, was the 5th femicide case in Armenia since the beginning of the year.¹

The victimization of Marine was prevailing in the public's reaction to her murder. The target of the accusations was once again the abused woman and not the abuser.

On March 9th, with initiation from the Coalition, human rights workers, activists, and feminist circles, dozens of women marched in Gyumri.

With posters that read “**Women are murdered because of your silence**”, “**Women are murdered in families**”, and “**No to violence**”, the participants marched from the Central Square of Gyumri to the Prosecutor's Office, and then to the residence of the murdered woman.²

- ● ● In a conversation with journalists, President of the Gyumri-based Women's Rights House NGO and Coalition member Karine Davtyan stressed, “***We have gathered to reject violence, to reject the silence and the societal indifference. We want to inform the public that women are not guilty and should not be silent. We will do everything possible to reduce the cases of murder and violence. In the case of Marine, a 43-year-old woman, her death was qualified as one caused by negligence, so we will pursue the harshest possible punishment.***”

¹ Details of the case published by Sputnik Armenia

<https://armeniasputnik.am/incidents/20200305/22282074/gyumrium-haytnabervele-43-amyaknoj-cecvac-din.html>

² Coverage of the march by «Epress.am», <https://epress.am/2020/03/09/2215.html>



This femicide case received a big response from state agencies as well. Marine's murder once again demonstrated the failure of all government agencies to commit to protecting women and girls from violence and preventing femicide.

According to official information provided to the Coalition by the Police of the Republic of Armenia (RA),

540 domestic violence cases were investigated by the RA police during 2020.

540
cases

During the same period, the RA police recorded 5 cases in which women in the family were murdered,

5
cases

out of which 1 woman was murdered by her husband, 3 by their sons, and 1 by her son-in-law.

At the same time, it should be noted that the cases registered by the police refer to the murders of women by family members (husbands, children, sons-in-law, etc). Excluded from official statistics are homicides committed by current or former partners and those committed as a result of violence within relationships, as in the case of Marine.

The Coalition and its member organizations base their monitoring on the Vienna Declaration on Femicide (2012)³, which recognizes femicide as gender-based violence, setting a more comprehensive framework for its detection.

According to data collected by the Coalition member organizations,

there were 12 cases of femicide in 2020,

which is almost twice the number of femicide cases reported in official statistics.



³ See the declaration: <http://femicide-watch.org/products/vienna-declaration-femicide-2012-acuns-vienna>

RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

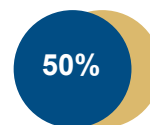
[March-November]

The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the physical, mental, and social security of women both in Armenia and around the world.

The pandemic also inadvertently changed the Coalition's plans for 2020: We were forced to cancel the events dedicated to the Coalition's 10th anniversary, our judicial monitoring efforts, and a number of public actions and advocacy efforts, as well as current programs **in order to direct available resources to women and girls in crisis and ensure a rapid response.**

In May 2020, the Coalition published a [report](#) (in Armenian) on the increase in domestic violence alerts, which showed that

during February-March, the number of hotline calls received by Coalition member organizations increased by 50%.



In addition to reports of violence, many women have turned to us for social and psychological assistance.

Since the establishment of the state of emergency due to the pandemic, the Coalition and its member organizations have tried to adapt to the existing situation as quickly and effectively as possible.

The Coalition carried out emergency fundraising and mobilized resources in a short period of time. Member organizations did their utmost to ensure that the women and families we work with don't have to face the challenges of the pandemic alone.

Within the framework of the rapid response, the focus of attention and efforts of the Coalition was on women survivors of domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence, as well as women with psycho-social health problems, LBT women, women living with HIV, and women living in rural areas.

Assistance was provided through utility bill reimbursement, economic packages, and the provision of necessary sanitary items, as well as the provision of free services by psychologists, social workers, and lawyers.

Coalition member organizations, through cooperation with the Swedish Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna,

managed to provide assistance to 1,399 women survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

1399
women

More specifically, member organizations provided:

- ▷ Financial assistance to 27 women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to start entrepreneurial activities and ensure self-sustainable income;
- ▷ Utility bills reimbursements for 77 women;
- ▷ Distribution of economic packages to 139 women;
- ▷ Distribution of masks and other protective and sanitary items to 1,260 women.

27
women

77
women

139
women

1260
women

With support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Coalition managed to provide

emergency packages for 157 of our women beneficiaries and masks and other protective and sanitary items for 450 of our women beneficiaries in the Shirak, Lori, and Tavush marzes (regions) as well as Yerevan.

157
women

450
women



With support from Open Society Foundations-Armenia, the Women's Support Center, a Coalition member, was awarded a sub-grant to provide financial assistance to 8 women and 15 children survivors of domestic violence to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. The women were unemployed due to pandemic-caused restrictions and could not afford their living costs. These beneficiaries needed help to pay for utilities, food, and hygiene items.

With support from the European Union (EU), the Women's Resource Center, a Coalition member, provided

24/7 hotline services throughout the year
and 65 women with free legal advice
to protect their social rights.

A circular infographic with a blue center containing the number '65' and the word 'women' in white. The circle is partially overlapped by a larger, semi-transparent yellow circle on the right side.

In addition, the Women's Resource Center provided sub-granting support to 13 regional organizations located in all regions of Armenia to establish a joint response and referral network to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, 14 sub-grant programs were directed at women survivors of gender-based violence and women faced with deteriorating socio-economic conditions as a result of the pandemic, and one sub-grant program was aimed at economic empowerment and trauma rehabilitation of survivors of violence.

A total of 10,500 Euros (equivalent in AMD)
was awarded through sub-granting, which provided
direct support to 287 women and 43 children
within the framework of this initiative.

A circular infographic with a blue center containing the number '287' and the word 'women' in white. The circle is partially overlapped by a larger, semi-transparent yellow circle on the right side.A circular infographic with a blue center containing the number '43' and the word 'children' in white. The circle is partially overlapped by a larger, semi-transparent yellow circle on the right side.

Our work with women and their families in response to the pandemic has demonstrated the need for comprehensive support programs and the inadequacy of such programs and interventions provided by the state.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Strategic Litigation: End of Taguhi Mansuryan's Trial

[December]

On December 2, 2020, the verdict was delivered in the case of Taguhi Mansuryan, a woman beaten with an axe by her ex-husband. The trial, which lasted more than three years, ended with the perpetrator being sentenced to 19 years in prison.⁴



Taguhi Mansuryan in an interview for the Daphne project⁵

- ● ● Regarding the verdict, the Coalition stated: ***“For years, there have been many illogical verdicts, and sometimes, in femicide cases, the perpetrators have been sentenced to only 3.5 years in prison. This verdict seems to be a turning point, and we are hopeful that the verdict will lead to continued unequivocal condemnation of all forms of violence against women at both legal and public levels.”***⁶

The coverage of the strategic litigation of the case by the Coalition and its constant presence at court hearings undoubtedly greatly contributed to the fair examination of the case and the restoration of justice.

The verdict is truly a big step towards the prevention of cases of gender-based violence and femicide in Armenia.

⁴ Details of the case, <https://medialab.am/114925/>

⁵ Taguhi Mansuryan's interview to Daphne, <https://daphnearmenia.com/2019/01/31/taguhiarm/>

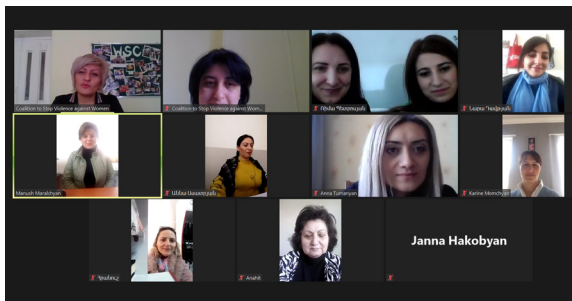
⁶ Report by Epress, <https://epress.am/2020/12/03/2138-2.html>

Training Activities

[September-November]

In 2020, 10 NGOs working in 10 different marzes (regions) of Armenia received grants from the government to provide services to survivors of domestic violence in addition to their regular scope of work, thus becoming DV support centers. All relevant NGOs have been trained by the Women's Support Center, a Coalition to Stop Violence against Women member.

The Women's Support Center carried out capacity building training of 26 participants over 26 days—a total of 86 hours of training.



The training material was based on internationally approved best practices and guidelines as well as evidence-based practices learned over 10 years of service to DV victims, taking into consideration specificities in Armenia.

Post-training evaluation demonstrated a 63% increase in knowledge among the participants and enhanced capacities to respond to domestic violence cases in a more effective manner, integrating gender-sensitive and feminist approaches.

Announcements and Statements

In 2020, the Coalition published responses and statements with regards to different instances of violence and discrimination against women, condemning [sexism by politicians and public figures](#), misogynistic and sexist advertisements that normalize violence against women, and [attacks against women human rights defenders](#).

The Coalition expressed its position in regards to pressing social issues and developments, such as the environmental fight to prevent gold mining in Amulsar and [the impact of mining on women's lives](#).

During the Second Artsakh War, the Coalition put out a number of statements and calls alarming the global community and international partner organizations about the [ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Republic of Artsakh](#), [the passivity and lack of response from the international community](#), [the role of UN Women](#), and [the situation with Maral Najarian and other Prisoners of War in captivity in Azerbaijan](#).

Awareness-Raising Efforts

Awareness raising through the production of media content and public and street actions has always been at the core of the Coalition's activities, which are aimed at sensitizing the public on domestic and gender-based violence and shifting societal discourse on these issues.

In 2020, at least 484 media publications were produced in collaboration with the Coalition, reaching at least 500,000 views on social media, radio, and TV channels. At least 100 people were directly reached through the Coalition's public actions and street campaigns.



With the support of the EU, the Women's Rights Center, a Coalition member organization, produced and broadcasted a series of TV shows in a collaboration with Shant TV within the scope of the project "Talks about women's rights" (2020-2022). In 2020, experts/guest speakers from the Women's Rights Center, RA Police, RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, RA Ministry of Health, RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction of First Instance, Committees of Guardianship and Trusteeship, the Human Rights Defender's Office, and Social Justice NGO appeared on TV programs.⁷

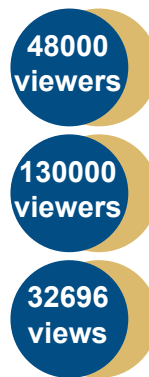


Viewers received appropriate knowledge and information on the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of the Victims of Domestic Violence, and Restoration of Solidarity in the Family. The concepts of domestic violence and gender-based violence were also highlighted and represented.

⁷ TV programs are available on YouTube channels of "Shant" TV / <https://bit.ly/3wauX8X> / Women's Rights Center / <https://www.youtube.com/user/WR-CArmenia/videos> / and the CSWA/ <https://www.youtube.com/user/justiceforzaruhi/videos> /

According to data analysis provided by Shant TV,

the number of viewers for all 11 TV programs was 48,000 in Yerevan and 130,000 in regions of the Republic of Armenia. The combined total number of views on the YouTube channels of Shant TV, Women's Rights Center, and the Coalition combined was 32,696.



Efforts to Develop Structures against Gender-Based Violence and Promote the Effectiveness of Legislative Mechanisms

In 2020, the Coalition undertook the following major research and advocacy projects through support and collaboration with Open Society Foundations-Armenia, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, and other partners:

- ▶ Development of a report in Armenian and English on the [Challenges and Gaps in Armenia's Response to Domestic Violence](#), combined with analysis of DV legislation from the perspectives of international human rights standards.

The report is based primarily upon the work of the Women's Support Center and Women's Resource Center NGOs and provides recommendations on effective, multi-sectorial response to DV that are based on the Coalition members' experience and international best practices.

- ▶ Development of a [policy brief on the Istanbul Convention](#) in Armenian and English.

The brief summarizes the purpose of the convention, successful examples of ratification, the situation around the convention in Armenia, and the reasons why it should be ratified.

- ▶ Submission of a thematic report on [Rape as a Grave and Systematic Human Rights Violation and Gender-Based Violence against Women](#) to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (SRVAW).

Over the course of the year, advocacy activities were aimed at improving the domestic legislation as well as criminal and civil procedural legislation responding to domestic violence.

In this regard, the Coalition's lawyer prepared packages of legal reviews, presenting 43 proposals for drafts submitted for public discussion by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and 26 proposals for projects submitted for public discussion by the Ministry of Justice.

Three consultative discussions on domestic violence legislation were held with the participation of the Coalition and the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs.

The Coalition staff participated in conferences and public events on the issue of domestic and gender-based violence with the participation of the RA Police, MPs, the Ministry of Justice, the Chamber of Advocates, and other actors in the field.

Due to the developments and crises over the past year, the state has understandably not initiated large-scale implementation of new policies.

A key development, however, was the adoption of the RA Police Reform Strategy and the resulting 2020-2022 action plan. During the public discussion of the draft strategic plan⁸, some of the observations and proposals submitted by the Coalition were accepted and reflected within the framework of the strategy.

Efforts Aimed at Capacity Building of Coalition Member Organizations

[February]

The Coalition held its retreat in Dilijan city with all 11 member organizations and staff, during which time the Coalition jointly developed its new Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 and Strategy Action Plan and Advocacy Plan for 2020-2021.

Apart from strategic planning, the retreat was aimed at addressing the hardships the Coalition and its member organizations were facing due to the pandemic, war, and constant emergency response.

⁸ Draft strategic plan, <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/2274>

The COVID-19 and the state of emergency resulted in various challenges for Coalition member organizations. Those organizations which were delivering services to GBV survivors, women living with HIV, and drug users started to work overtime due to a significant increase in hotlines calls and number of beneficiaries in difficult situations that required crisis interventions. This has led service providers to experience burn-out and increased health problems.

The retreat was an occasion to talk through shared difficulties, strengthen the Coalition as a team, and help improve members' capacity to deal with stress and burnout. It resulted in fruitful conversations around activism, women's rights, and feminist ideologies.



RESPONDING TO THE SECOND ARTSAKH WAR

[October-December]

In parallel to the pandemic, starting from September 27, Armenia was the target of an attack by Azerbaijan. As a result of the 44-day war, 90,000 people were displaced, most of whom were women, children, and the elderly.

The effect of the war on women, especially the impact on their mental health, is enormous.

Hundreds of women, together with their children, came to Armenia from Artsakh with no basic necessities, having to flee in pajamas and slippers.

From the very first days of the war, the Coalition initiated urgent programs to support the people of Artsakh. For this purpose, the existing programs of the Coalition were reorganized and new financial resources were raised.

As a platform for women's rights organizations, the Coalition strived to do its utmost to ensure women's physical safety and psycho-social well-being.

In the framework of the crisis response, women were provided with psychological support and counseling. Lawyers from the Coalition and member organizations also actively supported women by providing free legal advice.

With support from Open Society Foundations-Armenia, the Coalition provided support packages and dignity kits valued at 3,257,408 AMD to around 650 families.

Support packages were distributed through our partner organizations in the marzes (regions). These organizations include Agate Rights Defence Center for Women with Disabilities NGO in Shirak, Martuni Women's Community Council in Gegharqunik, and Sose Women's Issues NGO in Syunik.

The distribution of dignity kits and support packages was important in ensuring that displaced women had basic necessities for at least one month. The Coalition's lawyer also actively supported displaced women with free legal counseling.

With the support of Women's Fund Armenia, in December 2020 the Coalition supported 103 displaced women from Artsakh who currently reside in the Yerevan, Kotayq, Ararat, and Armavir regions. The dignity kits included underwear, menstrual pads, soap, toilet paper, and other hygiene items.

In response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the war, the following humanitarian efforts have been carried out through the efforts of the Coalition with support from Open Society Foundations - Armenia, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation:

- ▷ Warehouses were established at the Women's Support Center, Women's Resource Center, and Real World, Real People offices.
- ▷ In total, 9,437 families were provided with various forms of social assistance, including food, hygiene items, clothes, and other necessities.
- ▷ Legal assistance was provided to 102 women from Artsakh who were displaced in Armenia, and psychological assistance was provided to 182 people.
- ▷ With support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Women's Rights House, a Coalition member based in the Shirak region, provided vocational training to displaced women.
- ▷ Another Coalition member, Society Without Violence NGO, created safe spaces where displaced women and children from Artsakh could recover, communicate, share their feelings, and create mutual aid networks. For this purpose, 450 displaced women and children from Artsakh were hosted in three pre-selected hotels.

9437
families

102
women

182
people

450 women
& children



KEY COLLABORATIONS IN 2020

In 2020, the Coalition strengthened its cooperation with stakeholders in the fight against gender-based violence at local and international levels.

A major collaborative effort was the work carried out alongside regional NGOs.

The Women's Resource Center NGO, a Coalition member, provided sub-granting support to 13 regional organizations from all regions of Armenia, establishing a network of organizations to provide support to women subjected to gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus contributing to the prevention of violence at the regional level as well as fostering cooperation and referral among organizations.

As in previous years, cooperation with state bodies has been a priority for the Coalition.

In 2020, the Coalition actively cooperated and maintained communication with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, RA Police, and the Human Rights Defender of Armenia.

Throughout the year, the Coalition participated in at least 12 strategic in-person and online meetings with state institutions, decision makers, and influencers.



In 2020, Coalition staff member Zaruhi Hovhannisyan was invited to a closed human rights defenders [meeting](#) with the RA President. There were only 2 human rights defenders taking part in the official meeting, which suggests that the Coalition's work on the ground is valued at the highest levels.

In terms of cooperation with local and international organizations, the Coalition worked closely with the UNFPA, UNDP, Kvinna till Kvinna, Open Society Foundations-Armenia, Vanadzor office of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Human Rights House Yerevan, Non-discrimination and Equality Coalition, Martuni Women's Community Council, and Sose Women's Issues NGO.

The Coalition appreciates the united efforts from its partners and is grateful for their joint work, cooperation, and mutual assistance throughout this challenging year.



Report author: Anahit Simonyan

The report was prepared with financial support from the Open Society Foundations - Armenia

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