



Ընդուն կանանց նկատմամբ  
բռնության կոալիցիա  
Coalition to stop violence  
against women

Հերմինե Զիլինգարյան (1984-2014)  
Նինե Մահակյան (անհայտ-2017)  
Ջեմֆիրա Մաժակյան (անհայտ-2013)  
Յոդիկ Այվազյան (1986-2013)  
Հերմինե Զիլինգարյան (1984-2014)

# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2021

*This newsletter summarizes  
the main activities and events undertaken by the  
Coalition to Stop Violence against Women in 2021.*

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*Yerevan, 2022*

# INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Armenia (RA) entered 2021 with serious challenges. As a result of the horrific consequences of the Second Karabakh War in 2020, new socio-economic, security, domestic, and foreign policy crises emerged. In 2021, narratives and tendencies to oppose democracy and human rights using security and war prevailed in post-war Armenian political and social discourses, and the rhetoric of toxic nationalism and militarism grew.


On the other hand, the coronavirus spread even more in 2021, which had a significant social, economic, and health impact on almost everybody. Unprecedented global inflation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected every citizen, and as a result the majority of RA citizens live worse today than in previous years.

COVID-19 has had a very negative impact on women and girls, especially on their health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education and labor rights, and caused an increase in domestic violence cases. Any crisis exacerbates already existing problems. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-war situation, violations of women's rights, gender-based violence, domestic violence, and other harmful practices were among those issues that aggravated human rights violations in Armenia.

Since 2010, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women (the Coalition) has been raising the alarm about the systemic nature of gender-based violence and domestic violence in Armenia. There is no effective prevention for such cases, the state policy is disproportionate, problems are exacerbated, and women are being killed by their families. Although the RA adopted the law entitled "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of Victims of Violence and Restoration of Peace in the Family" in 2017, the steps taken by the state to reduce violence against women are still severely flawed.

This newspaper summarizes the main activities carried out by the Coalition from January-December 2021 in accordance with the strategic directions of the Coalition, which are:

1. Preventing and eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls;
2. Improving state accountability on issues of gender-based violence against women and girls;
3. Capacity skills building on gender-based violence towards women and girls and related themes.



*“I imagine that the Coalition is the body that will eventually create a stable system for the protection of victims of violence on the agenda of women’s rights. When that agenda is created and fully implemented, then the Coalition can be put to rest, but I can’t imagine this will be the case in the near future or even in ten years.”*

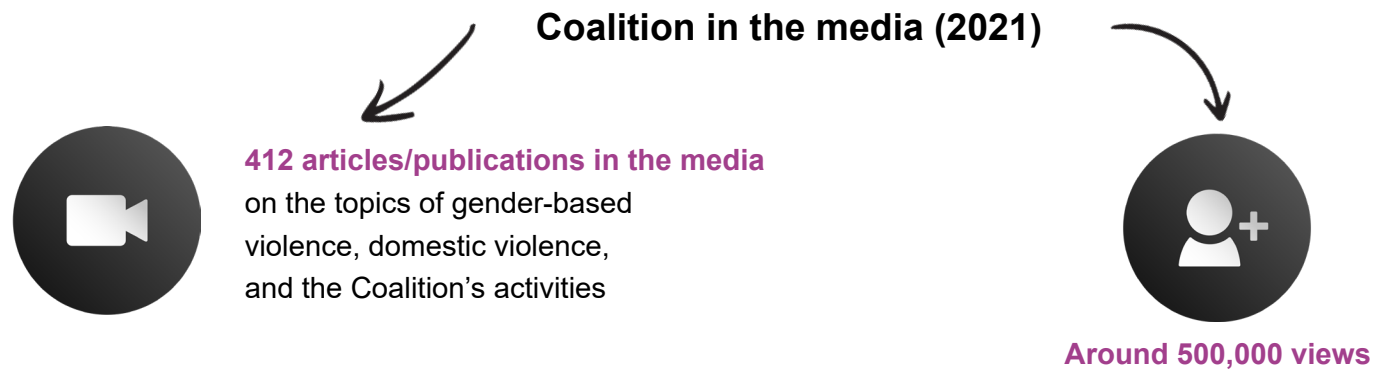
*Hasmik Gevorgyan, “Women’s Support Center” NGO*

*From the film on the 10th anniversary of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women*

## SECTION 1.

# PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

One of the most important strategic directions of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women is the prevention of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. As part of this strategic direction, the Coalition and its member organizations have been carrying out many campaigns to raise public awareness about gender-based violence and domestic violence over the years and have already succeeded in changing public attitudes towards those issues. 2021 was no exception, as the Coalition continued to participate in press conferences and TV and online programs on the topics of gender-based violence and domestic violence, and the Coalition's representatives gave numerous interviews on the subject. The Coalition's website, which is regularly updated, is another source of information about the Coalition's activities as well as gender-based violence and domestic violence. In 2021, the website also became disability friendly.



The Coalition is a recognized expert on gender-based violence and domestic violence and is well-represented in the Armenian media. Media and social media studies have shown that public awareness of domestic violence and gender-based violence has increased dramatically in recent years. The intolerance for cases of physical violence, beatings and femicide has also increased significantly. Unfortunately, much remains to break gender stereotypes, especially the stereotype that a victim is guilty. An observation of some groups of women on social media suggests that women today are more aware of their rights and encourage each other to seek help when their rights have been violated. The activities carried out by the Coalition in recent years are directly related to raising public awareness on this topic.

# SafeYOU

On the occasion of the annual international campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women and UNICEF presented the newly updated version of the [SafeYOU](#) mobile app. The app was created in 2019 by the Impact Innovation Institute. The purpose of the SafeYOU application is to create a safe online environment for women and adolescent girls, where they can get information about their rights, their health and employment; receive professional advice in times of need; and alert appropriate agencies about violence and receive support.





## Development of Sub-Legal Acts for Police Mechanisms/Procedures under the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of Victims of Violence and Restoration of Peace in the Family (DV Law)

The Women's Support Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, conducted extensive research and developed necessary police procedures concerning domestic violence and gender-based violence based on these research findings. This was carried out in collaboration with state bodies and local and international experts. The mechanisms and procedures in agreement with the existing legislation that were developed and proposed will provide the police with appropriate and specific procedural tools for various aspects of domestic violence and gender-based violence. These procedures are of crucial importance, as police are frequently not properly trained, and many come into service with many preconceived ideas, adhering to widespread stereotypes and prejudices in society.

Within the framework of the current action, various procedures were developed, including how police officers should record an incident, administer risk assessment, determine the predominant aggressor, collect evidence, mandate victim assistance, identify suicidal thoughts, and even how to remove the perpetrator from police records.

## Development of Legal and Policy Papers on Sexual Violence

The Sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, developed the following documents in 2021 in two main spheres, healthcare and education:

1. *Policy on sexual harassment entitled "The Sexual Harassment Prevention Procedure" intended for RA universities.*

This policy intends to regulate universities' response mechanism with regards to cases of sexual harassment within educational institutions. It also recommends creating a relevant committee within universities to periodically carry out informational sessions both on the existence of the policy itself and on the topic of sexual harassment in order to inform students about how to report incidents of sexual harassment.

2. *An interrelated document which includes regulations and recommendations on the implementation of the policy on sexual harassment.*
3. *A recommendations package for the healthcare system aimed at changing and improving current forensic practice.*

The Sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO, after many years of working with cases of sexual violence, presented a package

of recommendations to the Ministry of Health. In particular, it proposed developing a DNA database, a “rape kit” (a package of necessary items that allows one to collect and preserve physical evidence of sexual violence), and forensic practice. It also proposed allowing victims of sexual assault to receive medical care at any health center to maintain evidence of sexual harassment, even if they don’t immediately report it to the police.

## Research on Gender Based Violence against Women Living with HIV and Women Intravenous Drug Users in Armenia

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Real World, Real People NGO, a member of the Coalition, conducted comprehensive research and collected quantitative and qualitative data on gender-based violence amongst women living with HIV and women intravenous drug users. The research aimed at identifying the specific manifestations of violence that these women face at the societal, institutional, community, and individual levels. Women living with HIV and women intravenous drug users have a variety of health, legal, socio-psychological, and other problems that come from various circumstances. Representatives of these groups are frequently subjected to negative attitudes, violence, and discrimination that violates the principles of equality in interpersonal and family relations, hinders the availability and accessibility of services in various fields, and often leads to the destabilization of their social situations. The target groups are mainly deprived from social systems altogether given the problems they face, without the opportunity to enjoy their rights and freedoms. Thus, public policies that target the gender equality and human rights principles of women living with HIV and women intravenous drug users, the provision of quality services, changing socio-cultural conditions and raising

societal awareness can have a positive impact on changing and improving their quality of life, as well as enhancing efforts to reintegrate them into society. Based on the research results, relevant recommendations were prepared and discussed with various decision-makers.

## Research on Violence against Women in Penitentiaries

The Women’s Resource Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, launched a research study aimed at identifying the manifestations of gender-based violence in closed institutions in Armenia.

The research questions for this study included:

- What local and international legal regulations are applicable to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls in closed institutions in Armenia? What are the institutional gaps addressing the issue?
- What approaches do key actors and field experts take to prevent and address gender-based violence against women and girls in closed institutions in Armenia?
- What policies and practices should key actors adopt regarding the situation of closed institutions to effectively address the causes of gender-based violence?

The Coalition will publish the final research report, the main findings, and the package of recommendations in 2022.

## Trial Monitoring of Domestic Violence Cases

In 2021, Human Rights Power NGO, a member of the Coalition, developed a gender-sensitive toolkit to enable monitoring of cases of domestic violence in the courts and track to what extent the domestic violence law is being implemented.

Within the framework of this research, two members of the Coalition, the Human Rights Power and Women's Support Center NGOs, closely cooperated and worked together. Human Rights Power NGO has already monitored 6 cases of domestic violence – three in Yerevan and three in the Shirak, Armavir, and Aragatsotn regions.

## Support for Women Affected by COVID-19

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coalition and its member organizations has adapted their programs 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 their beneficiaries did not face the challenges of the pandemic alone. Special attention was given to women survivors of domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence, as well as women with psychosocial health problems, LBT women, women living with HIV, and women living in rural areas. Assistance was provided through utility bill reimbursement and the provision of economic packages and necessary sanitary items, as well as free services by psychologists, social workers, and lawyers. The Coalition's work with women and their families in response to the pandemic demonstrated the need for comprehensive support programs and the inadequacy of such programs and interventions provided by the state.

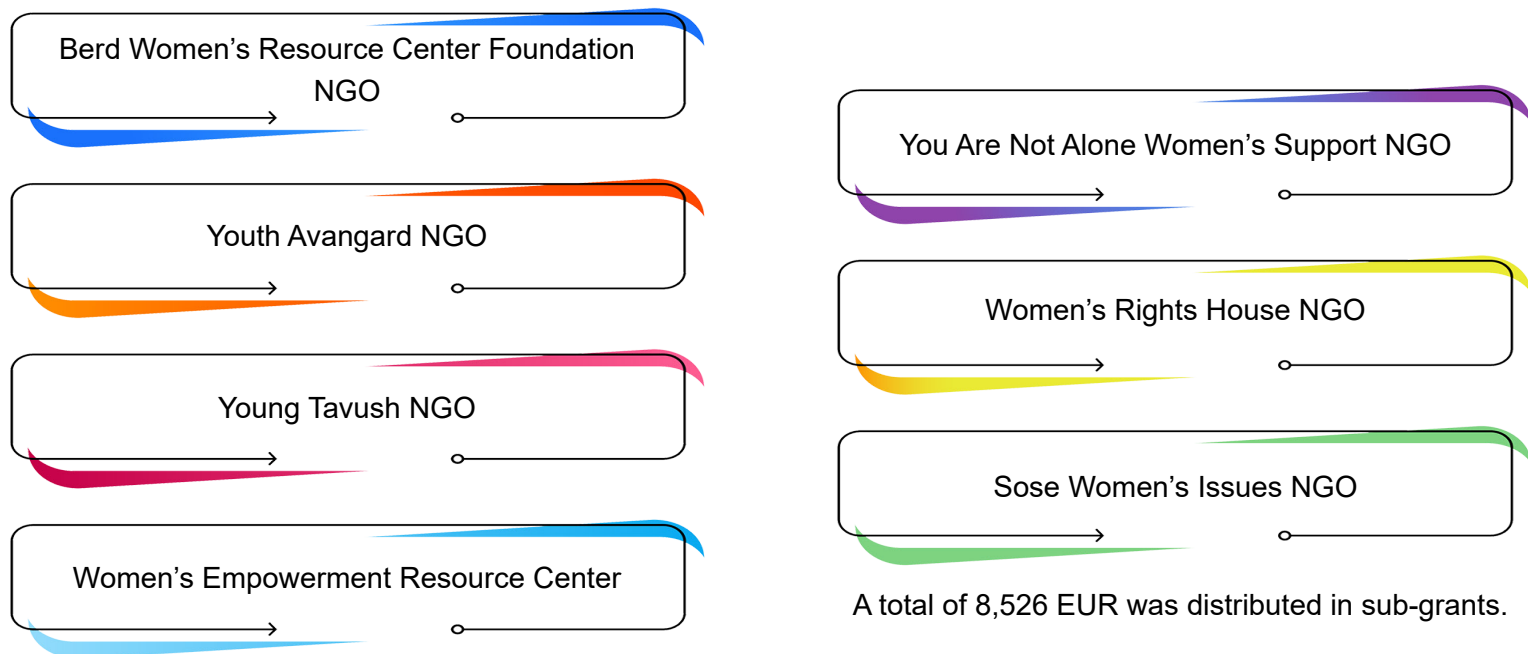
The Women's Resource Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, organized a hotline for legal counseling for women,

which enabled 37 women to receive legal counseling.

From 2021 to 2022, the Coalition provided emergency support packages to 256 women survivors of domestic and gender-based violence to combat the negative consequences of the pandemic. In total, 11,870.17 EUR (6,409,891 AMD) was spent on goods for emergency support packages. The Coalition will continue providing emergency support packages to vulnerable women affected by the pandemic in early 2022 based on a new needs assessment.

## Emergency Support Sub-granting to Local Initiative Groups and Civil Society Organizations in the COVID-19 Context

In the framework of this support, the Coalition, in cooperation with the Women’s Resource Center NGO, provided emergency support sub-grants to CSOs and initiatives working on women’s rights issues and gender-based violence and domestic violence. Organizations that received sub-grants included:



All programs were designed to help women survivors of violence acquire new skills and the necessary equipment to solve their financial problems and alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Second Karabakh War. The programs were implemented in the Armavir, Tavush, Vayots Dzor, Syunik, Shirak, and Kotayk regions.

## SECTION 2.

IMPROVING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY  
REGARDING ISSUES OF GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The second strategic direction of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women is improving state accountability on issues of gender-based violence against women and girls. To do so, the Coalition initiates and implements research studies, raises and ensures the inclusion of gender-based violence against women and girls in the agenda of the international institutions, and implements different activities to ensure that Armenian legislation contains the necessary laws and legal acts to align with international human rights standards. Moreover, the Coalition works to raise the idea of the intersectionality of gender-based violence.

## **The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

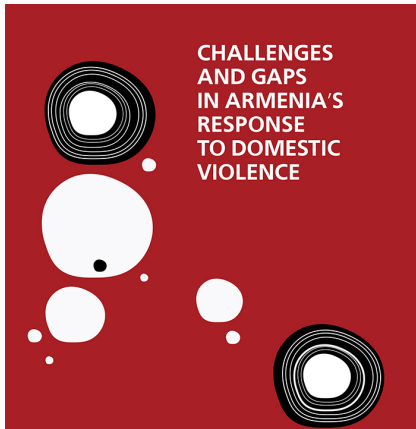
The Coalition prepared and submitted a list of issues to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that covers gender stereotypes and discrimination against women, gender stereotypes in education, women's participation in public and political life, health issues including sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's labor rights, and manifestations of the gender-based violence. The list of issues submitted to the Committee also raised the concerns of women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacted women's economic status, reproductive concerns, and to what extent the social assistance programs and services provided during the pandemic were available to women victims of domestic violence.

## **Requests for Information to Various State Agencies**

The Coalition sent requests for information to various state agencies within the framework of its strategic directions and implemented activities. These included inquiries to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Health about displaced women from Artsakh, women prisoners of the Second Karabakh War, and prisoners held in Azerbaijan as well as the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention.

## **Gender-Sensitive Recommendations**

The Coalition submitted gender-sensitive proposals and recommendations on gender-based violence on the e-draft platform regarding the following documents: the RA Criminal Code, the RA Criminal Procedure Code, the RA Law on Mediation, and other by-laws.



## Domestic Violence Prevention Council

During the regular session of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the Women's Support Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, presented its report entitled "[Challenges and Gaps in Armenia's Response to Domestic Violence](#)". Numerous examples included in the report detail and illustrate gaps in the system that are addressed using local and international best practices. Recommendations included the ongoing training of representatives of various relevant bodies, legislative changes, and the introduction of different community services.

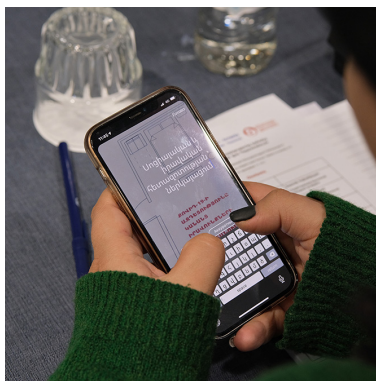


## The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women's Rights in Armenia

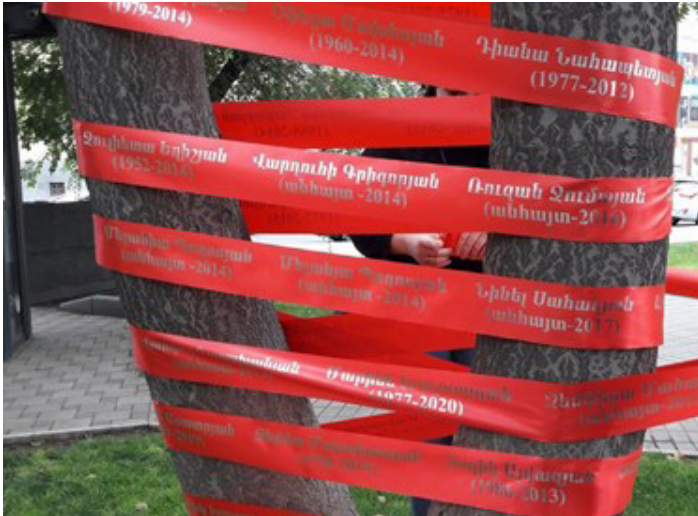
In 2021, the Coalition carried out a research study entitled "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women's Rights in Armenia", which examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's rights in Armenia from March to September 2020 from a sociological and legal perspective.

The research examined the views, perceptions, and life experiences of the target groups on how the pandemic impacted women's rights, as well as the assessments from and perspectives of the Coalition member organizations on the existing problems in the field and possible solutions.

In December, the survey was presented to stakeholders, including representatives of various government departments, civil society representatives, and others.



## National Day to Combat Domestic Violence - October 1



Since 2010, the Coalition has declared October 1st as the National Day for Combating Domestic Violence. The Coalition organizes and carries out awareness-raising and commemoration events on this day every year. In 2021, the Coalition published an official letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Armenia, which summarized the gender-based violence situation in Armenia and included demands for concrete actions to eliminate violence against women in the country. The members of the Coalition demanded that the state take concrete steps to ratify and improve international and domestic legal systems for combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Shortly after handing in the letter, the Coalition members put red ribbons on trees at a park behind the government office with the names and dates of birth/death of 80 women victims of femicide. The Coalition members also disseminated awareness raising leaflets on domestic violence to passersby.



On that same evening, young singers and dancers participated in a performance entitled [“Resistance Dance”](#), which was followed by the traditional candlelight vigil in memory of domestic violence victims.

## 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on November 25 and runs until December 10. Activists combine their efforts against gender-based violence globally by holding events until December 10th. In 2021, the Coalition joined this global movement and carried out various activities and events in both online and offline formats.

In the framework of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, the Coalition organized an information campaign on the Violence and Harassment Convention (N190) of the International Labor Organization. Each day, the Coalition presented demands and recommendations to various state agencies on specific issues concerning gender-



based violence.

The Coalition also voiced the campaign on social media pages through [live-stream broadcasts](#) and participated in various media programs.

The Women's Rights Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, produced a series of TV programs in cooperation with Shant TV entitled "Conversations on Women's Rights". The TV program guests included experts in different fields, representatives of state agencies, civil society representatives, and police officers, among others. They spoke about women's rights from a variety of perspectives, noting existing problems related to gender-based violence as well as possible solutions, directions, and commitments.



[3-rd edition](#)

[13-th edition](#)

[14-th edition](#)

## Meetings and Trainings with Local State Institutions in the Shirak, Lori and Tavush Regions

Coalition member Spitak Helsinki Group NGO held 30 meetings and workshops in the Tavush, Shirak, and Lori regions with representatives of local state institutions, including the staff of the municipalities, schools, and medical institutions; regional governing bodies; and CSO representatives. Overall, 200 representatives of local state bodies and CSOs participated in the meetings and discussions, which were organized under the theme "Developing Common Ways to Prevent Domestic Violence."

## SECTION 3.

# CAPACITY SKILLS BUILDING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN AND GIRLS AND RELATED THEMES

One of the most important strategic directions of the Coalition is the development of the capacities of different agents and subjects on gender-based violence towards women and girls and related themes, the institutional development of the Coalition, and the expansion of its network of supporters. Capacity development of the Coalition is also important from the perspective of preventing incidents of gender-based violence and taking an intersectional approach, which can be achieved through integration and raising gender-sensitivity.

## Monitoring the Coverage of Domestic and Sexual Violence against Women and Developing a Handbook

In 2021, the Coalition developed two important documents: an analysis entitled “Coverage of Violence against Women in the Armenian Media in 2019-2020” and a handbook for journalists entitled “How to Cover the Topics of Domestic and Sexual Violence against Women in Media: the Problems and Tips”. The above-mentioned [research](#) analyzed materials published in the Armenian media on domestic and sexual violence against women in 2019-2020 and examined tendencies with regards to how the topic of domestic and sexual violence against women was covered in the Armenian mass media and other related ethical issues. The researchers developed and presented recommendations to journalists, media outlets, and other stakeholders based on their findings. Moreover, the research findings informed the [handbook](#) “How to Cover the Topics of Domestic and Sexual Violence against Women in Media: The Problems and Tips”, which was prepared and published as a useful resource for Armenian media, journalists and editors to professionally cover domestic and sexual violence against women.

## Women’s Economic Empowerment

The Coalition, in collaboration with its Gyumri-based member organization Women’s Rights House NGO, carried out activities aimed at enhancing women’s economic empowerment and financial independence as well as their labor market competitiveness. In the framework of this activity, around 30 women and girls received an opportunity to participate in workshops, become retrained or acquire specific professional skills in the fields of graphic design, confectionery, nail artistry, hairdressing, and social entrepreneurship, among others. At the end of the project, the Women’s Rights House NGO also purchased the necessary tools and equipment for some of the project participants to apply their acquired knowledge, including hairdressing accessories, confectionery tools, computers, and more.

## Healthcare Services for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence

In 2021, the Coalition covered healthcare services for 26 women survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The much-needed medical interventions supported them in solving their health-related problems, finding a job, restarting their lives, and breaking the cycle of violence.

## Capacity Building Trainings for Healthcare Institutions on Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence

The Sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, organized 22 training sessions for medical staff on sexual violence and gender-based violence across all regions of Armenia. The meetings were attended by family doctors, gynecologists, and pediatricians. The training courses were held in the Armavir region (Hoktemberyan and Echmiadzin medical centers), Tavush region (Ijevan, Dilijan, Noyemberyan, and Berd medical centers), Kotayk region (Abovyan, Hrazdan, Charentsavan, and Yeghvard medical centers) and Shirak region (Gyumri and Artik medical centers). There were participants from both medical centers and rural polyclinics. In total, around 300 healthcare workers participated in the training courses.

The main topics covered by the training sessions were:

- the issue of sexual assault, main sub-types, and specifications;
- psychological and behavioral consequences of sexual assault, including post-traumatic stress disorder;
- physical and sexual dysfunctions resulting from sexual assault;
- specificities of sexual assault cases;
- case discussions and knowledge sharing of professional experiences.

## Development of a Comprehensive Training Guide on Issues related to Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence

The Women's Support Center NGO, a member of the Coalition, developed a comprehensive training guidebook on domestic violence and gender-based violence to set standards and create a unified language and approach to delivering

training courses on these issues. The publication is informed by research on international best practices and will be a comprehensive training guide for social workers and advocates to improve their support to domestic violence and gender-based violence survivors. The guide will also serve as a foundation for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to develop its curriculum to train service providers at the university level and offer non-formal training to social workers.

## The Coalition Celebrated its 10-year Anniversary

Watch the [film](#) about the 10-th anniversary of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, along with the [stories](#) of its members and supporters, sharing the reason they have joined the coalition.







Report author: Nvard Margaryan

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

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