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international coalition of gender journalists

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49th UN Session of the Commission on the Status of Women February 28 - March 11, 2005, New York

49th UN Session of the Commission on the Status of Women was held in New York from February 28 - March 11. Two members of "CaucAsia" - Tamara OVNATANYAN and Galina PETRIASHVILI attended the Session and participated in the events organized by non-governmental organizations.

**Tamara OVNATANYAN,
ARMENIA**

from the participant's diary

TEN YEARS AFTER: WOMEN'S PROBLEMS ARE NOT GETTING OLD

The UN Session was an important event even in New York. The Forum was attended by 6 thousand delegates from 165 UN member states. During 2 weeks 80 Ministries, more than 1800 members of government and approximately 3 thousand representatives of NGO sector from all the regions of the world were reviewing the implementation of Beijing Plan for Action adopted 10 years ago. This is where the name of the Forum comes from - "Beijing +10". This is the second Forum. The first Forum was held in the year 2000 under the title: "Beijing +5", which aimed to review the implementation of obligations taken by governments to insure the equality between men and women on the 4th World Conference in Beijing in 1995.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Everything that is considered to be the spirit and pride of civilization is accumulated in this city - Manhattan with its sky-scrapers and ambitions of the Rockefellers and the Tramps, financial power of the Wall Street, 5th Avenue with its fashionable shops,

Broadway with dazzling lights of commercials and unforgettable theaters, and the main symbol of democracy - Statue of Liberty. This very American city amazes us with its ethnical diversity and cosmopolitanism. From this viewpoint, it would be hard to find more appropriate place for locating the Headquarters of the United Nations. The UN building, which overlooks the East-River in the eastern part of Manhattan, is another symbol of New York. The UN consists of the following central institutions - 39 story glass curtain tower of the Secretariat, low dome building of General Assembly, Conference building and the Library. This is an international territory where one feels himself as a world citizen.

THIRTY YEARS LONG ROUTE

10 years passed since the 4th World Conference on the Status of Women held in Beijing. The ground for this world dialogue was prepared during the 1st World Conference held in Mexico City in 1975. The 30th anniversary of gender equality was celebrated with a reception and an exhibition in New York. They recalled year 1975, which was announced by the UN as an International Woman's year and all the following years - UN decade for women.

Per se, Mexico City had given way to new relationships between the UN and women - not as to passive recipients of help and support, but as to valuable and equal partners, with equal access to resources and possibilities.

Then there was Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. Nairobi conference reviewed and appraised the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. People involved in women's movements refer to Nairobi conference as to "the Act on Birth of World Feminism". It was in Nairobi that the women's politically and economically separated movements came together as one global power uniting the ideas of equality and development worldwide.

Nevertheless, the most representing Forum out of all international women conferences was the one held in Beijing in 1995 involving 17 thousand participants from 189 countries. Beijing confer-



ence was characterized with immense interest and participation of public organizations - 47 thousand representatives of public organizations participated in NGO Forum held in parallel with the Conference. Anyone who attended the Conference in Beijing in 1995 was unanimously referring to the grandiosity of this event. Dimensions of Beijing conference were also reflected on the document adopted during the conference - Beijing Platform of Action. Governments, international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and private sector, were called upon to take strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern: Economic and education, healthcare and poverty, conflicts and politics, ecology and mass media

VICTORY OR DISSAPPOINTMENT?

By signing the Beijing document member states have taken the responsibility to follow the recommendations set by this document and prepare reports regarding achievements. For the first time, governments reported on the achievements in 2000 at the UN Special General Assembly Session in New York. Next step for appraisal of achievements was made during 49th UN Session of the Commission on the Status of Women held this year in New York. It became obvious that some progress was achieved; however the number of problems had not been decreased.

...It seemed like after 10 years since Beijing conference there was the right time to call upon another, fifth world conference; however during the preliminary discussions regarding this issue, it was decided that conduction of the fifth conference was inappropriate. The point is that Beijing Plan for Action turned out to be not only the universal document but a very high demand at the given moment to be fulfilled for the majority of countries. Therefore, it was necessary to give these countries additional time to deal with set objectives.

It was decided during 49th UN Session to coordinate the objectives of Beijing Plan for Action with the goals of Millennium Development that which was adopted in 2000. Millennium Development Goals (MDG) consisting of 8 goals governments should achieve is less burdensome than Beijing Plan of Action. Among these 8 goals gender equality is on the third place. By declaring adherence to Beijing Plan for Action, the UN is strengthens Millennium Development Goals in respect to gender equality. That is why the Session emphasized the necessity of integration of gender issues in all goals of Millennium Development.

100 DOLLARS AND 50 CENTS

On the other hand, mechanisms for improving the situation are being developed within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. For this reason, all the necessary economic resources are being appraised, which implies putting emphasize on those complicated problems that had been faced by governments during implementation of Beijing Plan for Action. This especially refers to the struggle against poverty.

It is well known, that a group of experts working under the supervision of the famous economist Jeffrey Sachs have developed a practical plan on achieving Millennium Development Goals. This group was created by the decision of the Secretary - General of the UN. In January 2005, they issued a report called "Investing in Development", where they came to the following conclusion: in order to reduce the scale of poverty twice in the world, more developed countries should increase their help to the poor countries twice, which is 0,5% of their GNP. This plan was severely criticized. "But it represents just 0.5% of our GNP. Our financing gap is short by only 50 cents of every \$100 of our national income", - said Professor Jeffery Sachs. According to his words, if tsunami in the Indian Ocean took life of 170 thousand people, "the quite tsunami", which is poverty, takes away lives of 150 thousand people every month who die from just malaria."

Another unforgettable comparison was made by the Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General Nafis Sadik: "What contributes more towards security, \$3 billion invested in women, or \$900 billion squandered on weapons?"

DISCUSSIONS IN THE PARALLEL WORLD

The work of the session was held on two levels - panel discussions and discussions on the high level, where the representatives of all member-state governments reported on the achievements and barriers faced during the implementation of the objectives set by Beijing Plan for Action and discussed the resolutions on the forthcoming measures. By the way, the number of adopted resolutions was more than expected. In general, there were 10 resolutions on different problems: trafficking, economic support of women, HIV/AIDS prevention, and reconstruction and rehabilitation activities after tsunami disaster.

NGOs worked hard as well parallel with these events: discussion groups, round tables, trainings, and practical works. Representatives of civil society of various countries were implementing their function of oversight and control. From time to time, representatives of NGOs working "parallel" would intrude the "high level" space and declare their opinions regarding some conceptual issues.



Of course, access to the General Assembly Hall, where the representatives of governments sat, was limited. Nevertheless, all the sits in amphitheatre and gallery was occupied by the representatives of NGOs who passed information to their colleagues.

NGO forums give endless possibilities to meet people and establish new contacts. Representatives of NGOs actively distributed among themselves their own publications and alternative reports regarding the implementation of Beijing Plan for Action in their countries. These alterative reports served as evidence proving the high proficiency of NGOs in the issues discussed during the Session. Special bulletins and newspapers were issued during the event and special literature was exhibited on daily basis.

IS IT NECESSARY TO SPEND MONEY ON DEMOCRACY?

In spite of apparent disorders in NGO forums, which is characteristic to all international conferences on the status of women, non-governmental sector always used to have substantial influence on the decision-making process. Active participation of non governmental organizations always insures democratic discussions on existing problems. At the same time, it is impossible to carry out the objective of gender equality without participation of non-governmental organizations.

The problem of achieving gender equality consists of two aspects. On the one hand, it refers to introduction of gender approaches in politics. In this respect, government and its political will have a huge role. On the other hand, introduction of gender approaches in all other spheres of social life insures eradication of stereotypes in public consciousness; however only the political will is not enough here. It is necessary to include role and input of civil society that may have influence on the public opinion. This includes mass media as well, which according to the recommendations of Beijing conference has a great work to do in order to influence the mindset of its compatriots and get rid of humiliating stereotypes regarding abilities of men and women.

We referred to this issue in conversation with the Deputy Head of UNDP mission in Armenia Alexander AVANESOV. Talking about the priorities of UNDP work in Armenia, especially within the frames of the project "Gender and Politics", he referred to the issue of coverage of gender issues in the local mass media. "The role of mass media is unique in any kind of project. It is another issue that sometimes these resources are not fully utilized.

P.S. The author is grateful to the project "Gender and Politics" implemented by UNDP in Armenia. Within the framework of the project, the trip to New York was funded.

OPINION of another participant from "CaucAsia":

We worked not directly at the session, but around the session, because of the session and in parallel with it. We carefully followed the agenda and the work that was convened in the halls, where high governmental officials gathered. The decisions were made by them; we could not have a direct influence, but we managed to make ourselves heard through different statements and declarations; however it was a limited influence. Relationship of governmental and non-governmental sector could be close and constructive. Relationship between these two sectors is still problematic; we talked a lot about it in New York, we face this problem at home as well.

Shortly, I would express my opinion about this matter in the following manner:

NEGATIVE

It was clear not only to me but to the rest of the participants that there was a sheer misunderstanding between governmental and non-governmental sectors. In different words: There was absence of harmony, catastrophic absence of harmony! Many women from non-governmental organizations complained that members of their local governments in New York were simply unreachable. Governmental delegations demonstrated absolute self-confidence - they simply did not care about the opinions of non-governmental sector.

At the same time, by comparing expertise in both sectors, it becomes obvious that expertise of non-governmental organizations is more efficient and comprehensive than the latter.

POSITIVE

Non-governmental sector has made a huge step forward in terms of development during the last 10 years, ever since Beijing conference. I am more than sure, that the non-governmental sector, which is more efficient in its sphere, has a better understanding of national interests and is more motivated to adjust these interests to the democratic values. When it comes to gender issues, it can be said that non-governmental sector is way too far in supporting gender equality than those governmental institutions, which try to promote gender equality. Non-governmental sector is quite active in global scale; it has strong connections on regional and international levels; it is active and mobile, not bound with the official status, which gives it an opportunity to express itself impartially and clearly. Sometimes, the position of non-governmental sector is more state-interest oriented than that of the government's.

CONSTRUCTIVE

Nevertheless, they have power. The power makes them so slow and undisturbed. They are not accountable to us and we have to admit it as a fact.

If we look over the government's attempt to promote any of important gender issues, we will see that the first step is always made by the non-governmental sector. This is where the expertise comes from, statistic data is gathered, and the society is informed. This has happened in a number of countries with trafficking and family violence problems, this is how the state agencies working on gender equality were created.

Consequently, NGO sector has learnt how to influence the government. Knock and the door will be opened. The reality shows that in case of strong pressure from our side, governments enthusiastically cooperate with us - especially when they know that it is profitable for them either in terms of business or career. It is very important to attract their attention and make them become our friends. We have to help them make right decisions. They need to be constantly reminded about democracy - it is well known that powerful people always forget about the democratic values

These were the conclusions I made in New York.

*Galina PETRIASHVILI,
Journalists' Association "GenderMedia Caucasus",
TBILISI*



Larisa FEDOROVA,
Institute of Social and Gender Politics,
Moscow:

- We got involved in democratic changes and missed very important issues like privatization and distribution of private property. As a result, none of the women's organizations possess any property, most of them do not even have office space to work in. We simply missed this process. At present, many organizations often encounter a problem of office space; they have no place to meet. We did not have such a problem ten, even five years ago. It is a pity we missed this chance.

Secondly, we failed to establish relations with business and the government. They treat us as if women organizations should be giving out something for free. This is the main concern - we could not protect what we had. We did not take the proper position.

Zhanil ABDILDABEK kizi,
Gender Research Center,
Bishkek:

- Just after Beijing conference we established a Commission on the Family and Women Issues in Kyrgyzstan. I became its first Chairman. After a year I left my governmental job and established our center for gender studies. Why did I leave? There was a non-stop rotation of human resources. I believe that this is bad.

NGOs work within the frames, which are set for by the Code. The biggest part of the strategic planning should be done by government. Frequent staff rotation, had a very bad impact on the work.

It is the government that is responsible for fulfilling of obligation signed on paper.

Iliana STOICHEVA,
Gender Research Center,
Sophia:

- We have journalists in Bulgaria who permanently work in the field of gender issues. I can't say that there are too many of them but still there are some. There are newspapers that write about this topic, radio and TV channels that talked about it, lot of NGOs are publishing periodicals regarding gender issues. It is obvious that the

task of rising gender awareness of journalist is in the agenda and we have to work hard to achieve progress. The role of mass media is extremely important in further promotion of this issue - in order to make society understand the meaning of our efforts, to make them sensitive to our work, to make governments fulfill their tasks accordingly, etc. This is very important to attract and involve as many journalists as possible, to give them information and cooperate with them. Honestly speaking, I would prefer that our trainings covered the topic of working with mass media.

Raushan SARSEMBAEVA,
Association
of Business Women in Kazakhstan,
Almaty:

- I am grateful to Beijing Conference because it gave me a chance to realize my potential. 10 years ago we created our association, a very strong national women's network, which deals with wide range of important issues - from ecology to gynecology, as we used to joke. One of our main goals is to promote women's rights, promote women not only in economic sphere but also in politics. I have achieved a lot in this respect and I am very proud of it. I defended my Doctoral Paper on the following topic: "Gender Aspects of Social and Economic Reforms".

Ekaterina LEVCHENKO,
International Center
of Women's Rights "La Strada",
KIEV:

- The number of women's organizations and quality of their work is not the same. It is also possible to have many NGOs but lack women's movement at all. The issue of ideology, priorities and general strategy is very popular right now. What happens to some women NGOs working on women's issues? They help the victims of family violence; they are protecting the victims of trafficking. They are doing their job efficiently, correctly. Great, but what are the differences between them and social workers? This is the social work on local level. While carrying out this important work they forget human rights, reasons of all the violation that they are dealing with. They are professionals but not part of any movement.

Ia VERULASHVILI,
NGO "Women's Center",
Tbilisi:

- We are just starting to talk about reproductive health and reproductive rights in Georgia. It can be said that we have a very limited number of professionals in this field. Obviously, dealing with the reproductive health and problems connected with it at least in terms of child and mother mortality cases in the country; however no one is aware of their reproductive rights. This is a huge sphere, very important to every woman. By the way, although reproductive rights is a very interesting topic, Georgian culture is very sensitive to it.

Rodika KOMENDANT,
Association
of Reproductive Health
and Reproductive Rights,
Kishinev:

- Many people see this complex problem only in connection with abortion. When we are talking about reproductive health, we are not refereeing to only abortion. This is a very simple approach to the issue. The issue of reproductive health and reproductive rights is much complex. How many women can afford to have children from the financial perspective? If a woman can not afford to have a child just because she has no income or a very low one, this is violation of her reproductive rights. If a woman is making such traumatic abortions as it was accepted by the Soviet medicine, this means that her reproductive rights are violated. If a woman has no access to modern methods of contraceptives, because of its price or because she lives far away from the place where contraceptives are sold, or if the usage of contraceptives is deemed inappropriate by her family or the society, is also a violation of woman's reproductive rights. The same applies to the situation when women can not stay with their children at least till the child reaches the age of three.

Galina GREBENNIKOVA,
Sex Education and Reproductive
Health Association,
Almaty:

- People in our society are often talking about woman's natural significance, that a woman produces a new life and this should become the main function of her existence, some even say, and that women should be forced to give birth to as many children as possible in order to have an impact on the population growth. It is hard to say what prevails in these talks - stupidity or hypocrisy? In every country in every century, the population growth was achieved merely through certain economic measures. Families should be encouraged to have many children through benefits, providing them with space, developing social infrastructure. It is easy, right? But some people think that the government's task can be put on women, as it had happened many, many times in history before in history.

Mira KARIBAEVA,
Agency of Social Technologies,
Bishkek:

- In 1995 Kyrgyzstan sighted 5 Conventions regarding women's rights. This step was assessed by politicians and even women NGOs as signing of meaningless, formal declarations, having no political power. It is good that we are accountable for CEDAW, but the report and the recommendations are simply not considered. We are not researching what has been recommended by CEDAW committee and we are not eager to carry out these recommendations.

Virginia ALEKSEIUNAITE,
Gender Equality Promotion Center,
Vilnius:

- I see huge threats to gender issues. One of these threats is hidden in mass media and in mass culture. It is scary to see what is going on in commercials and generally in pop-culture, what images are used for imitation, what is the role of a woman. Something needs to be done in this respect. Another treat is violence against women. We have been talking about this for a long time but still the situation remains unchangeable. There are 17 registered shelters in Lithuania but only 1 gets support from the municipalities. There is not a complex system, which would include legislation, practical implementation of this legislation, mediation, administration and rehabilitation.

Muborak SHARIPOVA,
NGO "Open Asia - Denmark",
Dushanbe - Copenhagen:

- Time has come for us, women to start talking strictly. We are half of the world, we give this world half of the budget paid from our pockets, we give lives to generations, we fill up the human resources - and what we are left with? Our money is being used on implementation of military projects; we have wars, destroyed ecology and violence. We are talking about this, trying to make ourselves heard but with no success. Time has come for to demand, not ask. We have to demand to show us how money from the budget we create is used - we have to make sure that the money is spent adequately. We have to initiate laws against military budgets, we have to decrease financial support to these budgets and increase funding of social, cultural and gender projects.



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)



**191 UN MEMBER STATES
HAVE TAKEN THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING GOALS
BY YEAR 2015**

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
- 2 Achieve universal primary education**
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women**
- 4 Reduce child mortality**
- 5 Improve maternal health**
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability**
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development**

**Natalia DOMAGALSKAYA
KYRGYZSTAN**

justly!

**NOW WE HAVE POSITIONS
OF GENDER OFFICIALS
IN MINISTRIES**

This is what the law indicates

During the past 10 years we have adopted number of good laws protecting the rights of women and families and have learnt a lot - laws on "Prevention of Family Violence", "Gender Equality".

Interview with the assistant professor of the Chair of Procedural Criminal Law of the Faculty of Law at Kyrgyz-Russian (Slavic) University, Chairman of NGO "Diamond" Bermet Tugelbaeva.

- Bermet Galieva, what has been changed positively in the republic during the last 10 years from Beijing Platform for Action since 49th UN Conference on the Status of Women? I don't mean statistical data or some report based information. I mean something obvious, visible to everyone?

- Well, you can judge for yourselves: you may remember that in previous times, families with many children tried to give higher education only to their sons, thinking that girls did not need to know anything but housework. But now, on the question, who will get a chance to graduate from the university, you get an answer: "The one who is

more talented". More than that, it became very usual when a mother-in-law is bringing up children when her daughter-in-law is either busy with career or defending diploma! In our patriarchal society this seemed to be more unbelievable some time ago than a man taking care of a sick child "when mother was alive".

I can also add: all the officials in Kyrgyzstan are aware of the fact that it is not that easy to neglect women's problems, including women who are victims of family violence. How was it before? When a man was violent, police would not even accept woman's grievance, plus she would be blamed in God knows what. They would say that she is not well brought up as she does not know how to please her husband.

- Does it mean that we are getting rid of stereotypes and mass media has successfully worked in this direction?

- I guess so. However "noting is perfect". Not only was mass media busy with destroying stereotypes. NGO dealing with gender issues and fighting against family violence played an important role. By the way, our association tried to exempt mass media working on gender issues from paying taxes. Unfortunately, we did not succeed. Our financial officers are not yet ready to discuss this issue.

- Association "Diamond" was created by women scientists working in different universities of Bishkek. Consequently, you were acting "scientifically". You started with legislative process. Please, tell us few words about this.

- We not only drafted the law on "Prevention of Family Violence" but also promoted this law according to the Constitution. This is a national law, initiated by people, which is foreseen in the Constitution. In order to bring the law to the hearing, we collected 36 thousand signatures, though 30 thousand was enough. This law, like the one on "Gender Equality" was drafted

on voluntary basis by experts from the OSCE. For example, the expenditure on drafting the Tax Code in the United States involved 300 thousand US dollars. Our government paid nothing to draft the law on the "Prevention of Family Violence". More than that, we had to struggle to bring amendments to by-laws of the Civil Code of Kyrgyzstan, in order to make the law work. For a year and half this law was frozen - it existed but did not function. But the ice is melting and there are about 50 temporary organizations that shelter victims of family violence. Simultaneously, judges are being trained; gender sensitiveness of law enforcement agencies had been raised during these years.

However, one can not be happy only with the success of law enforcement agencies in terms of raising gender awareness. We need crisis centers, support groups. It is also important to avoid disasters: we have to divulge families where violence is more likely to take place. Taking into consideration the mentality of our people, we are trying to involve community courts in promotion of new laws (community courts comprise of old and respected men in the village or rayon. They look like national courts of Soviet Times. Decisions there are made on the level of one's blame). It is a very effective measure. I have seen a man saying to his wife through his tears: "I wish you had imprisoned me for 15 days instead of bringing me here".

- *You have not mentioned the law on "Gender equality".*

- This law was adopted traditionally, through the legislative session of the Parliament and thus represents the guarantee from the part of the government for the protection of gender equality. Adoption of this law is a huge achievement for us. For example, there are new positions introduced in the ministries dealing with gender equality. This is very important. In this situation you can not depend only on the demonstrations and revolts because gender stereotypes in the world are way much deeper enrooted than racism or religious prejudices. I believe that

the government should make further steps in this direction, like establishing quotas for politically active women.

- *Do you have any kind of recipe how to overcome these stereotypes?*

- We have to start from zero, start from the school and kindergarten level. Honestly speaking, during these 10 years, while we were busy with training policemen, judges, etc, we missed something: generations of people who might become gender sensitive - people who are graduating from schools and universities now.

We have forgotten that movies and computer games, traditions and examples taken from the older generation easily influence young people, as if manhood is a cult of power. However, the real manhood is reflected in the ability of building faithful relationships based on trust and respect. From their point of view, this attitude is a reflection of weakness and softness and God knows what else. Fertility among young people is associated with obedience, sentimentality, and pathetic attitude. We have to destroy stereotypes!

- *Do you really believe that this is possible?*

- Of course. It is not only possible but is necessary. Colorful revolutions on the territories of former USSR, demise of authoritarian regimes abroad, the latest scandal connected with the presidential elections in the US, etc - all these mean that there is a serious crisis of patriarchal system, there is a crisis of absolute male governance in the world. We have to overcome the crisis, right?

Farida SHARAFUTDINOVA, KAZAKHSTAN

optimistic

WOMEN LIVING IN SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN DID NOT LOSE THEIR TIME

*They acquired new skills in business,
civil society sector
and self-governance*

During 1920-1930 women's issue in the USSR was "completely solved". In her lecture, "Women in Politics", D.M. Bekmanova, assistant professors of one of Kazakhstan's universities, gives the following data: "From 1930 women's issue disappeared from the agenda of the political party, from its organizational structures and the scientific sphere. This problem was solved by introducing the quota system -letting women to participate in the rep-

resentative bodies of the government". The phrase "Every cook can govern the country" was born during this period. Not only cooks presided in the Supreme Counsel of the USSR, but also pig-tenders, tractor-operators, weavers, cotton-growers, etc.

In 1980-1985 women's share in the Supreme Counsels of the USSR member states was 36,2%, and it was even higher in the autonomous republics - 40,3%. However, after PERESTROJKA, during the first alternative elections held in February 1999, women's issue was neglected. Women lost in these elections. The reasons for failure were the following - lack of organization and political will of women. In 1990 among the national deputies in the Supreme Counsels of the USSR women comprised 8,95%. It became obvious that year that women had to win back their rights to participate in political life", - says D.M. Bekmanova.

Changes in economic life were more shocking. Instead of state guaranteed employment, a new phenomenon invaded lives of women, called self-employment. Many women started to work in the sphere of trade and services because this was the only source where real cash flew.

My friend, Ulbosin Alpisbaeva used to be a nurse during 10-12 years, not being able to get her minimal salary for several months. In the same period, her husband died. She was left alone with three kids. She pulled herself

together and started a small business - she had nothing else to do. She started with a small booth, where she sold all kind of stuff together with her children. At the same time, she started to take lessons in accounting. Her business flourished and she came up with the idea to open a small cafe. The idea was successful. Now she has many plans for the future. For already several years, she is the member of the City Commission on the Rights of Women and Families. Maybe after some time she will be balloting in local governance elections as well. She has a clear idea on how to improve her life.

This is an example of a successful woman. According to the information of City Regulatory Commission in Economic Issues, by January 2004, in Shymkent (a town in the south of Kazakhstan) 12 771 individuals registered their small business among which the majority were women. 975 enterprises existed in the city are managed by women, big part of which is represented in trade - 522 enterprise (53,5%); agriculture - 27 (2,7%); mineral resource industry - 2 (0,2%); manufacturing activities - 94 (9,6%); electric power, gas and water - 9 (0,9%); construction - 40 (4,1%); Hotels, cafes and restaurants - 100 (10,2%); transportation and communication - 49 (5,0%); real estate - 132 (13,5%).

Statistics are not as high as it should be. Sociological survey conducted among women not employed in business, by the assistant professor D.M. Bekmanova showed the following results. On the question: what hinders women from being employed in business, 54% of the surveyed answered that it was connected with the problem of finances; 38,1% of respondents blamed uncertainty, fear to risk and some moral "enslavement" as a barrier; 7,2% of the respondents did not specify their answers. It is obvious that we need to destroy not only stereotypes but in parallel with it we need to give women some economic education, support them psychologically and financially.

We can say that nowadays most of the NGOs are busy with this. Women living in the south of the country revealed their business skills in NGO sector as well. Most of 320 registered NGOs in the south Kazakhstan are run by women.

Alma Bekturganova-Andersen DENMARK

open experience

GOVERNMENT AS A PROTECTOR AND A PROMOTER OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IS THIS POSSIBLE?

*This is quite possible -
for example in Denmark*

During ten years since Beijing Conference, Denmark has made a huge step forward - in 1999 Ministry of Equality was established. In 2004 its budget comprised of 14,7 million Danish Kroner. (i.e. Approximately 2 million euros; 1 euro equals 7,5 DK.). Ministry of Equality is headed by the Minister of Gender Equality Issues appointed by the Prime-Minister of Denmark. The new Ministry started its work by an interdepartmental project introducing gender approach, the project started in 2001. The aim of the project was to promote gender approach inside other ministries: to raise the level of gender awareness and to provide them with strategies of introducing gender approach in the sphere of their activities.

Ministers are responsible for securing gender equality in their ministries - from the point of special as well as general initiatives (the principle of legislation supported gender approach). At the same time, in 2001 the Minister of Gender Equality created an interdepartmental management team. The team is composed of high

officials from 18 ministries of Denmark who are responsible for general implementation of strategies in all sectors and sub-divisions of the government.

Annually all ministries, institutions and municipalities are reporting to the Ministry of Gender Equality. The reports are featuring statutory information. Gender specialist working in the ministry analyze the received information and based on the acquired results are drafting new plans for action.

Denmark has an extensive legislative basis, regulating gender policy. The first legislative act prohibiting all forms of discrimination based on gender identity was adopted in 1976. This was the law on Equal Remuneration of Men and Women, this document underwent number of amendments and supplements.

In 1978 two additional laws were adopted - the Act on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. The aim of this Act was to ensure gender equality in all spheres of life; the second was the Act on Equal Treatment of Men and Women as regards Access to Employment and Maternity Leave. This act ensured equal treatment on the labor market.

The following legislative acts ensured establishment of gender equality in the spheres of management and politics: the Act on Equality of Men and Women as regards to Appointment as Members of Public Committees (1985) and the Act on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women for Occupying Executive Positions in Public Administration. The aim of both legislative acts was to guarantee equal representation of men and women in government bodies.

The problem of gender balance and equality is regulated in Denmark with the following basic laws: 1) The Law on the Equality of Men and Women; 2) The Law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women (this law refers to the equal treatment of men and women on the labor market).

3) The Law on Equal Remuneration of Men and Women (i.e. Equal treatment of men and women from the point of social protection in labor), the final amendments to this law was made in 2003.

All reports provided by the Ministries and municipalities are placed on the web-site of the Ministry. This information is available to every interested party. The information is interesting and comprehensive. As an example from the web-site, you can see the charts on gender statistics given below.

Chart 1
Vacancies in Danish Municipalities according to gender dimension (2003)

Name	Men	Women	Women (%)
Composition of administration of Danish municipalities, including technical and service personnel	2189	93	4,07
Facilities, environment, territorial management (including bus drivers, etc)	13044	2360	15,32
Other	4758	8475	64,04
Education	21217	37717	63,99
Sphere of service	7492	21528	74,18
Clerks, IT service and administration of communal institutions, including higher education	11565	34212	74,73
Secondary education	13488	81215	85,75
Social services, healthcare (including dental services)	4191	86123	95,35
Total	77947	271727	77,70

Chart 2.
Management apparatus of Danish municipalities (2003)

Name	Men (%)	Women (%)
High level	85 %	15%
Middle level	59%	41%
Leading specialists	40%	60%
Other staff members with no right to make decisions	22%	78%

Based on the given data, we can see that Danish municipalities still have problems with gender equality in the spheres where decisions are made. But the transparency and accessibility of information ensures that this problem is taken into consideration and adequate steps will be made to solve this problem. (If we look at politics, we will see that men and women are almost equally represented 60:40).

Why is Danish experience so attractive? The answer is as follows: Gender statistics is available on all levels and at all stages. And changes are becoming visible in the deepest corners of public life of the country.

The Ministry of Gender Equality of Denmark works in close cooperation with women NGOs. The Ministry is providing annual financial aid to the Women's Council of Denmark, which is 1,1 million Danish Kroner. The Women's Council of Denmark is an umbrella organization uniting more than 50 women associations and organizations, which are actively supporting promotion of women rights and influence in public. The Council was established in 1899, it plays an important role in the struggle for enhancement of democratic values and women rights. The Women's Council of Denmark is a member of International Women's Council and the European Center of International Women's Council.

BY THE WAY

THEY PUT THEIR HOPES ON WOMEN

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, 38, defeated Frank Jensen, an experienced politician, in the elections of the Chairman of Denmark's largest opposition party Social Democrats. For the first time in history a woman will become the Chairman of this political party. The Social Democrats became an opposition party four years ago, when they lost majority in the Danish Parliament. Elections held in February 2005 showed that the Social Democrats are still losing votes. The party needs to be renewed and it also needs to strengthen its position. Lots of hopes are connected with Helle Thorning-Schmidt. According to experts, Helle came in power for a long time and she has serious intentions about the party. Her election to the post indirectly implies that a woman may become the Prime Ministers' position in the nearest future.

The Social Democrats is the third political party in the opposition, which is run by a woman. The other two are - The Danish Social-Liberal Party and The Danish Red-Green Alliance. Soon in May there will be elections of the Chairman of the fourth opposition party, Socialist People's Party, taking into consideration the fact that 2 women and 1 man are presented as candidates for this position, it may happen so that the woman will win in elections and there will be the fourth opposition party led by a woman. The two political parties in the Danish government are Denmark's Liberal Party and The Conservative Party. These political parties are run by men. However, previous elections showed that even these political parties have problems with the electorate. The opposition tries to improve relationship with the electorate by appointing women on leading positions.

Alma Bekturganova - Andersen, COPENHAGEN



**Viktor UNIYAT,
Vladimir KHANAS,
UKRAINE**

a chest of drawers

IN THE CONTEXTS OF KITCHEN AND CHILDREN

*This is how our politicians understand gender equality
after 10 years from Beijing Conference*

In Ukraine politics is a male business where women are not welcome. The Prime Minister of the country Yulia Tymoshenko, Minister of Culture and Tourism Oksana Bilozir and the Director of the State Property Foundation, Valentina Semeniuk are exceptions that just prove the rule. None of women are in charge of state administrative offices of Ukraine even during the new government; however there are 24 administrative offices, plus Kiev, Sevastopol and the republic of Krim.

The presidential election campaign of 2004 became a kind of litmus-paper for gender programs in politics. Let us compare the pre-election campaigns of presidential candidates in Ukraine. Only 26 candidates were registered in the CEC out of immense number of candidates and only one was a woman. Her name was Natalya Vitrenko. One part of her program was called "Motherhood and childhood". As we could see in her program, in case of her presidency, "motherhood and childhood would be protected and supported, birth rate would increase, families with many children would be given benefits", plus "young families would be able to receive loans for buying apartments". She has not forgotten the issue of protecting women's political rights - "women should occupy 50 % of governmental positions".

Only 2 male candidates introduced gender issues in their political programs.

For example, Vasyly Volga convinced his constituents that he would take care of the social sphere and "insure absolute social protection of young families, mothers and children give opportunities to women to participate in political life as well as in local self-governance".

Another candidate, Mycola Grabar introduced "Activities for the support of families, women and children as well as the social protection of citizens" in his political program. He was the only person among the presented candidates who in case of winning the elections promised to "increase the role of women in public life and insure women's participation in political life of the country based on legislation" and "the state support in increasing birth rate, supporting families with many children and single mothers, increasing state's financial support to newly born children", etc.

However, these candidates could not even receive 1 percent of votes.

How the two popular candidates did treat gender issues in their political programs? Viktor Yanukovych addressed this issue from traditional viewpoint: "Let us strengthen families and insure protection of women's rights in all spheres of public life". Based on his program, the main idea of woman's function was connected with the reproductive issues.

Victor Yushenko was also quite traditional in respect to gender issues in his program. After a short preamble, that said: "I see Ukraine as a fair, protected European state, where families, motherhood and childhood are guarded" a paragraph followed: "To protect family values, have respect toward parents and protect children's rights". The red line in his program was the following: "woman is a mother". Yushenko was basically promising "to increase 10 times financial support to newly born babies", "guaranteed high quality and free medical assistance during the delivery", at the same time "mother's refusal to participate in public life because of her will to dedicate all the time to bringing up her children, is highly appreciated".

What about men? Can it be appreciated in case of men?

Traditional approach to women was characteristic to all the candidates.

Alexander Balyziuk: "We have to understand that we need to return old Slavic traditions and family values".

Igor Dushin: "Our families and their well-being is the most important thing".

Mykola Rogozhinskii: "Protection of women and youth's rights will help us to defeat unemployment".

Alexander Yakovenko: "A Woman - mother should receive remuneration from the state for taking care of the family and bringing up children. This is her major responsibility before society."

The way Ukrainian politicians deal with women's problems, remind us of a chest of drawers where one can pull out the drawer full of items - "problems" and then push in when not needed any more.

Ukrainian women and progressive men living in the country should do their best to overcome this "tradition". Male gender issues are not even mentioned in the political programs of the politicians.

SOS

This is the fourth edition of the magazine "CaucAsia".
The magazine is prepared on volunteer basis.
The success, which our work has, will hopefully interest some donors.
We look forward to your proposals!
Sincerely,
"CaucAsia"

The edition was prepared by:

Galina PETRIASHVILI (editor) - Georgia;

Tamara OVNATANYAN - Armenia;

Natalia DOMAGALSKAYA - Kyrgyzstan;

Farida SHARAFUTDINOVA - Kazakhstan;

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN - Denmark;

Victor UNIYAT - Ukraine;

Vladimir KHANAS - Ukraine

Photo:

Svetlana SVISTUNOVA - Russia;

Galina PETRIASHVILI - Georgia

Design:

GMC design-group, Georgia

Translation:

Teona KUPUNIA - Georgia (GMC)



CaucAsia

INTERNATIONAL COALITION

GenderMediaCaucasus

JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION

17 Ioris Str. TBILISI, 0103, Republic of Georgia

Tel. (995 32) 77 60 18; (995 99) 90 11 24; fax (995 32) 23 09 45

e-mail galapet@ip.osgf.ge