**INFORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNGA 73/153 RESOLUTION ENTITLED “CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE” PRESENTED BY THE OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Republic of Armenia has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with [target 5.3](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=rK7E5gH0h%2BZEsoHUhBKcbR%2BDyqP54tQg8yKy62Ydxkk%3D&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsustainabledevelopment.un.org%2Fsdg5) of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Armenia co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution on “Child, Early and Forced Marriage”, and the [Human Rights Council resolution](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=l6DBXefV3ygKR4ZYdPfihxRsEkXIKfjMeqlvq9ItxB0%3D&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.girlsnotbrides.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2013%2F10%2FHRC-resolution-on-child-early-and-forced-marriage-ENG.pdf) on “Child, Early and Forced Marriage.” In 2014, Armenia signed a [joint statement](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=SVs7I%2B6UEKnjIIqg2RzYw0WMlaIaEOYKDQXqzQDHzJM%3D&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffngeneve.um.dk%2Fen%2Faboutus%2Fstatements%2Fnewsdisplaypage%2F%3Fnewsid%3D6371ad93-8fb0-4c35-b186-820fa996d379) at the Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on a child marriage.

Armenia acceded to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=1i2ru8AD4O5Zb5zSuwwsBJR1oJ2Q7Fw9h7H8NFpVY7E%3D&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2FEN%2FProfessionalInterest%2FPages%2FCRC.aspx) in 1993, which sets a minimum age of marriage of 18, and the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=Skea0%2FXGqVU5Cay8%2BW3aq0cQ7vl4iKPK0PhXICOWT1I%3D&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fwomenwatch%2Fdaw%2Fcedaw%2F) in 1993, which obligates states to ensure free and full consent to marriage.

During Armenia’s 2016 review, the [CEDAW Committee expressed concerns](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=is%2B2LG0nUW%2Bj2eJF5A2s36sfFOPJXKmYNhtsaYC1YnQ%3D&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocuments-dds-ny.un.org%2Fdoc%2FUNDOC%2FGEN%2FN16%2F402%2F28%2FPDF%2FN1640228.pdf%3FOpenElement) about child marriage among Yezidi community, significant school dropout rates among girls from this community and a lack of data on the correlation between this and child marriage.

During its [2015 Universal Periodic Review](https://www.dropbox.com/referrer_cleansing_redirect?hmac=AM8jSAi0OltPuO4WByDQY9RZEyux2pVKRcCHVEg6WYM%3D&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2FEN%2FHRBodies%2FUPR%2FPages%2FAMindex.aspx), Armenia agreed to examine recommendations to enforce the minimum age of marriage set out in law and to develop awareness-raising programs on the negative impact of child marriage.

Over the last two years, Armenia has introduced amendments to key domestic laws, including the Family Code, Labor Code, and Criminal Code, designed to better protect children; children’s rights are also protected under the Constitution. For instance, the Criminal Code of Armenia was amended to include counts on trafficking and on violence and neglect against children, as well as on juvenile justice. The relevant national laws are harmonized internally and with international legislation. The Government of Armenia also adopted the National Plan of Action for Protection of Children’s Rights which became an integral part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. According to a government representative interviewed for this research, the different agencies working with children (for instance, the judicial system, local authorities, and educational institutions) interact with each other and exchange information. There have also been Strategic Action Plans put in place to promote gender equality and women’s equal roles in decision-making and management in socio-economic, education, health, culture, and public information sectors.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia does not provide a definition of a child and juvenile, but stipulates that ‘the person who reached the age of 16 before the committal of the crime is subject to criminal liability.’

The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (5 July 1995) enshrines the right to free choice and consent in marriage. According to Article 35, ‘men and women of marriageable age shall have the right to marry and form a family with free expression of their will.’

Moreover, Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia stipulates the right to education: “Everyone has the right to education. Compulsory education programs and duration are defined by law. Secondary education in public educational institutions is free of charge. Everyone shall have the right to receive free education in higher and other professional (vocational) education institutions on a competitive basis in cases and in the manner prescribed by the law.” According to the Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia (LA-297), "the Republic of Armenia shall ensure the right to education irrespective of nationality, race, sex, language, religion, political or other views, social origin, property or other circumstances." Educational programs are equally accessible to all children. In general schools, gender equality is 1.04%.

Topics related to basic human rights, equality of men and women, elimination of violence, tolerance and civil society are taught within the subject of “Social Sciences” from 8 to 12 grades. Gender themes are also included within the elementary school subject entitled "Me and the Surrounding World." Students learn about equality between men and women while studying these subjects.

All the primary (vocational) and secondary vocational education standards include the “Basics of Law” module, which covers child, early and forced marriage, gender equality, gender-based violence, and so on.

Gender equality trainings and discussions since 2015 have been incorporated into the annual training program for the primary (vocational) and secondary vocational education providers (principals, deputy directors, teachers, etc.) implemented annually by the National Center for Vocational Education Development.

Appendix 1 to the Decision N1334-L of the Government of the Republic of Armenia “On the Approval of the Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 for Gender Policy Implementation in the Republic of Armenia” provides for the awareness-raising on human rights, democracy, and gender equality among students in primary (vocational) and secondary vocational education institutions and for the organization of discussions on gender equality for the administrative and pedagogical staff of the primary (vocational) and secondary vocational education institutions.

In 2018, 12269 (52.8%) out of the 23,228 students enrolled in primary (vocational) and secondary vocational education institutions, and 1822 (27.1%) out of the 6723 students studying in primary (vocational) and vocational secondary education institutions were women.

Based on the “2017-2021 Strategic Plan for the Protection of the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Armenia”, the Center for Legal Education and Rehabilitation Implementation SNCO (hereinafter referred to as the Center) has organized capacity building and awareness raising meetings with the representatives of the relevant authorities on the protection of the rights of the child, highlighting the issue of early marriage.

The issue was also included in the agenda of the Juvenile Justice Council meeting on August 6, 2019. As a result, trainings were organized with the participation of law enforcement officers of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, territorial offices of the Yerevan Social Service, guardianship and trusteeship committees, investigators, lawyers and Police officers.

In 2019, as a part of its partnership with the UNICEF, the Center has developed a Draft Action Plan to Combat Child Abuse, which is intended to be incorporated into the Human Rights Strategy. The plan is assumed to revise Articles 10 and 11 of the “Family Code of the Republic of Armenia” and to prevent early marriages by changing the age of marriage and informing about the change to the general public, including national minorities.

In 2018, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, with the support of the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland within the framework of “The support to the Government of the Republic of Armenia to enact properly the Action Plan under the auspices of the National Human Rights Strategy aimed to educate the public and all the relevant stakeholders on domestic violence issues” program developed “The Strategy on Preventing the Domestic Violence and on Communication of Defending the Persons Subjected to the Domestic Violence” [[1]](#footnote-1) as well as “The Training Program for Public Servants Engaged with the Domestic Violence Issues.” [[2]](#footnote-2)

Taking into consideration the existing consequences of early marriages for girls, which deprive them of their childhood, education, endangering them and the life of their baby due to the physicaly and psychologically unprepared motherhood of these girls, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia participated in the process of changing the age of marriage in Article 10 of the “Family Code of the Republic of Armenia.” As a result, the Armenian government raised the legal age of marriage for women from 17 to 18 years old, the same age as for men. The officials behind the change say they want to ensure gender equality, protect the health of young girls and women, and keep young women in full-time education, in light of a change to the rules which requires everyone to complete 12 years of schooling instead of 10.

Thus, Article 10 of the “Family Code of the Republic of Armenia” defines: "The mutual voluntary consent of a man and a woman and the marital age of them (17 for women and 18 for men) are necessary for marriage conclusion, except as provided in paragraph 2 of this Article. A person may also marry at the age of 17 if his or her parents, adopters or legal guardians agree. A person may also marry at the age of 16 if his or her parents, adopters or legal guardians agree, and the spouse is at least 18 years old. The second part of the Article was added later after Yezidis residing in Armenia held protests. Their daughters get married at an earlier age. Rates of child marriage are much higher among the Yezidi minority than among the general population in Armenia; in addition, rates of unregistered marriages are also very high in these communities. Focus group discussions with Yezidi women revealed that for Yezidis, marriage is considered more important than an education, particularly for girls and women. Participants felt that women should not work outside of the home, and that therefore there is no need for them to continue to study. Commonly Yezidi women do not work, and can only do so if their husbands give permission; this is a tradition that is still strong today. Boys are also usually taken out of school after eighth grade; most Yezidis are self-employed farmers, and do not see the value of educating children beyond eight years of schooling. Yezidi girls usually marry at 13-14 years old, a girl who doesn’t marry until 17 is considered ‘late and not worthy of respect’, according to focus group participants. Yezidi boys usually marry when they are aged 17-20. In most cases, marriages are arranged by parents.

The Ministry of Health and medical organizations of the Republic of Armenia continuously carry out educational activities in the communities to prevent early marriages of girls.

# As refers to the issue of gender equality, the specialized unit of the Police of the Republic of Armenia has been actively involved in the development of the Draft Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on “Approving Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Action Plan for 2019-2023 in the Republic of Armenia.” It should be noted that Police is in charge of the actions specified in the decision. At the same time, the Police officer who is involved in the Juvenile Justice Council, currently participates in the development of the program "On Preventive Actions against Child Abuse."

# For the purpose of protecting the rights of victims of domestic violence, preventing of domestic violence, promoting equality between men and women, providing appropriate support to victims of domestic violence, the Law of the Republic of Armenia on “Prevention of violence within the family, protection of victims of violence within the family and restoration of peace in the family” was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on December 13, 2017 and was signed by the President of the Republic of Armenia on December 30, 2017, which entered into force on January 31, 2018. Police officers of the specialized unit of the Police of the Republic of Armenia have been carrying out their functions as prescribed by the Law since June 30, 2018. They make precautionary, emergency intervention decisions, supervise the implementation of the relevant requirements of emergency intervention and protective decisions and conduct preventive records of persons who committed domestic violence.

Conversations and meetings on various legal topics were organized and held by the Police officers of the units of juvenile affairs and prevention of domestic violence at all secondary schools of the Republic of Armenia aimed to raise the legal education and awareness, as well as to detect and prevent the cases of violence against them.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination, the equality of men and women, phenomena of “Violence’’, “Domestic violence” and its types, as well as types of protective measures for the victims of domestic violence were presented and discussed during these conversations.

Competent Police officers, in carrying out their functional daily duties, focus on the activities of detecting committed crimes and violence against juveniles, including cases of domestic violence. It should be noted that the above-mentioned conversations/meetings also contribute to the detection of cases of violence against juveniles.

If the juvenile has been subjected to the domestic violence and there is a need to transfer him to a safe environment, the competent Police officers shall direct the juvenile to the FAR (Fund for Armenian Relief) Children’s Support Center, where the necessary support is provided by a multidisciplinary team comprised of a psychologist, a teacher, a social worker and a Police officer.

Child marriage violates girls’ rights, denies them of their childhood, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and limits their opportunities. No cultural, religious, or economic rationale for child marriage can possibly justify the damage these marriages do to young girls and their potential. A girl should have the right to choose whom she marries and when. Parents want the best for their children, and need to support their girls’ choices and decisions to marry. Armenia has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 and is continuing its efforts in this direction. Nowadays, there are few child marriages in Armenia, and overall, the average age of first marriage has increased since independence. At the same time, criminal sanctions in cases involving sexual relations with someone under the age of 16 act as a deterrent.

1. <http://moj.am/storage/uploads/1._Communication_strategy_ARM_1_1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://moj.am/storage/uploads/2._Curriculum-_ARM.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)