

## Gender and Sustainable Development: Empowering Women in Armenia

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One of the issues in Armenia remains the involvement of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Women can play a significant role of change agents in the society in conflict transformation, confidence building, and reconciliation. However, women were somewhat alienated from these processes, particularly in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where almost political leaders é exclusively men are engaged in negotiations and diplomatic relations.

Another issue is the women's engagement in business and decision-making in economic relations. Women in Armenia are not reaching their economic potential. Women bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities and consequently face barriers to formal employment. Thus, the economic aspect of gender equality is equally important as the political dimension in Armenia.

Entrepreneurship is seen in Armenia as a crucial option for women to gain a livelihood. In terms of loan requirements, women and men face similar obstacles in accessing finance. However, there are gender-based obstacles, which compromise women's ability to start and grow small and medium entrepreneurs. These include (a) lack of appropriate skills, information, and familiarity with the business environment; and (b) questions of self-confidence, lack of networks, aversion to risk and inexperience in running a business. Cultural perceptions that women do not make business decisions mean that women have few role models.

This study aims to facilitate women to enhance business skills, financial literacy, and confidence in their entrepreneurship abilities to enable them to build productive businesses in profitable sectors, and benefit from economic opportunities:

- Through the consistent efforts of the government, civil society and development partners to minimize women's alienation from the various political and economic processes.
- To strive to promote gender equality and empowerment of women through both mainstreaming gender dimension into its programs and initiating and implementing gender-specific projects, as well as incorporating the principle of equality of men and women into its human resources and other corporate policies and practices.

This study will carry out using methodology that includes country consultations, focus group discussions, and review of secondary sources.

Addressing the gender issues such as stereotyping, women's limited access to economic opportunities, political participation, this assessment will suggest key policy reforms and service delivery improvements that empower women in Armenia.