

**IV International Gender Workshop - Abstracts**

**19-20 November 2015, Warsaw**

**Armenia**

**Gohar Shahnazaryan: Structural and Cultural Causes of Gender-Based Violence in Armenia**

Since independence, the Republic of Armenia has faced numerous obstacles as it transitions to a market economy, including the conflict with Azerbaijan, repercussions of the 1988 earthquake, the collapse of the national economy, the production crisis, extreme inflation, and increased unemployment. As a result of these endemic issues, nearly one million people, or twenty five per cent of the population, have migrated from Armenia since 1991, the majority of which are men. As the Armenian population transformed, traditional gender roles were strained and forced into conflict as women were forced to bear the burden of household responsibilities, childcare, and financial support for the family. Women in rural areas and in border villages have been the most vulnerable to physical and psychological violence and reduced access to proper health, psychological, and legal support. Women's economic and political status has been drastically decreased during the past 20 years. The challenges facing women in Armenia have been compounded by the absence of domestic violence legislation and the perception that gender based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV) is a private matter that should not be addressed by the police or social services. A 2007 study by the American University of Armenia found that while 60% of survey respondents agreed that domestic violence is a widespread problem in Armenia, the majority of respondents also agreed that being unfaithful (67%) or neglecting children (52%) justifies physical force against wives. Other manifestations of gender based violence are discrimination against women rights defenders, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, sex-selective abortions, and discrimination against LGBT organizations.

**Czech Republic**

**Lucie Jarkovská: Gender Equality and Sex Education**

Childhood is conceptualised as innocent and as such at constant risk. One of the alleged risks is sexuality in a broad sense. This perceived sexual risk to children becomes part of various political and social processes. Through debates on the form and content of sex education the issues of parental/school authority, adult-child relationship or sexual diversity and gender equity are negotiated. And vice versa children's protection in connection with questions of sexuality becomes one of the core arguments in debates on LGBT+ rights or gender equality policies as we could see it in the case of Slovak referendum on sex education and LGBT+ marriage/adoption right. Conservative agents plea for abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education strategies. In some countries the strategy of "evidence based" (EB) curricula is

adopted and perceived as valueless. The presentation will analyse the situation of sex education in Central Europe and show how both these strategies are problematic in terms of gender equality and LGBT rights.

**Jitka Hausenblasova: Stopping Cyber-Violence against Women and Men in the Czech Republic**

Gender Studies introduces new topics in gender based violence discourse. Main research findings show, how much such violence is spread and which are the crucial issues men and women are facing. How is gender dimension reflected by the key actors and how do we influence public awareness in our campaigns? The most relevant information on the role of gender in our experience of ICT in relation to cyber-violence will be presented.

**Georgia**

**Natia Gvianishvili: Transgender persons in Georgia and their access to sexual and reproductive rights**

In the present article, I explore the situation of transgender persons living in Georgia with a specific focus on their access to sexual and reproductive rights. I will analyze how biologically determinist perceptions of gender in the existing medical discourse (as well as violence and discrimination) work as restrictive mechanisms limiting access of transgender persons towards SRHR services but also further limit their access to legal gender recognition and subsequently adequate employment and protection from discrimination. I will examine the possible solutions that have been outlined through the knowledge and experience accumulated by WISG and other human rights organizations in their years of research and working closely with transgender community, as well as resulting from the analysis of best international practices on the matter.

**Alla Parunova: Sexual Harassment in Public Spaces in Georgia: Statement of Power or Invisible Discrimination?**

According to the latest research on sexual harassment, young women in Georgia often are sexually harassed in public spaces. While the research is not representative and cannot be generalized on all Georgian women, still the results reveal the untold experiences of women and bring to light the invisible discrimination which is highly neglected by society. However, the main questions of my presentation are: How invisible is sexual harassment to the society? Why people tend to neglect it? What is the main reason of sexual harassment in public space? While sexual harassment is told to be invisible it is often takes place in highly crowded places such as streets, transport, etc. Despite that fact, society does not discuss sexual harassment or in case of discussion it often blames only women. As far as sexual harassment is a public act, it is also can be accepted as a public statement of power of men over women, of their privileges and of the norms of masculinity and femininity that are dominant in Georgian society and that make men actors and women the passive objects of these acts. So, paradoxically, despite the publicity of sexual harassment in Georgia, it still remains invisible, which in my opinion is a proof of visibility of patriarchal culture and gender hierarchies.

## **Poland**

### **Marcin Szczepkowski: Recent research findings on popular approaches to registered partnerships for non-heterosexual partners**

What is the public attitude to the subject of non-heterosexual relationships? What needs do LGBTQIA communities have and how much society is able to agree with them? During the presentation we will get to know the results of two polls, organized by the Love Does Not Exclude Association in 2015 – "Poles' attitudes towards marriage equality" and "LGBTQIA community's needs and attitudes concerning marriage equality" – which are showing the current situation and outline the range of activities in the subject of civil partnerships and marriage equality in Poland.

### **Agata Chełstowska: The way to In-Vitro in Poland**

While talking about the Polish debates and changes concerning abortion, in vitro fertilisation and other reproductive issues, I would like to present a new theoretical framework - reproductive justice. This new approach to reproductive issues, formulated by American feminists of color (Sister Song Collective) can prove especially useful in post-socialist countries, as it links reproductive health and reproductive rights with economy, justice and demography policies. This approach moves away from the concept of "choice" (associated easily with the capitalist consumerist "choice" context) and towards framing the fights for reproductive health and freedom as part of wider movements for social justice. I will also place the Polish experiences in the post-socialist context, especially by describing the role of nationalism and Catholic Church in Polish political life.

## **Russia**

### **Boris Denisov (and Victoria Sakevich): The implementation of sexual and reproductive rights in post-Soviet Russia**

Russia inherited the Soviet Union, which supported all progressive initiatives stemmed from the UN and other international organizations, at the same time we are now experiencing a conservative revolution, therefore, the situation in our country is quite contradictory. Reproductive rights have traditionally been mainly concerned with protecting mothers and children and on mother's reproductive health. However, the state's attitude towards safe and satisfactory sexual life, family planning and reproductive choice has been and still is ambiguous. Although abortion and contraceptives are legal, they are negatively viewed in some segments of society, and many people and policy makers still believe that birth control is synonymous with limiting population growth and that increased access to family planning services results in a decline in the birth rate, and thus in depopulation which is a national nightmare. Official policy with respect to family planning has changed radically in the last 15 years, from being supportive and encouraging to being critical and dismissive. The federal family planning programme from the early 1990s was supposed to fundamentally alter society's attitude towards women's

reproductive rights, to encourage family planning and create suitable conditions for its implementation. It assumed that increasing sexual awareness and transition to more modern birth-control methods would, among other things, ensure a substantial decrease in maternal and infant morbidity and mortality. At the same time gay sex between men had been decriminalized. Hundreds of family planning clinics centers were opened, free contraceptives were provided to socially vulnerable groups and sexual education programs for schools were developed, leading to rapidly declining rates of abortion and maternal mortality. However, these steps to extend reproductive rights encountered fierce resistance. Led by communists State Duma launched a campaign against them. In 1998 budget funding of the programme was cut off. The government now is adopting a different approach, attempting to reduce the abortion rate by restricting availability of abortion services, introducing clerics in them, disseminating disinformation on harmful effects of abortions on female health, and suggesting that abortions are unacceptable from an ethical point of view. Today, Russia has no official family planning program. On the other hand, the Concept for Russian demographic policy up to 2025 (approved in 2007) mentions among its objectives "*the strengthening of the institution of the family and the restoration and preservation of spiritual and moral traditions in family relations*" and calls for additional measures to further reduce the abortion rate. The program does not specify what these measures might be. Inconsistent state policy and lack of financing make it doubtful whether recently achieved positive changes in reproductive health can be maintained. Yet Russia remains a nation with likely most liberal abortion regulations. However, the government plays a double game declaring rights, but avoiding to support them.

### **Igor Yasin: LGBT Life in Russia after the Enactment of the Homophobic Law: How to Fight for Equal Rights**

Since the homophobic "propaganda" law was adopted in June 2013, only a few real cases have been brought to the Russian courts under it. However, the law has made the lives of LGBT people in the country more difficult by creating a fear of prosecution among them, especially for activists and their supporters. In addition, many other repressive laws (aimed at civil society) have been adopted over the last two or three years that have made it harder for LGBT activists to engage in public affairs. Activists have tried to follow different approaches in resisting the law, including attempts to put pressure on the state through Western governments and institutions. This strategy hasn't (and couldn't have) succeeded, especially in a context like Russia. It has simply isolated the LGBT community more and strengthened more conservative political trends in the country. What we really need is to concentrate our efforts on changing public opinion, not just fighting the state, through building a stronger LGBT movement with democratic structures, engagement with wider political and social struggles, and solidarity on the level of civil society organizations both in Russia and internationally.

### **Serbia**

#### **Vladimir Miletić: Mental healthcare for LGBT persons in Serbia: challenges and solutions**

LGBT mental health as a separate subject is still on the sidelines of mental health protection theory and practice in Serbia. In this paper we will approach the subject from three distinct

perspectives. We will consider epidemiological aspects of LGBT mental health, such as evidence of increased prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms in the Serbian LGBT population, as well as different contributing factors. Also, we will reference the state of care received by LGBT persons, based on qualitative data. In the end, we will discuss the way in which LGBT psychology is treated within professional training programs, and present current and future solutions to identified challenges.

**Mladen Antonijevic Priljeva: Developing LGBT public policy in transitional systems - the case of Serbia**

The workshop like to open a debate about LGBT public policy development processes in transitional societies and developing democracies as a sustainable, targeted and need based approach to advancement of quality of life of LGBT citizens on the model of Serbia. It will focus on the development of adequate policy proposals, communication with stakeholders and achieving positive political circumstances.

**Ukraine**

**Anna Sharyhina: Kyiv Pride as provocation, reaction and process. Implementation of the right to the freedom of assembly for LGBT people in Ukraine**

The presentation will be a presentation and probably discussion about pride-movement in Ukraine with the example of KyivPride. We have been organizing Pride and March of Equality (Pride March) since 2012. And since then the attitude of society and of the LGBT-community to this event have been continually changing. And we can observe this process now. What is KyivPride for Ukrainian activists, for average citizens and the LGBT community, for the human rights movement and for democratic values in our country? Is it an instrument for achievement of our goals or a process without an end? In my presentation I will discuss the situation with pride-movement in Ukraine now, how Ukrainian LGBT activists use the Pride idea and what the results of this work are.

**Oleg Marushchenko: Is non-sexist education possible? Regional experiment in Ukrainian schools and kindergartens**

The presentation focuses on the regional gender experiment, which began in January 2015 in 8 schools and kindergartens of Kharkiv region. The purpose of the experiment is the formation of a gender-sensitive educational environment by simultaneous transformation of major institutional foundations of education (traditional style of teaching and management, stereotypical visual space of schools and kindergartens, sexist content of textbooks, formal rituals and after-school holidays, etc.). The presentation will describe the main stages of the gender experiment (such as sociological research, seminars and workshops with educators, gender audit), as well as how they are perceived by its direct participants.