

**REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

**on National Follow-up**

**to the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS)**

**of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)**

**Introduction**

Ageing of the world population is one of the biggest challenges of our era. For the future of any country ageing is dangerous, but at the same time, we must not forget that old aged people are the inner mental and spiritual force of a state and a country, the wealth without which no country can survive.

Priorities of social protection field of the Republic of Armenia coincide with the supremacies established in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Program of the Republic of Armenia, which are also included in social support programs for enlargement of addressness and implementation of activities focused on social protection of old aged and disabled people.

**Statistics**

By January 1, 2007 the number of people, who are 65 years old and above that age is 12,7% of the total population of the Republic of Armenia (3,2 mln.) or 408 100 people, and people above 80 compile only 1,2% (37300 people) of the total population. 64,1% of the total population of the Republic live in cities, 35,9% live in rural areas, whereas 45,6% of 65 years old people and people above that age live in cities, 54,4% live in rural areas. The number of old people in regard to city dwellers and villagers is not proportional, probably because of lower level living conditions in villages.

Last year at the same period the number of old people was 10,5% or 337 700 people of the total number of the population. In comparison with last year this year the number of old people increased by 8800. About 60% of the total number of old aged people are women.

Women form 51,7% of the total population of the Republic, although in the age group of people above working age (65 years old and above) women compile 61 %.

Average life duration in the Republic of Armenia is 73,5 (for men – 70,3, for women – 76,5):

In the group of people above pension age the disabled form 12,5% (51115 people, among those – 21857 women, or 42,8% of the old disabled).

During the coming years we are expecting growth of the number of old people in the population structure. According to international standards our country is considered ageing country with its all consequences.

### **Commitment 1.**

Elderly and old aged citizens of Armenia are carriers of our national moral values, traditions, culture, life experience of generations and serve as a support for the family, however, it is painful that today quality of their life is far from being satisfactory.

A very important step towards improvement of life quality of elderly people can be considered the fact that in 2005 as a result of the amendment made in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia a new provision was added, according to which the state must provide for decent life level of elderly people and take measures within its power to implement provisions established in that article.

With that the Republic of Armenia strives for efficient solving of social-economic, family, daily round, health, psychological and other problems, creating conditions for healthy, secure and proper old age. Steady increase of life quality of old aged and elderly people, their active participation in the development of social life is one of the objectives of social policy, constant issue of solicitude for our state.

**Commitment 2.**

Special measures which will contribute to integration of elderly people in the public and the political life are not implemented in the Republic of Armenia. There is no national consultative body dealing in aging issues.

**Commitment 3. -**

**Commitment 4.**

Legal basis for social protection of elderly people is the current legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

Provisions connected with elderly people issues are established in the RA Constitution, the RA Laws “About State Pensions”, “About Social Support”, “About State Allowances” and in a number of sublegislative acts.

In particular the RA Law “About Social Support”, which was adopted in December 2005, regulates relations connected with granting social support, establishes those social groups (among which are elderly and old aged citizens), which should be granted services of social support, care and attend which are guaranteed by the state.

In order to bring the mentioned law to life the RA government introduced “The Order of Granting Care for the Old and Disabled” and “The Order of Recovering

Support” which fill in the existing gap in the RA legislation and contribute to the addressness and legibility of the policy carried out in that field.

The majority of about 350 thousand of elderly people of the Republic of Armenia lives in families and because taking care for the old generation is considered the most important value in the Armenian national system of values, therefore services of social support guaranteed by the state are granted mainly to lonely old aged people (both having children but living alone and without children).

In 2007 the average pension level in the Republic of Armenia is 12600 AMD.

After 1996 the same age of retirement for men and women was established – 63 years old, instead of 60 years old for men and 55 - for women. Both for men and women age gradation was introduced, according to which each year retirement age rises for 6 months. Age gradation for men finished in 2001, and for women it is continuing and will work until 2011. In 2007 women have the retirement right when they become 61 years old.

In the field of social protection the implementation of granting financial help in accordance with the level of vulnerability of the family in which they live. Although in the system of family allowances for elderly people special points are given, which let those families get additional points of vulnerability and receive financial support. In the system of vulnerability evaluation of families, elderly people are divided to three groups, which receive different vulnerability points according to their age differences and absence of children:

Pensioners under 75 – 36,00 points,

Pensioners above 75 – 39,00 points,

Pensioners having no children or other people who legally take care of them – 37,00 points:

According to the data base of December 2006 about 52408 families, who have elderly pensioner members and 13144 lonely pensioners having no children receive

family allowances (the least quantity of vulnerability points which is considered basis for getting allowances is 34,00 established by the RA government for 2007).

According to the RA Law “About RA State Budget” Article 13, Annex 8, during 2006 reimbursement of deposits contributed before June 10, 1993 in Hajkhnajbank was carried out, where as priorities were considered 70 years old pensioners, under 70 and lonely pensioners.

From August to December 2006 and the first quarter of 2007 about 1 billion AMD was reimbursed to the afore-mentioned groups of elderly people.

#### **Commitment 5.**

According to the current RA legislation women and men have equal rights, no discrimination is prescribed by the legislation. However, the legislation provides no provision for elderly and old aged citizens.

In accordance with the RA Law “About Social Protection in Case of Employment and Unemployment of the Population” unemployed people of long term service and with privileged conditions receiving pension who seek for a job got the right of vocational training and additional education.

In the state annual programs regulating employment designed for people seeking for a job, there are no divisions of programs designed specially for women and men, both men and women if they wish can participate in all programs without any gender discrimination.

Statistics show that the majority of people involved in the afore-mentioned programs are women.

Tension of the labour market and high level of unemployment in the Republic of Armenia still do not allow to implement projects promoting employment of old aged people. However, in comparison with the soviet period, working age was prolonged, especially for women.

According to the RA Labour Code Article 113, Part 1, Point 9 an employer may terminate an employment contract signed for an indefinite term and one signed for a definite term prior to the expiry of the contract because the employee reaches the retirement age. If the employer agrees a person who has reached the retirement age may continue working.

In accordance with the RA Law “About Civil Service” the retirement age for civil servants of the Republic of Armenia is 65.

#### **Commitment 6.**

In our Republic almost nothing is carried out for the education of elderly people.

At the RA Ministry of Education and Science a working group to design the draft of the RA Law “About Education of Old People” was organized.

By Yerevan state information technology budget new subject program was created for old people to get additional education and work with Windows package, Word Excel program.

Some NGOs also deal in education issues of old aged people implementing corresponding projects.

Definite steps in the sphere of education and employment of old people are made by the NGO “Mission Armenia”, particularly:

In communities function self-assistance groups which consist of old aged people served by the NGO “Mission Armenia”.

To increase the role of old aged citizens in the society self-expression and self-implementation exhibitions of works of old aged people were organized.

To develop skills of self interests protection of old people and establishment of social partnership in communities round table discussions were organized with the participation of old people and organizations functioning in the community.

Study classes were organized and implemented to develop skills of workers of “Mission Armenia” dealing in issues of interests protection, corresponding manual was created and distributed to the workers.

Articles on elderly people issues and on increasing their role were published.

Elderly people issues were discussed during TV and radio programs.

In order to change negative stereotypes documental films were produced.

A video film on enhancement of the role of elderly people, creation of their positive image was produced and shown.

## **Commitment 7.**

Provision of social maintenance services is an important means of involving elderly people in the active public life and increasing their life quality. These services are provided both at round-time care institutions and at home and at elderly people care day time centers.

More than 10000 lonely old aged people in the Republic receive services from state and non state organizations.

At 6 old-aged pensioner's homes (4- state and 2 non-state) of the Republic more than 1100 old and disabled people are taken care of, at home and at elderly people day time care centers about 9000 lonely old people are taken care of.

At home and at day-time care centers different services are provided to elderly people: every day services, medical assistance, social-psychological and legal consultations.

Care and social maintenance services are provide to elderly people at home both by state and by non-governmental organizations, namely a reliable organization in this field is the charity NGO "Mission Armenia", which organized 12 community centers in the regions and Yerevan. For the period of coming two years the organization planed to create one social house and one elderly people garden (daily club) in two communities of Yerevan.

Elderly people both at old-aged pensioner's homes and at homes, and at day-time care centers lead an active public life. They periodically participate in cultural activities,

different meetings and discussions, celebrate all holidays and birthdays, go to excursions etc.

Through groups elected by themselves elderly people take part in making and implementing decisions concerning their life and activities of this organization, at old-aged pensioner's homes there are leader consultations, which discuss and solve various quarreling questions.

Attention is paid also to the provision of accessibility for elderly people in different spheres of public life. Such a step may be considered the Order of provision of social, transport and engineer substructures accessibility for groups of people with limited capabilities for movement, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in February 2006.

One of the positive and progressive changes in the sphere of social protection of elderly people is that since 2002 the basis for entrance to the old people care institutions is considered the conclusion of territorial agency of social services, which is given as a result of home visit after complex evaluation of social-economic, family, health and psychological conditions of elderly citizen. Hence this contributes to finding out and choosing old aged people requiring care and social maintenance, and individual approach to providing services in conformity with their needs.

It is well known that old age is one of the stages of age development of a person. Aging is biologically non-avoided, subversive process, which starting from the birth of a person and developing with years, leads to the limitation of adaptation skills (defensive, adjustability) and different pathological phenomena.

Investigations show that only 20% of elderly people is practically healthy. Multimorbile condition is characteristic of elderly people, that is simultaneous existence of several illnesses, which have chronicle features. It is this condition that makes urgent

the issue of increasing legal and social guarantees of medical assistance provision to elderly people.

The state guarantees the right of receiving medical assistance and service free of charge in the framework of state health purpose programmes.

The right of getting medical assistance is established by the RA Law “About Medical Assistance and Service to Population”, the resolution of the RA Government dated in March 4, 2004 N318-N “About Free of Charge Medical Aid Service Guaranteed by the State”. According to the February 17, 2005 amendment to the mentioned law, all people of 65 and above that age are served in dispensary-polyclinic institutions free of charge. This amendment improves partially the procedure of providing medical assistance to elderly people.

Elderly people also have the right of getting medicine on privileged conditions: Lonely pensioners who do not work - at a 50% discount, and pensioners who work – at a 30% discount.

Bellow there is an information about the largest NGO dealing in elderly people issues in Armenia.

“Mission Armenia” is a charity NGO dealing in elderly people issues, which was founded in 1993 in Yerevan. It is a member of different regional and international networks on elderly people issues, social reforms, poverty reduction, presents active participation in international conferences devoted to elderly people issues and in the process designing and adoption of international documents directed to solve those problems, has a great input in *The Second World Wide Conference – Madrid 2002*, *Ministerial Conference of Economic Committee of Europe – Berlin 2002*, where the

honor of NGO declaration announcement from all member organizations was given to “Mission Armenia”, namely to the president Hripsime Kirakosyan.

In the Caucasian region “Mission Armenia” is the introducer of principally new model of service rendering to elderly people, which difference from the former institutional system is in community based approach with determination of services. This model of service gives elderly people an opportunity to lead an independent and participatory life and receive necessary social and health services at home and in the community.

One of the most important principles of the model is flexibility of rendering services, harmonizing them with the needs of stakeholders. According to it, stakeholders are offered individual addressed form of rendered services, which makes the provided assistance efficient. Deriving from the results of continuous investigations of needs, in accordance with changes in physical and social needs of elderly people, in the process of rendering services the list of services is changing, fitting the new raised problems. This innovative approach gave “Mission Armenia” opportunities to decrease abject poverty and exclusion of its stakeholders, improve their health conditions and standards of living, to ensure decent life for them, creating utmost possibilities for independence, self expression and participation in the public life.

The model is included in the national program of the RA government “Improvement of Rendering Social Service to Lonely Elderly and Disabled People” (Resolution N 485, 1997). And since 2007 “Mission Armenia” receives part of financing of elderly people social services with “Middle Term Expenditures Program” of the RA Government.

“Mission Armenia” also implements public advocating directed to protection of elderly people’s interests and increasing their role in the society, carries out activities of

personnel skills development, and works in the direction of ensuring stability of the organization and creating social partnership.

Today “Mission Armenia” serves 8000 unprovided, lonely, disabled, local and migrant elderly people of 8 regions of the Republic: both rendering different home care services to stakeholders, who have fully or partially lost moving activity and creation of favorable life conditions for physically and socially active elderly people.

“Mission Armenia” carries out its activities through several key substructures, which are spread in 8 regions of Armenia.

Those structures are:

Community centers – there are 8 such centers performing 2 main functions:

1. Renders various social-health and care services both in the center and visiting homes of stakeholders
2. Fulcrum for each region in regard to organizing, managing, coordinating and evaluating works of all other substructures of the Region

Charity canteens – through charity canteens the organization renders food security services, giving warm food consisting of different dishes. Nowadays there are 32 charity canteens functioning in 8 regions of the Republic.

Recovering centers – the organization founded 4 recovering services for stakeholders having hospital medical temporarily treatment needs.

Resource centers – In every resource center different classes are being organized. Today there are 5 such principal centers.

Medical centers – through 20 medical centers the corresponding personnel of “Mission Armenia” gives sick people first medical aid, consultations, renders first medical service.

Mental health day time centers – there are 4 mental health day time centers for stakeholders having mental health problems, one of which is planned for young insufficiently developed stakeholders (Warm Corner).

Elderly people garden (daily club) – one of the largest acquisitions of the organization during last years can be considered the foundation of the first elderly people garden for the whole region.

Old aged pensioner’s home – although community based approach is used in all social support activities of “Mission Armenia”, because of extreme necessity for a number of elderly people, who not only require twenty-four-hour care and supervision but also a place to live, the organization also founded an old aged pensioner’s home.

In community day time centers of the charity NGO “Mission Armenia” were created self assistance groups, which provide different types of assistance and maintenance services to people of their age, who have the need but cannot attend the centers. In the day time centers elderly people do different kinds of work: sew, embroider, read, organize discussions, watch TV, play table games, celebrate holidays and birthdays, go to cultural centers, do sightseeing etc. They also raise questions of vital importance for the community, invite or visit officials, who help to solve community problems. Periodically exhibitions of elderly people’s hand works are organized in the centers (namely, on International Day of Elderly People and on other occasions).

Summing up the given information, we can note that devoted to its mission and direction since early 1990s “Mission Armenia” designed, introduced and by now has been implementing an innovative non-institutional community based model of social and health services, acting as its advocate in the country and the whole Caucasian region. As a feasible means of assistance and a valuable answer to different needs of elderly people this model proved its expediency and efficiency in the context of the present social-economic changes of Armenia and other Caucasian countries long ago.

Parallel to the activities connected with rendering important services of different character directed to elderly people, the organization shows active participation in works contributing to the development of the system of social services.

One of the advantages of the activities of the organization is that without changing native and desired environment of its stakeholders, without excluding them from the community “Mission Armenia” offers a wide range of services, planned both for stakeholders attending the center and those who cannot leave home.

Through rendering community based services, to elderly, disabled and indigent people is provided an opportunity to lead independent, participatory life and receive necessary social and health services at home and in the community. Ways of their free self expression are not limited to this, their usual life style does not change, and they do not leave native environment and people.

The package of services of the organization is directed to internal and external problems, psychological issues of different nature: including overcoming of loneliness and exclusion, stressful and critical situations.

The complexity of the offered services contributes to the reintegration and activation of the stakeholders in the context of recovering and development of possibilities to live independent in the society, having as the final objective the international slogan “Society for all ages”.

Summarizing the presented information, below we would like to mention the main strategic guiding principles of the activities connected with the elderly people issues:

- To make community based services and social-health upbringing as available as possible.
- Create opportunities for elderly people to lead an independent and active life without excluding them from the native environment.
- Do works for the protection of elderly people’s interests and for the elucidation of their issues.
- Always take into consideration individual opinion of the stakeholders on provided services and make pivotal actions which are considered important and favorable for them.
- Contribute to the realization and enforcement of the process of social services allocation by the state to charity NGOs and to promote social partnership beginnings.
- Contribute to poverty reduction and legal base creating activities directed to the improvement of the system.

#### **Commitment 8.**

With “The National Program of 2004-2010 on Improvement of Women’s Conditions and Increasing their Role in the Society in the Republic of Armenia” ratified by the government in the projects implemented for women it is planned to enlarge study components of life skills development, own rights and gender issues. In the framework of the above mentioned national program special classes on gender issues for public, political figures and civil servants will be organized.

Importance is also given to advocating healthy life style among students and their preparation for the future family life. Also inclusion of gender issues in copy-books and study programs is planned.

The government of the Republic of Armenia confirmed demographical situation of the Republic of Armenia and state demographic policy vision, according to which in the nearest future family directed state policy should be developed, which will also have gender direction. The legislation of the Republic of Armenia does not have provisions on gender discrimination.

### **Commitment 9.**

The majority of about 350 thousand elderly people of the Republic of Armenia lives in families and care for the old generation is considered the most important value in the Armenian national system of values, therefore services of social support guaranteed by the state are granted mainly to lonely old people (both having children but living alone and without children).

We also must note, that each year specialists working with elderly people, independent of organizational-legal form of the institution where they work, attend vocational additional education short classes, which make their further work more efficient, which in its turn contributes to solving elderly people’s problems.

At the same time we cannot deny, that inspite of legal acts and implemented reforms and many activities carried out during recent years, there are still many unsolved problems and the quality of elderly people's life still remains unsatisfied.

### **Commitment 10.**

As an example of regional cooperation can be mentioned work experience of the organization "Mission Armenia".

So, "Mission Armenia" has a solid management system, about six hundred professional and experienced employees, in different regions of Armenia founded more than one hundred substructures serving elderly people, has cooperation relations and is reliable among local authorities. By now it has implemented a dozen programs financed by international organizations and foreign governments. It has monopoly advantage in the Caucasian region.

At the request of Caucasian organizations "Mission Armenia" started to introduce its model in other countries of Caucasian region implementing joint programs with local NGOs by organizing special study classes, also participating in the process of putting the model into practice.

Particularly:

Include aging issues in all policies, make societies and economies harmonious and create society for all ages.

Ensure elderly people's participation and their entire integration in the society.

Promote life long education and bring educational systems to conformity with changing economic, social and demographic conditions.

Guarantee life quality for all age groups, and provide independent lifestyle, including health and well being.

Ensure gender approach in aging society.

Give assistance to families taking care for elderly people, and promote intergenerational solidarity among members of those families.

Promote implementation and monitoring of regional strategies through regional cooperation.

The organization carries out its activities in a way that in Armenia the mentioned international principles, according to which “Mission Armenia” built its strategic priorities, would be implemented. They are:

Develop and enlarge the package of social-health services rendered to the stakeholders, taking into consideration urgent needs of the stakeholders and the present international experience in this area of activities.

Develop and implement activities of public awareness, protection of interests and advocating.

Make steps in the direction of stability and continuation of the activities of the organization.

Plan and make definite steps directed to capability development of the organization.

**As a summary:** Considering extremely important the need of having a fundamental document in the social security field, in 2007 it is planned to design a strategic document, namely Long term purposeful program (2007-2015) on elderly people protection in the Republic of Armenia, which leads to increase life quality and formation of harmonious civil society characterized by solitude of generations. The mentioned strategy will give an opportunity to ensure implementation of different programs and their monitoring. It must be mentioned that the main principles of the international Action Plan, adopted by the Madrid Second Conference should be the basis for every activity directed to elderly people.