

## **National status report on gender education**

### **OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE-AZERBAIJAN**

### **NETWORK WOMEN'S PROGRAM**

## **NATIONAL STATUS REPORT ON HIGHER SCHOOL REFORMS AND GENDER EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY**

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### **Educational Reforms**

The system of higher education in the Azerbaijan Republic consists of the following types of state and private institutions: universities, academies, institutes, colleges and conservatoires. One of the most important reforms is the transition to a multi-level system of higher professional education in compliance with the Law on Education approved in October, 1992. In its provisions the Law sets guarantees of the equal access to the primary, undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate educational levels for both genders.

This new Law defined and legislated the general principles and structure of the entire education system in Azerbaijan and in addition permitted the establishment of private educational institutions. The Law approved the following credentials (from law to upper levels): Bakalavr, Magistr, Doctorate (PhD), The Doktor Nauk (should have been phased out, but still undergoes considerations on the necessity of this educational level).

Institutions have the right to choose their approach to the multi-level education of specialists, determine the contents of this education, and draw up academic plans for these disciplines. The only restrictions are those imposed by the requirements of state educational standards to maintain a minimum of knowledge. They have acquired independence in financial in management matters and can therefore obtain their own financial resources.

Another important achievement of the Law was establishment of the National Entrance examination for the prospectus students. The examination is held in several installations according to the group of specialities. In total higher education specialities included to admission plan are classified in five groups: technical specialities, economic, humanitarian, medical and pedagogical.

According to the brochure "Gender Aspects of Admission Examination Results to Higher Education Schools" published by the State Admissions Commission, in the year 2004 among total number of 90680 applications to the higher educational institutions, boys comprised 48.52 percent and girls

51.48 percent. The statistical analyses of the State Admissions Commission testify that since establishment of the National Entrance examination the number of girls applicants exceeded the correspondent number of boys. However, when it comes to the admission to the high schools, the statistics on the percentage of boys and girls admitted to the higher educational institutions shows the reversed numbers. For example, in 2004 the total number of applicants admitted to the higher educational institutions of the country made up 12500 boys (28.79%) and 11783 girls (25.55%). This gap does not testify that boys get better training than girls for the admission examination, what in some cases might be true. But may find its explanation in the number of boys and girls students admitted to the private schools, where the pass level requires lesser points than admission to the state universities. The figures show that the total number of boys admitted to the private universities exceeds the number of girls on about 25%. This gender disparity proves that parents are more eager to pay for the higher education of their male children, who will be the future breadwinners of their families.

The statistic results also confirmed that in choice of the profession applicants are driven by the social stereotypes about "male" and "female" professions. For example, girls comprise 96.06 percent of applicants to group, where offered specialities are psychology and pedagogy. Boys give preference to the technical specialities (mathematics, physics, engineering, etc.) - 74.81 percent and to the economic group of specialities (economy, management and geography) - 74.76 percent. The number of female applicants to the humanitarian and medical specialities is slightly higher than that of males and makes up 62.99 and 59.97 percent respectively.

Currently the new project of the Law on Education undergoes considerations in the Parliament of Azerbaijan. The aim of the new Law is to increase status of the secondary schools and to introduce the single final examination. While undergoing discussions in the higher institutions of Azerbaijan the Law received the number of amendments and now is revised in the Commission of Public Education in the Parliament of Azerbaijan. However, one of the recommendations of the academic circles was already taken into account and in April 2005 the President of Azerbaijan signed the decree on the single entrance examination to the graduate level of study.

Gender education became recently a concern of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Besides revising and approving curricula on different gender courses, now the Ministry has a focal point on gender issues. Within the ministerial structure was created a new position of Representative on Gender Issues, whose main mission is achievement of gender balance in the educational system.

#### Political situation in Azerbaijan

One of the crucial points of the political discourse in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is the "neutral gender subject" equally referred to both sexes. This status is reinforced by the number of legal acts including the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted in 1995. The possibilities for action within the newly emerged civil society are seen to be equally open for men and women. However, the practice shows that we cannot consider civil society and political arena to be a gender-neutral space for women.

The whole political theories and practices in Azerbaijan are based on the strength and importance of the family and kinship ties. Within this framework women are supposed to play a very important and respectful role as mothers and providers of the new state ideology and national values. But

along with this favorable esteem, the societal discourse puts restrictions on the involvement of women in the public sphere and limits their roles to motherhood and house-holding.

However, the current authority of Azerbaijan considers the problem of gender equality as an issue affecting the further integration of Azerbaijan into the international and European communities. Within the last years the state authorities had recognized that achievement of the real equality is possible via integration of gender issues into the State programs and establishment of appropriate mechanisms. Thus, the attempt of replacing the "protection" concepts with regard to women with gender approach was done in the Presidential Decree "On Implementation of the State Women's Policy in Azerbaijan" issued in 2000. However even this document could not stand praising women as "source of life and embodiment of wisdom".

In 2004 with the purpose of creation of the real state mechanisms for securing gender equality the State Committee of Women's Issues, established in 1998, worked out the Draft of the Law "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men". This Law stipulates the state guarantees for securing equal rights and opportunities for men and women and was drafted with methodological assistance of the experts of the Council of Europe. The Law passed the discussions in the commission of the Azerbaijan Parliament Milli Majlis. However, as it was stated by the deputy of Milli Majlis and one of the advocates of the Law Ms. Malahat Hasanova during the conference "Gender Equality and Azerbaijan", there are strong forces in Milli Majlis, which create impediments for the Law discussion on the plenary session. According to Ms. Hasanova their main argument is that we already have provisions on gender equality in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and there is no necessity to adopt additional document. This discussion reveals the low level of sensitivity towards gender issues among the deputies of the national parliament, including women.

Even the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and number of the legal documents stipulates the equality of both sexes, the analyses of gender situation in the country testifies the existence of gender disbalance at all levels of the society and especially in participation in decision making bodies. Currently there are no women serving as Ministers in the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, total number of women elected to the Parliament is 13%. On the background of the state policies on advancement and promotion of women in the state institutions, we had witnessed recent dismissal of 2 women from the positions of the Heads of the Executive Committees in the regions of Azerbaijan and two women-chiefs of the judicial bodies: High Court and Court of Appeals. In the mean time no women were appointed to these or the similar rank positions.

Notwithstanding this hypocritical environment in political sphere, ruling political forces in Azerbaijan generally supported initiatives of Gender education. Thus, the first program "Gender: The New Stage of Women's Problem" was aimed at rising gender awareness among broad public in the capital and the region. This program was initiated by the UNDP together with the Cabinet of Ministers and conducted by the Social Union "Gender and Human Rights" in 1998. First educational project "Women in the Social Conflict" was started at the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the financial support of the World Bank. In 2000 the third-year Bachelor's student were lectured the course "Gender Politics". The same year Network Women's Program - OSI announced a grant competition and collected proposals for the creation of Gender Studies Center, which would be university/inter-university center, concentrating local scholars efforts to research and curriculum development in Women/Gender Studies. This Center was established the same year under the Western University in June 2000.

Within the operating period of 5 years the Center successfully conducted number of projects and what is more important managed to create the core of the academic researchers in Gender Studies in Azerbaijan. Starting from the point zero, the Center gathered together large academic circles, the majority of whom comprise women, but tended always to include men into the project's activities. The target of the Center was not only quantitative increase of the teaching staff of Gender Studies in the Azerbaijani higher institutions, but also enhancing quality of the educational curriculum and course materials. The Center partially managed to reach this goal and as illustration for it serves the materials of the scientific conference "Development of Gender Education in the Context of Contemporary Social-political Transformations" held in Baku in 2004, which positively differs from the early conferences conducted by the Center. In total 150 people participated in the conference activities including foreign guests, state officials, representatives of international and national NGOs and local academic community. The essays and reports were published as conference materials, which present interesting accounts on development of gender studies in Azerbaijan and further integration of gender approach in different areas.

On the other hand, one cannot deny the existence of the conservative forces within the academic elite, who hinders the inclusion of gender studies into the educational curriculum. The main sounded objections of this group is perception of Gender Studies as a vogue, a fashionable trend in the Azeri academy, mainly connected with the availability of funding for the research activities in this area. As soon as the findings will be ceased the interest to the subject as well as the activities within it would be commenced. The followers of this approach neglect the fact, that Gender Studies in Azerbaijan had been started by the group of enthusiasts, who within these years built up the core of gender researchers. Nowadays, Gender Studies in Azerbaijan firmly entered into the curriculum of the higher institutions and try co-exist along side with other humanitarian disciplines.

Hence, the more dangerous objection is a denial to consider Gender Studies as the full-scale humanitarian discipline. The critiques of Gender Studies argue that it is not possible to build up the discipline, which has in its categories apparatus the only the concepts of "sex", "gender" and derived from them "femininity" and "masculinity". This shows the lack of knowledge and narrow understanding of the subject of Gender Studies, which besides analyses of male-female relationships focuses on the power hierarchies of the societies, operating at the same time with such concepts as class, race, ethnicity and citizenship.

In my opinion, in order to overcome this skepticism, academic community interested in development of Gender Studies should work more towards the development of the researches incorporating gender methodology and departmentalization of Gender Studies within the structures of the universities.

#### Institutions and Organizations Involved in Realization of Gender Programs

Different sources present different statistics on number of NGOs involved in realization of Gender programs in Azerbaijan. Their number is ranging from 50 to more than 100 organizations registered or just submitted registration documents to the Ministry of Justice. Some of the sources while talking about gender programs presents the statistics only on Women's NGOs, which however distorts the real situation as not all women's NGOs in Azerbaijan are involved in Gender Programs and gender problematic often becomes the focus of other types of NGOs such as educational, human rights, etc.

Azerbaijan Gender Information Center created the database of the projects connected to some extent with gender problematic, which were conducted by the local NGOs starting from the year 1997. In total database contains information about 262 projects tackling gender issues in Azerbaijan conducted by 68 NGOs. However, not many of NGOs are involved in educational work and quite few are research oriented. The majority of them are specialized in specific training delivery dealing with particular problem or range of the corresponding problems to the focus groups, such as women-IDPs, women entrepreneurs and etc. For example, 28% of projects are aimed at the protection of the reproductive health, 19 % - target the problems of domestic violence and trafficking, 17% deal with Women's Human Rights, etc.

The main organization which had implemented educational or research activities in Gender Studies are the following: Gender Studies Center under the Western University, Social Research Center AREAT, Gender and Human Rights Research Union, Empowering Education, NGOs Forum on Migration Issues, Institute for Peace and Democracy, Clean World, Jewish Women's Society, "Sensiz" Widows Society, Association of Women's Journalists, Youth Women's Center "Shams", Creative Women's Association, Azerbaijan Gender Association "Symmetry", Sociologists Association of Azerbaijan, etc.

Taking into account the main emphasis of the current report on the status of Gender Education in Azerbaijan, I will concentrate more in details on the activities of two NGOs involved in educational and research activities in the higher institutions: Gender Studies Center under the Western University and Gender and Human Rights research Union.

#### Gender Studies Center under the Western University

Gender Studies Center (GSC) operating within the Western University has been founded in June 2000.

According to the Statute the main missions of the GSC are:

- Dissemination and development of gender approach to the analyses of social life that is new for the Azeri society;
- Integration of this method into scientific researches and syllabi.

Gender Studies Center provides conditions for scholars and teachers that study gender aspect for various social and humanitarian (philosophy, economic theory, law, history, psychology, political science, sociology, culture study) subjects.

Activities of Gender Studies Center includes the following trends:

- conduct of researches regarding gender and women's problems;
- integration of the gender theory into social and humanitarian sciences;
- development of scientific and social relations (organization and participation in conferences, workshops and symposia);
- educational, scientific and awareness activity;

- publications of GSC.

GSC aims to analyze and discuss the following problems:

- individual and his/her attitude toward the society;
- freedom and its limitations;
- differences among people and the necessity to ensure equal rights;
- family, marriage and religion;
- traditional and democratic values.

During the period of its operation Center implemented several projects.

The first project "Interdisciplinary programs of gender education in the system of higher education of Azerbaijan" was implemented with the support of Central European University (Budapest) within the framework of program "Gender and Culture" and OSI-AF NWP from June, 2000 to June, 2001.

Within the framework of the Project, syllabi on the following social and humanitarian disciplines have been developed: philosophy, political science, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, economics, and employment of population. Syllabi included thematic plan, themes worked out for study, and list of recommended sources. Syllabi were approved by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, published in 300 copies and distributed among all the higher educational institutions of Azerbaijan.

In 2002 on the basis of syllabi approved by the Ministry of Education the researchers of Gender Studies Center prepared and published 9 course manuals as well as their collection in the book entitled "*Gender: History, Society, Culture*". This was the second project of the Gender Studies Center, which was made possible with financial assistance of Open Society Institute - Assistance Foundation.

These projects were continued in 2004 when researches of the Gender Studies Center prepared and published curriculums and manuals for 6 more social and humanitarian disciplines including philology, conflict study, journalism, art criticism, anthropology and ecology.

In 2003 Gender Studies Center organized trainings for faculty members of the Azerbaijan higher schools within the project "*Methodology of Application of Basics of Gender in Social and Humanitarian Disciplines*". This project was financially supported by the Open Society Institute - Assistance Foundation. The trainings were organized within 5 modules: Political Science and History; Philosophy and Cultural Studies; Psychology and Sociology; Economics and Employment; Law.

Trainings in each module were held in two (in Azerbaijani and Russian languages) groups, during 5 days 4 academic hours each day. For realization of the project 18 trainers and 32 experts were involved. 9 of them were the authors of syllabi and courses of lectures, participants of many conferences and workshops. Total number of trainees amounted to 221 people, including 127 faculty, 10 administrators of educational institutions and departments, 13 senior research fellows, 17

junior research fellows, 15 senior laboratory assistants and assistant teachers, and 23 graduate students.

The Gender Studies Center also acted as an organizer of the number of scientific and practical conferences, which gathered together researchers in gender studies and women activists from Azerbaijan and neighbor countries. Below is the list of conferences held by center:

- "Integration of the gender theory into social and humanitarian discipline" - December, 23 2000
- "Theoretical Methodological Aspects of Problems of Gender Education in the System of Higher Education" - March 9, 2002
- "Development of Gender Education in the Context of Contemporary Social-political Transformations" - March 27, 2003.

Taking into consideration current situation Gender Studies Center developed the strategy of advancement of gender education to the closest perspective under the title: "*The Main Problems of Development of Gender Education in Azerbaijan and their Solution at the National Level*". Strategy consists of 4 sections:

1. Participation in drafting of gender equality policy as an articulated aim of the reformation and modernization of education in Azerbaijan.
2. Creation of the new opportunities for the further development of gender education and gender researches.
3. Increase of gender awareness, quality of training and gender qualification.
4. Organizational questions.

In December 2003 this strategy was considered with participation of the executives of the Ministry of Education, the Academic council of the Western University.

### **Gender and Human Rights Research Union**

"Gender and Human Rights" Research Union is a non-governmental organization uniting philosophers, lawyers, political scientists, sociologists, historians, economists, philologists. The aim of the Union is to analyze the reciprocity of gender relations and human rights problem within the conditions of democratic development and ideological pluralism in the Republic of Azerbaijan. From this perspective the Union implements the following tasks: research on human rights from the point of view of gender balance; investigation of social, philosophical and legal conceptions, theories and tendencies in connection with human rights and gender aspects; explanation of the influence of public-political-legal institutions on the development of human rights and gender; analysis of the situation in the electoral system on the background of human rights and gender. The activities of the Union includes organization of the scientific practical seminars, round-tables, training, and conferences devoted to gender relations and human rights; creation of the information network on human rights and gender relations for the development of democratic processes; organization of the sociological polls; scientific analysis aimed at studying the sphere of gender and human rights; etc. The Union conducts researches on Human Rights and Gender issues using them

in its educational activities. One of its key goals Union considers scientific and educational work directed to building up the healthy family on the basis of Human Rights and gender equality.

The Union started its activities in 1998 with the organization of the republican conference "Gender: a new stage of women's problem" jointly with UNDP Gender in Development Project. Within the framework of the same project the Union organized public opinion poll among 450 people in the regions of Azerbaijan, which had been published then in a book format. On March 18, 2000, the Union was registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Union shows its adherence to the principles of gender balance even at its scientific board, where Ms. Rena Mirzazade (Ph.D.) is acting as a chairwoman and Prof. Ali Abasov as a chairman of the Union.

Since registration the Union implemented a number of projects connected with gender research and raising awareness on gender issues in broad public. For example in 2000 the Union issues 4 editions of the "Gendershunaslif" ("Gender Studies") journal in Russian and in Azeri languages.

In 2002 the project get its continuation and number of seminars were conducted in the regions of Azerbaijan with the financial support of the Embassy of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In 2003 the Union conducted seminars "Women Appeal for Peace in the Southern Caucasus" in Nakhichevan AR, Zagatali, Balaken, Kakh, Sabirabad, Hajikabul, Ali-Bayramli regions of Azerbaijan under the aegis of UNIFEM.

In 2004 the Union within the framework of the project "Gender in Education and Application", sponsored by the Women's Network Program, OSI - Azerbaijan, held three cycles of educational courses for students, teachers and representatives of Women's NGOs, finalized by the joint conference: "Gender and Education". Conference materials, findings and recommendations to the Ministry of Education and other relevant governmental structures are currently in print. Conference participants approved the initiative of the Union to set up the Republican Public Council on coordination of educational and research activities on gender and women's problematic. The Union took up upon itself the responsibility to establish in Baku and regions "Gender Schools" in order to popularize gender studies among broader public.

The Union is also actively engaged in publishing activities. The Union had published number of books, monographs and collections in Azeri language, which will be discussed later in this report.

### **Gender Education and Research Projects**

As it was already mentioned above Gender Studies as research area are relatively new for Azerbaijan. Even there is large number of accounts on women's issues and problems in Azerbaijan developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, only few of them might be described as gender researches. The majority of studies were conducted by non-professionals who were not familiar or had difficulties in use of the correspondent gender methodology.

Very interesting analysis on Azeri women in post-soviet environment were done by the ethnical Azeri women of Iranian origin, residing currently in the US: Farideh Heyat (*Azeri Professional Women's Life Strategies in the Soviet Context* (2000) and *Azeri Women in Transition. Women in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan* (2002); Nayereh Tohidi (*The Intersection of Gender, Ethnicity and Islam in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan* (1997) and *Gender and National Identity in Post-*



*Soviet Azerbaijan: a Regional Perspective* (2000); and Manujeh Sabi (*The Impact of Economic and Political Transformation on Women: the Case of Azerbaijan* (1999)). However, even the status of outsiders possibly gives some advantages while examination of women's lives, the researchers sometimes confronted difficulties in grasping the meaning of social behavior of Azeri women. For example, Farideh Heyat was surprised with the high interest towards all kinds of fortune-telling among the highly educated women, or great submission of educated women to the wishes of their husbands in their personal and professional life issues, such as of visiting trainings or conferences abroad or even within the republic.

Currently there is strong necessity in development of Azeri professionals who will be able to reveal the impact of social, political and economic transformation on women's lives and professional strategies, as well as issues of gender equality within the country. Only in this case we will have more comprehensive practical tools to develop the gender equality strategies at all levels: in governmental programs, curriculum of educational institutions, and even in the funding directions of the donors.

One of the first steps towards this goal was Gender Studies Mini-School conducted in May 2000. The 4-days Mini-school was organized in Baku by the NWP OSI in collaboration with CEU Gender & Culture Department for the representatives of the NGOs of Azerbaijan and university faculty. Unfortunately, this school was not transformed into the traditional one and yet there were no Seasonable Schools on Gender Education held in Azerbaijan.

However, Azeri faculty members actively take opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills and actively participate in the International Schools and Research Conferences held on the territory of the former Soviet Union and in foreign countries. For example, they had made contributions to the activities of such well-known international schools and conferences as SUN project on Gender Education of the Central European University, Budapest, Italy, European Conference "Gender Equality in Higher Education", Summer Schools in Foros and Kharkiv, Ukraine, internship at the Moscow Center for Gender Studies, Russia, etc.

In fall 1999, the Visiting Scholars from Azerbaijan participated in Women's Studies classes Purdue University, meeting with women's organizations, and attending a series of seminars conducted by women from the University and Gender Lafayette communities.

One of the significant research projects done in Azerbaijan was Women's Memories Project, aimed at creation the country's non-official history through women's stories. In January 2001, the Training on Women's Oral History was held for women's NGOs with the financial support of Network Women's Program - OSI. Two beneficiaries of this project: Olga Rzayeva and Lala Sariyeva published their researches: "Tragic Events of January 20, 1990, through Azerbaijan Women's Eyes" and "Women's Memories as Reflection of Social, Political and Cultural Life in 20<sup>th</sup> century Azerbaijan".

As an example of the activities connected with research presentation can be listed the Forth Conference of Young Researches on Gender Issues "Gender Attitudes in the Modern Society: Global and Local" in Saint-Petersburg, Russia, in October, 2004. The conference, organized by the Neva Institute of Language and Culture, Russia Pedagogical University and Saint-Petersburg Academy of Public Administration, gave opportunity to the young researchers from different educational fields, starting from the mid-Bachelors to PhD levels, to sound their own vision of gender problematic. Two representatives from Azerbaijan presented the research projects on

"Impact of Globalization on Women's Problems in Azerbaijan" and "Veiled Women in Azerbaijan". Both of the reports got positive response from the academic circles and conference participants and one of them was considered as the best within the section and will be published in the collection of the conference essays.

The First International Competition of Gender Researches should be mentioned as another example of the effective international gender educational project. This competition was conducted in July-September 2004 within the framework of the program "Development of Gender Education in Post-Soviet Countries". The competition is a component of three-years innovation program for the whole region. According to organizers - Women's Network Program of the "Open Society Institute" - every gender educational program should take into account specificity of cultural interests and everyday reality of the focus auditorium and all the attitudes towards gender equality should be grounded on the researches on women's lives in the particular country.

The main goal of the research project's competition was to encourage researchers aimed at the examination of the actual gender problems of every particular country, the results of which further might be used in the educational programs and lecture courses on gender disciplines.

In total for participation in the competition were submitted 86 proposal from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan. Only 27 out of them had been selected for the semi-final. After the thorough examination the best 12 projects were recognized as the project-winners with 4 projects among them elaborated by the Azerbaijani researchers.

Below is the list of the projects:

- Ibragimbekova R.: "Gender Analysis of the Political Sphere in Azerbaijan and Development of the Educational Programs on the Basis of the Collected Data";
- Gender Researches Center " Gender equality aspects in the education"
- Abasov A. and Kasumova Y.: "Cross-Cultural Research of Gender Stereotypes in the Modern Azeri Society as Factor for Construction of Life Strategies of the People in the Transitional Period";
- Mamedova M. and Mahmudov M.: "Impact of the New Economic Activities on the Gender Relations in the Post-Soviet Azerbaijan".

Besides receiving research grant, these researches participated in the special Winter International School, which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from January 30 to February 8. This Winter School created for them an opportunity to discuss and comment on each other's projects and to get valuable guidance and recommendations from supervisors.

### **Gender Education**

Out of total 42 higher institutions in Azerbaijan, Gender Studies was introduced into curriculum of 5 universities: Baku State University, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku Slavic University, Western University and Khazar University. The

first three higher institutions have the status of state institutes, whereas the two latter are private universities.

As it was already mentioned the first course in Azerbaijan on Gender Studies "Gender Politics" had been lectured in the Academy of Public Administration for the third-year Bachelor's students of the departments of political science and international relations in Azeri and Russian languages. The thematic plan of the course had undergone little changing since the year of its establishment and is presented in the Appendix 1.

Within the framework of the project "Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace in the Southern Caucasus" UNIFEM worked out the course: "Introduction to Conflict Studies. Increasing Women's Role in Conflict Resolutions". Out of total 36 of course lectures 4 hours are solely dedicated to the women's activities in conflict prevention and resolution. This course was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2003 and is being lectures in 7 higher institutions: Academy of Public Administration, Western University, Baku State University, Khazar University, Slavic University, State Pedagogical University named after N. Tusi and Odlar Urdu University.

Baku State University is offering gender courses within four main directions:

1. Gender Sociology
2. Gender Philosophy
3. Gender Psychology
4. Social and Political Aspects of Gender

Baku Slavic University offers special courses on Women' Issues:

1. Rights on Education
2. Education and Health
3. Women's Rights in Azerbaijan
4. Women's Human Rights and Human Rights
5. Women and Violence
6. Women and their Peace Building Activities

In Khazar University students are offered the courses on:

1. Gender studies
2. Women's rights are human rights
3. Women in transition period: reality and participation in peace-building activity
4. Women's role in peaceful resolution of conflicts
5. Women's social protection
6. Gender asymmetry

The largest number of Gender Studies courses were introduces at the Western University:

1. Gender aspects in history of Azerbaijan
2. Gender aspects in political sciences
3. Gender aspects in philosophy
4. Gender sociology
5. Gender and culture

6. Psychological aspects of gender problematic
7. Gender aspect in the economical theory
8. Legal aspects of gender researches
9. Gender aspects of employment the population in Azerbaijan Republic
10. Gender in Politics and International Relations: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

The curriculum for the first nine courses has been developed at the Gender Studies Center under the Western University. These syllabi have been approved by Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2001, published and circulated between the higher educational institutions. The curriculum for the last course on Gender attitudes in Political Science and International Relations had been developed independently in 2004. Even most of these courses have been registered as selective, Azerbaijani higher institutions do not have articulated system, which will give students opportunity to choose which courses are most interested to attend. So, even if gender course in its curriculum is specified as elective, students, in fact, have to attend it along with mandatory ones.

On the bases of the developed course syllabi the researchers of Gender Research Center had done a great job in preparation of the lecture courses. This work had been done in two installments within two projects implemented in 2002 and 2004. The collection of the lecture courses of the first nine modules listed in the Appendix 2 was published in the book entitled: "Gender: History, Society and Culture". Currently the Center publishes the collection of the six more modules developed last years as a continuation of the previous project and the textbooks.

Giving the high value and appreciation to the efforts and endeavors of the authors of the developed lecture courses of gender issues for the first time in Azerbaijan, many of them has serious shortcomings. Though the course lectures were developed within the project "Interdisciplinary Programs for Gender Education in the Higher Educational System in Azerbaijan", it seems that most of the faculty is not familiar with the principles of interdisciplinarity and choose instead multidisciplinary approach. It is obvious that authors of the lecture courses are coming from the different traditional discipline background and try to incorporate gender studies into the given discipline(s) borders. This leads to the application of the already worked out disciplinary methodology in studies of gender issues and constrains development of gender specific account on the given issue. However, as it was mentioned many times by gender scholars "Interdisciplinarity involves not simply the use of more than one discipline to solve a problem or analyze an issue but also *integration* of disciplines to create a new epistemology; to rebuild the prevailing structure of knowledge; and to create new organizing concepts, methodologies, or skills<sup>4</sup>".

The other issue originating partially from the lack of interdisciplinarity is an attempt to substitute in some of the lecture courses gender approach with the widely criticized principle conventionally formulated as "Add women and stir". That means that lecture courses have been developed within the borders of the traditional disciplines and tend to overcome the only failure of all other disciplinary readers - lack of women. This can be traced in the lecture course on Gender and History, where the author have done the great work in restoring accounts on women's lives in the history of Azerbaijan. However, still it does not remain clear for the reader why all this women's lives have been invisible for such a long period of teaching History as a discipline.

In some of the lecture courses the legitimacy of feminist scholars is still questioned. In response to them authors try to create a detached field of study "Genderology". For example, in the reader on Gender and Philosophy, the author discusses the problems of the reality and matter, object and subject within the philosophical school of reason based on the traditional dichotomies of 'masculine'

and 'feminine'. For example, he tends to equate maleness with reason and rationality, whereas femininity with irrationality and emotions: "Human life is the same struggle of the sensual feminine and conceptual masculine origins in every person irrespective of his sex"<sup>2</sup>. The lecture course does neither present students any alternative philosophical accounts developed, for example, by constructivists, deconstructivists or post-modernists and the only women-philosopher referred is Simone de Bivour. Author as well does not consider feminism as a school worse any studies as he presents its definition as follows: "Feminism is as old as time endeavor to impose on person certain social roles, originated in the distorted perceptions about *his* biological essence"<sup>3</sup>. Besides this strong essentialist approach the author seems to lack gender sensitivity as he refers to the subject of examination - 'person' or 'individual' - using only masculine pronouns.

Some of the lecture courses are even of an ambiguous character. For example, very interesting reader "Gender and Journalism" presents many accounts on interrelation of gender and journalism and on the double-sided relations between them. On the one hand author talks about enforcement of gender stereotypes through gender insensitive articles or advertisements, whereas on the other hand gives concrete examples of the subversive potential of the mass media. But at the beginning of the book the author contradicts himself when it comes to the discussion of the biological and social in gender roles. He discusses brain differences of men and women discovered by American neurologist Roger Gorsky at the California University in Los-Angeles and comes to the conclusion that our nature had assigned different tasks for men and women embodied in their brain structure. The author claims that: "Innovation in all businesses is a male mission", whereas "women can lead the solution of already known tasks to the perfection"<sup>4</sup>. However, in the next chapter the author is criticizing biodeterminism: "Using this approach the researchers usually study impact of gender as biological or social category on the study object. If it was possible to discover any differences, they are assigned to the differences between gender groups (women and men), what in its essence is tautology, as the researcher a-priory establishes discourse of their differences, basically referring women and men to different social and demographic categories"<sup>5</sup>. It seems that author is criticizing his assumptions in the previous chapter and this open contradiction remains unanswered through the whole lecture course.

At the same time I would like to emphasize the successful presentation of gender concepts in the lectures courses on Gender and Political Science, Gender and Sociology, Gender Aspects of the Economical Theory, Legal Aspects of Gender Research, Gender and Anthropology, etc. This teaching materials present the alternative points of view on the society and initiate discussions on the topics, which just recently were perceived as natural and unquestioned.

#### Academic Community:

Academic Community engaged in gender activities is not numerous but is constantly growing. The largest share of the scholars interested in Gender Issues is academics coming from different humanitarian backgrounds. Currently there are only few people who have graduate degrees in Gender Studies gained in the American or European Universities.

On 18 December 1998 by the decree of the Presidium of the Azerbaijan Scientific Academy under the Institute of Philosophy and Law was established department "New Trends in Philosophy and Gender Studies". The department is engaged in working out the methodology, concepts and theoretical baseline for people interested in post-graduate studies on gender problematic. The activities of the department are aimed at establishment of the Azerbaijan Gender Studies School, which will differ by its own pave and traditions. "New Trends in Philosophy and Gender Studies" is

the first department within the state institution concerning gender issues in Azerbaijan. Currently there are total staff of 16 people working in the department. The chief of the Department is Doctor of Philosophy, Prof. Ali Abbasov. Department is also engaged in assistance to the scholars writing their academic research on gender subjects. Currently department is working with 4 dissertants and aspirants.

The first person in Azerbaijan to defend the Doctoral thesis in Gender Studies is Ms. Rena Mirzazadeh on the theme: "Gender in Philosophical, Historical, Political and Legal Analysis". Recently deputy of national Parliament Malahat Hasanova defended her PhD thesis on the topic: "Role of Women's Movement in Azerbaijan in the Struggle for Independence". The dissertation of Tamam Jafarova on the similar topic "Role of Women in the National Independence Struggle in 1985-2005" had been approved in the Baku State University, but was not defended yet.

The number of under-graduate and graduate students who choose gender issues as topics of their thesis increases every year in the Western University, Baku State University, Academy of Public Administration and other higher education institutes. According to the senior lecture of the Academy of Public Administration Yelena Kasumova, gender topics were first introduced to the Master Degree students in 2001 and only one student selected it for her paper. In 2003 gender topics were introduced to Bachelors and selected by one student. In 2004 two students in the Academy holding Master and Bachelor's degrees selected gender issue related topics for their theses. In 2005 already 3 Bachelor students and 2 Masters selected gender as a theme for their papers. Besides Academy of Public Administration several defenses on gender related topics were held in the Western University and Baku States University. This trend brings us the optimism about the perspectives of gender studies development in Azerbaijan.

#### **Publications:**

The first pioneers of gender studies in Azerbaijan had experienced an obvious lack of textbooks and learning materials. They were using mainly publications available in Russian or English languages, which were brought mainly from trainings, seminars or conferences abroad. However recently number of publications in Azeri language increased, but still cannot be characterized as sufficient.

Even there were many publications in Azeri about the lives of Azeri women in the soviet or post-soviet era, none of them might be consider to have gender sensitive approach to the topic. Only within the last years there were issued number of books, which deals explicitly or implicitly with gender problematic. For example in the collection of the library of Gender Information Center there are 13 books on gender problematic in Russian and 20 books in Azeri languages compiled published in Azerbaijan since 1998.

The Gender Information Center tries to fulfill the missing gaps and since the year of its establishment worked out the number of publications. For example, in 2002 the Center had published two books: "Ekofeminism" and "Cyber feminism". In 2003 was published for the first time "European Women's Thesaurus" in three languages (Azeri, Russian, English). The same year was published the collection of informational resources on gender available in the Internet: "Popular Informational Gender Resources" and annotated bibliographical guide "Gender in Azerbaijan Periodicals 2000-2002". In 2005 the Center published "Regional Directory of Women's Groups", which presents contact information of women's NGOs from the Eastern Europe. Currently the

historical account on women's activism in the Southern Caucasus: "Traditions of Women's Movement in Azerbaijan" is in print.

After the adoption of the "Platform of Action" of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 the State Statistical Committee every year publishes statistical reference book "Women and Men in Azerbaijan". This account presents statistics analyzed and compared through prism of gender differences in Azerbaijan society.

Gender Studies Center under the Western University is engaged in translations of the key publications into Azeri language, which mainly can be used for teachers in gender studies as manuals or course materials. For example, in 2002 the Center published in Azeri "Oxfam Gender Training Manual" (UK).

The majority of publications in Azeri language had been done by the Union "Gender and Human Rights". For example, within the framework of the project "Gender Library" the Union published the following books: "Gender Studies in Azerbaijan" (2002), "Gender. Philosophy. Culture" (2003), "Gender in Azerbaijan" (2003), "Introduction to Gender Studies" (2004), "Women's Problem in the History of the Fine Art and Social Thought in Azerbaijan", "Elections and Gender Factor" (2004), etc. The project "Gender Library" was funded by the Women's Network Program OSI and Eurasia Foundation.

However, the number of valuable books on gender issues in Azeri language still remains insignificant. There is a considerable need to translate the classics of gender studies as limited knowledge in English, German, French and other languages creates narrow opportunities for broad public to access the monographs of the famous gender scholars and founders of new epistemological and practical approaches.

### **Information Resources**

Being the new field of study Gender Research still could not gain the full status in the stocks of public libraries in Azerbaijan. For example, the biggest national library named after Mirza Fatali Ahundov does not have even section on Gender Studies. Several books on gender available to the reader are classified under the sections on political science, sociology, peace building, etc. However, some resources on Gender Studies are available in the University libraries, or at the Gender Research Centers established under the Universities, for example, in Baku State University, Khazar University, Western University.

The largest informational recourse on Gender Studies in Azerbaijan is Azerbaijan Gender Information Center established in 2002 by the NWP OSI initiative. The Center has large collection of books, monographs, textbooks on Gender Issues in Azeri, Russian, English, French and other languages, exceeding in total 1200 items. The books are available for all people interested in Gender Problematic and can be borrowed for the short time period. The Center has also collection of the 8 000 press clippings on Gender or Women's problematic published in all periodicals in Azerbaijan in Azeri and Russian languages starting from the year 1998.

Another significant component of Center's activities is development of the first Azerbaijan National Gender portal in three languages: Azeri, Russian and English of 50 MGB. The Portal is constantly

updated and empowered by the technologies of HTML, SSI, Perl, JavaScript, GSS, etc. The Portal presents 12 sections such as the projects of the Women's Network Program, gender problems of the transitional period of the country, fundraising, participation of women at the decision making level in Azerbaijan, etc. Portal presents the possible to hold public opinion polls on all three languages. It also contains information about 262 projects on gender issues conducted in Azerbaijan, database on 57 Women's NGOs, information about courses and degrees in Gender studies offered by the universities in the US, Europe, NIS, etc. It has also electronic form of 7 000 press clippings in Azeri and Russian languages. The Portal also offers the subscription to its news and currently the number of the subscribers exceeds 220 people.

Among the other gender informational resources may be listed the page of Gender Studies Center on the website of the Western University - [www.wu.edu.az](http://www.wu.edu.az). This page describes main missions and activities of the Center, and is used for announcement of the events held at the Center.

Two more sites on gender issues were created by Women's NGOs Creative Women Association in 1999 - [www.cwa.aznet.org](http://www.cwa.aznet.org) and Women's Society "Azery-Turk" - [www.tanzilarustamhanli.com](http://www.tanzilarustamhanli.com) - in 2004. However, these sites are mostly concentrate on their project activities and present photo accounts on the work done.

#### **Donor's :**

There are no donor organizations operating today in Azerbaijan, which consider gender studies as a key point of financing. However, number of the donors allocates the finances for development of gender sensitive approaches and researches. Each of them set their financing strategies independently and there is no body or working group that could coordinate their efforts. Among the key international donor organizations can be listed OSI-Azerbaijan, UNDP, UNICEF, OXFAM, AED, ISAR, Eurasia Foundation.

The World Bank is considering doing a country-wide gender assessment in accordance with its gender mainstreaming policy. As it was already mentioned earlier the World Bank was among the pioneers donating money for gender projects. In 2000 the Bank had financed number of projects stipulating the development of gender curricula.

Gender and Development Unit at the UNDP focuses on the encouragement of gender issues development: gender planning, statistics trainings, community gender awareness and women's NGOs capacity building. The UNDP currently has started new gender project "2005 National Human Development Report on Gender Attitudes". With the financial support made available by the Embassy of Norway, UNDP will broadly address gender issues in Azerbaijan through piloting a survey on gender attitudes and eventual launching the 2005 NHDR reflecting findings of the survey, thereby stimulating public debate and triggering policy action for ensuring greater gender equality in the country.

UNIFEM has a special Caucasus project on "Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building". Besides holding the conferences and publishing activities the project has developed the new course on "Introduction to Conflict Studies. Increasing Women's Role in Conflict Resolutions", which was described earlier.



The Global Fund for Women even does not have representative office in Azerbaijan annually allocates two grants for Women's NGOs in Azerbaijan. The majority of the projects are connected with organization of the trainings and conference sections, however Fund funded two gender research projects. In 2002 NGO "Islam, Democracy and Human Rights" conducted research entitled: 'Gender Issues in World Religions: Women's Rights in Islam'. In 2004 Women's Association for Rational Development conducted gender expertise of the national legislation and had published the book "Women's Rights in Azerbaijan - Legal Basis" in three languages (Azeri, Russian and English).

The Open Society Institute has a Network Women's Program providing funding for various women's initiatives. One of their main activities is a gender education projects aiming to integrate gender methodology into secondary and higher education, such as Empowering Education Project, Development of Gender Studies in Post-Soviet countries, Establishment and development of Gender Studies Centers, Research projects, Projects relate to development of higher education curricula, Publishing of readers, Oral History projects, Education projects on Women's rights in Islam, gender education schools, funding of the Azerbaijan Gender Information Center and creation of the first web portal on gender issues in Azerbaijan. The dynamics of the gender studies funds allocation within 1998-2005 years is 403950\$.

#### **Recommendations on Gender Education Development:**

Taking into account the achievements and shortcomings discussed in this report, I would like to propose following recommendations for the further development of gender education in Azerbaijan:

- Increase of gender sensitivity among the teaching staff of the primary and higher schools through conduction of trainings for the working teaching staff and introduction of gender studies into the curriculum of the prospective teachers, in the State Pedagogical University named after Tusi, Ganja Pedagogical University, University of Foreign Languages, etc.
- Introduction of Gender Studies into the curriculums of the Universities in the regions of Azerbaijan.
- Gender expertise of the textbooks and course lectures used as teaching materials in the primary and higher schools.
- Organization of the competition for the Best lecture course on gender issues in different disciplines.
- Publication of the reader or collection of readers on classical feminist and gender scholars in Azeri language.
- Organization of the Summer School on Gender Studies in Azerbaijan with participation of the international experts.

This research was conducted on request of the Network Women's Program Azerbaijan - OSI. The methodology of this research was qualitative data analyses. The data was collected from the primary

sources such as reports on gender education, publications of the Gender Centers operating in the Republic, statistical data books, interviews with active participants of the gender educational projects in Azerbaijan.

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Electronic materials of the Azerbaijan Gender Information Center's website: [www.gender-az.org](http://www.gender-az.org)

**APPENDIX 1**

Topics		Number of hours		
		Total	Lectures	Seminars
1	Introduction to gender	4	4	
2	Philosophical content of Gender	2		2
3	Political history and gender	4	4	
4	Gender aspects of political thinking in modern	2		2

	period			
5	Gender aspects of political theory	4	4	
6	Political framework of feministic philosophy	2		2
7	Socialist system and gender	4	4	
8	Political regime and gender	2		2
9	Gender policy and socialization	4	4	
10	Gender policy and political participation	2		2
11	Future of gender and its influence to political processes	4	4	
12	Gender policy in Azerbaijan	2		2
	TOTAL	36	24	12

## APPENDIX 2

<b>No</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>The authors</b>
1.	<b>Gender aspects in history of Azerbaijan</b>	<i>Mamedova Farida</i> - corresponding member National Azerbaijan Academy of, the doctor of historical sciences. <i>Gadzhiev Ulvija</i> - the younger scientific employee of the National Azerbaijan Academy of sciences
2.	<b>Gender aspects in political sciences</b>	<i>Aliyeva Magiba</i> - the senior teacher of political sciences and political management faculty of the Academy of the Government management under the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, candidate of historical sciences <i>Orduxanova Fidan</i> - the political scientist, the dissertator
3.	<b>Gender aspects in philosophy</b>	<i>Azimov Anar</i> - the chief of the department "East - West" Oriental studies Institute of the National Azerbaijan Academy of sciences, candidate of philosophy
4.	<b>Gender sociology</b>	<i>Axundov Akif</i> - the senior lecturer of faculty humanitarian disciplines

		of Western University, candidate of philosophy
5.	<b>Gender and culture</b>	<i>Faradjeva Fidan</i> - the senior lecturer of philosophy faculty of the Baku State University, candidate of philosophy
6.	<b>Psychological aspects of gender problematic</b>	<i>Abbaszade Nagina</i> - the teacher of faculty political science of the Western University, the post-graduate student Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University
7.	<b>Gender aspect in the economical theory</b>	<i>Ibragimova Eleonora</i> - managing faculty economy, marketing and management the Western University, candidate of economical science
8.	<b>Legal aspects of gender researches</b>	<i>Gadjieva Elmira</i> - managing faculty of the law the Western University jurisprudence science
9.	<b>Gender aspects of employment the population in Azerbaijan Republic</b>	<i>Sulejmanova Gulara</i> -senior lector of department economy, marketing and management of the Western University, candidate of economical science
10.	<b>Philology</b>	<i>Gafaorva Sabina</i> - senior lector, the dean of faculty of the English philology of the Western University, candidate of philological sciences
11.	<b>Conflict study</b>	<i>Alieva Magiba</i> - the senior teacher of political sciences and political management faculty of the Academy of the Government management under the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, candidate of historical sciences
12.	<b>Journalism</b>	<i>Babayev Zaur</i> - the senior teacher the theory and practice of journalism faculty of the Baku State University
13.	<b>Art criticism</b>	<i>Gulieva Leili</i> - senior lector philosophy faculty of Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, candidate of philosophy
14.	<b>Anthropology</b>	<i>Faradjeva Fidan</i> - the senior lecturer of philosophy faculty of the Baku State University, candidate of philosophy
15.	<b>Ecology</b>	<i>Gurbanovva Saida</i> - senior lector.of economy, marketing and management faculty of Western University, <i>Bayramova Lala</i> - the senior teacher of environment protection faculty of the Baku State University

- <sup>1</sup> Judith A. Allen, Sally L. Kitch, "*Disciplined by Disciplines? The Need for an Interdisciplinary research mission in Women's Studies*", *Feminist Studies* # 24.2, 1998 / Summer, pp. 276.
- <sup>2</sup> Азимов А.Б., "Гендер и Философия", в сборнике "Гендер: История, Общество, Культура", Баку, 2002, стр. 142
- <sup>3</sup> Азимов А.Б., "Гендер и Философия", в сборнике "Гендер: История, Общество, Культура", Баку, 2002, стр. 164
- <sup>4</sup> Бабаев З.К., "*Лекции: Гендер и Журналистика*", Баку, 2005, стр 81.
- <sup>5</sup> Бабаев З.К., "*Лекции: Гендер и Журналистика*", Баку, 2005, стр. 92.