

# C@ucAsia

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# EDUCATION

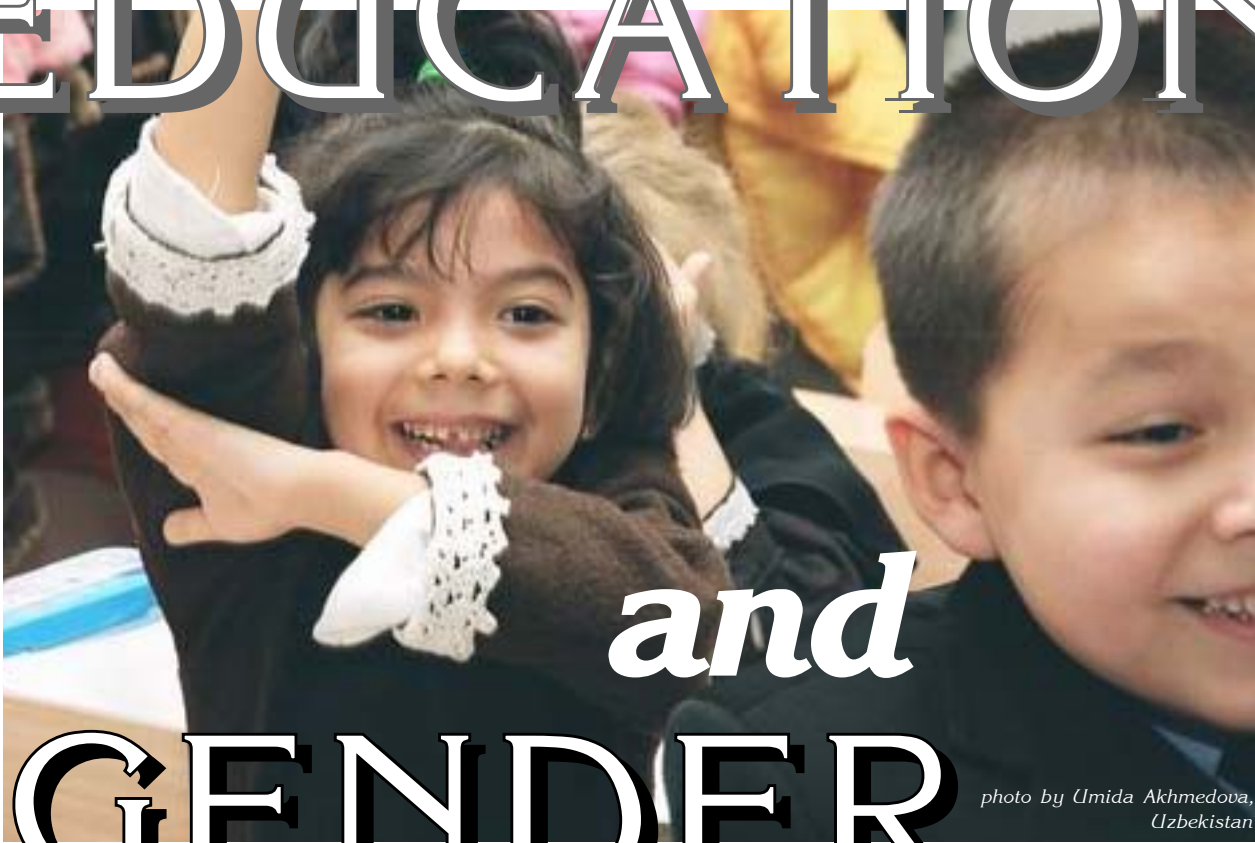


photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

# and GENDER

Lois A. HERMAN,  
Women's UN Report Network

## tensions

## GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

international conference  
held in Dushanbe  
on September 13-14

*The goal of the WUNRN-MODAR Conference on Gender Inequality in Tajikistan has been to bring together multiple sectors of society in Tajikistan - Government, NGOs - National and International, Academia, Religions, and Civil Society, Media, for consideration and dialogue on Gender Inequality in Education in Tajikistan.*

We are honored that the highly respected United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Mr. Vernor Munoz, accepted our invitation to the WUNRN-MODAR Conference. The theme of the Special Rapporteur's 2006 Report to the United Nations is Girls' Right to Education.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals include:

\*Achieve Universal Primary Education with an Indicator: To ensure that all girls and boys complete a full course in primary schooling.

\*Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women with an Indicator: To eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

Indeed, girls, educated girls, are an important and vital resource for Tajikistan. Literate and educated girls will strengthen families and society in this country. They will also help educate their own daughters and sons. Educated girls and women can enhance the economic level of their families, communities, and country. WUNRN has been impressed by the leadership role of the Government of Tajikistan to increase the equality of education for girls in this country, even serving as a model in the Region.

Tajikistan was one of the first nations in the CIS to ratify international declarations on women's and girls' rights. The Constitution and national laws of Tajikistan guarantee the right to education to all citizens, regardless of gender.

The UNICEF Qualitative Survey on Issues in Girls' Education in Tajikistan - an in-depth analysis of the Reasons Girls Drop Out of School in Tajikistan .

Among the Survey results were:

\*40% of girls do not believe that education would impact the quality of their lives.

\*57% of parents think that it is more important to educate boys than girls.

\*The number of girls dropping out of school increases correspondingly with grade levels.

The most recent Government of Tajikistan Report to the United Nations CEDAW Committee - on implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - stated:

"The main reasons for the decline in educational achievements for girls (in Tajikistan) are as follows: poverty, increased education costs, shortage of teachers, and a stereotypical gender perception of the value and



...the purpose of the meeting was to bring together different parts of Tajik society: government and NGOs, both local and international.

Photo provided by Lois A. Herman

role of women and men, which, for girls, results in a lower probability of finding a job."

By the 2004/2005 school year, the shortage of teachers in general education schools of the Republic of Tajikistan amounted to, according to the Ministry of Education, 2,470 teachers. Temporary measures, such as admitting girls to higher learning institutions on the basis of quotas, are being used to eliminate that shortage."

The school age population dramatically increased after the Civil War.

WUNRN believes that the leaders of Tajikistan, in all sectors, know the realities, the needs, and the possibilities in this country for education for girls. You are aware of the challenges presented at the end of the Soviet Union and the formation of a free and independent Republic of Tajikistan. You know the issues of poverty, and yet an exciting emerging economy in Tajikistan. Leaders and experts in this country know the importance of national pride and respect for cultural values, including religious.

An important WUNRN goal at this Conference has been to discuss and review the current situation of Gender Inequality in Tajikistan, and to explore ideas for enhanced education for girls, with respect to beliefs, traditions, cultural sensitivity, economic challenges.

At the Conference, experts from throughout Tajikistan, gave research, reports, and testimony to the many dimensions of the needs on Girls Education in Tajikistan. The major disparity in school attendance comes after grade nine, when many girls drop out, and for multiple factors. Enrollment is significant, but it is also very important to analyze and address staying in school, and quality of education. Improved measurements are being developed.

Participants are finalizing a Conference Declaration and hope is that this Conference will bring experts together to move from issues of the past, to Modern Tajikistan, and consider ways in which current realities, resources, and values can be integrated for greater Gender Equality in Education in Tajikistan.

Rano BOBOJANOVA,  
Tajikistan

**going back**

# EDUCATION ONLY makes women powerful and independent

***Equal education for men and women was the key issue for theorists of women's issues since the second half of the 19th century. The Soviet regime managed to carry it out; that was the achievement of which Soviets were proud with good reason.***

In 1920, at the National commissariat of education the Extreme Commission on Liquidation of Illiteracy, the well-known Educational program, has been created. A revolutionist Anna Kurskaya was the supervisor of Likbez. In the entire country, there appeared volunteer societies called Down with Illiteracy, where women volunteers made the majority. Newly set-up women's councils were actively engaged in the education campaign, which turned out to be hardly not the most significant of alike programs. The results were amazing: by 1926, 42,7% of Soviet women learned how to read and write; by 1939 their number increased up to 83,4%. Thus, illiteracy was practically eliminated, and the principles of secular education were introduced. The education became universal, free of charge, obligatory and combined.

First Soviet decrees proclaimed co-education in school, equal opportunities in education for both genders, ban of corporal punishment and similar education programs for girls and boys. Thus, pupils were not divided into future housewives and future officials; all of them began studying similar subjects, including technical and natural scientific. Girls were convinced of the importance of alike careers for them.

An attempt to introduce special secondary education institutions to women was an important direction in achieving education equality. In 1927, women made 40% of students of the special secondary schools preparing future scientists and engineers. By the beginning of industrialization process, the government announced that women should make at least 30% of all alike schools' students; by the beginning of the World War II, female

students were half of the total number. Quotas and stimulatory methods also brought significant results: in the meaddle of 1960-s, women made 53% of medical students, 75- 80% of biologists, 25% of agronomists, some 2/3 of chemistry students, up to 50% of math students and 25% - 40% of physics and geology students. These numbers are especially impressing when compared to analogous indexes of other countries.

"People, whose women are compelled to carry out heavier work, than it is common in our culture," Engels wrote, "are much more respected than the Europeans." And though it would be silly to approve, that this statement of Engels is universal, it does illustrate the Soviet society.

In cultures where men have grasped all the most important kinds of activity and have monopoly for authority, women are compelled, often not realizing it, to be guided by a manufacturer, a supporter, in other words, a man. In societies like this, women who perform high-skilled work, feel themselves as anomaly under pressure of system of values existing in the society. Only in societies where female work and female achievements are norm, a woman possesses the natural self-respect which used to be considered as a prerogative of men.

The period of independence of Republic Tajikistan has opened new prospects by way of understanding and observance of gender equality and in an easy approach of women to education. There were new opportunities and new problems. When we speak about the necessity of strengthening of women's status in the society, the most important question there is a question on women's moral and cultural role; and the issue of girls' school education is extremely important from this point of view.

Deputy education minister of Tajikistan in newspaper interview has shared his concern regarding school training. He noted, that "recently, there appered decrease of number of girls in schools. If in elementary classes the percent of girls makes about 46%, in the senior classes it decreases to 38%".

Generally, Tajikistan's education system encourages gender equality. Schools are mixed with identical number of places for girls and boys. However percentage of girls in schools decreased since the country obtained independence. According to the World Bank, 25 % of girls do not receive formal education. Year after year the number of girls dropping study increases. A primary factor influencing the attitude of parents to study of their daughters, are social and gender stereotypes. Decrease in prestige of education also contributes to this problem. There is a stereotype: the destination of an Asian woman is to be mother, and therefore most important to her should be marriage, not education. Decrease in a standard of living and incomes of the population is considered as another reason behind the problem. There is also a number of other factors.



Study, girl, study!

photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

## APROPOS

### WHAT DOES ISLAM SAY?

*Many parents view the problem of girls' education in the context of Islamic doctrines, making up many reasons not to let daughters go to school. But in reality, Moslim woman does have the right to get education and to work. This right concerns both men and women equally. The Prophet in this respect says: "Aspiration to knowledge is a duty of each Moslem." That fact, that many Tajik girls do not want and have no opportunity to get education, is more likely connected with local traditions and does not link to Islamic regulation of this question at all. Islam does not forbid women to work in the case of necessity; also, it does not establish restrictions to the society to profit from women's talents in any particular field of activity, which should answer certain norms of Muslim etiquette. Earnings of a wife are in her personal disposal and she is not obliged to contribute to financial maintenance of family, as a problem to provide family is entirely a man's responsibility.*

Kamla Bhasin,  
India

### BECAUSE I AM A GIRL, I MUST STUDY

A father asks his daughter:  
Study? Why should *you* study?  
I have sons aplenty who can study  
Girl, why should *you* study?

The daughter tells her father:  
Since you ask, here's why I must study.  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

Long denied this right, I must study  
For my dreams to take flight, I must study  
Knowledge brings new light, so I must study  
For the battles I must fight, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

To avoid destitution, I must study  
To win independence, I must study  
To fight frustration, I must study  
To find inspiration, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

To fight men's violence, I must study  
To end my silence, I must study  
To challenge patriarchy I must study  
To demolish all hierarchy, I must study.  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

To mould a faith I can trust, I must study  
To make laws that are just, I must study  
To sweep centuries of dust, I must study  
To challenge what I must, I must study  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

To know right from wrong, I must study.  
To find a voice that is strong, I must study  
To write feminist songs I must study  
To make a world where girls belong, I must study.  
Because I am a girl, I must study.

sent by Lois A. Herman, WUNRN

Nurjan TULEGABYLOVA,  
Kyrgyzstan

## question

# WHICH IS BETTER: TO BE A PRESIDENT or to be only a president's wife?

*Education systems form societies and are formed by societies to which they serve. It concerns to all educational levels, starting with preschool programs and finishing with the most advanced levels*

As a young scientist, especially in the field of gender researches, I had many times to deal with questions of influence of education on gender identity. I believe, that this topic is very significant for development of any society. Unfortunately, today we come across with practice of the latent discrimination, characteristic for all steps - from a kindergarten up to university. This is admitted by numerous corresponding researches. The attitude of teachers to boys and girls is different; and precise orientation of boys and girls to certain 'particularly ordered' professional works does take place.

Guys are courageous, initiative and strong - they are future researchers and businessmen. Girls are executive, patient and silent - they are future housewives, secretaries and top models. These gender directives received at children's and youth age, influence all subsequent life. Women are less likely to achieve successes in career, politics, business, science and a public life; indeed they are very likely to limit themselves by frameworks of their family. I held a public opinion poll among the students of 3-rd and 4-th years of the Z.Balasagyn Kirghiz National University. The poll results has shown that only less than 10% of girls would like to be engaged in political activity. "It is better to



*it's up to you to decide what is better. But the education system should encourage making propper decisions*

*photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan*

be the wife of the president, than the president," they have answered. 41% of respondents has specified, that they are influenced with a stereotype of thinking, and about 30% have made such choice when considering the size of payment for work, 20% - because of traditions in family and a society.

The last university years unveils the tendency of unequal approach to post-graduate studies. Girls oftentimes drop studying because of the family reasons. Here, only women are in charge for the parental role, and therefore childbirth often quits women's further education and career.

In the Kirghiz society traditions of education, distinguishing purely female jobs, are still alive. Stereotype is the major factor influencing a choice of a speciality. The majority of women I interrogated feel comfortably if they are engaged, for example, in pedagogics or working in healthcare system. Many of them belive that a woman should be able to treat her family members...

It is easy to notice, that the education system promotes preservation of gender stereotypes. They are a heritage passing from generation to generation. Unfortunately, in our society they are regarded only as a positive basis. The overwhelming majority does not see that they are an obstacle for development of a fair society. Education could break off this vicious circle to generate new gender attitudes. It could, if it would not remain on service of the old stereotypes.



photo by Nina Yerkaeva, Kazakhsnat

Nina YERKAEVA,  
Kazakhstan

**bad job**

# DON'T WANT TO STUDY, DON'T WANT TO TEACH

*neither students, nor teachers  
like school*

I have asked this question Arkhimed Iskakov, honoured teacher of Kazakhstan. He replied:

*- Huge number of subjects taught in schools today have nothing to do with education. I believe, that initial military preparation at schools should not be taught at all. There are historical examples when early militarization of children brought monstrous harm: look at Germany of 1933, or China of 1968. Besides this, what is Valeology, one of today's school subjects? Everybody I asked, failed to explain it to me. There is no developed country, that teaches this subject during the recent 50 years at least. Someone just made up a science of a healthy life style. It seems, that I must teach children how to take shower, and brush teeth. Any normal mother teaches this her kid from a very early age.*

*I do not want to teach kids "Almatyology"! It is basically, the part of kazakhstan's history, which you should know without a new special subject. Neither I understand why should we copy the American education system and to introduce Sexual Education subject. We do not have American mentality, me and the kids. We copy the American system, but I don't know why 7-th grade students should learn what incest is. I do not know why the second-graders should study computer science. I guess, my colleagues know nothing about the news in pedagogic science. Three years ago, our Japanese colleagues unveiled the results of their experiment. They stated that the results were tragical. Despite the kids were very succesful in computer graphics, they developed a computer stereotype of thinking that has nothing to do with real life. These kids are not idiots, but neither they will ever become creators.*

*Also, I don't like the idea of teaching the basics of safety. A teacher should not be teaching these weird, stupid subjects.*

In Kazakhstan, the formation of education systems is in process from the moment of finding independence. Reforms and experiments are being carried out for 15 years already. The range is the widest possible: it involves structural transformations, development of national textbooks and a regulation of school clothes.

We have carried out sociological research and have made a portrait of an average teacher. This person is in 90.6 percent of cases a woman. In overwhelming majority of cases (77%) she works in a municipal school. And this school is in 48.6 percent of cases a Russian school, while 48.6 percent of teachers there are Kazakh. The majority of women (37.4%) work there for more than 15 years.

The situation reminds a large family in which mother brings up a crowd of children alone. And the head of the family - the Ministry of Education, holds his hand in a pocket, distributing the money to feed and dress the kids. There is severe lack of funds in that family: children grumble and cry, "mother" is constantly nervous. And everybody wants to leave the place... The school year has just started, but one of my friend's son, a second grade student, does not want to go to school anymore. Teachers also complain of the destiny, and a simple question appears: what kind of school is this, if nobody wants to go there?!

Saule MAYLIBAEVA,  
Kazakhstan

## diploma

# DIPLOMA WITH HONORS AND HONORED JOB

ambitions and expectations turn make your life impossible,  
if there is no job

*in the words of a graduate of the Karaganda State University:*

I am 24 years old, and I studied for 17 years. I have always been a good student. When I graduated from high school, I never had any doubts about going to the university. As I received bachelor's degree, I decided to go on with obtaining master's degree. Today, I have two diplomas, both with honors. When you have a valuable education, your ambitions grow higher and it is very difficult to ignore them.

It is now time for me to find an honored job. Today in a society, there is a rule of market economy, with the principle of natural selection working: the strongest survives in fight! And it is very difficult to one who has not got used to fighting. An employer might like your diligence and sense of duty, but only after you have started to work. But it is very hard to convince an employer that you are exactly the person he needs at the first acquaintance.

There is a lot of work around me, but when I correlate it with my previous aspirations, I understand that it is not what I actually need. I studied for many years, I know a lot - this is exactly what does not let me start an casual work. Sometimes I think that I could have a better life if I'd start working right away instead of going to the university.

My younger sister has different goals and different attitude towards education. She dreams of graduating from school and starting working at a barber's shop. The biggest difference between us is that she is morally ready to work, and already sees herself as a barber. She does not want to study and does not feel confused about the absence of university diploma.

The problem is even more severe for the guys with university degrees. Despite of their status and aspiration, they can not let themselves stay unemployed, as they have to earn money for their families. This is why they have to agree with any job available. Together with other, less educated men, they work as constructors, painters, and drivers, still hoping that they will be able to start a job they deserve.



*besides knowledge, we need a field for using our knowledge*

*photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan*

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN,  
Denmark

**career**

# FORWARD TO THE PAST or back to the future?

## Denmark actively discusses the necessity of changes in the education system

Scientists of the Danish Pedagogical University have carried out research Gender, Estimations and Career Not so long ago Minister of Education has published the decree about cancelling of group examinations. In reply to this, thousand schoolchildren and teachers manifested in Copenhagen. The smaller attention of the public is involved with other attempts of reorganization of school education system. For example, in preparatory classes of some schools Olbo (North Denmark) an experiment on separate teaching for girls and boys was introduced. Children spend morning together, but for studying they go to different class rooms. Authors of the project explain: separate training allows girls to feel easy and to study in silence. In boys' rooms there is no requirement to sit silently, they can freely run about, play. It allows to avoid unnecessary punishments and notations.

In other schools, separate teaching is practiced in middle classes for certain classes, for example physics.

- This enables girls to feel free experimenting during classes, without being afraid to cause boys' sneers, Danish teachers believe.

The Gender Estimations and Career reserch encourages further experiments. Boys are generally behind girls in studies, even despite of traditional leading in math and physics. Girls concentrate at studying better, and as a result they get higher grades.

Such measures as the increase in school hours for boys does not bring significfant results. At the same time, games seem to bring more effect for boys, for example, when teaching them foreign languages. These are conclusions of researchers. Scientists insist on the necessity of differentiation for educational process for boys and girls, proceeding from a postulate on social justice. They approve, that identical training of boys and girls deprives boys from an opportunity to continue training in a grammar school, and closes them the way to higher education. This happens not because of the boys' abilities and desires, but only because of gender attribute, scientists believe. Formation of feeling of responsibility and

assiduity appears among boys later, than among girls, the report states. But only grammar school gives an opportunity to continue training in higher educational institutions. Some scientists see an output from a situation in sending boys in school for a year-two after girls.

The report also says that problems of boys and girls could also have other consequences. Having received secondary education, the majority of boys is compelled to continue training at technical schools, and after graduating from them, they will have to join army of unemployed, as these kinds of jobs are undemanded in Denmark. We should not allow that gender distinctions in education negatively affect further destiny of school students, the authors of the Gender, Estimations, and Career stated.



boys need to catch up?  
photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan



Svetlana BEISOVA,  
Kazakhstan

## reverse of diploma

# EDUCATION AND CRIMINALITY

## sometimes their ways are crossed

*It has become very difficult to get free education. Not because it is difficult, and too high point is required, but because that almost all grants are on sale even before the examinations begin. Probably this is the reason why foreign universities became so popular.*

We send children to study in 'prestigious' Kazakh-Turkish liceas and then we are proud that they go to study to Turkey. But not many people know, how do such trips come to an end. In this context, I would like to tell you about two sisters, who graduated from Turkish-Kazakh liceam and went to study in Turkish universities, one in Ankara, and another one in Istanbul. Their mom borrowed money for the trip; girls passed all examinations very well, and were supposed to get a scholarship from one of the funds. For some reason, we very much trust our state and never demand any guarantees from it.

Girls were very happy that they would study. But the situation turned out to be completely different. Nobody waited for the girls also nobody was going to pay for their studies. In addition, it appeared that they received wrong visa, a touris one, not education.



To study in a university, it is necessary to pass a preparatory course. This is obligatory for all foreign students even if they are fluent Turkish speakers. This course is paid; and the girls discovered that they did not have money for it, did not have corresponding visa, and did not have any money to go back home. They made it to the Kazakh ambassador, and saw "a fat impudent muzzle" (sorry, this is how they portrayed him), who did not want to hear anything, but wanted to squeeze money out of them.

God knows, what these girls had to go through to get job illegally (their tourist visa has already expired by then) and to earn money for the way back. These girls had a strong character and they were together. Being together it is always a big help. They lived in cellars, washed cars in the streets and did dishes in cafes, they underate and underslept.

But the majority of other our girls are not as strong as these sisters. Many of them are forced to prostitution, and they prostitute in order to earn money for going back home. Later, when they already have money, they have no need to go home.

It is all much easier for boys. They are stronger physically and can do difficult physical work to earn money for studies and life. There are many kids studying in Turkish universities, but girls are often pushed into dirt. Some of them get married and live life of a housewives, without education and without working. Their destiny is children, housekeeping, gossips with neighbours, and constant waiting for their husbands.

Is this why they studied in 'prestigious' liceums? These girls told me about other girls who appeared in analogous situation, and about how they try to support each other. Their parents have no idea about the problems their daughters face... When I listened these stories, I cried.

unfortunately, not all of us are so optimistic. Studying abroad teaches us not only in class rooms

photo by Svetlana Beisova, Kazakhstan

Marjana KOROL,  
Ukraine

## fatherhood science

# BIRTH OF A FATHER

there is plenty of literature on gender education for women.  
What about education for men?

*Unfortunately, it is as yet exotic. Just look through the lists of any "gender" conference participants! However, life is changing. In Ukraine, for example, several techniques on men's genderization were worked out, and also experience of Canada, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway was adapted.*

*Expecting a baby changes the life of both, future mother and future father. But our parents do not teach us the art of being a father. This is why we need educational programs for the category of men who are ready to become dad. I talk to Vladimir Khanas, chairman of Men's Adptation Center of Ternopil.*

- Share your secret with me. How to teach being a father?
- There are two very important stages in the life of a married men: before the birth of his baby and after. At the first class of our school future parents are told about father's role during the first months of baby. It is important that our students have an opportunity to use personal experience of trainers, who went through necessary internship to become qualified teachers.
- Can we say that Ukraine uses Swedish technique of preparing fathers?
- Part of Ukrainian trainers went through internship in Sweden, within the frameworks of Oleg program. Besides this, it is necessary to remember that all Ukrainian trainers have their own parental experience. As the basis technique is personal experience, all used methodics are unique and exclusive. There are no universal approaches. Specialists from Ternopil, Vinnitsa, and Lviv work at the issue. Trainers of Kirovograd are probably the most successful. The majority of out trainers are in a constant search for new approaches, they read special literature, share their experience. This is why the 8th issue of CaucAsia magazine on Gender and Health is very popular among the men who work at parents' schools.

## APROPOS

### HOW TO BECOME PROFESSIONAL FATHER?

#### several points of the FATHERS-TO-BE SCHOOL program

*(created by the Men's Adaptation Center of Ternopil)*

*What is father-school? Father's role in the first months: can I do it? Art of being a father: the best strategy is participating in everything.*

*Basics of gender and gender equality. Why gender is the new progressive view on the roles of mwn and women in the society?*

*Preparations for the delivery and future fatherhood. Taking care of the health of mom-to-be and the baby.*

*Men's participation in the delivery process. How to get prepared? How to help a woman?*

*Legal issues regarding the birth. How to obtain financial aid after childbirth? How to register a baby? Paternity leave.*

*After the delivery. Breast feeding and its role for the health of mother and baby. New family budget. Post-delivery emotional and psychological problems. Pregnancy-planning: modern contraceptives.*

*Family. Authoritarian and democratic families. We bring up dictators ourselves. How to build a democratic family. What kind of family does the family need?*

*Psychological training on family relations. Child as the center of a family - is it good or bad?*



Maria OSIPOVA,  
Belarus

**always!**

# LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

## In September, Minsk hosted the First International festival of informal education

The goal of the organizers was to bring together people who organize training courses, seminars and round tables that contribute to increase of qualifications of adults.

The Festival was supported by the Program of Support to Belarus of the German Government; the event brought together 40 organizations from Belarus, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Russia.

Among the master classes held by German trainers, the most interesting was Gender Competence and Gender Mainstreaming master class. The master calss for Belarus women's NGOs was held by the Institute of International Cooperation of Higher Public Schools of Germany (IIZ/DVV)

Nadja Plote, the trainer who cooperates with Belorus colleagues as an expert, held the master class.

- Back when I studied at the university, I got interested in the processes taking place in Eastern Europe and former USSR. In 2001, traveled through several Eastern European and Southern European countries, but never studied much in Belarus.

This is my fifth time in Belarus. Each trip was quite a challenge for me, as I had to coordinate the work and to make decisions via e-mail, overcoming language bareers. It was difficult, as every participant had his own view of the trainings, but we managed to do everything.

At the beginning of the seminar, Nadja explained that our goal was not only about discussing an issue of gender dialogue, but also in attempting to implement it on practice.

The majority of the master class participants considered themselves experts in gender issues, and that's why they were initially sceptical about the trainer's proposal top make two rounds and to ask a neighbor about 'pluses' and 'minuses' of her or his gender. I was standing next to two men. First of them, deputy head of the Republic's Association on Protection of Fathers' Rights claimed that during divorce, courts are more likely to support women's side, while men are practically deprived of father's rights.

The second partner, Tobias Knubben, director of Swedish-German -French Center of Foreign Studies, begged me to explain to him waht the notorious women's logic is.

Two hours of the training passed very quickly.

In conclusion Nadja asked the participants to express the attitude towards the dialogues with partners and to share impressions:

We often spend seven-days trainings on gender education, as it involves a lot of work, and two hours is not enough to get success.

Today, I realized once again that both men and women are very attractive in all senses and capable to agree. Gender problem is the biggest challenge in the society. When it is solved, the society will change. I was happy to see more than one man in the class rom. Those gender attitudes which were showed here, demonstrate that the gender space is full of myths. All of us should make efforts to get out of these myths into the reality.

For me, gender problem was always associated with the fight for women's rights in the Muslim countries, but today I have understood, that this problem exists for men as well. It seemed to me, that the solution of the problem largely depends on the politicians.

Today's discussion has shown that we need to focus on promotion of this topic in the society. As a man, I feel myself personally responsible for the solution of this problem. To tell yoy the truth, untill today, I did not know what gender was. Now it is clear to me, that our most important problem is to begin dialogue and consultations to change the society. But I doubt, that this process is possible from top to down.

Nadja Plote: I am happy, as it was pleasure for me to be here. But to my surprise the majority of participants of not only the master-class, but also the festival, were women. Sphere of education (both traditional, and informal) seemed to me as sphere of men's activity. this is how it is in Germany. But in Belarus the situation is different. My participation in trainings, seminars and conferences in Belarus forced me to reflect my own attitude to questions of principle of gender policy.

As one of the festival's results, participants have proposed the governmental bodies to create Public Council on development of education for adults and informal education at the Belarus Ministry of Education. However, not all of the participants supported the idea. Sceptics fear that creation of alike body could encourage the authorities' interference into the informal education.

Alma Bekturganova-Andersen,  
Denmark

**learning to understand**

# YOUR MAHALLA

*Copenhagen hosted personal exhibition of Umida Akhmedova*

...the idea of organizing alike exhibition appeared a year ago, at the third International Conference of Gender Journalists held in Tbilisi, where I met Umida. I decided that it was extremely necessary to show Asian life to the Europeans. Post Soviet countries do attract foreigners because of their history and modern political developments, but even so these countries keep being closed to the rest of the world, as they are not properly understood. Central Asia is probably the most enigmatic region at the post-Soviet space. Umida Akhmedova brought her collection entitled Life of Central Asian Women. The exhibition was supported by two Danish funds, center of development and culture (CKU) and Politiken. Two very interesting persons spoke at the exhibition opening. These were Kirsten Visboll of the Equality Council, and Maria-Lois Hansen, member of Central-Asian Society. These two young girls are very much interested in the problems of our region, maria-Lois volunteered in Kyrgyzstan twice. We agreed with Umida that during her stay in Copenhagen, she'd collect material for new exhibition, Charming Feminism. Umida seems to be a real fan of her job. She takes camera with her all the time and gets very upset when it is forbidden to take pictures in sauna, supermarket or rock-festival.

I get very surprised when thinking back about the volume of work Umida managed to do in Denmark. During her short stay, she photographed one day of Copenhagen's female burgomaster Ritt Bjekegard, exhibition of women's

portraits, Sunday marathon of the city residents, head by princess Alexandra and her sons, museum of modern art Louisiana. Besides this, she gave interviews to local radio stations, visited rock-festival in Sweden and one of the oldest amusement parks in Tivoli, met her colleague Thomas Yengel, held retrospective demonstration of her films in the Russian science and culture center, visited the seminar of women's organizations of Denmark. When I looked through her pictures taken in one of Copenhagen's districts, Norrebro, I made up the name of the new photo album - My Mahalla Norrebro.



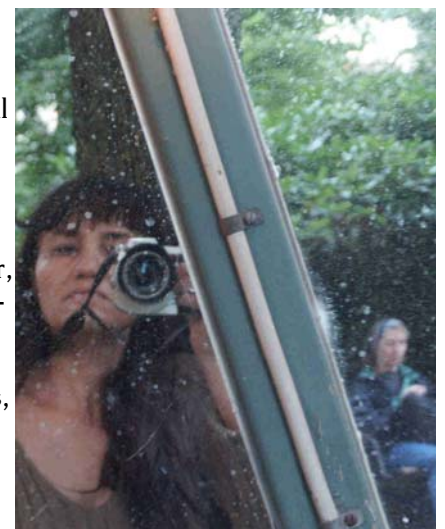
*everybody has his own role, depending on what he does better*



*Ritt Bjekegard, the first female burgomaster of Copenhagen*



*gender equality even among monuments*



*Umida. Auto portrait Tivoli*

*photos by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan*

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