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GENDER AND



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

NETWORKS

useful and pleasant

SPIRIT

AS THE MAIN COMPONENT OF NETWORKING

Tamara HOVNATANYAN,
Armenia



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

*concluding remarks on the conference
Gender Networks and Media: Integration and Mutual
Empowerment
(Tbilisi, 1-3 July)*

The fourth Tbilisi conference is over, and now it is possible to talk about the tradition of it combining both pleasant and useful. The pleasant is not only about meeting friends, but also from the point of view of joint work. At the conference, there meet a lot of different people who share your views and beliefs; who get inspired with your ideas and who are ready to implement new plans as soon as possible.

As for the usefulness of our meetings, we suspected it, but at the recent conference we realized it all of a sudden from a different angle. The idea was proposed by Olga Lipovskaya, a person who likes provocative questions, as she admitted it herself. "Networking or Notworking?" she said, showing a globe hanging in the air. If you turn off hanger bracket's power supply, the globe falls down. "It is so symbolic," the audience sighed. But the globe was finally found and returned to its initial place by common efforts. But the question remained. Is our network real or just virtual? Is there a



We are all here - participants from 14 countries
Photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

threat that we get lost in the web and fail to implement our ideas and to turn them into real actions? The answers were found by common efforts as well. Firstly, we do not want to limit our enthusiasm by virtual space. Secondly, we are quite real people who are ready for real actions. Our annual meetings help us to stay real; these meetings are stimulating, inspiring and fueling our network, giving it new ideas, that we start implementing right when we get back home. This is the salvation from the notorious 'Notworking' that became a reason of many other networks' inactivity.

Lack of ideas is something that will never happen in our case. There were more than enough ideas, just as always. For three evenings, small groups discussed three vital problems: the future of *CaucAsia* magazine, the future of our network and plans for one year. Discussions regarding the magazine development did not take long; we described its thematic for two years in advance. The perspectives of the network development were seen by the participants as a part of cooperation with new communities and creation of our own web space. In other words, we absolutely necessarily need our own web site. Its main particularity should be that the information is available in many languages so that our voice is heard in every *CaucAsian* country. The idea is not quit new, we spoke about it at the previous conference as well, however, we did not implement it yet. The reason why is that opinions differed. Some participants considered that local teams were not properly prepared for successful work; others claimed that there was not proper sponsor for alike project. The truth is somewhere in the middle: the work on expanding the network locally does not always necessarily involve expenses, however finances are necessary for the first stage of the web site creation. The initiative group promised to work at this issue.

The most acute discussion took place when sharing the plans for one year. There were a lot of proposals, each of them very interesting. But the main idea that would inspire everyone was not voiced until the very end. Precious words were pronounced by Alma Bekturganova-Andersen, who said: "Let's study the influence of national traditions on gender equality; we spoke so much about the film that Umida Akhmedova brought," that was exactly the idea that was supported by everyone. By the way, the film, *Men and Women at Rituals*, did cause active discussion, after the conference, Umida took her film to Yerevan and demonstrated it there through one of

our TV channels. Alma's proposal was supported instantly by all the participants; the details of the idea, such as methodic of the research and the main findings of it, also appeared right away. The plan is to tell real stories about men and women. We left Tbilisi encouraged and inspired, looking forward to starting new and interesting work.

I look through my notes taken at the conference and recall the most vivid moments of it: poetic digressions of Lois Herman from the US, the coordinator of the UN women's information network; the results of Global Media Monitoring, presented by Ruta Pels from Estonia; Vladimir Khanas appealing to pay attention to men's problems within gender. Among our newly met colleagues there are Elwira Chrusciel of European network ASTRA, Joanna Szabunko of KARAT coalition. Nadezhda Azhgikhina, business-like and always ready for work chairwoman of the professional journalists' union, seems to be well-known to anyone. "Mission is hard, but possible," she said confidently and it was impossible not to trust her. It was interesting to meet Maria Osipova from Belarus. Maria is a specialist in the security field and she believes that lack of security for the people is the main challenge that needs to be resisted. In general, I think that the session on challenges was very successful. Network's information possibilities enable on time reaction to challenges. *CaucAsia* already has alike experience: during last year's Kyrgyzstan events, our network voiced the opinions of the colleagues based there. This year, Nurzhan Tulegabylova brought a publication based on the articles written back then.

There are a lot of words that were not said due to lack of time. I would thank the hosts of the conference - for being so kind and hospital and for the work they did to make the conference happen. Enormous volume of work becomes evident to each of us, if we only open our inboxes and count the number of messages received from the well-known address, galapet@ip.osgf.ge. Actually, I did count the number and it turned out to be very impressive. But it is not about numbers at all. The spirit is what is important for networking



The photos by Diana Petriashvili from the Conference you can find here:

<http://gmc-caucasia.livejournal.com/>



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN,
Denmark

everyday work

PLANNING THE RESULT

The effectiveness of networking depends on this result

Sometimes it is not easy to follow this result, but it is necessary to do so. If a network members do not feel the result, they do not feel that they are tied to each other with the same thread. In this case, a network slowly dies. Each year, CaucAsia has the results that can be seen and evaluated by anyone; these are the publications of journalists' articles that are focused on the most important issues of women's movement and not only. Joint work within a network inspires us to create our individual products, that would be impossible without preliminary joint work.

MY HOME - MY PRISON?

Umida Akhmedova brought from Tashkent a wonderful film - Men and Women at Rituals. The idea of creating this film appeared at the last year's conference held in 2005. If Umida would make the film four or five years ago, before she met gender experts, it would be a completely different film. Film-exotic, or film-ethnography. But now the documentary is about how the centuries-old rituals hamper a woman to occupy a proper position in the life. The author's new vision is the result of the networking. The film does not include author's words; neither has it included any explanation remarks. It only has the artist's position, the position of female artist, who saw habitual problems from the new angle.

The film caused ambiguous reaction even among us, the associates. Some saw the beauty of national rituals, picturesque details of traditional weddings. But I suddenly recalled sad memories. Some thirty years ago, back in the Soviet times, I was invited to the wedding of my closest friend, who was my classmate at the institute. She used to be quite a modern Uzbek girl. She was the only who drove a car in our provincial institute in the South Kazakhstan. The first shock at her wedding appeared when I saw my friend wearing paranja. Her and her husband went to the mosque. The second shock was when I saw my friend, beautiful Lilya, bowing low to everyone. Neither then, nor now, I see nothing beautiful in a ritual like this. Finally, we ran away from that wedding, all five of us, the bride's classmates.

Another sad memory was the following. Seven years ago I participated in the work at the project on

women's reproductive health. I had to write down an expert opinion of a geneticist. I arranged a meeting with a doctor and came on the due time, but had to wait, as the doctor had visitors. When I entered her room, Korean doctor attacked me:

"As long as you follow your stupid traditions, there will be no sense of talking about healthy generation. Write it in your article!"

I did not even felt offended, as the woman seemed very professional to me. Finally, she explained her words:

"Have you seen a woman with a disabled girl? How old that woman is, you think?"

I saw an old lady with a girl, I thought they were grandmother and granddaughter.

"She is not even forty yet, the doctor said," "but she has worn organism. She needs to be at least properly fed before she gets pregnant again. But she keeps having babies, as all the kids are girls, while the family needs boys. It is very understandable that her organism is famished, because of you traditions - here a daughter in law does not eat until she serves all other family members. Even in the case she is pregnant. Finally, all she gets for dinner can be only a cookie and a glass of milk. This is why it makes no sense to speak about health in the circumstances like this."

The doctor continued:

"Maybe, it is not a problem for wealthier families. But I deal with pathologies that appear mostly among poor families from remote villages, where all these traditions are very popular "

After watching Umida's documentary, Kyrgyz colleagues restarted the topic of brides' kidnapping. The ritual that used to be more or less voluntary back in the Soviet times, now seems to be a national tragedy, especially in remote villages. Sometimes, kidnapping is the only option for a family to be created without huge debts

The topic of national traditions and rituals is very difficult and delicate. Not much is spoken about this problem, and what is voiced is not truth. This is why we decided this problem to be the topic of the next conference. We want to discuss, how the rituals influence status of women, how do they correspond to the principles of democracy and women's equality. For this conference, we decided to publish collection of articles on this topic, holding a peculiar journalist investigation. Our traditions - are they good or evil?

FROM NATIONAL PROBLEMS - TO JOINT SOLUTION WITH THE NORTHERN EUROPE

At the previous conference there appeared an idea of my film as well. The film is about Danish women's participation in the political life of the country. I believed that alike documentary could be used by women's organizations, schools and activists of post-Soviet countries. I discussed the idea of this film with all the CaucAsia countries. I received opinions from delegations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Uzbekistan. A letter of support was also sent by the gender unit of ODIHR OSCE. It was decided that the film should influence a watcher's emotions. Numbers and facts can be easily found in mass-media, or researches, while the film would be focused on convincing a watcher through its visual, emotional tools.

At the recent conference, I demonstrated a pilot version of the documentary. It was very important to me to discuss if I chose the right direction in my work with the Danish film director Thomas Yengel. Thomas is the author of several documentaries, an award winner of professional competitions. From afar, life looks different; it is for the first time for me that I work in an international tandem. We do not have any argues about the general effect of the film, but we actively discuss the tools that will help us. Thomas is a strong supporter of women's equality, and there is nothing surprising about it, if you know Denmark. But as a representative of my country, I sometimes suspect that he is not gender sensitive enough. But

during each discussion, that are held in the mix of English, Danish and Russian (Thomas worked in Russia for some time), we come to the conclusion that all my fears are groundless. Colleagues made comments that are very important to me. As the film is ready, I think it will be interesting from the networking point of view.



Umida creates a new documentary
photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

**Remark on the conference
ABOUT WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY**

**Umida AKHMEDOVA,
Uzbekistan:**



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

I would like to tell you about how I appeared in gender. A book publisher I worked for said: "You will have to go to that conference. Don't worry, it won't be boring. They will show some movies there. It was back in 2003, in Tashkent. This is where I met Galina Petriashvili, Nadezhda Azhgikhina and Olga Lipovskaya. I only wanted to show them the city, my house, my works. They looked through my pictures and thought: we need to help her. Galina wrote to me later: I saw your picture on the internet, they are the best, I swear! Nadya proposed: let's publish them in the Women's Dialogue. And than Galina invited me to the conference in Tbilisi, not as a regular participant, she proposed to hold my personal exhibition there. My first exhibition took place not at home, but in Tbilisi; after a long break in my professional career. And finally my local colleagues proposed me to make an exhibition in Bukhara. After this exhibition I started working at the film. That was my return to my profession that stopped with the collapse of the Soviet Union... And it was an exact result of women's solidarity that brought me back from professional non-existence.



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Vladimir KHANAS,
Ukraine

men's tears

LOST IN NETWORKING

At the Third conference in Tbilisi, I already spoke about the question, if real men cry or not. In one of CaucAsia magazines, I wrote about the main problems that men face. Now, I would like to share with you my opinions regarding creation of men's gender network. I think that this experience will be useful for the future, and that if we even get lost in our networks, we will find the right solution.

SOME HISTORY

Vinnitsk social organization Men against Violence was set up in the summer of 2001. Its main goal was to unite men to develop their self-consciousness, to lessen the level of violence and to achieve gender equality.

At the first stage, the organizations worked at attracting the society's attention towards the fact that stereotype attitude towards a human is the violence against human's nature. For women, this problem is being solved by feminist organizations, while this network was focused on men.

According to the organizers, the main difficulty is that even those activists, who realize the necessity of changes, are, as a rule, not ready for these changes emotionally.

The experience of Swedish consultants appeared to be a push for creation of the men's movement in Ukraine. The seminars were held by Sprangbradan, campaign, which used its own example to prove the productiveness of alike organizations. From the beginning, the Men against Violence network was doing pretty good, as it managed to attract appropriate media sources, and even was included in several manuals and started consulting other men's organizations, especially at the stage of their formation... But later, personal contradiction between the organization members began, and due to certain circumstances the activities of the organization stopped. Practically at the same time, under the support of UNDP and Swedish International Development (SIDA) two more men's centers were founded in Zhitomir district and in Kiev. However, after some time, these organizations also stopped functioning.

The Men's Adaptation Center was created in 2003, in the period when there were no other alike centers working. In 2004, men's centers were created in Kirovograd (Men's Gender Center), in Zinkov town of Poltava district (Gender Center) while in Vinnitsa, a part of previous organization set up social organization called Oleg. These organizations had a chance to go through an internship within a framework of the joint Ukrainian-Swedish program Oleg. The internship project was held in Ornshskolsvik, Sweden, as a part of Papa School program..

The experience gained there was used in several different ways in Ukraine. In Ternpil, for example, it is used even by the state structures, who invite trainers

for consultations. But in Zinkov, the experience was not appropriately developed. In Kirovograd, the union Technologies of Optimal Development worked out a program methodology complex on men's gender education, which unites both Ukrainian and Swedish experience.

IN TERNOPIL

Our organization, Men's Adaptation Center, together with Ty Dyvi social organization, holds weekly events called Parents Saturdays. Each of these meetings is thematic: parents and children study local lore, play sport games, hold various sport competitions, that are already well-known in the entire country.

Under our initiative, the center on gender studies was created at the Ternopil Experimental Institute of Pedagogic Education. Seminars, public opinion polls are conducted jointly, students are lectured on special courses in gender, Gender Studies Messenger is being published.

In May of 2006, Men's Adaptation Center together with the Ternopil Experimental Institute, and under information support of CaucAsia international coalition of gender journalists, held the Third International Conference: Humanitarian Direction of Gender Relations. Participants from Russia, Poland, Denmark, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Canada took part in the Conference. Conference materials were prepared for two publications - an academic and popular scientific.

At the same time, men's gender centers continued searching for other methods of working with men. In Vinnitsa, there appeared men's emergency center called Men's SOS. It foresees 24 hour work of volunteers who answer mobile phones. The Gender Center in Vinnitsa launched cooperation with the local authorities; its potential has already expanded the limits of a small town. Your Right organization, located in Lviv, worked out a very interesting program on gender and human rights activities.

Also, in 2005, under the support of the UN Development Program, men's education centers were created in Lugansk and Kherson (possibly, in other towns as well). The logical question is: why the variety of men's centers failed to be transformed into a men's network, which would be a part of an international network? Discussions over this perspective began back in 2004, at the Genderstan - 2004 international conference held in Bishkek. However, it was yet impossible to transform nominal network into an acting network.

WHY IS THE NETWORK INACTIVE?

I have participated in the consultations, agreements and works at the network's concept. But it is extremely difficult for me to analyze why the network was stopped. Men's Adaptation Center has a good experience of networking, both local and international. No doubt that cooperation with Ukrainian coalition of social organizations Listen Yourself is absolutely positive, useful and pleasant for our organization. The Coalition's purpose is to support social initiatives in different fields. Joint implementation of the project entitled Women's Participation in Ukrainian Social and Political life is underway together with the Ukrainian Women's Consortium. During parliamentary and presidential elections, we cooperated closely with international observers of ENEMO and OSCE; with Polish and Ukrainian partners, we continue working in the School of Young Leader project, which was launched 5 years ago. It was a great achievement to start working with the CauAsia international coalition. Thanks to the CauAsia magazine, we have a chance not only to share our news, but also to receive extremely valuable information from all coalition members.

But let me return to the failures of the men's network. Ukrainian political technologists state that three factors are necessary for winning elections: people, idea, money. If there is no first component, it makes no sense to speak about future success. If there are first two, there is quite a chance for the victory.

Analogous formula can be used when talking about the network. It is impossible for the network to work effectively if there are no horizontal ties. The Center's attempt to control the activities of the participants does not have any perspective. It may sound strange, but participants of Oleg, Ukrainian-Swedish project, have never met together, despite the project is financed by SIDA. The initiative of the Men's Adaptation Center was always welcomed but was never implemented; there would always appear reasons behind why joint working sessions were never held. The paradox is that we have quit friendly relations with all centers separately. And this is not a network!

The experience of Ukrainian-Swedish program Olga+Oleg has even more negative experience. Kiev's center, which finances the Ukrainian part of the project, chooses the location of the activities, and selects participants without any consultations with the others. It is understandable, that in a situation like this, the feeling of internal resistance appears. It is not pleasant to see how your work is being demonstrated as an achievement of someone else. And the issue is not about gender, it is about moral. These examples show that good ideas do not always appear in good people. And the conclusion is: networks die because of the factors that could build them: people, ideas, money.

WHAT DO MEN DO IN THE WOMEN'S CONSORTIUM?

Joining of the Men's Adaptation Center caused huge interest and huge misunderstanding. Ukrainian Women's Consortium was founded in summer of 2001 as "an open democratic coalition of non-governmental organizations... the members of the Consortium support the idea of gender equality and oppose all form of discrimination..." This is what is written in the Consortium regulations. The organization implements social projects in all districts of Ukraine and unites partners of 167 non-governmental women's and youth organizations of Ukraine. The only men's organization united in the Consortium is the Men's Adaptation Center. It was very difficult for us from the beginning, but we are happy that we are understood by the majority of the Consortium members and by the organization's president Natalia Samolevskaya. What does the Women Consortium do? Its priorities include fight against domestic violence and human trafficking, multidisciplinary education for specialists, political lobbying of gender issues in Ukrainian parliament, strengthening women's leadership, introduction of gender approaches to the legislation...

Practical anecdote:

When questioning at the seminar for chairmen of village councils, held by the Men's Adaptation Center, one of the participants answered the question regarding his marital status as saying it was "satisfactory."

ANY POSITIVE TRENDS?

When we began our active work on gender with our male colleagues, we were dubbed as "gays" and even "masons."

But today, there are so many people who address to our center and who want to joint us. This is one of the signs of a real network - the network is being built itself! Just as CauAsia built itself, just as our Center was created. It was not created as a formal structure, but was built as alive organism.

Not much time passed since the conference in Tbilisi, but we have already held the presentation of the Woman and Civil Society book. Meeting of social organizations of Ternopil, Kiev, and Lviv districts was held recently, where the perspective of men's network creation under the aegis of CauAsia was discussed. There is a principal agreement on representing CauAsia at the biggest social portal of Ukraine, Gromadskiy Prostir (Social Space), where it is planned to create Ukrainian version of CauAsia magazine. I would like to highlight that all these small steps were made by men. Very soon, an international seminar Gender Development in Ukraine and Belarus and the Society Progress will be held. As proposed by the Women's Consortium, I will present the experience of both men's crisis centers and the materials of the Tbilisi conference there.



Photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

Marina PEREKRESTOVA,
Kyrgyzstan

beginning PARADE of IDEAS and PERSONALITIES

In contrast to my colleague Nurzhan Tulegabylova, it was my first time at the Tbilisi conference of journalists. My participation was very useful both from the point of view of its matter and considering that I expanded contacts with other participants and gained new associates.

The information discussed at the conference was very rich. Presentations that described and demonstrated women's problems in the post-Soviet countries were very interesting. The conference took place in the format of an 'open space;' each bloc was finalized by active discussion that added even more information to the situations existing in the regions and the countries.

The presentation delivered by Ruta Pels was very impressive. Independent journalist and national coordinator of the Global Media Monitoring in Estonia delivered the following speech: "Woman and Mass Media: Adequacy of Coverage. GMMP-2005." The numbers that were included in the research properly demonstrate gender situation in the mass media. The presentation of Elwira Chrusciel of Polish ASTRA association, was a culture shock for me. Elwira spoke on the pressure upon women's reproductive rights in Poland, where activation of Catholicism opposes women's right for family planning. The situation in Poland is very much like what we face in Kyrgyzstan. Just recently, ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan addressed to the country's parliament demanding to introduce criminal punishment for abortion at the stage of over 12 weeks. Ombudsman demanded criminal punishment for both, a woman who wants abortion and for doctor who makes it.

The presentation of Charming Feminism, a pilot documentary by Alma Bekturganova-Andersen from Denmark appeared to be a positive note at the background of the problems' discussion.

My own presentation of the Different but Equal project was focused on the experience of promoting gender equality through the network of the regional non-governmental radio stations. This presentation also caused interest; it was especially interesting to the colleagues from Russia and Armenia. Probably, it will be a beginning of future partner projects.

Three days of the conference appeared to me as a parade of personalities, ideas and implemented projects. This creative environment encourages making a proper response. Besides the book with publications, which includes my article as well, I brought from

Tbilisi a lot of thoughts and ideas that need to be evaluated and analyzed before they transform into particular projects. I would like to share some of the thoughts that I had during the conference.

First was that I suddenly realized, that despite former Soviet republics live separately from each other, they remain in the one space. There are many problems that can be solved only through joint efforts. Regional NGO networks solve the same tasks in different countries, however, sometimes they are not properly informed about what is going on in some other place and how the problems are solved in a neighboring state. Annual conferences of the GenderMediaCaucasus journalists' association are unique and vitally important from this point of view. Another thought was that I really regret that Kyrgyzstan did not participate in GMMP - 2005 as actively as Estonia or Georgia did. At least, I had never heard about the national results on Kyrgyzstan. These results could seriously contribute to the ideas of gender equality in our country.

Besides this, I noticed that GenderMediaCaucasus Association did a very good job choosing the space of the conference. The program was very rich, and we did not have time to get to know the country and its culture. But the organizers chose historic chamber theater, which was restored in accordance to Georgian national decoration. Besides this, at the presentation, we listened to a real Georgian male choir.



folklore music group "Dioskuria"
photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

**Remark on the conference
ABOUT GENDER JOURNALISM
Tiina ILSEN,
head of gender unit,
ODIHR OSCE:**



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

It is for the fourth time that you come together to discuss important issues. ODOHR OSCE does a lot to assist our countries in promotion on the way of achieving steady and mature democracy. The success of this process is influenced by different factors. One of the main is how actively and creatively are all parts of the society involved in these processes. This is why one of the main postulates in the work of ODIHR OSCE is the achievement of equal opportunities for women and men at all levels of decision-making. We understand that it is impossible without media. This is why we try to make media component to be one of the main part of our programs and projects. We highly evaluate the work of the International Coalition CaucAsia, inspired by the GenderMediaCaucasus Journalists' Association. We watch your work with great interest and satisfaction, and we are trying to support your growth and cooperation. Your international network is a good example of cooperating at the regional level. We view the journalists working in the field of gender as an important resource of women's movement, and an important resource for democracy and women's fight for equal opportunities in your countries.

Lois A. Herman
Coordinator WUNRN
Women's UN Report Network

WE CAN CROSS BORDERS AND TRANSMIT OUR TRUTHS AND REALITIES



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

The Women's UN Report Network - WUNRN - has come a long way to say congratulations to CaucAsia and the Gender Media Caucasus Journalists' Association for organizing this highly significant Conference, and to say thank you to OSCE ODIHR and all involved. WUNRN has been pleased to publicize the CaucAsia Bulletin Electronic Magazine from the beginning and to the WUNRN ListServe, which is considered the most active Gender ListServe in the world. The WUNRN ListServe covers the globe on human rights, empowerment, and oppression issues of women and girls. WUNRN's ListServe also intersects the UN system and at high levels, multiple times every day. The reality issues of women and girls in Central Asia have remained quite invisible. Political, economic, social, religious, cultural, and other factors have been influences. The gender perspective from the grass roots level has been even more elusive. CaucAsia has, through excellent and diversified articles and pictures, created a window of awareness and communication from the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russia. CaucAsia, like WUNRN, represents the pivotal importance of free and independent Gender Media. WUNRN has been very impressed with the CaucAsia

International Journalists' Conferences on Women's Representation in Media and Ways to Build Strength and Effectiveness of Gender Media, especially in the CIS Region. WUNRN has noted the importance of the 2005 Conference Appeal

It is SO important for Gender Media to be accurate, ethical and honorable, esthetically of high quality in presentation, and consistent - sustainable, to build trust.

We all know that Violence against Women and Girls is very much influenced by media.

We are quite marginalized from mainstream public and private media, and yet we have the distinct advantage of being free and independent. And, very important, is that we share, validate, and energize each other as we move forward.

Through Gender Media, we can cross borders and transmit our truths and realities. We must share information with each other and then expand our audiences and across sectors. This is the spirit and theme of our Conference: Gender Networks & Media: Integration & Mutual Empowerment!



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Ruta PELS,
Estonia

gender sensitivity of mass media

HOW TO INCREASE IT?

to write more,
to write better,
to write adequately

The role of a personality in network is so important! I thought about it when the conference was coming to an end. The organizers of the conference were journalists of the GenderMediaCaucasus Association (Georgia); its permanent sponsor is, for the fourth time already ODIHR OSCE in person of Estonian Tiina Ilsen, who heads gender unit of the democratization department. Because of these women and all whom they brought together, the network of the CauAsia international coalition of journalists continues its work. The coalition publishes monthly magazine, and unites gender activists bringing them to the annual conferences.

This year, journalists and representatives of social organizations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Estonia, Denmark, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and USA delivered their reports at the conference. Generally, they spoke about the status of woman in the civil society.

I had a chance to participate in publishing the Woman and Politics book, which included my article on women parliament members in Estonia. This year, my heroes were Lena Blum of Estnian center of women's education and participants of mentor project, organized by this center. My report, included to the conference agenda, was focused on the results of the Global Media Monitoring, held in 76 countries of the world, including Estonia, on February 16, 2005. The organizers of the project Who Makes the News? Analyzed 12 893 information pieces, heroes of which were 25 671 men and women and 14 273 leading reporters. The main question for the research was: Is mass media a mirror of life?" And, unfortunately, the question is "no." 52% of the population of Earth are women. But only 21% of February 16, 2005 news was on women (where a woman is the subject of news or an interviewee). Only 14% of political and 20% of economic and business news was more or less related to women.

In our everyday practice we do not think much about gender sensitivity of mass media, the issue of gender equality in Estonia is oftentimes misunderstood and causes irritation among both general public and politics. This is why the data received as the result of the monitoring are so much important, as they help to see and to realize real situation in this field.

How many years are necessary to obtain gender equality in the information field? What to do to influ-

ence gender sensitivity of those who makes decisions? After the announcement of the monitoring results, during February 16 - March 8, 2006, all participating countries held Three Weeks of Actions, which was a mass effort to genderize mass media and public opinion. It is necessary to say that in Estonia, mass media was quite inactive when covering this action. Well, five years ago, the situation was even worse. Now journalists and editors at least do not ask for contact information of Mr. Gender; the majority of them do not need to be explained what gender is. But still, it is obvious that activists of social organizations and gender journalists have a lot of work to do ahead. And the results of the global media monitoring can be a good help, as for many people news is the window to the world, and their comprehension of news depends on who makes the news.

GMMP-2005:

86% 'voices' in the news - men's.
83% experts in the news - men.

Women lead:
In the role of a housewife (75%),
Student (51%),
Celebrity (42%),
Royal person (33%).

49% of men in the news - aged 50 and older.
72% of women in the news - aged younger than 50.

19% of victims of accidents, crimes, wars - women,
8% - men.

17% of women showed in the news as a mother, a sister, a wife, a daughter...

5% of men were named in the news as fathers, husbands, sons...

Remark on the conference
ABOUT GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Marina TABUKASHVILI, Georgia:



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

We build our networks ourselves and their work is influenced by the impulse we have. I welcome the work of the GenderMediaCaucasus Journalists' Association as a national network, which includes the contribution of the Open Society Institute's Women's Program. It is very inspiring that now the network has its own strategy, it leads, and brings us together independently from our program and any other sponsors. Today, various challenges and threats of the people are so serious and dangerous, that women should not be thinking not only about their own status and rights (which is, or course, important), but about the global survival of the mankind. And if we are responsible women, good professionals, if we are honest and active, if we really know how to interact and how to support each other, we should know how to change even the most horrifying tendencies. We, the women, who are dispersed in time and in space, feel the unity we aspire to. And it needs to be comprehended as a big resource and a big power.

Remark on the conference
ABOUT MEDIA GROUP

Diana MIKADZE, Georgia

Our Coalition of Women's NGOs has been working in Georgia for five years already. It was created in October 2000, with approximately 30 NGOs signing the memorandum; during all this time it is being developed under the support of ODIHR OSCE and the head of its gender unit Tiina Ilsen. Today, the Coalition unites some 80 organizations. It is a multi-aspect union, it is focused on different spheres of life, including the work with the media. First of all, I would like to speak a little bit about the general media context of our country. Today in Georgia, the freedom of speech is in threat, many newspapers stopped functioning, others face serious financial troubles. Journalists' honorariums are very small and not paid on time, there do appear critical articles, but they are yet unable to create a proper background. Pro-governmental powers rule in the country blocking the freedom of speech. The problem of gender balance is very acute - women journalists make the majority, but editors, managers, producers are men, and they are exactly who makes decisions and have power in the mass media. This is why gender topics are not popular. Domestic violence, trafficking, forced marriages happen in life, but are not reflected by the media. And there is no society's demand for articles like this. These are the problems Coalition's Media Group works at. It is a slow and steady process. But gender articles make their way through the society's consciousness. The Media Group formed a network of regional women journalists, who cover these topics. For this year's fall, we plan a large media-campaign to promote women to the local elections.



Photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

Remark on the conference
ABOUT BEGINNING
Lois A. HERMAN, USA



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

One woman journalist can be very strong. But a group of women journalists is a huge power. How are the networks created?

They start from a tiny link; if you are at least 3-4-5 associates and you want to work together, and you do work together expanding your contacts, you should be considering yourself a beginning of a society. For this, you don't have to have a status, the work itself will make it all so that your contacts get more and more expanded, getting to the international level. The most important is to get organized and your flower will grow.

Remark on the conference ABOUT CaucAsia

**Galina PETRIASHVILI,
Georgia:**



Photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

In 2003 we did not even plan any coalition - we just came together to the conference in Tbilisi. But we worked there so intensively and so creatively that nobody wanted to break up. And someone said: Let's unite! This is how we made up the name, caucAsia, which was the sum of two the words Caucasus and Asia, the regions participants were from. And we simply started working. From the beginning we did not even

realize that it was actual working. Initially, we simply interacted, exchanged news, information, links. Later we made some joint actions, publications. There are a lot of ideas, all is necessary to form applications with these ideas. Granting organizations see our activeness and support us. ODIHR OSCE is our reliable, understanding partner. Annual meetings in Tbilisi and our annual publications have already become a calling card of the CaucAsia Coalition.

Donors' support is very important, or course. But it needs to appear in the due time and in the right direction. And finances are not always crucial. Even in the projects that seem to be impossible on the volunteer basis only. During one year, CaucAsia monthly magazine was coming out without a single cent. We decided to publish this magazine in 2004, at the Second Conference. We decided that we needed to create a publication where we could voice our feelings, and we made it. Writing articles, editing them, doing design, planning, proof-reading, photos, English translation - everything was done free of charge for an entire year. Wonderful foundation Mama Cash saw our efforts and devotion, and issued a grant for 2006. Another wonderful sponsor, Global Fund for Women, assisted as institutionally. We would like to thank them so much! However, neither Mama Cash, nor the Global Fund, would probably ever get to know us without our CaucAsia magazine. This is why, answering a question of less experienced colleagues on how to build once work, I reply: working! Acting, doing what you consider necessary and important. And the work will take you to the right direction, associates will join you, and you will find someone who considers it necessary to support you.

Remark on the conference ABOUT THE REALITY AND VIRTUALITY

**Olga LIPOVSKAYA,
Russia:**



photo by Polina Miloradovich, Georgia

Networking today means working in a virtual space. We interact in the space. All we can do is that we can use this space, internet, generally. But there is

reality as well. Maybe we switched to virtual activities too much? Maybe we too much trust words? Maybe we overestimate them? We need to be aware that even if we collect millions of signatures supporting a woman who was killed somewhere in the other part of the world, we will be unable to change her fate, to change this reality. Our assistance and solidarity, that seems so significant to us, will remain virtual. Real activity differs from virtual activity because it involves real risk, real work, and real actions. This is what I would like to propose to discuss.



Photos by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

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