



“WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER” NGO

Annual Report

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2022

“WOMEN’S RESOURCE CENTER” NGO
ANNUAL REPORT
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About Women's Resource Center



Women's Resource Center (hereafter, WRC) is a feminist human rights organization with a vision to establish the equal, and self-determined status of women¹ in Armenian society, through the elimination of oppression and restrictions on women constructed by patriarchal societal standards. Through its various activities, WRC strives towards social, and normative change influencing state policy, legislative and socio-cultural spheres.

The WRC was founded in 2003, and works within the field of women's rights in three main directions:

Feminist safe space
and empowerment of
women and girls,

Sexual and
Reproductive Health
and Rights,

Women's
Rights
Advocacy.

The basis and foundation of the Women's Resource Center has continuously been distinguished by its feminist approach, offering women a feminist safe space, with equal opportunities and mutual support, based on a non-discriminative and collaborative approach. At WRC, individuals can initiate and implement their ideas that align with feminist ideology and values.

Mission

Empower and support different
groups of women and girls;

Identify and reduce cultural,
and systemic manifestations of
discrimination and violence against
women;

Spread feminist ideology and support women's united
struggle against inequalities created by the patriarchal system.

We understand and accept the fact that the term
“woman” is multidimensional, including many sub-identities,
categories and expressions.



Feminist Safe Space and Empowerment of Women and Girls



Feminist activism is one of the main directions of the WRC. Expanding feminist activities, the Organization tries to contribute to the expansion of the feminist movement and the overthrow of the patriarchal system. Therefore, WRC Feminist Space operates in 3 directions: **capacity building of women and girls, feminist activism, and women's well-being.**

Safe space

Since the Organization's foundation, WRC has established a safe space for different groups of women, where they can share their experiences, discuss, and self-express without facing any kind of discrimination or judgmental attitudes. WRC is open from Monday to Saturday from 14:00 to 19:00, except Wednesdays. It's free to work, study, use the library, and interact with staff. Here we hold movie screenings, book discussions, and various events aimed at improving the well-being and mental health of our visitors. This year we had **376** visits to our safe space.



Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

Women's Rights Training



One of the important initiatives of Feminist Space is “Women's Rights Training”, which has been held twice a year since the WRC was established. In 2022, the trainings were organized twice. Due to these trainings, participants study the following 6 topics: Human rights, Gender, Gender-based violence, Feminism, Sexual and reproductive health and rights, Women,

peace, security.

During the women's rights trainings, the participants were provided with an opportunity to apply their gained knowledge, and collectively develop a small project to contribute to the gender equality movement in Armenia, and address gender stereotypes and women's issues in society, and their respective communities. In 2022, **6 initiatives** were implemented with the support of the WRC.

“Girls Talk” project

The goal of the project is to empower teenage girls, to create a safe space for their self-development and communication. During the weekly meetings, the participants have the opportunity to share their ideas and experience, discuss the role of young girls in society, as well as their own personal issues, goals and dreams.



In 2022, with the help of our volunteers, we conducted 8 meetings with a group of **10 girls**, where we discussed topics such as: self-esteem, self-perception, healthy relationships, body positivity, sexual health, feminist literature, feminist motivation, etc. In September, we implemented the same program in one school in the Ararat region, with **30 girls**.

Girls' Empowerment Camp

On July 22-24, WRC and its volunteers organized the annual “Girls' Empowerment Camp”. The camp provided 20 girls (aged 18-25) an opportunity to have discussions surrounding topics such as, feminism, sexuality, art activism, literature, culture, and many different feminist issues, in a safe area outside the city for 3 days. In addition, the camp became a safe place for girls to make friends, share, and meet like-minded people.



Feminist Discussions

Feminist discussions are organized in our space, during which a guest expert, our volunteers, or our staff members lead a discussion on a chosen topic. The idea of the feminist discussions is to create a discourse on feminist and women's issues in Armenia. During 2022, **5 meetings** were held on the following topics: ecofeminism, female genital mutilation, and a meeting with the WRCA lawyer on divorce and labor rights.



Forum Theatre



As a part of our collective care and healing projects, we held forum theater meetings twice a week from April to May. At the end of the course, **3 stories** were staged and discussed within the group.

Feminist Activism and Women's Rights

Exhibition dedicated to the International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders

Globally, November 29 is celebrated as the “International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders”. The “Remembering the WRCA Archives” exhibition was organized, to recall the journey of women human rights defenders who for many years



actively organized, participated, or volunteered in various demonstrations, actions, or events with the WRC. The exhibition had more than 50 visitors at different times.

March 8: Women's Rights Day



The purpose of “International Women’s Rights Day” is *to uphold women’s achievements, recognize challenges, and focus greater attention on women’s rights, and gender equality*. Every year, WRC and its volunteers organize campaigns, and events to raise awareness in society about the real purpose of March 8. In 2022, the main idea of the March 8 events was to remind people that it is, first and foremost, “International Women’s Rights Day”, and why it still matters.

WRC Volunteers

The WRC, as a grassroots organization, has always emphasized the role of volunteers in its activities. The volunteers of WRC contribute to the realization of the feminist agenda in Armenia. Currently, we have more than 15 volunteers who are actively involved in the activities of the WRCA, as well as starting their initiatives.



WRC volunteers have the opportunity to initiate their own ideas, as well as, receive support for their initiatives. To volunteer at the WRC, you need to fill out our volunteer [application form](#). Over the past 20 years, WRC has had hundreds of volunteers who have contributed to the activities, and mission of the Organization. In addition, WRC has had an important impact on the volunteers by empowering, and influencing their capacity development.

Enhancing Women's Well-Being

Psychological support

Due to the pandemic and post-war situation, violations of women's rights, gender-based violence, domestic violence, and other harmful practices exacerbated, and portrayed more harmful reflections in Armenian society. To counteract the negative impact of the current challenges on women, the WRC initiated psychological support via group meetings. The psychological group support was organized through **thematic meetings and personal growth courses**.



During the reporting period, 6 thematic meetings were held in the following order: “Anger: impact and importance in our life”; “Anxiety and fears”; “What are my limits?”, “Menopause” - medical and psychological features of menopause in a woman's life” and a 3-part thematic meeting on “Relationships”. In total, **37** women participated in the thematic sessions. Additionally, 6 personal growth courses were held through art therapy. The number of meetings with each group was 6-8. The number of participants in the 6 courses was **51**.

Legal Support

A free hotline was available for women to discuss experiences related to legal issues in their work or personal life. This legal aid provided women the opportunity to find reliable answers to their legal questions, and receive directions on how to find solutions. The counseling service received 200 calls, and 21 in-person visits from women.



Both Armenian as well as foreign citizens have sought counseling. We have received calls both from Yerevan, as well as different regions of Armenia. In addition, the Organization has provided legal support to women displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, we have also received calls for legal advice from Russia.



Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights



The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) program has been operating within the Organization since 2008, and is one of the main priorities of the WRC. We raise issues in society, by talking about women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as barriers to women's decision-making about their bodies, and the perception of sexuality as a stigmatized, and closed topic. The purpose of SRHR is to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of different groups of women by building awareness, and developing mechanisms for raising, and solving issues concerning women's sexual and reproductive rights.

The following activities are implemented within the framework of the SRHR program:

Individual Counseling

Counseling is conducted both face-to-face and online, maintaining all principles of confidentiality. If necessary, women can be referred to reliable medical facilities, accompanied by our specialists. You can call 094-56-57-21 for individual consultation.

In 2022, we reached **65 women** and **4** men through individual counselling related to SRHR.



Capacity Building and Awareness Raising

Capacity building workshops for obstetrics/gynecologists and general practitioners:



The “Advocates for Reproductive Health and Rights” network (hereafter, Network) developed the Training Module on a rights-based and non-discriminative approach to providing reproductive health services, which has been initiated within the scope of this project in 2017. The Module for obstetrics/gynecologists, and general practitioners was accredited by the Ministry of Health of Armenia in 2019, and reconfirmed in

2021 for 2 years. It is worth mentioning that the participants get credits upon completing the course. In 2022, we conducted two-day meetings with several groups of health providers, reaching **204 obstetrics/gynecologists and general practitioners** from all regions of the Republic of Armenia.

Online awareness raising workshops for different groups of young women:

In 2022, 3-day workshops, with 3 groups of young women was carried out on SRHR issues, covering subjects such as healthy sexual relationships, sexuality, and sexual violence prevention. In total, **we reached 60 women** through our workshops on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Capacity building workshop for specialists on gender sensitive response to SRHR issues:

A series of training courses have been developed for two regional NGOs during the reporting period. Specialists developed a 2-day training manual to increase NGOs' sensitivity to sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. As a result of the trainings, the members of the NGOs developed their capacities on the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights, got acquainted with the articles of the RA Law on Reproductive Rights, studied in-depth abortion approaches, and anti-abortion movements. Moreover, members of the NGOs developed their capacities on the topic of reproductive rights issues of women who are living with HIV, women who have disabilities, Yezidi women, and LBT women.

Capacity building workshop for youth on sexual and reproductive health and rights:

A five-day training course was organized for young women on human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. In total, 60 young women participated in the training. As a result of the training, one initiative group was formed and conducted two days trainings on sexual health topics for teenage girls in their community.



Awareness Raising on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights via Media

Sexual Health Week

February 14-21 was the annual Sexual Health Week, and this year it was dedicated to [raising awareness](#)

on STDs ([Fb link](#)). During the week, [My Body, My Right](#) page actively published posts on STDs. At the end of the awareness week, a short podcast was prepared, tackling all the issues mentioned surrounding STDs.



Raising Awareness on Breastfeeding



During the first week of August (1-7), the [page](#) raised awareness on [breastfeeding](#) as part of World Breastfeeding Week.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#) during which we dedicated a series of posts to the topics: stages of breast cancer (in 4 parts – [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), [part 4](#)), and breast self-examination (in 2 parts – [part 1](#), [part 2](#)). In addition to the posts, an in person discussion was held on October 17 on the topic of “Breast Care and Breast Cancer Prevention”. Participants had the opportunity to learn about breast care features, breast self-examination techniques, cancer prevalence, and prevention methods.



“Reproductive Rights Advocacy Network”

Within the framework of the SRHR program, there is an advocacy component. Therefore, legislative and state policy issues in the field of reproductive rights and measures that are aimed at social change, are fulfilled by the Network that operates and advocates for reproductive rights. “Reproductive Rights Advocacy Network” was established by the efforts of WRC in 2017 to raise reproductive rights issues of different marginalized groups of women, such as: women living with HIV, women living in rural areas, Yazidi women, disabled, and LGBT women.

Feminist Advocacy



Advocacy is a phased process aimed at changing, and improving policies and legislation developed and implemented by decision-makers, mainly state actors. Our advocacy work is based on feminist values and approaches which take into account the needs of different groups of women. After listening to problems encountered at the personal level, the WRC advocacy team politicizes these issues by raising them among state agencies and proposing solutions at the legislative or policy level. We carry out advocacy work at both the local and international levels, and pour our efforts and capacities to provide political solutions to women's issues and rights violations.



Advocacy Work on the Local level

At the local level, we try to influence the state policies, and legislative processes and make them more gender-sensitive and inclusive for women. In particular:

Meeting with women's groups, and other CSOs to take consideration of their needs;

Mobilizing the efforts of civil society to implement joint actions;

Conducting research and developing policy papers;

Working with the representatives of the different state bodies.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

In the post-war period, women's sexual and reproductive rights are mostly limited by the policies which promote population growth. In particular, these policies continue to be inaccessible to representatives of different groups of women (women with disabilities, women living with HIV, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender women). Moreover, as a result of promoting these policies, women face barriers to accessing contraceptive methods. One of the main goals of the WRC advocacy team, was advocating

and identifying problems related to the reproductive rights of different groups of women, such as the use of assisted reproductive technologies, access to contraceptives, and other issues. In the scope of this direction, the following activities were carried out:

Uniting efforts with the members of the “Reproductive Rights Advocacy Network” to implement advocacy for the realization of the reproductive rights of marginalized groups of women, in particular, producing a comprehensive report on the legislative mechanisms of the use of assisted reproductive technologies, and availability among different groups of women.

The report is available in Armenian: <https://bit.ly/3CEzl4U>

Develop a policy paper on the provision of contraceptive methods for women. The summary of the document is available in English: <https://bit.ly/3X5KhAM>



Women's Labor Rights

In 2022, the government of RA initiated the development, and adoption of a package of large-scale amendments to the Labor Code. However, in the package there was a lack of provisions that ensure women's decent work, such as the prohibition of workplace sexual harassment. Currently, women sexually harassed in the workplace do not have any legal mechanism to protect their rights. In the circulating draft, there were also retrogressive provisions around fixing the principle of equal pay for women and men. The main goal of this principle is to reduce the gender pay gap. In the scope of this direction, the following activities were carried out:

Advocacy for restoring legal regulations on the gender pay gap in the draft Labor Code.

Advocacy for the introduction of mechanisms to regulate workplace sexual harassment. Additionally, we conducted a survey and mobilized about 50 civil society representatives in calling on decision-makers to accept the recommended amendments. Finally, we had a number of meetings with representatives of legislative and executive bodies. The package of legislative proposals in Armenian is available: <https://bit.ly/3W2WdSs>

Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

In the war and post-war period, advocacy work on identifying women's needs (including displaced or war-affected women), and increasing the role of women in peace processes gained particular importance. In the scope of this direction, the following activities were carried out:

Regular consultations with civil society representatives on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in the post-war period. Two productive meetings were held in 2022. More details about the meetings are available here:

<https://bit.ly/3GVd05B> <https://bit.ly/3Qw5TE0>

Feminist analysis of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.



State Policies and Laws Watchdog

Proposed amendments to six legislative and policy drafts through the [Unified Website for Publication of Draft Legal Acts](#). We made recommendations on the draft Government decision regarding procedures surrounding court-mandated sterilization of persons deprived of their legal capacity without their consent. We also proposed to amend the draft Ministry of Health decree to eliminate discriminatory requirements, and enable rights for non-biological parents of a future child that wish to use assisted reproductive technologies through a surrogate mother.

The WRC was elected as a member of the Human Rights Defender's Women's Council and participated in two meetings of the Council. More details in Armenian: <https://bit.ly/3W1M7RZ>

Participated in the development of the 2023-2025 Action Plan deriving from the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection. More details are available in Armenian: <https://bit.ly/3CAI35t>

Used public governance mechanisms available to civil society and participated in the Deputy Prime Minister's Women's Council, Public Councils of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education. We have taken part in 17 meetings of public councils with government representatives.

Joint advocacy with the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women and the Non-discrimination and Equality Coalition.

Advocacy on the International Level

At the international level, the Organization takes the following actions:

WRC submits alternative reports to the United Nations (UN) Monitoring bodies, special rapporteurs and other international treaty bodies;

Advocates at the national level for proper implementation of the recommendations made by the UN Monitoring bodies.

In 2022, the advocacy team of WRC implemented its advocacy activities at the international level as well.

Provided an [alternative report](#) to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;

Communicated urgent issues with the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls;

Participated in an international discussion at the Council of Europe on women's access to justice

<https://bit.ly/3QDlou0>

Participated in an annual meeting of the ASTRA network on sexual and reproductive rights

<https://bit.ly/3Gxvacq>;

In 2022, we joined the [WAVE Network](#) of European organizations, which unites 160 organizations in the fight against gender-based violence.



Implemented Projects in 2022



“Support for Resilient Women’s Civil Society Organizing in the Context of Multiple Crises in Armenia” Project



The “Support for Resilient Women’s Civil Society Organizing in the Context of Multiple Crises in Armenia” project is being implemented by the WRC with the support of the Swedish

International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA. The vision of the project is to develop a strong women civil society which advances the gender equality agenda in Armenia in post- crisis reality. The project’s vision includes all voices that have been systematically excluded or marginalized in the decision-making processes, and addresses inequalities that impact sustainable development of democracy in the country. It develops the capacities of CSOs establishing an ongoing advocacy dialogue among groups of well-prepared CSOs, and the government on gender equality issues.

As mentioned, one component of the project is aimed at capacity building of CSOs that are advocates of women and gender issues. During 2022, in the scope of the project, WRC has cooperated with 8 local CSOs, namely, Women’s fund Armenia, Sexual Assault Crisis Center, Democracy Today, Women’s Center Shushi, Socioscope, Women’s Empowerment Center, Women’s Rights House, and Women in Black.

After conducting a needs assessment of the above-mentioned organizations, the training plan was developed to contribute towards capacity development of CSOs. During the 1st year, 18 trainings were held on 13 topics with 39 CSO employees participants. These trainings cover topics such as: digital security, resource involvement for NGOs, strategic planning, working with a donor community, getting to know the executive, basics of activity-based budgeting and communication plan, result-based management, information and public awareness campaigns, principles of strategic communication, social inclusion, gender-sensitive policy, gender analysis, and feminist advocacy. After the trainings, individual consultations were conducted with the mentioned organizations by the experts.



Due to the sub-grant programs, organizations were able to implement various projects, and acquire the property and knowledge necessary for organizational sustainability and long-term development. Additionally, significant research studies have been conducted such as, “Assessment of the Needs of Displaced Women in Armenia”, and “Collective Care”.

“Women Human Rights Defenders Stepping up against Gender-Based Violence in Armenia” Project

“Women human rights defenders stepping up against gender-based violence in Armenia” project was implemented by the “Coalition to Stop Violence against Women” and funded by the European Union. Within the scope of the project, and due to WRC’s implemented activities, 520 women received direct support through legal counselling, and sub-grant projects.

In total, 20 sub-grants have been awarded to regional NGOs to implement local activities for women who have faced gender-based violence, and empower women in the economic sphere. As a result, 334 women living in the specific regions directly benefited from this activity. 47 women have acquired new professions and have been provided with necessary items which gave them the opportunity to work, and be economically independent.

The WRC has implemented evidence-based research on violence against women in closed institutions. This was the first research project conducted in Armenia around this topic, and was conducted by the Human Rights Research Center. The research illustrates the issues surrounding gender-based violence in Armenian closed institutions. The research contributes to the Coalition’s evidence-based advocacy. On June 17, 2022, the presentation of the research was organized, and displayed to 70 attendants including, state representativeness, civil society actors, media representativeness, and human rights defenders.

To read the research: [Gender-Based Violence against Apprehended Women Exploration of the Issue in the Armenian Context](#)



Three public short announcements (PSAs) were produced regarding sexual harassment, domestic violence and victim blaming. Around 70.000 people have been reached. These PSAs not only raise awareness, and sensitivity towards DV and GBV, but also increase the visibility of member organization's hotlines that operate to prevent domestic violence and support persons faced to domestic violence.

To watch PSAs, please, see the links below:

[Sexual Harassment in Workplace](#)

[Domestic Violence](#)

[Victim Blaming](#)

Women's Voice Radio



The mission of the Women's Voice Radio is to raise the voices of women in Armenia, inform society about women's rights, issues and roles. To achieve these goals, we conducted interviews that introduced the activities, programs, goals, and vision of Armenian and international women's organizations.



In addition, we cover, and report all activities and events related to the women's rights movement, such as “National Day against Domestic Violence”, “Breast Cancer Awareness Month”, “16 Days of Gender Violence”, “Sexual Violence Awareness Month”, “Women's Rights Protection Day”, and so on.

You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Soundcloud](#).

Communications and Media Engagement



In 2022, WRC initiated many media campaigns, and actions to engage new people and raise awareness around women's rights. Therefore, the following actions were implemented:

Development, and distribution of a [handbook](#) for women relocated to Armenia due to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, aimed at informing women about available services.

[Social media survey](#) to understand the opinions of the public on our social media presence. Almost 200 social media users took part in it. As a result of that survey, a news series of posts were developed dedicated to psychological topics.

Launch of a new series of posts called "Questions to the lawyer" where the WRC consulting lawyer answers some of the FAQs related to women's labor rights, and marriage issues.

February 14-21 was the annual "Sexual Health Week", and was dedicated to [raising awareness on STDs](#). During the week, our page actively published posts on STDs, including information on [how STDs are spread](#), [what the main symptoms are](#), [how to prevent STDs](#), [why women are more vulnerable towards STDs](#), as well as the [myths](#) that exist in our society about STDs. As a result of this informational campaign, we were able to reach 500 social media users on Facebook, and Instagram.

In September, we carried out another informational campaign aimed at raising awareness on the issue of [sexual harassment at workplace](#). During the campaign, we presented [the reasons for not reporting sexual harassment at the workplace](#), as well as [examples](#) of it, [what to do in case of sexual harassment](#), as well as [the obligations of the state](#) in addressing issues related to sexual harassment at the workplace.

Stay informed about our work, events, trainings and activities by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#), and visiting our [Website](#).

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(photo)



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