

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Tatul Manaseryan

PhD, Doctor of Science in Economics

Key words: women empowerment, economic development, poverty, labor market, economic growth, microfinance, migration

Introduction

As in many newly independent nations, the current trends in the Armenian economy and macroeconomic policy have gradually had a significant impact on the social and economic situation of women. It may also affect the representation of women in decision-making in various spheres of economic and social activity. So far, there are contradictory trends in the Armenian economy. On the one hand, the economy continues to grow after the formation of the newly elected National Assembly and government, on the other hand, agricultural production has decreased over the past few months, and consumer prices, especially the prices of the minimum subsistence basket, have increased somewhat. These indicators have a great impact on women due to the mass migration of the male labor force, emigration, as a result of which the burden of providing for the daily needs of children and the social responsibility of upbringing and education falls on women's shoulders. Taking all this into account, there is less time left for social, social or other activities outside the family. It is obvious that the issues of public participation in economic development, as a rule, are combined with characteristics of age, ethnicity and gender.

Methodology

This study uses various methods. First is the method of economic analysis of current trends in related to women's empowerment and their role in the economy. Next is the method comparative analysis, in our case, we compare the changes in women's empowerment and their progress in the global economy and compare the data with those for Armenia. Also, this study use relevant data from statistical lines that illustrates women's employment in the branches of economy, unemployment figures, etc., as well as precise statistical calculations. These data allows to making analysis and conclusions, build tables and charts and make generalizations from trends. In terms of more specific methods, we believe it is not enough to add the women's issue to the existing development problems, but instead it is important to find out why women are isolated from many processes and pursue the implementation of steps aimed at eliminating the aforementioned imbalance in terms of participation. The issue of women's participation in economic development should also be included among the priorities, which aims to make the gender issue central to all forms of activity, including planning, implementation of various programs, projects and implementation and monitoring of legislation.

Literature review

International trends are thoroughly analyzed by many experts. Some concentrate on particular issues, such as motherhood pay gap, looking at the issues related to the theory and international evidence [Grimshaw et al., 2015]. Others look at the global trends and their impact on women, including such trend as feminization of migration and trends in remittances [Le Goff, 2016]. In addition, cultural norms and their financial aspects are also examined by experts [López-Anuarbe et al., 2016]. International organizations frequently discuss women empowerment issues with a less accent on economic component or concrete emphasis on steps leading to the progress. [UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment]. Among series of reports and speeches of experts, it is worthy to mention that International Labor Organization and the WB Group pays continuous attention on economic and social aspects of women, particularly in developing nations [ILO, 2020-2023; WB, Women, Business and the Law 2023]. Also, most valuable studies are conducted by the UN Women [UN Women, Progress of the World's Women, 2017, 69; Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, 2023].

Analysis

It becomes obvious that the more women work, the more economies grow and their economic empowerment positively impacts on economic growth and diversification, earned income equality for shared prosperity [IMF, 2018, 31]. In recent decades, a “masculine crisis” has been registered in terms of the changing roles and positions of men through processes of globalization, which indicates the need to focus attention on the role of men if these changes are to lead to the transformation of progress towards greater equality.

It is estimated that women own only 1% of the land they own, which severely limits their participation in large-scale production. Even when women can inherit land, men's role and ownership are conditioned by the fact that women typically pass on the land they inherit to their male relatives and friends. Lack of land ownership can also prevent women from participating in the development of agricultural production improvement schemes, and lack of access to broader assets hinders access to credit.

Female-headed households may not be the “poorest of the poor”, as women living with men may suffer from “secondary poverty”, i.e. the household may not be poor overall, but because the man keeps his income for personal use, the real income of the family is reduced and as a result the children in that family become poorer [Chant, 2006, 201-220]. When women earn, men can keep more of their income, leaving women and children with the same limited access to resources, but women's situation could theoretically be improved through greater control over those resources [Chant, 2006, 201-220].

First, advocating women's economic justice and rights in the economy and closing gender gaps in the world of work are keys to achieving the 2030 Agenda for SDGs [UN panel, 2018]. Closing the gender gap could give the global economy a \$7 trillion boost.

Current issues related to women's participation in economic development trends and their empowerment are best illustrated in the following facts:

- one in every 10 women is living in extreme poverty (10.3 per cent). If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated 8 per cent of the world's female population – 342.4 million women and girls – will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day. Most (220.9 million) will reside in sub-Saharan Africa [UN Women, 2025];
- gender differences in laws affect both developing and developed economies, and women in all regions. Globally, over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. Of 190 economies assessed in 2023, more than one-third (69 economies) have laws constraining women's decision to work, and 43 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace [World Bank, 2023];
- by 2050 women globally will still be spending almost 2.5 more hours per day on unpaid care work than men, on the current trajectory [UN Women, 2023];
- women migrant workers populate informal, low paid, and unregulated work. As of 2023, the main sectors in which women migrant workers are employed are: services (79.9 per cent), industry (14.2 per cent), and agriculture (5.9 per cent). More women migrant workers than men work in service-related jobs, often owing to an increasing demand for workers in the care industry, such as healthcare and domestic work [ILO, 2023]. Of the more than 67 million domestic workers over the age of 15, 80 per cent are women and one in five is a migrant worker [IOM, 2020].

As for the Armenian economy the role of women, it is enough to analyze official statistics and the studies that are full of them to assess the real situation.

- 52% of the population of Armenia are women and 48% are men, but only 73% of women and 56% of men are economically active.
- 26% of the labor force in Armenia has higher education, and the share of women among them is 59%, which does not mean that women are paid better [www.armstat.am].
- The average wage gap between men and women in the Armenian labor market is 34 percent. And the income gap is even larger and reaches 40%. For comparison, in EU member states this gap is 15.9%, and the world average is 22.9%.
- The significant difference in wages is due to discriminatory (horizontally unequal access to the career hierarchy) and horizontal (occupation and specialization) employment.
- The existence of horizontal discrimination among women in the labor market is also a result of limited employment choice. The number of women in 7 out of 28 professional groups in state and non-state universities exceeds 50 percent.
- Taking into account the results of international monitoring of natural and mathematical research, girls have recorded greater progress, which further excludes the hypothesis of professional discrimination due to their weak knowledge and skills. Women specialize in stereotypical approaches, choosing occupations that are “more suitable for women”:

- Vertical discrimination occurs early on, as women are paid less in the lower and middle ranks. Women are overrepresented in the public sector of the labor market, which also fuels discrimination. Thus, about 60 percent of public sector workers are women, but more than 50 percent work at lower levels. 90.2 percent of managerial positions in the public administration sector and 59.9 percent of managerial positions are held by men¹.
- Despite the fact that the government sees the progressive development of SMEs as an effective means of solving employment and social problems, the representation of women in SMEs is only 10%, while the share of women in micro-enterprises is less than 25%.
- The share of women among the economically inactive population is 68.1%, of which the share of women with higher and secondary vocational education is 40%. 90% of economically inactive women are housewives who are engaged in unpaid work. Women perform the majority of household work, but they are not valued in any way and their participation is not reflected in the system of national accounts²:
- Women make up 54% of the unemployed, including 72% of the registered unemployed. The dynamics of women unemployment increased between 2001 and 2022. Among unemployed women, 62% have education (higher or vocational), while 48% of the unemployed are receiving education.
- 100% of the unemployed who lost their jobs for family reasons are women.
- Women spend an average of 5 hours and 12 minutes on household chores and family care, while men spend an average of 1 hour and 3 minutes on the same task. The care and worries of children aged 0-9 require 6.6 times more time from women than from men. Men have 30% more free time than women.
- Paid work does not relieve women from housework to the same extent as men, as a result of which women work more than men.
- Research on the structure of time use shows that the Armenian population is inclined to the distribution of gender roles in the family, where, women bear primary responsibility and their paid work depends on the ability to combine family and work responsibilities.
- In general, the gender situation in the labor market is characterized by the inefficient use of women's human capital.
- If more women in Armenia worked in their profession, and not of their own or against their will, they would be able to add an additional \$50-60 million to Armenia's GDP.
- Studies indicate that economic losses in the country due to domestic violence amount to an amount equivalent to \$400,000-1.1 million annually³.

¹ ARMSTAT, www.armstat.am

² Results of study from WomenNet.am

³ Ibid.

Among men who were not employed and not seeking work, 29% reported illness, injury, or accident as the reason, while 19% indicated a lack of job opportunities in their area or hopeless to finding job [Women and Men in Armenia, 2024,106].

Table 1. Employed population by status in employment, 2023 [source: LFS, p. 100]

	1 000 person		% by sex	
	W	M	W	M
Wage-earner (employee)	375	384	49	51
Employer	6	19	25	75
Own-account worker	127	227	36	64
Contributing family	5	2	70	30
Total	513	632	45	55

As of the beginning of 2024, out of all industries women's employment by major sectors of economy was the following:

- Agriculture 21% (men – 18%)
- Industry 10% (men – 16%)
- Construction 1% (men 18%)
- Services 69% (49%) [LFS, Armstat, 2024, 98]

Horizontal discrimination is characterized by the fact that Women are concentrated in sectors where wages are lower than the average annual wage. According to statistical data provided by the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, women are mainly engaged in agriculture (services), education, healthcare and arts (more than 50 percent). In more competitive and well-paid sectors, such as IT or financial insurance, women are less represented, and even if they are represented, they are also engaged in low-paid work¹.

Conclusions

It is important to note that the current macroeconomic policy has not yet significantly affected the social and economic situation, as well as decision-making and personnel policy in the economy, healthcare and education sectors. In 2024 almost 33 % of female and 16 % of male youth in an age group from 15 to 29 were neither in education, nor in employment (122.4 thousands individuals). Moreover, 24% of girls and women were unemployed (neither working nor seeking work), while 59% of young men were neither studying nor working but were actively looking for a job. Three out of four women (75%) who were not employed and not seeking work cited reasons such as being in the prenatal stage, childcare, or other household tasks, family circumstances for not looking for work.

¹ Source: ARMSTAT data and WomenNet.am on gender equality.

References

1. Alpízar Durán, L. Keynote speech at High-Level Roundtable “The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Status of Women, UN Headquarters NY, March 2010.
2. Benefits of women’s economic empowerment, Facts and figures: Economic empowerment, UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>
3. Chant, S. Re-thinking the "feminization of poverty" in relation to aggregate gender indices, *Journal of Human Development* (7 (2), 201-220), 2006.
4. Damian Grimshaw and Jill Rubery, The motherhood pay gap: A review of the issues, theory and international evidence, International Labour Organization, Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 57, (Geneva, 2015).
5. ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology, 2021.
6. IOM Releases Guidelines for Labour Recruiters of Migrant Domestic Workers, (September, 2020). available at: <https://www.iom.int/news>
7. Maelan Le Goff, Feminization of migration and trends in remittances, 2016. www.wol.iza.org
8. Mónica López-Anuarbe and others, More than altruism: cultural norms and remittances among Hispanics in the USA, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, vol. 17, May 2016
9. UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment. available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/01>
10. International Monetary Fund (2018). Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment. available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31>
11. UN Women, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023. available at: <https://www.unwomen.org>
12. World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2023. (Washington, D.C., 2023). available at: <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>
13. UN Women, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals the Gender Snapshot 2023. available at: <https://www.unwomen.org>
14. Youth not in education, not in employment, 2023, 91, Informal Employment by Major Groups of Industries Women and Men in Armenia, 2024, 2024 www.armstat.am

Tatul MANASERYAN

Women's participation in economic development trends in the Republic of Armenia

Key words: women empowerment, economic development, poverty, labor market, economic growth, microfinance, migration

This article is related to the women's participation in economic development trends in the Republic of Armenia. A study of the time spent at work by the National Statistical Service shows that men spend more than three times more time on paid work, while women spend more than five times more time on unpaid work. The level of wages does not always mean that women are highly educated. The cause of the difficulties is professional advancement, and vertical discrimination persists in areas where women's employment has traditionally dominated (healthcare, education, culture, social security, agriculture). Women play a key role in the so-called “care economy,” which not only provides care for children, young people, the elderly, and the sick, but is also vital for providing a productive workforce. Since such work is often unpaid, it is undervalued and falls outside the general concept of economic development. Women in paid employment are effectively doubly burdened and continue to engage in domestic responsibilities while working after work, until they are done.