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“Armenian Women in Military Affairs” Research Project

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“Armenian Women in Military Affairs” Research Project

The research project on the topic "Armenian Women in The Military Affairs" was conducted in July-September 2014. The goal of the research was to identify the image of women in the military affairs, as well as to bring out the features, characteristics and opinions that are typical to those involved in that field.

The traditional image of Armenian woman as being gentle and meek was historically accompanied by another image of Armenian woman as being brave and courageous. The parallel of these characters is obvious manifested in national folklore. Particularly, on the one hand when we analyze the "Anahit" fairy tale, we see that the woman is not only a beautiful housewife, but also a brave warrior, the inspiration and guidance of an entire army.

On the other hand in historical episodes these intersecting two characters of women are especially seen in wars or battles, when the question “to be or not to be” is determined. The most famous historical heroines are Sose Mayrig (Sose Vardanyan), Gevorg Chaush’s wife Helen, as well as Mariam Chilingatyan¹, Aguline Tatulyan², Khanum Katenjyan³, etc. All these women are represented out of the frames of stereotypes: they are armed, dressed in masculine clothes and have men's posture.

The tendency of not putting a woman in the frames of femininity and delicacy is observed not only in the mentioned historical period (19th century), but also in the further period. Particularly the role and contribution of women (not only Armenian) was significant during the Second World War. Nevertheless the most significant point in the

¹Mariam participated in the Armenian revolution, [uprising for Turks] of Urfa, in 1915 as a group leader. Gemchian, Mirzayan and Tuptupyan were members of her group. They were dressed as man and were armed. Mariam was part of good bomber group. She was arrested during a fight, and was first sentenced to death, then the sentence was changed to 101 years of prison. During the truce of 1918, she was set free.

²Aguline Tatulyan was one of the nine women who survived from besieged Hachn which was plundered and destroyed by the Turkish troops. She cut her hair and started wearing men's clothes to join the opposing forces.

³Khaneme was the commander of the Union of Women during the defense of Urfa in 1915. She personally revenged on more than twenty Turkish gendarmes before she died. In the Unit of Khanum Katenjan were 30 young women. Her unit was especially successful during the operation of destruction of the Turkish military post.

recent period for the Armenian nation was the last two decades of the 20th century. Since 1988, Armenia has been involved in the national liberation war to protect its historical areas. This national goal gathered Armenians from all over the world. But, of course, the largest number of participants in the war was Armenians from different parts and regions of The Republic of Armenia. Armenian women were not an exception and they participated in the war as well. Different sources give different information concerning the number of female participants during the Nagorno Karabakh war. On the one hand, according to some sources, about six hundred women participated in the Nagorno Karabakh war. On the other hand, other sources reduce this number to three hundred and in some cases even to two hundred. According to Encyclopedia of "The Karabakh Liberation war: 1988-1994" over 200 women volunteered to participate in the national liberation struggle of 1988-1994⁴.

It is clear that some situations can induce women to drop their femininity and delicacy dogmas, break stereotypes and go against adopted norms. However, there are some questions such as what can motivate a woman to engage in military field? What specific characteristics and features describe a woman who is involved in military affairs? What problems and obstacles arise in front of a woman while she is trying to express herself in so called "masculine" field? How does a warrior woman display herself in family, military field and in daily life? The research on the topic of "Armenian women in military affairs" was implemented to clarify these and other similar questions and issues. It should also be noted that Armenian woman displayed her courage not only during the war, but also nowadays in no war no peace situation. The discourse of the significant role of a female still remains up-to-date in military affairs.

The fact that more than 2000 women soldiers are involved in the Armenian Armed Forces currently comes to prove it. In Military Forces women undertake not only administrative works but they are heads and soldiers of various departments, such as the Department of Communication, secret division and subdivisions, as well as employees of medical service. Moreover, there are women serving in Special Forces, sniper women, etc.⁵

Being in a situation with such a high possibility of war, it is of great importance to pay attention to the role and significance of women in the military sphere, especially in Armed Forces. That is why this project aims to study the potential of women in military sphere, as well as to find out the reasons that bring women to military sphere, obstacles

⁴Encyclopedia of "The Karabakh Liberation war: 1988-1994" p. 277-290, Yerevan2004

⁵ The speech of The Minister of Defense of The Republic of Armenia during the meeting with youth in 20.03.2014

that they come across when they are trying to enter the military sphere, and being involved in the sphere in general.

Thus, we used the methodology of qualitative research to achieve the main purpose of the research, i.e. reveal the image of a woman involved in the military sphere. The method of life-story research based on the method of oral stories is the most appropriate, as each image has her peculiarities and unique character. The method of in-depth interview was used during the research, as new questions might come up, that would help to comprehend the interpretation of the situation by the interviewees, to understand uniqueness and peculiarities of the interpretations, the meanings that interviewees put in the interpretation of the situation, as well as their values and notions.

Women who had participated in the war in Nagorno Karabakh, as well as women who are serving in the Military Forces nowadays were involved in the research to reveal the full and exhaustive image of a woman involved in the military sphere. Thus, 25 women veterans of war, and 50 women serving in the Armenian Armed Forces participated in the interview. It must be mentioned that being led by the conviction that during this research we dealt with two different chronological and situational activities, two different half-standardized questionnaires were used to reveal the image of a woman involved in the sphere in the past (during the war in Nagorno Karabakh) and at present.

It should be mentioned, that the selection of participants of the in-depth interviews was based on the distribution of women who had their contribution in the military sphere, their position and rank. As a result besides revealing the general image of female participants of war and women serving in the army, there an attempt was made to present typical images with their peculiarities. Particularly those images have been marked out based on being in frontier and non-frontier region, marital status, education degree, etc.

Accordingly general images of female participants in war and women serving in the army have been withdrawn:

A woman, serving in the army – middle aged (up to 50 years old), with middle educational degree, non-commissioned officer ranked single mother, whose job responsibilities for the past 15 years have been clerical.

A woman participant in war – up to 40 year old woman, active participant of the Karabakh movement arose in 1988, who had a job, family – husband and a child, higher education, was compassionate for the Armenian nation and the future of Armenia, and as the movement entered into the war she followed it as a supporter of her comrades.

The following typical images have been singled out besides these two general images:

According to marital status and territorial characteristic:

- Married women serving in the army from frontier and non-frontier regions, who got married before entering into military service
- Married women serving in the army from frontier and non-frontier regions, who got married after entering into military service
- Married women serving in the army from frontier and non-frontier regions, who have divorced or are widows
- Single women serving in the army

According to education degree:

- Women serving in the army having high school education
- Women serving in the army having vocational education
- Women serving in the army having
 - Medical education
 - Other professions

According to the above mentioned typical images the positions of female participants in war and women serving in the army have been marked out:

- About military education and the opportunities of women in it
- About career promotion opportunities for women in the military sphere
- About the ranks, positions given to women, the opportunities of getting them and being promoted
- About the image of a woman as a commander
- About the image of an ideal woman
- About the image of ideal warrior-woman
- About compulsory military service for women
- About the role and significance of women in military sphere (on battlefield, in MF)
- About the potential of women in military sphere
- About the perception of the image of a female participant of war /a woman serving in the army within the society, etc.

A woman, serving in the army

Several typical images of women serving in the army were singled out during the research depending on different factors: marital status, education degree, age etc. Nevertheless it is also possible to discover the general image which is typical for almost all women involved in Military Affairs. A woman, serving in the army is a middle aged (up to 50 years old) lady, with middle educational degree, non-commissioned officer, single mother, whose job responsibilities for the past 15 years have been clerical. The fact of being a single mother is the main reason that makes a woman to look for a job. Today's economic situation and the absence of alternatives in the job market induce women to work in a workplace which is labeled as masculine.

The research gives an opportunity to emphasize different images according to characters as well besides this general image. Therefore, a number of criteria and factors were brought out which stress on different significant attributes in the image of women serving in the army. These criteria are:

1. Regional factor.

In this research the regional factor describes two areas: borderline regions and non-borderline regions. According to this factor the main and the primary differentiation depends on residence and work place of a woman serving in the army. This fact also needs to be discussed because, as a rule, military service mainly considers to be a mobile and non static field. Nevertheless women serving in the army are privileged in this point of view, because they do not obey the principle of mobility. However, depending on whether the women military servants are from borderline regions or not, we can see certain specific features and types.

2. Marital Status

Marital status, perhaps, can be considered as the most significant and important factor (after the regional prefix), which determines behavior, attitudes and positions of women serving in the Armenian Armed Forces. According to this factor several images can be discussed:

In this situation, it is possible to separate the following characters.

1. Married female serving in the army

1.1. Women serving in the army who married before military service

1.2. Women serving in the army who married after military service

2. Divorced women who serve in the army

3. Single women who serve in the army

Let us refer to each image separately, submitting their everyday life outside military service, the attitude of their family toward military service, the female soldiers' perceptions of the ideal woman and a variety of other issues.

Married female soldiers who are married after military service /non borderline region /

It should be emphasized that this image is the rarest image of a woman serving in the army according to the interviews of this study. The stereotyped notion of female soldiers is a kind of an obstacle for a woman to form a family. As the women serving in the army have mentioned in their interviews, men are hard to get adjusted to his wife's so-called "non-feminine" work.

Married female soldiers who are married before military service /non borderline region/

Marital status and territorial factor of women serving in the army also greatly influence on the notion of female in military affairs in general. To explore that kind of notions we tried to understand the role and significance of opinion of the family members of a female serving in the army in the decision-making process concerning involvement of a woman in the army.

It turned out that at first the position of the family concerning woman's decision to serve in the army was negative, which was later transformed into a positive one. On the one hand it can be understood as a stereotyped position as the military sphere in this case is seen as an arena of male domination where women are not desirable. Moreover it is not desirable for a woman to attribute the role of main financial supporter in the family. On the other hand the notion of the family turns to a positive vector as, in any case, the economic situation makes a woman work.

The domination of masculine culture is noticeable not only in the situation of stigmatizing military affairs as "unacceptable" job for a female, but also in everyday life. The proof of this statement is the fact that women serving in the army are themselves skeptical of the skills and opportunities of a female. Moreover they think that women must have a fine and light job. Although these women work in military affairs, they seldom meet and work with the soldiers (boys of the age 18-27). They mainly work in the offices situated in military units and are engaged in the documentary work. As for the command function, this obligation currently takes only men. Women themselves are not ready to assume command function, as they believe that it is a mere man field, as to perform that function special qualities and skills are needed that a woman cannot have.

Disparity of femininity and military service is also emphasized in the interpretations of female serving in the army concerning the public opinion in reference to «women in uniform». According to this interpretation, in non-borderline regions it is difficult for the society to adjust seeing a woman in military uniform. According to women serving in that regions previously almost everybody was looking at them in a strange way as a woman in uniform was unique and remarkable.

Married female soldiers who are married before military service / borderline region /

Borderline regions have become a battlefield during the war in Nagorno Karabakh and even today there is still tension in these regions. That is the reason which explains why the military sphere is quite open and simple in these regions. Women from borderline regions who serve in the army do not perceive military affairs as a typical man field. The presence and work of women in military affairs is required, acceptable and common in borderline regions. Such perceptions are reflected in the attitude of female's family and friends toward the decision to be involved in military sections.

The adaptation of military affairs in borderline regions is also seen in the interpretation of public opinion concerning the expression “women in uniform” by a female involved in Armed forces. If in non-borderline regions the “women in uniform” transformed into something common and accustomed during a time period, in borderline regions this image was initially a nice and respectable character.

It is interesting to mention that in the case when a woman serving in the army has a husband regardless the regional factor (borderline or not) female accepts male domination and emphasize the advantage of male, especially in military affairs. This is reflected in the situation, when women describe "female commander" phenomenon. In their opinion this role requires more skills than women's potential is. In both borderline and non-borderline regions married women serving in the army believe that a female cannot lead and command a male. Moreover this is not desired in any case, especially in military affairs.

Women serving in the army who are divorced or are widows /non borderline region/

This image of women serving in the army is distinguished by the fact that the head of the family is not the husband, as it is considered to be, but the woman. These women are carrying out basic economic welfare function, which in other circumstances is the main function of the husband. These women have child/children whose education, welfare is their main solicitude. As a result, they assume not only the role of the mother but also the father's role.

This explains the fact that the family, particularly parents and children, of women are not against their choice of working in the military affairs. It should also be

emphasized that these women choose this work after receiving the function of supporter of economic welfare of the family. The lack of job alternatives, the high wage and stability motivates them to choose military affairs as a workplace.

According to circumstances this image of female working in the military affairs attributes a number of male functions and features. Probably this is the reason why these women consider that women and men can equally be a commander, to lead not only a group of girls or a small unit of young boys, but also lead a whole army.

Women serving in the army who are divorced or are widows /borderline region /

In contrast to female from non-borderline regions who are bringing up their children alone, and thus describe a woman as a strong one, women from borderline regions have another point of view. According to the women from these regions female cannot be equal to male, especially in the case of being a commander. A woman must be gentle and feminine, be with her own family. This suggests that in these regions priority of security issues still makes a woman yield to man. In these regions military service is perceived to be the most complex and most difficult work. Thus, according to women serving in the army this hardest job must and can be done only by men.

Single female serving in the army

The key feature of female of this type is autonomy. Women of this image mostly appreciate femininity in women's image, but they also mention the persistence and courage as features of that image. Especially describing the characteristics of ideal women in military affairs single female serving in the army highlights solidity, strength and masculine features, whereas other images of women serving in the army put the stress on femininity and role of a mother.

3. Education degree:

Although the general image of women serving in the army has vocational education, however, this provision cannot be spread on everyone. Therefore, during the research there were distinguished the following main groups of female serving in the army according to their education degree.

- Women serving in the army having high school education
- Women serving in the army having vocational education
- Women serving in the army having education degrees
 - Medical education
 - Other professions

It should be emphasized that the educational degree is a significant factor not only for women serving in the army, but also in military affairs in general. The higher the educational degree, the higher is the position and title (of course, we should not forget about work experience, which is also a decisive factor). However, women do not always want to continue their education, to get higher positions and titles. Among women involved in this research the highest rank was the title of Major. It is interesting to mention, that this rank is considered to be the highest point, which is available for women during their work in the military affairs. Moreover among the senior officer ranks titles higher than Major could be gained only by the elected.

In fact, the advancement of women in the military sphere is not hopeless and unrealistic because as women believe a female can reach higher ranks and positions in case she is eager to get an education.

Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that women serving in the army have a passive stance to their own educational and positional progress. The main factor, according to them, hindering their academic progress, is the age.

Female positions on the issue of the opportunity of women for receiving military education differ depending on education degree. Especially women with secondary education degree consider themselves as being able to learn everything that is necessary for their work during the work time.

Military education is desirable but unavailable value for a female serving in the army. Like in the case with the higher rank of senior officers here we can also see that military education is emphasized as a higher value. Although women serving in the army believe that this value is available nowadays, there is still some skepticism that anyone can achieve that value.

Women participants of war

As to the question of who were the women participated in war in Nagorno Karabakh, here the picture differs from the one describing the women serving in today's Armenian Armed Forces. A 40-year-old woman who had a job, a family (a husband and children), higher education and was quite worried about the future of Armenia and the Armenian nation, since 1988 was active participant of Karabakh movement which grew up to a war. After transformation of the movement into war she entered the battlefield, as a supporter.

Each of the women participated in the war in Nagorno Karabakh is unique by her motivations, activities, and functions she had at that time. Nevertheless, this study was a kind of an effort to bring out the general image of a woman participated in war, which has common characteristics for each one.

Accordingly, here are brought out the main factors that made women take a weapon and participate in war parallel to her everyday activities. The main motivation for women to participate in war was patriotism. Even when women moved to the battlefield as a part of medical staff patriotism was a significant factor for them to be a volunteer. In other cases a woman went to the battlefield, leaving her children in the custody of her parents. There are also examples when women got involved in war as their husbands or children were already there.

Still, the question arises: what was the attitude of the family to the fact that in some cases a woman leaves her children and goes to the battlefield, or if she does not have children, she chooses that dangerous activity? It is interesting to underline the position of both parents and husband. In the case of the parents it is obvious that they deny and have an obvious negative position. Probably this is the explanation why women have been keeping in secret their decision to leave for the battlefield (even if they had a husband) from their parents, whereas husbands were aware of the decision and approved it. Women participated in war explain it by the fact that their husbands were also in the battlefield and realized the necessity of women.

Women who participated in war emphasize the equality of men and women in the battlefield. The equality refers not to the functions and roles but to the conditions. However this equality is assessed as complicated and difficult. It is particularly manifested in the lack of hygienic conditions.

As the main difficulty and the most significant problem for a woman in battlefield was fear. This problem is particularly stressed by the women who were involved in the medical staff and were related to injured people. This is probably the result of incompatibility of practical and theoretical knowledge.

Still it is important to understand the functions women were performing on battlefield. It's natural that the primary and the most important function involved the sphere of medical treatment. Still among women participants of war there were not a few who were on the frontline, or supported the soldiers by one way or another.

Thus, women not only wore arms, carried out military actions, ensured evacuation and first aid of the wounded, but also were responsible for the food, tidiness and everyday problems. This means that the role of women to provide care keeps being primary even in situations where the functions of men and women do not differ.

The above mentioned role of women and its importance for women themselves is noticed even in cases when women participants in war present their most memorable day.

The abovementioned image and its importance for the women themselves are also observed in cases where the women represent their most memorable or most impressive day. The best moments were connected with women's everyday life in the battlefield: making dinner, cleaning etc.

It is interesting that both women serving in the army and women participants in war mention the restraining and encouraging function of female as the main. Some aspects of masculine culture does not display in presence of a woman. Moreover the presence of a woman in dangerous and difficult situations makes a man to face the danger. And this is the inspiring function.

Which is the ideal image of a woman according to women participants in war? It is interesting to mention, that if in the case of women serving in the army the image of an ideal woman overlaps with the image of a mother, in the case of the woman participants in war this image overlaps with the image of a smart woman. The image of a woman devoted to her family and the image of a mother comes next to the abovementioned image. According to the women participants in war the women's intelligence displays especially at home, in family.

Women who participated in the hottest points of war have an interesting perception of an ideal image of a woman. According to them the ideal women are themselves as they both participated in war and took care of their families.

And who is the ideal woman of military affairs? On the one hand women serving in army were trying to avoid describing this image. On the other hand, according to women participants in war, this image has such features as patriotism, courage, strength and will.

The positions of women serving in the army and participants in war significantly differ as considered to the concept of compulsory military service for women. According to women participants of war girls also need that kind of experience, mastering military weapons. This is probably due to the fact that on the one hand women serving in the army appreciate the potential of women in peace; on the other hand women participants in war encourage such skills in the context of security. However, it should also be noted that although women veterans mention the importance of such skills, they also mention that it should not be compulsory.

Another important distinction that needs to be discussed is the question what women expected from the field which is not proper for female. As compared to women serving in the army who got involved into this field with having no idea about their

future activity in their workplace, women participants in war realized their role and functions in the battlefield.

A number of comments and suggestions have been brought out during the research that is to be paid attention to. Particularly women who participated in the interview mainly underlined questions concerning military status, social-related issues, the issue of granting privileges to borderline soldiers, the issue of war participant soldiers' status and corresponding privileges, etc.

Taking into account a number of judgments, issues that have been presented by women participants of war and women serving in the army, as well as discussions with the specialists of the sphere a package of suggestions has been drafted that is to be correspondingly presented to the Ministry of Defense of RA, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, a number of structures and organizations related to military affairs, war participants or main problems concerning women in general. "The Union of Artsakh Freedom Fighters", "Organization of Women Participants of Artsakh War", etc. are among them. Particularly women participants of war taking use of their social network volunteered to meet the Minister of Defense of RA to present the issues that they are concerned with, to discuss the solutions of those problems and suggest definite projects.

Thus the research of approaches and points of view concerning various issues among women participants of war and women serving in the army shows the obvious influence of social context upon the positions concerning the abovementioned phenomena. Moreover, social status, social-economical conditions, education degree and other factors have not less influence. Social-economical conditions are the one inducing women to look for a job in a sphere that is labeled as man dominant. A chain of problems spring out for women in this man environment. Particularly these problems come out when trying to acquire military education. Military education is available for women but with restrictions. That's why even women who work in military sphere and can have appropriate education might have some progress as professionals, are not interested in getting military education. It should also be mentioned that women as compared to men are seldom trained or participate in professional courses. These problems are compensated by the fact that women working in military sphere get ranks of senior officers (major) and non-commissioned officer, are heads of some units, hold administrative positions that outwardly creates the illusion of equal opportunities. Nevertheless, even in case of holding top positions women perform only administrative works. As for the function of a commander, the authority of women comes to its end. As a result from one hand the presence and participation of women in military sphere is encouraged, on the other hand women have extremely limited opportunities and functions in this field.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned points and factors it can be concluded that the social context and situation have a great influence on the attitudes, behavior, opinions of women. Moreover the social status, conditions and educational degree should be taken into consideration. A number of suggestions and significant points are distinguished at the end of the project and which are going to be presented to Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and to several institutions and organizations such as the "The Union of Artsakh Freedom Fighters", "Organization of Women Participants of Artsakh War" etc. It should be mentioned that most of the suggestions and offers concern the working conditions of women serving in the army nowadays and mostly to the current social conditions of those who participated in war.

Some proposals and issues were brought out during this research which were proposed by the women participants of war and women serving in the army. That proposals relates to not only the issues of women serving in the army but also the military service and Armed Forces in general. On the other hand, on the basis of results of the research some reviews were brought out that need to be reviewed and transformed.

The main noticeable issues, the reasons of their origin, impacts, the ways of solution and the basis are presented below:

Work conditions for women

1. Salaries. One of the most desirable reformation for women serving in the army is the increase of salary. It is interesting that this issue was mentioned mainly by those women who are single mothers and who have an underage child/children. However women themselves mention that salaries are quite high in their work field compared to the other state sectors in RA. It is obvious that this issue is the result of social-economic situation, as these women bear the functions of the main provider of the economic welfare of the family. It is apparent that the increase of salaries is not a solution of this problem. In any case the status of single-mother women serving in the army combines different roles and functions.

Taking into consideration these circumstances more efficient solution can be the privileges given to these single mother who serve in the army. Particularly, one of the privileges can be the reduction of the working hours and/or privilege of free graphic. This can somehow soften the conditions of women who combine the responsibilities of mother and father, and the functions of female and male.

2. Sanitary conditions. Although women serving in the army have not mentioned sanitary conditions as a separate objective, but the existence of this issue is testified not

only by observations but also by women who emphasize the importance of the primary conditions for girls in military service. The latter can be presented as a projection of their own requirements. Women mention that we can talk about girls' mandatory or volunteer military service in the army only in the case of relevant sanitary conditions as girls need a special care. Nowadays the necessary level of conditions is missing even for men in military units (this is related to the characteristics of the masculine culture, which get more strict in the army).

3. Uniforms of women serving in the army. Although this field requires the less expression of femininity (less or even absence of make-up, accessories etc.), the aspiration of women to retain their role especially in masculine domination field is getting obvious. It emphasizes both in their look and their opinions concerning women service in the army. They mention that there are a lot of problems with the uniform. It is given once every two years, therefore it is not possible to wear the same clothes every day, moreover frequent washing makes it discolored. In some cases, each part of the uniform is given separately, delays, so that the women have to get some part of the clothing themselves. Women also emphasize that although a woman should serve in equal conditions with a man, but it would be better to have a different approach to them: for instance the shoes can have a free style, etc. The quality of clothing is also evaluated as low, as the material is rough and poorly sewed. The latter refers to military uniform in general. Reckoning the above mentioned problems it should be emphasized that the quality of the uniform needs to be proved. But it should also be mentioned that the manifestation of femininity in form of wearing freestyle cloths, shoes having some makeup, etc., still is not desirable, as long as there are no special conditions of women serving in the army.

4. Supporting social needs. Women serving in the army emphasize that each officer /male or female/ needs a special attention in the army. This means that each has its own specific needs which can be satisfied by the state official. In some cases, officers get an apartment, a car, or some support which they need. However, some questions arises: What is the basis for defining these "gifts"? Who may qualify for such assistance? What conditions are necessary for officer / female or male / to receive such support? Are there certain standards which regulates these processes. The two sides of the medal can be observed: if there are certain procedures, why the officers and women serving in the army do not know about that? And if there are no such procedures, they need to be established. For establishing the procedures there must be specified significant factors such as title, position, education etc. Moreover, the results of this research show that marital status and location are also significant factors thus they also need to be presented in these procedures as primary factors. For the evaluation of needs and formulation of clear procedures we have separated two important groups: women serving in the army

and soldiers who serve in borderline. In the case of the evaluation of social needs of women serving in the army it is important to take into consideration that these women are not mobile in contrast to men. This means that if the male officers can move to work in another city or region, in case of women the work place and their residence are the same and do not change based on the work. Besides, as women mention, the soldiers in borderline need more attentive, as there are such problems as security issues, life insurance, etc. Therefore, this group also needs a special qualification.

Quality of women serving in the army

1. Education. The results of this study indicate that women serving in army yields by educational level and opportunities to male soldiers. It regards both the issues of military education and in general the implemented trainings during the job. Women serving in army don't see the necessity of education and training for them, on the other hand they emphasize the importance of the relevant education in the case of military service of girls in future. Reckoning those who have higher education degree can be a <threat> for soldiers in the case of their current job, they project the necessity of education on those who afterwards willing to be engaged in army. Nonetheless, besides the necessary skills, we also highlight military education or the acquirement of relevant quality even in the case of documentation-office jobs as in some cases it is noticeable the unawareness of the field in women serving in army. We consider desirable and even mandatory both trainings and the acquirement of the least military knowledge for every soldier who works in that field.

2. Career. It should be noted that the majority of women have the secondary vocational education. This greatly affects on the work progress as the achievement of high positions and titles mainly depends on it. Women are not interested and motivated in both education and work progress. Although they mention that this field and this work is the best and that they should choose the same job among possible alternatives, the attraction of the work refers to high amount of wages and employment opportunities. The work itself is not unique and characteristic only to the military field, as it requires mainly office work with documentation and/or organizational work. Women serving in the army have some inertness towards work, as they are limited only by their work and have no advancing expectation and desire in this field (explaining it as the lack of opportunities). Moreover they do not accept women's progress in this field (it refers to the commanding positions).

As a result, on the one hand there are no necessary opportunities of advancement for woman for, as they have limited educational, training and other opportunities, on the other hand, woman herself is not ready to break the adopted stereotypes in this field. The

solution to this problem can be organizing of training courses for women, which will increase the interest to the work and promote them to achieve higher positions. As these women, regardless to their work, always have intercourse with the soldiers, they also need to get commanding skills and qualities. Trainings will enable them to gain those skills.

Mandatory military service for women

Women's views on mandatory military service for women are quite different, which is a kind of a projection of society's attitudes. However, taking into account the geo-political characteristics and uncertain relations with neighboring countries, it should be stressed that military combat training is desired for girls. The importance of such skills and such trainings are underlined by women serving in the army and women participants of war. According to women serving in the army the solution of such problem can be not compulsory but voluntary service. But here we are facing a number of questions:

- Are girls ready to pass military service even in voluntary principle? Is the society ready to accept girls service? Are the boys ready to see the girls serving next to them on their side in equal conditions? Taking into consideration all the opinions and positions presented during the research the answer to all these questions is NO. Women involved to this field do not encourage military service for girls, emphasizing its difficulties and unnecessary.

- Even if girls are ready to serve in the army, is the Armed Forces ready to be replenished by female recruits? Recently “Break the stereotypes, come over to our ranks⁶” video became very popular in social network. It is called to motivate girls to pass military service in Armed Forces. But do the girls have all equal opportunities to get involved in Armed Forces and pass military service? Are there all the required conditions which are important for female?

- And finally the most significant question: is there a need for women to pass mandatory military service? As the participants of the interviews of this research assume, the Armed Forces does not need girls to ensure the number of soldiers nowadays. But this does not exclude and deny the fact that every Armenian (male or female) needs some skills of using military weapons and passing combat trainings.

The solution_voluntary military service_proposed by women participants of war might be the best one, however reckoning the above mentioned questions and a variety of circumstances, we can confidently say that the voluntary principle still can not be an effective tool. In the processes of getting new skills of using military weapons and passing

⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5YOOgDOgF4>

combat trainings for girls the best promoting role can play several organizations and institutions that are implementing such activity. There are a number of non-governmental organizations that are trying to create and/or strengthen the relation between the army and society, and to encourage young people to acquire the necessary skills. The experience of such NGOs, which are related to combat trainings, shows that the significant part of the participants are female. The promotion of the activity of such organizations may be more effective and useful for both the army and the female participants than military service.

The issues of women participants of war

This research aimed to bring out the issues of women participants of war as well. It was very often emphasized that there is no distinct state policy regarding the participants of war and particularly women participants. The issues of women participants of war and their probable solutions are presented below:

Clarification of status: During this research we tried to reveal the constitutional provisions that relate to the participants of war. The absence of such provisions arises questions such as: By which criteria this or that person is considered as a participant of war? by which principle this or that participant of war is awarded with some prizes, encouraging awards while others are not? what privileges and obligations the participants of war have? etc.

The absence of constitutional regulation of the above mentioned questions results the uncertainty and complaints among the participants of war. It's necessary to clarify the criterias which define the status of the participants of war (according to the various principles of the participation in war: the activity, location, period etc.) and the relevant privileges and obligations. In the definition of these provisions it should be given a special approach to the status of women participants of war take into consideration the defined criterias.

- Activities of organizations: Nowadays there are some organizations in Armenia that are aimed to protect the interests and rights of veterans. Women participants of war mentions following organizations: The Union of Veterans, the women participants of Artsakh liberation war NGO and a range of initiatives, that somehow relate to veterans. Women participants of war have two strongly differing position and opinions concerning the activities of these organizations. Some of them evaluate their activities as very high, the others as low. Here we also face with the issue of status of these women veterans, as the ones who have contact with these organizations, have more privileges and opportunities than those who do not keep in touch with similar units. It means that in every situation these organizations have selective attitude towards women veterans. It is

very important that these organizations have a possibly complete database where will be presented the activities of women veterans during and after the war, their current status, martial status and other details. Hence it will be possible to more effectively regulate different procedures, as well to make definite provisions of law on the basis of these databases.

- Besides the above mentioned institutions, women participants of war highlight the establishment of the union of women participants of war. However, it should be mentioned that women participants of war are not decisive and initiative regarding the establishment of the Union. Nonetheless, during our research it was possible to have a group discussion with some women participants of war. The latter were willing not only to establish such an institution but also meet with the Minister of Defence to discuss the issue of the clarification of their status and other issues related to the participants of war. We want to specially mention this point, as we intend to organize the meeting of these women with the Minister, which will give them an opportunity to directly present their issues and suggestions to the Minister, to define clear goals and take steps to achieve them.

- Work with the young people: Talking about the clarification of the status of the war participants we also emphasized their obligations. Nowadays in various social, national, military patriotic initiatives where young people are mostly included, there is a need not only to represent different manifestations of patriotism through the examples and facts but also emphasize the importance of combat training and capacity within the framework of youth. The experience and knowledge of women participants of war (and not only women participants of war) can play a significant role in the issue of upbringing and education of future generation.

Only readiness of women participants of war is not enough in the issue of that knowledge transfer as there is also a need to be know and represent them.

The one of the ways of the knowledge transfer is not only the integration of these women in different organisations' and NGOs' activities but also today many of women serving in the army have the supply of all necessary knowledge which they can effectively use within the framework of the subject "Preliminary military training": that is a mandatory course in every school.