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Shadow report

Discrimination and Status of Rural Women in the Russian Federation

Brief summary

This shadow report describes position of women who live in rural areas of the Russian Federation. The report contains results of the independent researches held by public organizations from different regions of Russia. The report in a special way underlines a problem of ignoring of rights of women who live in a countryside. The report contains information on restrictions of the mentioned group of women in access to the medical and social assistance system, including reproductive health services. The report presents information about unemployment, poverty, health of rural women and offers recommendations for current situation improvement.

The report structure corresponds to the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Introduction

According to the official information as of 2002, 73 % of Russian Federation citizens are city habitants, 27 % are rural. The number of rural women reached 20 282,0 thousand people in 2002, at the end of 2006 it was 20 064,0 thousand people only.¹

In spite of the fact that the Russian Federation has undertaken a lot of measures directed on eradication of all forms of discrimination of women, discriminative actions continue to exist towards specific groups of women, in particular, towards women living in rural areas. It is so-called "passive" discrimination which means the neglect and formal declaration of defense of women's rights, but not executing legislative defense of the rights.

Article 1. For the purposes of the present Convention, the term discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Recognition, observance and defence² of the human rights and freedoms declared in the Constitution of the Russian Federation is a formal sign of observance of the article 1 of this Convention. However, having formulated the basic problems of rural women - social vulnerability and legal illiteracy; decreasing possibilities for career growth; low wages, poverty; bad criminal conditions; absence of opportunities to enjoy the right to inviolability of one's private life, personal and family secret, advocacy of the honor and a reputation, restricted access to medical services - we can see the obvious infringements or absence of defense of fundamental rights of rural women.

Recommendations

- To develop the state social programs taking into account specific features of women living concrete rural districts.
- To strengthen the control over legislation observance on defense of rights of rural women guaranteed by the Constitution and laws³ of the Russian Federation.
- To create cultural centres for development of adult education.

Article 2. Political measures on eliminating discrimination

In the item d) articles 2 it is noted, that States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation and to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations and practices which constitute discrimination against women (item f);

In reality, rural women live according to traditions, instead of laws. In each district, there are laws and

¹ Erdinjeva L. The social status of the rural woman in a modern Russian society: on Republic Buryatiya materials: **dissertation**, 2009

² The Constitution of the Russian Federation (12.12.1993), Art.2

³ Resolution Supreme Soviet RSFSR 01.11.1990 N 298/3-1 " About urgent measures on improvement of position of women, families, motherhood and childhood advocacy in rural areas"

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traditions which are regulators of a private life. Pressure of public opinion leads to narrowing borders of a private life. In critical situations, rural women will ask neighbors, fellows villager for help, instead of state structures, for example, the police. A lot of cases of physical violence over women, especially in rural areas, are caused by absence of the police in village or neglect by police of calls in cases of domestic violence over women. It is supposed that a husband and a wife should solve all situations inside their family. That is why women, who were exposed to physical violence, in fact do not apply to the police. Elderly women who live alone are especially vulnerable in this situation.

It is almost unreal for the rural woman to declare that she has survived sexual violence. Public opinion in overwhelming majority of cases are on the man's party. Absence of trust to state structures which are called to defend fundamental laws and freedom of women in rural areas is a consequence of a policy of "passive discrimination" of the women held by state structures concerning rural women. Absence of positive experience of women rights advocacy (the majority of lawyers do not advocate for this kind of affairs in court free of charge), as the result of the stereotypes and fear of condemnation by public opinion the majority of women has reconciled to the position of the deprived of civil rights.

Recommendations:

- To create special women rights advocacy centres in rural areas engaged in educational and lawyer activities

Article 3: Guarantees of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

There is only one current standard document on improvement of conditions and labour safeties of rural women - Resolution Supreme Soviet RSFSR 11/1/1990 N 298/3-1 «On urgent measures for improvement of position of women, families, motherhood and childhood advocacy in rural areas». After 20 years, any standard document on improvement of position of women in village has not been accepted anymore. In Russia, any other legislative guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms for rural women are absent.

Recommendations:

- To develop a package of documents for improvement of position of rural women, to create the "low-threshold" governmental programs directed on rendering social and medical aid and support for rural women.
- To expand institute of public defenders of the rights of women.

Article 4: Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory

Article 4 of the Convention demands from the States realisation of special measures directed on protection of motherhood. The universal measures which were developed and accepted in 70-80 years of the last century created a set of "privileges" for women (holidays, benefits and also restrictions of employment on harmful manufactures, lengthening natural periods of interruption of employment (for pregnant women). The measures were realised rather selectively and as a result of it, there are restrictions of labour mobility, professional and qualifying growth of working women, and also decrease opportunities of use of knowledge and experience which they already have.

In the modern conditions of labour market, these privileges can be recognized as obstacles for employment and preservation of women's working places. For the agricultural enterprises which are in a stage of economic transformations, it has become unprofitable and often impossible to take such social responsibility. According to item 64 of the Labour Code of the Russian Federation⁴, unreasonable refusal in employment depending on sex is forbidden, actually approximately third of enterprises heads of different kinds of ownership recognise that they prefer to employ men, and at every sixth surveyed agricultural enterprise the breach the legislation towards pregnant women are revealed.

Recommendations:

- To strengthen the state and independent control over legislation observance regarding employment.
- To develop governmental programs for women's small-scale business, including possibilities of reception of additional educational services, retrainings, improvements of professional skills.
- To develop the institute of public advocates for protection of the rights of mothers.

⁴ Labour Code of the Russian Federation, 30.12.2001 N 197-FL

Article 5: Elimination of prejudices and stereotypes surrounding roles of men and women

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

In our research, no statistically significant distinctions in hierarchy of basic vital values, problems and requirements at different age categories of rural women was revealed. It means both the traditional character of life style, and not varying objective circumstances of a life in the Russian village, stereotypes of behavior of the "bondmaid" are transferred from generation to generation⁵. The general tendency of a passive survival is a characteristic for the majority of women in rural regions of Russia.

On the other hand, there is a tendency that women from big cities move to villages where they begin business. They bring their subculture in villages, changing traditions and stereotypes. Despite that there are few such cases for the present, there are such successful stories and they form so-called «growth points» of cultural and economic potential in the village.

Recommendations:

- To implement systematic work on increase of knowledge of rural women about their rights through mass media, to inform women about successful experience of advocacy of the rural women's rights.

Article 6: Suppression of all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

Despite measures on improvement of the legislation on the prevention and suppression of a human traffic and involving preventive maintenance in prostitution in the Russian Federation, special "low-threshold" programs for the women who are engaged in prostitution, or rehabilitation programs for the women, decided to stop employment by commercial sex, by the state it is not supported. Rural women, escaping from poverty, leave in cities where fill up armies of prostitutes and the unemployed. The most part of prostitutes in cities - women has moved from rural areas.

In different regions of the Russian Federation there are specialised divisions of police on struggle against offences in sphere of morals. It deal with persons employment by prostitution and houses of ill fame. However, in a reality it turns around prosecution and violence concerning the women involved in prostitution instead of development of a wide network of preventive and rehabilitation programs for this group of women.

Recommendations:

- To develop governmental preventive, rehabilitation and adaptable programs for women involved in prostitution.
- To develop a package of measures on creation of conditions for development and normal residing in rural territory

Article 11: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave.

In spite of the fact that negative consequences of reforms in agrarian sector have affected all agricultural population, women have appeared to be in the most adverse position. Reforms of the agricultural enterprises and their privatisation occurred without any participation of women. Women could not create the farms and did not participate in privatisation of the enterprises. The reasons of it are, first, that women were poorly presented in local authorities, and secondly that women did not have sufficient means and skills for agricultural activity as an owner of an enterprise. Meanwhile, rural women are in the conditions of survival, they are involved in manufacturing rural production both for maintenance of families and for its sale in the city. More over, they are traditionally anxious by problems of sale of such production, its transportation and the prices.

Similar to city women, rural women have strongly suffered from decreasing the number of public health, educational, trade institutions, that are those spheres where most of women were concentrated as state workers. These women less than others are adapted for agricultural work on the earth given to them.

⁵ <http://www.owl.ru/gender/294.htm>

Recommendations:

- To develop governmental programs on development of the small business for women, including concessionary terms on conversion training of women, women's employment programmes in the village.

Article 12: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

Article 12 of the Convention demands from the State Parties to take all corresponding measures for liquidation of discrimination towards women in public health services, in particular, with the regard of planning the size of a family, including corresponding service in pregnancy, sorts and the postnatal period.

Family planning programmes are not included into the school education program, and women have not enough information on contraception, pregnancy and giving birth.

Health services is the sharpest problem of villages. In rural areas, the negative result of reduction of the governmental expenditures on public health services is especially sharply. It leads to closing specialised medical institutions and to loss of such experts as gynecologists and accoucheurs. The majority of polyclinics and hospitals are closed and replaced by feldsher's and obstetrical station, usually with no medicines, the majority of services should be paid for. There are no first aid services. In case of emergency peasants may not have any opportunities to reach districts and nearby cities.

There are cases when lying-in women remain unobserved by medical professionals and give birth in house conditions. In a rural areas, there is an extremely actual problem of disclosure of HIV diagnosis by employees of medical institutions to extraneous persons. Disclosure of the diagnosis of mother (drug addiction / hepatitis / HIV) also occurs in kindergartens and schools because this information is underlined in the child's medical history card, and leads to disclosure of the diagnosis of mother and discrimination not only towards the mother, but also towards the child.

Among rural women there is a high percentage of anaemia (because of decrease in quality of a food and living in ecologically adverse zones), the quantity of cancer cases has increased. Such concepts as vaccination, diagnostics, routine observations and inspections have disappeared.

Recommendations:

- To create system of the mobile medical aid stations spending routine inspections and vaccination of rural women.
- To provide access to complex services in sphere of reproductive health, to services in family planning, including access to condoms, tests for pregnancy;

Article 13: Economical and social benefits

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular the right to family benefits (item a)

In spite of the fact that on village high percent of unemployment and poverty, a lot of families have got many children, but reception of children's and the social benefits is complicated for many reasons (absence of money for reception and gathering of documents, loosing documents). On the other hand, a population part, remained without means of support and without having other cash lives on children's grants, pensions of old men, in many rural regions of the grant - a unique way of reception of cash. The considerable quantity of rural women see the childbirth as additional possibility to earn (the parent capital, other benefits for having many children etc). In connecting with there are a lot of cases of adoption of children for reception of benefits. On the other hand, contrary to the official policy directed on strengthening family, many women surveyed in different regions inform that the state does not create necessary conditions which would stimulate women to have children. Accessible child care centres which were created by employers earlier, now are closed or translated on a commercial basis everywhere.

Recommendations:

To create the system of Centers of social support of the women, realising social and economic programs of women

Article 14. Rural women

States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of

the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

In a reality the poor development or practical absence of channels of communications is observed. A lot of rural women have no phone, they doesn't write out magazines and the federal newspapers, many women haven't information about the Internet. The basic source of the information are central federal TV channels. Bad roads, absence or insufficient quantity cars and coaches lead to that many rural women are compelled to live a subsistence economy and to count only on own forces and endurance in struggle against the elements and in critical situations. Low level of legal literacy does not allow rural women not only to protect, but also to realise the rights about which the majority of rural women doesn't know. Poverty, unemployment, an alcoholism promote criminality growth in villages - thefts, moonshining and drunk fights became the ordinary in many villages.

Recommendations:

- To create the special remedial centres in a countryside, engaged educational and advocacy activity, the centres of a remote additional education for adults.
- To develop government programs for a female small-scale business, including possibilities of reception of additional educational services, retrainings, improvements of professional **skill**.

Summary

Main problems of rural women:

1. Absence of highly paid situation for women in a countryside
2. Low knowledge of rural women about their rights
3. Regulation of a rural life by traditions and stereotypes, instead of laws
4. Not developed socially - cultural sphere.

Common recommendations:

- To develop target government programs for improvement of position of rural women taking into account specific features of concrete districts. To develop a package of documents on improvement of position of women on village, to create the "low-threshold" government programs directed on rendering social and medical aid and support for rural women.
- To strengthen the control over legislation observance on protection of the rights of the rural women guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the Russian Federation. To expand institute of public defenders of the women rights.
- To create the special remedial centres in a countryside, engaged educational and advocacy activity, the centres of a remote additional education for adults.
- To develop government programs for a female small-scale business, including possibilities of reception of additional educational services, retrainings, improvements of professional skill.

References:

1. The Constitution of the Russian Federation (12.12.1993), Art.2
2. Labour Code of the Russian Federation, 30.12.2001 N 197-FL
3. Resolution Supreme Soviet RSFSR 01.11.1990 N 298/3-1 " About urgent measures on improvement of position of women, families, motherhood and childhood advocacy in rural areas"
4. Erdinieva L. The social status of the rural woman in a modern Russian society: on Republic Buryatiya materials: dissertation, 2009