

Session I: "Global Population and Development Trends: the European View"

Issues of gender equity in a society are amongst the most important matters of ICPD Program of actions. From the point of view of legislation on human rights Georgia may be considered as a one of the most advanced countries in the region. In the last ten years Georgian government has adopted an exhaustive list of international conventions and has accepted a lot of legislative documents that insure the protection of women's rights and guarantee gender equity in a society. But what is going on in reality on Caucasus? Does society itself always care about gender equity's issues in every day's life? Are people in Caucasian society ready not only for declaration of gender equity but also for implementation of its principles in own families? I would like to suggest you one example of violation of women' rights when unplanned pregnancy is ceasing in the process of selection of preferable sex of fetus.

Since the mid 1990s, the three Caucasian countries, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, have been experiencing a dramatic increase in sex ratio at birth that amounted to the almost 120 live born boys on each 100 girls for the year 2001. It appeared that this change is specific to Caucasus and has not occurred in the neighboring territories of Russia or in any other ex-USSR country. Even in Central Asian countries and Turkey and Iran sex ratio at birth has to date remained very stable.

The research that has been conducted recently by Georgian and French demographers and has been presented on the last European Population Conference in Warsaw, has shown that at least in two Caucasian countries, Georgia and Armenia, this artificial situation with sex ratio at birth is likely to be related very much to the practice of selective abortion. The preference for boys is not new in the Caucasian region, but it has recently produced an increase in sex ratio through the development of a practice of selective induced abortion. The practice of echography widely spreader up in these countries allows women to identify the sex of fetus on the early terms of pregnancy and to cease it in case of undesired sex of child. It of course increases the prevalence of induced abortions that remains to be in Georgia and Armenia at the one of the highest level in Europe. Religion in Georgia is quite patient to the fertility regulation issues. Some studies confirm that an attitude to abortions among the Caucasian women is still very patient and abortion very often is considering by the m as a mean of fertility regulation, sometimes even more preferable than use of modern contraceptives. Yes, abortions are free in this region and they are safe. But civil society being in the process of European integration should always take in mind to what extent abortions may be used and does woman should be so irresponsible to own reproductive health. Presented example calls to policy makers how much still have to be done in future in this region and how important is collaboration between local scientific and policy bodies for successful population developments in the different countries from the point of European view.