

TRANS NEWSLETTER

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N - 18



HORMONE THERAPY FOR TRANSEXUAL PEOPLE -----	2
STRATEGIC PLANNING OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR 2021-2025-----	3
THREE ARMENIAN TRANSGENDER WOMEN BARRED FROM ENTERING EGYPT BECAUSE OF “MALE” MARKER IN THE PASSPORT-----	4
TRANS HEALTHCARE AND LEGAL BARRIERS OF TRANSITIONING-----	5
THREE-DAY REST FOR THE “RIGHT SIDE” HRD NGO BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF-----	6
IMPLEMENTATION OF “HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOUCH WITH TOMORROW” TRAINING-COURSE-----	7
“CIVIC ACTIVISM FOR COMMON VALUES” TRAINING WAS HELD IN MARCH-----	10
TRANS CAMP 7-----	12
31 MARCH IS INTERNATIONAL TRANSGENDER DAY-----	15

HORMONE THERAPY FOR TRANSSEXUAL PEOPLE



Taking care of the health of the transgender community, which has been neglected for years, “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO provided free endocrinologic services and medication to 18 transsexual people for the first time in Armenia in January 2021. Thanks to the mobilized resources, with the consultation of a Ukrainian endocrinologist, the beneficiaries underwent 40 types of mandatory medical examinations, which were carried out in one of the local diagnostic laboratories. The results were summarized by the Ukrainian endocrinologist through a 40-minute individual in-depth online consultation, appropriate treatment or treatment correction was prescribed. The assistance was provided by the generous financial support of the European Union, People in Need, the Helsinki Committee of the Netherlands and AFEW International.

The hormone replacement therapy is a form of hormone therapy in which sex hormones and other hormonal medications are prescribed to transgender or gender non-conforming individuals for the purpose of aligning their secondary sexual characteristics with their gender identity more closely. For transsexuals, hormone replacement therapy usually lasts a lifetime.

Hormonal medications registered in Armenia are sold in the market without doctors prescription, are considered contraceptives, and are not intended to be the main medication for hormone replacement therapy. As a result of the lack of a specialized endocrinologist in the Republic of Armenia, transsexuals are on self-medication. The “Right Side” HRD NGO regularly receives complaints about the deterioration of the health situation of trans people, as these medications have a variety of side effects, and can cause even mental health problems.

“Right Side” HRD NGO has been actively advocating for the need to adopt medical guidelines on gender reassignment surgery and on hormone replacement therapy in Armenia for five years already. The “Right Side” HRD NGO continuously implements programs like this, with the goal of preventing the use of the wrong medications among transsexuals, creating accessible quality health care services, educating transsexuals about hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgeries, and referring to the professionals. The results of screenings have shown that all the transgender people have complications because of the lack of a consistent approach to the health.

Additionally, the RA Ministry of Health has not taken any necessary steps to ensure access to quality professional health care services for trans people up till now. Will the medical interventions related to gender reassignment be included in the soon introduced comprehensive health insurance? This issue also remains unreported.



STRATEGIC PLANNING OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR 2021-2025



The “Right Side” NGO started 2021 with strategic, advocacy and communication planning for the next five years in the beginning of January. The achievements of the organisation in the field of gender equality and human rights protection in recent years are unquestionable and can be found in detail in the annual reports of the organisation, which are available on the website.

But taking into consideration the end of the previous three-year strategic plan of the organisation, the rapid development of the organisation, it was necessary to review the previous plan and undertake the development of a new strategic, advocacy and communication planning for 2021-2025. The development of new plans was carried out through several stages. The organisation hired an external consultant for the facilitation of the development of the plan. The consultant conducted community consultations, individual consultations with staff and board, analysed the reports and resource management. The multi-stakeholder working meeting took place in 2021 in January to review the following for the next five years:

- **organisation’s mission, vision and values,**
- **the strategic programs of the organisation and the objectives,**
- **activities and operational plan,**
- **human resources and the structure of the organisation,**
- **advocacy and communication plans**

The results of the planning have already been summarised and approved by the Assembly of the organization. Based on the plans, the organisation will work in following three strategic directions over the next five years to protect the rights of trans people and sex workers:

- 1. Protecting community health and safety.**
- 2. Human rights protection and legal reforms.**
- 3. Changing public opinion and breaking norms.**

The “Right Side” HRD NGO expresses its deep gratitude to those involved in the planning for their contribution and commitment, assuring that it will continue to stand by transgender people and sex workers for the next five years, advocating for equality and justice, and providing services tailored to community needs.



THREE ARMENIAN TRANSGENDER WOMEN BARRED FROM ENTERING EGYPT BECAUSE OF “MALE” MARKER IN THE PASSPORT

On February 22, 2021 “Right Side” HRD NGO received a request from three Armenian trans women to provide support to lift the illegal ban from entering the Arab Republic of Egypt and to assist in returning the expenses from the tour agency.

In February, three transgender women purchased fourteen-day travel packages to Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt from two different travel agencies. Arriving at the Sharm el-Sheikh airport on February 19, after waiting for six hours, they were informed that “all three could not enter the country, since their passports state that they are “men”, and they can enter the country only after the female gender mark is indicated in the passport”. The transgender women travelled to Egypt, having previously consulted with a travel agency, with updated photos in the valid passports of the Republic of Armenia.

The border guards, by noting that “the headquarters of the security service in Cairo barred them from entering,” took the passports, isolated them in one of the closed cafes of the airport, deprived them of communication, did not provide food and water, and informed them that they can travel to Armenia only in fourteen days with a flight purchased by them. The border guards did not mark the passports with entry-exit stamps, and no deportation order was issued. For three days, transgender women regularly paid cleaning women about 20 US dollars for water and chips, which allowed them to survive under severe psychological pressure and fear. Realizing that there is no other way, they paid the border guards three hundred US dollars in cash to be released and sent to Armenia with a next flight. Transgender women were able to arrive in Yerevan only in the morning of February 21.

There are numerous articles in international media about the problems of transgender people in the borders. There are many cases when such problems serve as a basis for corruption or human trafficking.

“One of the solutions is to stop marking the gender in passports, as there is no reason for a foreign country to collect data on the gender identity of foreigners, or the marking of gender should be done without forced sterilization, based on the principle of self-determination in Armenia”, added the lawyer of “Right Side” HRD NGO.

The “Right Side” HRD NGO applied to the Embassy of Egypt in Armenia, the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the RA Embassy in Egypt for clarifications. One of the agencies has already returned the expenses of one person.

The “Right Side” HRD NGO urges trans people to cancel their planned visits to the Arab Republic of Egypt to avoid similar problems, until the Embassy of Egypt will provide clarification on entry for Armenian trans citizens to Egypt. For security reasons, in all similar situations we advise transgender people to contact us online and then to the RA Embassy.



TRANS HEALTHCARE AND LEGAL BARRIERS OF TRANSITIONING



INTERVIEW WITH LILIT MARTIROSYAN

“COMMUNITY IS IN SELF-TREATMENT BY SEEKING CONSULTATIONS FROM ONE ANOTHER, OR ON THE INTERNET, ETC. ONLY OUR ORGANIZATION KNOWS ABOUT A HUNDRED OF SUCH TRANS PEOPLE. IN ADDITION, THE AVAILABLE MEDICATIONS ON THE MARKET ARE NOT INTENDED FOR HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPIES FOR TRANSEXUALS.”

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LILIT MARTIROSYAN
PRESIDENT, RIGHT SIDE
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER NGO

MY RIGHTS

The global healthcare system has experienced considerable development in recent decades, and in recent years there has been constant talk of healthcare reforms in Armenia. The topic of daily discussion in the political, media and social spheres is the quality of healthcare, funding, availability and accessibility of targeted services to different vulnerable groups. In this article, we have tried with the president of “Right Side” HRD organisation – Lilit Martirosyan to briefly review the obstacles in the healthcare of transgender people, to understand the possible solutions to overcome them.

Mrs. Martirosyan, please, mention what kind of medical interventions are required to protect the health of transgender people?

- First of all, let me say that not all transgender people need medical interventions. Those who want to harmonise their body with their identity through medical interventions are called transsexuals. For transsexuals, hormone replacement therapy and (or) gender reassignment surgery may be especially important.

Taking care of the health of transsexuals is difficult, is it possible in Armenia?

- In developed and developing countries, often a primary care physician and (or) an endocrinologist coordinates their care. But our research shows that the vast majority of trans people are afraid to seek primary care because of discrimination or disclosure of medical privacy. Endocrinologists do not have professional skills to care for transgender people’s health, and there are no gender reassignment surgeons in Armenia. Our community is in self-treatment by seeking consultations from one another, or on the Internet, etc. Only our organization knows about a hundred of such trans people. In addition the available medications on the market are not intended for hormone replacement therapies for transsexuals.

Then how are the surgeries and hormone therapy performed, and how much do they cost?

- Transsexuals have to undergo hormone replacement therapy for a year or two, often psychological counselings, after which gender reassignment can be performed. A foreigner doctor is invited to Armenia, who performs gender reassignment surgery. In general, the cost of surgeries alone can be up to 10 million drams. Recently, it became possible to alleviate the costs of healthcare care for trans people, by establishing contacts with a Ukrainian endocrinologist, who coordinated the hormone replacement therapy for 18 people. Hormone therapy is carried out according to the international standards and medical protocols, which are absent in Armenia. For three months, the cost of treatment with all examinations and medical checkups was about 350,000 drams per person. Trans people in Armenia can earn this amount only through sex work, as these expenses are not included in private insurances, are not covered by state programs, and in general, there are no relevant specialists.

Mrs. Martirosyan, how is legal gender recognition being implemented?

- There is a problem with the current legislation. According to the current law, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia requires the submission of a gender reassignment certificate, the form of which must be approved by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia. Of course, it does not exist, and our efforts with the Ministry of Health have not brought results. On the other hand, doctors are afraid to perform such interventions in Armenia, so in case of surgeries performed here, they mention “sex correction”, which is not accepted by the Civil Acts Registration Office. We have to ask for the certificate from the foreign clinic, from the doctor who did the surgery.

How do you plan to solve the issues raised?

- A comprehensive solution to the above-mentioned problems is needed. As a new strategic priority for the next five years, we are advocating for the adoption of medical protocols in line with international standards, improve the medication market, and ensure availability of specialists. On the other hand, legal gender recognition should be carried out based on self-determination, without mandatory sterilization. On this topic, we have a strategic litigation case against the RA Ministry of Justice, based on the similar case of ECHR in 2019. We do not spare any effort to ensure that future universal public health insurance covers the costs of hormone replacement therapy and gender reassignment surgery. In many EU countries such costs are already included in public insurance, and from the CIS member states, for example, in Belarus, gender reassignment surgeries are also free. Our ultimate goal is to ensure the availability and accessibility of targeted, inclusive and quality health services for vulnerable groups of the population.

THREE-DAY REST FOR THE “RIGHT SIDE” HRD NGO BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF



In order to prevent the burnout of the staff, board and activists, the “Right Side” HRD NGO organised a three-day outgoing activity in February for the organisation’s nine employees and board members. The activity was financially supported within the framework of “COVID-19. Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability” regional project, which is being implemented by IREX Europe (now Equal Rights & Independent Media, ERIM) and Human Rights House Yerevan (HRHY) and funded by the European Union (EU).

The activity aimed to promote the stabilisation of the emotional harmony of the activists and human rights defenders by practicing yoga and self-care. During the activity, in the calm atmosphere interpersonal discussions on the following topics took place:

- Organisation of recreational activities for activists to prevent burnout.
- Ensuring emotional, mental and spiritual balance and harmony.
- Drawing the borderlines between work and private life.
- Proper management of free time and leisure.
- Improving and clarifying working conditions.
- Motivation and focus on work and rest.
- Discussion on the policy of prevention of burnout among activists.

It should be noted that since the day of its foundation, the organisation has been working with a heavy workload, the employees of the organisation often take the problems of the community personally and even try to spend the time allotted for leisure on solving them. Given the fact, that the organisation represents the interests of trans and sex workers communities, the organisation’s activists are daily targets of stigma and discrimination. Many activists experienced emotional imbalance, nervous instability, some even visited doctors and psychologists regularly.

This recovery activity enabled the organisation to continue its work in a more motivated manner, stronger push forward the new strategic and advocacy plans, approved in the beginning of the year. Due to the difficult, dangerous and tense work environment, during the activity, it was decided that such preventive and recovery measures should be organised twice a year, taking into account the problems and the workload of the organisation.

“Right Side” HRD NGO expresses its gratitude for the support provided within the framework of “COVID-19. Civil Society Resilience and Sustainability” regional project, which is being implemented by IREX Europe (now Equal Rights & Independent Media, ERIM) and Human Rights House Yerevan (HRHY) and funded by the European Union (EU).

It gave an opportunity to the organisation to review and re-evaluate the organisation’s human resource’s management, the working culture, to recover and to return with to the work with more power, for the new achievements and successes, for the benefit of the trans, sex workers and LGBTIQ community, for equality, and for human rights protection.

This rest has given us an opportunity to review and re-evaluate the organisation’s human resource management, working culture, recover and return to the work with more power for new achievements and success, for the benefit of the trans, sex workers and LGBTIQ community, for equality and human rights protection,



IMPLEMENTATION OF “HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOUCH WITH TOMORROW” TRAINING-COURSE

On March 15-18, 2021, Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO conducted a four-day training for transgender activists.

Twenty young transgender activists aged 18-30 from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia fighting for the protection, security and welfare of transgender people in Armenia took part in the training.

The aim of the training was to strengthen and develop the capacity of young transgender activists in the fields of human rights, advocacy, protection of interests, contributing to the safety, awareness and welfare of young transgender people in Armenia.

During the four-day training, a number of topics were discussed, such as the rights of trans people in the police, social media, stigma, discrimination, leadership skills, gender identity and sexual orientation, gender based violence, hate speech, European conventions, the situation of trans people in Armenia, individual self-defense, the role of local and international organizations for the protection of human rights, protection mechanisms for transgender people’ mental health and solutions, protection mechanisms for the interests of family members, safety and security issues.

The training was launched by Lilit Martirosyan, transgender activist, the Founder and President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, she delivered an opening speech, stressed the importance of education among the transgender youth, and thanked all participants for their involvement.

Lilit presented the organization’s human rights, social and humanitarian activities among transgender people.

Referring to all the participants in her opening speech, she noted that she encouraged the activism of each participant, adding that every transgender person had to fight for the security, well-being of their transgender community, build a strong democracy, and the opportunity to live with dignity, free from stigma and discrimination.



On the first day, the participants learned the best European leadership models, management skills and methods, they gained theoretical knowledge about the levels of advocacy, its implementation ways and campaigning methods. Lilit Martirosyan presented how community initiatives, specialists and various other groups should be involved in advocacy processes. Then, the participants were divided into groups and did practical work on the topics of leadership and advocacy. The participants suggested using their knowledge to help the organization in advocacy.

Continuing the discussions on the second day of the training, the participants gained new knowledge about hate speech, violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The participants said that they were regularly facing hate speech on social media in Armenia, shared their stories that they had repeatedly appealed to the police and courts, but their problems had not been resolved, but they also added that they would continue to fight for their rights and freedoms. They thanked the lawyer of the organization, who had participated in the court hearings of every transgender person, provided representation in police stations by protecting the rights and interests of everyone.

The participants expressed a desire to develop a new booklet, which would contain the cases of hate speech against them in order to draw the attention of the society and the state to the threats and hate speech against them.

One of the necessary topics of the training was the discussion on the safety of transgender people. The participants shared personal stories about crimes against them, violence, how they had resisted and overcome transphobia in Armenia.

All participants received detailed information on how to defend themselves, have knowledge on security, and a personal safety guide was developed for each person. In addition, the participants gained knowledge on how to deal with threats and avoid violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. They discussed how family members could be involved in transgender and sex worker rights movements.

That was followed by the presentation of personal stories of transgender people and sex workers about the cases of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes. The participants were speaking by presenting the difficulties they had encountered during their lives. Everyone shared their story and got acquainted with the story of the others. The participants told about a number of cases of violence, discrimination, hate speech and threats against them. Then, speaking of self-defense, young transgender activists stressed the importance of uniting and strengthening the transgender community.

In order to raise the participants' perceptions and knowledge, a moot court was organized, where the participants were divided into plaintiff-defendants, there were selected judges, prosecutors, witnesses, and the topic "A transgender person was subjected to violence on the street" was chosen. By playing the moot court, participants gained more insight into how they could defend their rights in the courts and police departments. They learned how to process lawsuits, applications, complaints, got an idea of the role of the courts, the cases and instances to appeal, learned about the significance of the European Court, necessary cases to apply to the European Court, and they got acquainted with the European Court precedents concerning transgender people.

On the last day of the training, participants raised their voice about their mental health and self-care, each told about psychological violence by family, teachers, friends, neighbors, officials and other groups in society, suggested that regular psychological and social support be provided to transgender people which would be aimed at maintaining the mental health and self-care of transgender people.

Then, at the end of the overloaded day, Lilit Martirosyan organized a meditation with the participants.

At the end of the training, Lilit Martirosyan, thanked the young transgender activists, then handed over their certificates and encouraged the participation of young transgender people in the protection of their rights and the development of a prosperous future.

The young transgender activists expressed a desire to talk about the topics, format, organization of the training, as well as their feelings that they had during the training.

Quotes from the participants:

"Thanks to the organizers, to do all this here in Armenia, is very hard and difficult," said a trans woman.

"I was finally able to express myself here, I found myself in this safe environment. I'm so happy to have found you, my transgender friends, now, I am stronger with you," said a trans woman.

“I thank the entire staff of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO for doing all this for us. I want this to be continuous, as you are giving me an education that I have not received at school or elsewhere because of discrimination,” said a trans woman.

“Thank you for so much knowledge, I am full of knowledge,” said a trans woman.

“My father tells me that he has to change me, in order I become a boy, but I already know how to educate my father and the rest of the people who call us sick with the knowledge I have gained,” said a trans woman.

“Security is priceless, and I already have clear plans on how to protect myself and everyone else,” said a trans man.

“It was very difficult for me to decide whether to come to the seminar or not, I thought I would be misunderstood, because I had never had such an opportunity to appear among transgender people, but I was wrong, as if I was just born. You let me live,” said a trans woman.

“I imagined so complicated when I heard the word leadership. But now I can say that I am a leader,” said a trans man.

Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO assures that this course is a step towards ensuring the well-being of transgender people, improving the quality of their harmonious and safe life, strengthening democracy in Armenia, and building equality.

Participants are now more aware of advocacy and campaigning skills for equality and human rights, and of course, they will establish a dialogue and cooperation between the transgender community and NGO representatives to fight discrimination more effectively through joint cooperation and active civic participation.

The training has been carried out within the framework of the **“Strengthening access to justice through non-judicial redress for victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes in the Eastern Partnership”** project which is funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe”.

The views expressed during the meeting can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union or the Council of Europe



“CIVIC ACTIVISM FOR COMMON VALUES” TRAINING WAS HELD IN MARCH

In March 2021, the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO conducted a three-day “Civic Activism for Common Values” training for twenty TRANS LBIQ individuals and their parents.

During the three-day training, there were discussed different topics such as the involvement of transgender people in activism, women for peace, the safety of transgender people, self-care and well-being, overcoming interpersonal conflicts, public campaigns, stigma, discrimination, hate speech, etc.

The training was launched by Lilit Martirosyan, the Founder and President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, transgender activist, who made an opening speech, emphasizing the importance of the involvement of transgender people in civic activism in recent years, thanked all human rights activists fighting for human rights, freedoms and common values on the front lines, paving the way for TRANS LGBIQ people who were still oppressed by society, family members, living by hiding their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Lilit Martirosyan presented the activities, management, goals and mission of the organization, adding that the Community Center of the NGO was always ready to receive every member of the transgender LGBIQ, sex worker community in Armenia and their parents, providing psychological, legal, social and a number of services that would strengthen and ensure their safety and well-being.

On the first day of the training, the participants learned about activism, its nature in a number of European countries and in the USA, the situation of activism in Armenia, its prospects and expectations in Armenia.

Lilit Martirosyan presented how to advocate during activism, the participants studied the situation of activism in a number of European countries, its current stage, they learned to apply the best international models of activism, then, comparing with the situation of activism in Armenia, they said that they would no longer be afraid to make their voices heard through public campaigns, as they had been stigmatized and discriminated against for years by members of the family, educational institutions, etc. Then the participants divided into groups, carried out practical work on the situation of Trans LGBIQ activism in Armenia, then presented the work done.

Continuing the discussions on the second day of the training, the participants gained new knowledge about the safety, self-care and well-being of transgender people. Taking into account the regular violence cases against TRANSGENDER LBIQ and SEX WORKERS by the society in the Republic of Armenia, Lilit Martirosyan highlighted the individual security, protection, and well-being of everyone and she provided new detailed knowledge about security.

All participants were very interested in the course, as they all had individual issues related to their safety and well-being, they told their personal stories and received comprehensive answers on how to take care of themselves, others, and their mental health.

During the second half of the training, the participants began to prepare safety maps for themselves based on the acquired knowledge, and then each of them presented what tools were needed in everyday life in order to be protected.

At the end of the day, Lilit Martirosyan reminded about the importance of taking care of mental health and informed that those in need of a psychologist, could be provided with free psychologist assistance by the Rights Side NGO, she said it was vital for all the activists and she also offered to participate in TRANS camps to gain new knowledge and opportunities.

On the third day of the training, the participants were divided into two groups and presented the topics of the previous two days, shared their new knowledge, then the trainer organized panel discussions on stigma, discrimination, hate speech in social platforms, during which transgender people presented their personal stories trying to get solutions. In particular, it was discussed violence by family members and relatives on the basis of gender identity. Violence was reported by university students, who were forced to study in order to gain professional knowledge, but had been ridiculed and persecuted every day because of their appearance and gender identity.

TRANS CAMP 7



The “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO organized the seventh Trans camp for Transgender LGBTIQ activists, their allies and parents.

The aim of the training was to foster the capacity building of the Transgender community, to improve the level of involvement of the transgender community in the socio-cultural and civic life, to promote their safety both in the family and in society, and to raise the level of awareness of transgender people by providing them new knowledge that will improve their prosperous and secure life.

During the camp the following topics were discussed:

- Human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Stigma and discrimination against transgender sex workers;
- The situation of transgender people in Armenia;
- Hate crimes and hate speech;
- Creating a safe and secure environment in the family;
- Mechanisms for protecting the interests of family members;
- Legal gaps in hormone therapy and gender reassignment in the Republic of Armenia;
- The situation of trans activism in the Republic of Armenia;
- The situation of sex workers in Armenia.

On the first day of the camp, Lilit Martirosyan, President of the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, made an opening speech, presenting the organization’s mission, goals and objectives, current projects and services. She thanked all the participants for their interest to the camp, then added that “education is very important for us to build a prosperous and secure future for all of us together. By gaining new knowledge we will be able to break all the stereotypes about TRANS LGBTIQ people in the society. Yes, we are discriminated against in schools, universities, all the places where we can get knowledge, but we must continue to fight; meetings in such a format give us enough knowledge to protect us and other representatives of our community.”

During the first day of the training, the topics of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression were touched upon, which were new and interesting for all the participants. L. Martirosyan presented all the wrong stereotypes about Trans LGBTIQ people, the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity, the unsuccessful experiments in the treatment of homosexuality. The trainer then talked about how to use and introduce the right terms concerning to LGBTIQ people to the public, which are often misused in the media field, targeting and discriminating against Trans LGBTIQ people and sex workers. A separate reference was made to gender identity and self-expression.



At the end of the day, the course was continued by Transgender activist Maria Atabekyan, a student at the Yerevan State Medical University, who told the participants about the difficulties she went through at the university based on her gender identity, but continued her education to help the members of the community who did not have access to education due to the continuous discrimination. “This course is very important for all the transgender sex workers because the community members live alone, abandoned by their family, relatives, and do sex work on the streets. Too often, medical institutions do not serve them and discriminate on the basis of their gender identity, that is why it is necessary to have the knowledge of first aid to help and why not to save one another”, added M. Atabekyan. The trainer gave the participants detailed knowledge about first aid, how to provide immediate assistance in case of accidents, injuries, sudden illnesses before the arrival of the medical staff, transfer of the patient to the medical institution. “Any emergency situation is a great stress in itself. We must be able to be oriented correctly, not to panic. Due to the state of emergency, people often lose their self-control and may become inadequate. This can lead to disruptive first aid, often due to the lack of knowledge, fear of making a mistake, mistrust, uncertainty, the nature of the victim’s injury, and so on. Disruptive circumstances can be eliminated if the person is prepared and has relevant information. In any emergency situation, certain steps must be taken, which will contribute to the improvement of the injured person’s condition and will prevent further dangers,” said Maria. During the training, the trainer showed through practical examples how to help the injured person and bring them to a conscious state, provide psychological help, how to perform artificial respiration, heart massage, how to prevent bleeding, etc. At the end of the training, the participants thanked M. Atabekyan for the detailed knowledge which they did not receive at school and they highlighted the role of information in their lives.

During the second day the honorary guests of the Trans camp were Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Republic of Armenia Nico Schermers and an employee of the Embassy. Lilit Martirosyan thanked the honorable Ambassador for accepting the invitation, for being present and listening to the needs of the Trans LGBTIQ community and sex workers in Armenia, noting that it was a great honor for the community to have the opportunity to talk to the Ambassador about their needs. Ambassador Nico Schermers thanked for the invitation, then added that he was very happy to be in the Camp and hear about the needs of the participants, as well as he added that through joint efforts Trans LGBTIQ people and their parents would feel stronger and protected in Armenia.

After the speech of the Honorable Ambassador, a panel discussion with the topic of “The Parents of TRANS LGBTIQ People Speak” started, in which the parents of LGBTIQ people from different regions of Armenia and from Yerevan participated. During the discussion, parents told personal stories, shared about difficult relationships with their children, talked about how they could involve parents who, lacking sufficient knowledge, continued to discriminate against their children and even kick them out of the house for fear of negative reactions from relatives and neighbors. The parents expressed readiness to organize informational meetings with LGBTIQ people and their parents in the safe space of the “Right Side” NGO to educate them and involve them in various educational and social events that would reduce violence and stigma in families. The participants asked questions to the parents, received exhaustive answers, then some of the participants hugged their parents by getting warmth and a positive energy.

The next panel discussion was dedicated to sex workers. This type of discussion has been taking place within the framework of the Trans camps for six years already. The sex workers spoke about the growing violence in Armenia, stigma and discrimination by the society, as well as the lack of laws.

The sex workers shared their personal stories, noting the difficulties they had encountered while doing sex work. “Sex work in Armenia is considered illegal, sex workers are regularly fined by the police, they are not accepted and receive a negative attitude by the society, transgender people and sex workers are not provided with other jobs in the RA, they are discriminated against, ridiculed and humiliated at every step. I have to do sex work to buy hormonal medicines, to pay my flat rent and just to live,” said one of the transgender sex worker participants during the discussion. The discussion was very emotional, based on personal stories.

After the panel discussions, the participants watched the short film “My Right is Also Important”, having a heated discussion about the issue presented in the film. Then, summing up the panel discussions, L. Martirosyan gave the floor to the Honorable Ambassador Niko Schermers to express his impressions, then all the participants were given the opportunity to ask their questions to the Honorable Ambassador. Ambassador Nico Schermers noted that it was very important that all the members of the community were aware of their rights to participate in the process of building a democratic and equal state. The participants thanked the Ambassador with the expectation of meeting again.

It should be noted that the camp was unique in that Yelena Konovalenko, a Ukrainian endocrinologist-nutritionist, was invited to conduct a course on hormone therapy. Yelena explained to the participants in detail the international experience of hormone therapy, gave new knowledge to all the transsexual people who were undergoing hormone therapy or were about to start. For the first time, the participants gained sufficient knowledge about their health, gained information that would help them to take the right hormonal medication in the future, be under the supervision of a doctor, regularly undergo appropriate laboratory tests and follow their health. The trainer answered a number of important questions of the participants, and the participants thanked the doctor for the new knowledge and information that was not available to them, then Yelena Konovalenko expressed a desire to stand by the side of the participants who needed her help.

On the third day of the camp L. Martirosyan conducted a course on “Leadership”, during which they spoke about advocacy, methods of conducting advocacy and organizing campaigns. The trainer presented how to involve community initiatives, professionals and other groups in advocacy processes.

It was also talked about the life of famous leaders, their activities, how they had changed the life of an entire society, nation, humanity for the better with their words and actions. At the end of the course L. Martirosyan instructed to be divided into groups, to do practical work on the previous topics, the participants, presenting the works they had prepared, reinforced the knowledge they had received.

Then, all the participants presented individual stories, which would later be included in the book “TRANSGENDER People Talk about their Lives”.

At the end of the training, the participants thanked the entire RS HRD NGO team and funding organizations for the opportunity of being provided with new knowledge that was not available due to discrimination in schools or universities, they added that such camps played a very important role in their lives and that they would like it to be continuous.

The official closing of the camp was implemented by L. Martirosyan who thanked all the participants for their participation in the educational initiative taking with them new knowledge that would help them throughout their lives. Then all the participants received certificates of participation and letters of gratitude.

Quotes by the participants:

“This is my first time participating in such an event. I had no idea where I was going to participate, I was scared. Now, I can say that you have given me so much new knowledge, I have made so many new friends that I cannot find words, thank you for your existence, for your NGO’s existence.”

“This is my first time participating in the camp, I have always avoided being photographed and making my face public, but now I can freely say that you introduce me with an open face, I’m not afraid of anything else.”

“You gave me a lot of knowledge, Lilit. I never thought I was born the way I was; I always blamed my parents. But now I’ll go and apologize.”

“You have given me new opportunities to make my life better, for which I am grateful.”

“The topics of sexual orientation and gender identity have revealed to me to know who I am. You have given me things I have not got from anywhere.”

“Please, involve me in the next camp again, give me the opportunity to participate in the camp, it has played a very important role in my life.”

For almost seven years now, the Trans Camp has provided and continues to provide TRANSGENDER LGBTIQ people, their PARENTS and ALLIES new knowledge and achievements, it has created links of solidarity between TRANS LGBTIQ people and their parents by strengthening the bonds between children and parents, creating healthy, strong and safe family relationships.

Hundreds of Transgender LGBTIQ people continue to gain new knowledge on human rights, security, self-care, self-defense, leadership, advocacy, self-awareness, hormone therapy, full exercise of rights, rights protection in the judiciary and police systems, on a number of other topics.



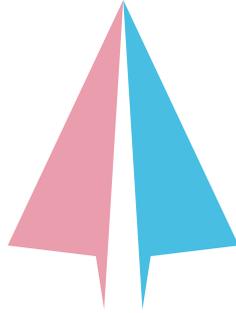
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