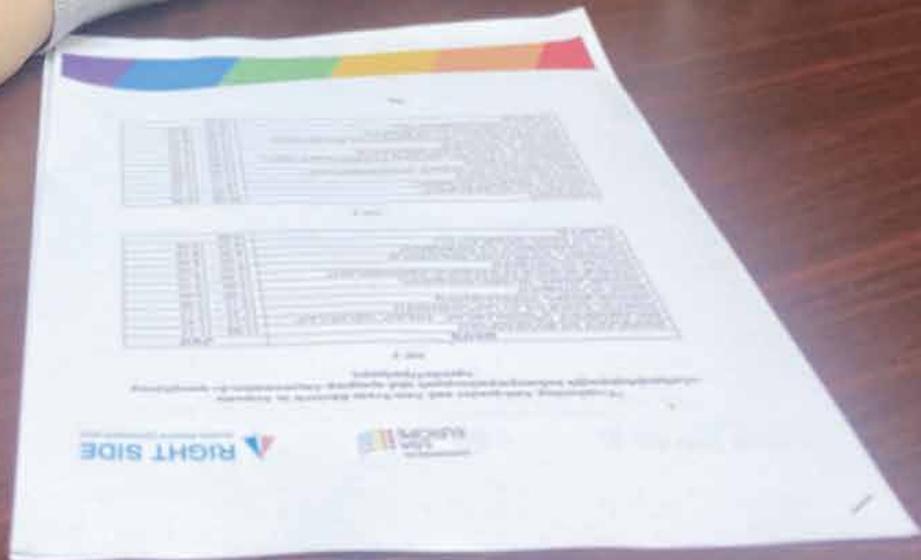


# TRANS NEWSLETTER

September - October 2021



# N-21



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## ATTACK ON A TRANSGENDER WOMAN

On the night of September 4, at around 3:30-4:00 a.m., an unknown person approached G. Karayan and her transgender friend, sitting in the park in front of the Yerevan Municipality, and threatened that if trans woman G. did not have sex with him, he will beat and stab the trans woman. G. Karayan asked him to leave them alone, otherwise she would apply to the police, but the person, pulling G., forced her to go with him. The trans woman, seeing that there was no other way out, asked her friend to call the police immediately or find the patrol officers nearby, who would help them.

After pulling through and forth, that person attacked transgender activist G. Karayan, inflicting several stab wounds on different parts of her body, injuring her leg and shoulder. G. Karayan somehow escaped from the hands of the abuser and went to the Arabkir police station to report a crime.

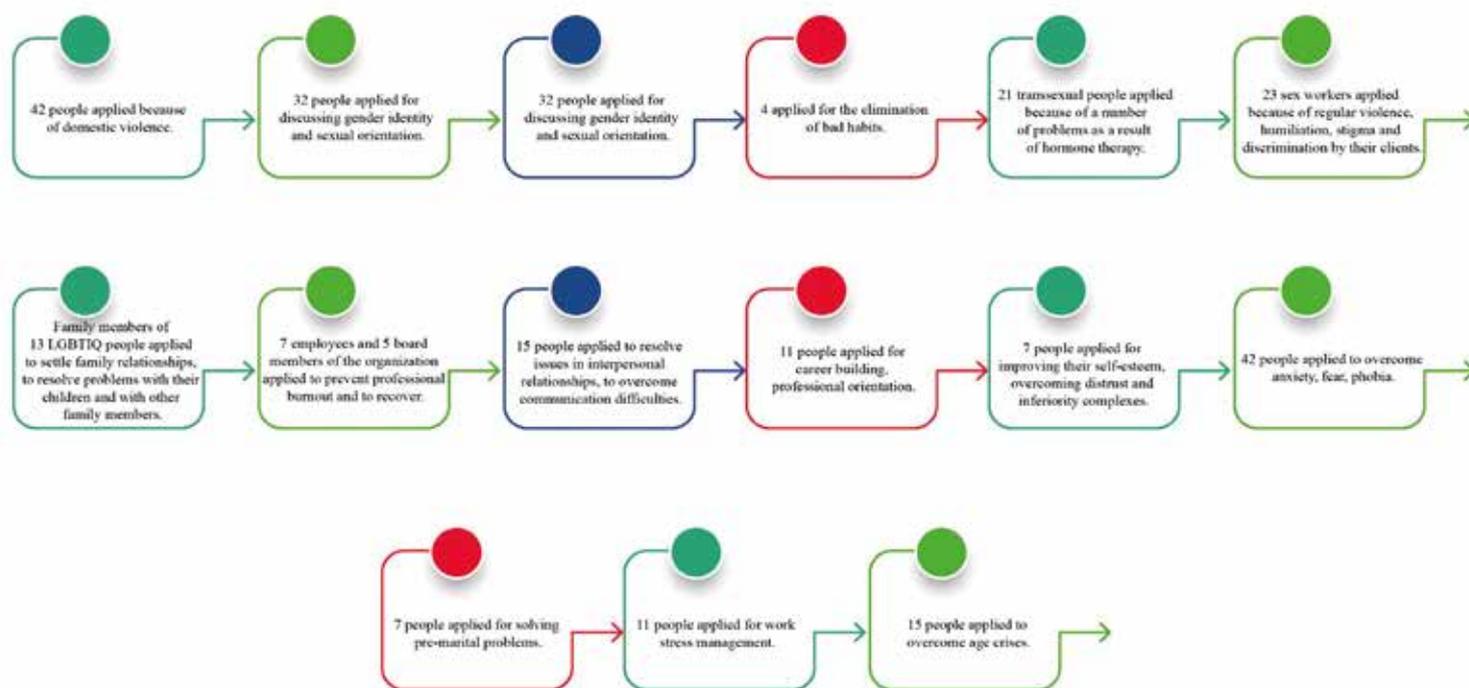
According to G. Karayan, the police did nothing to find the criminal, moreover, they discriminated against the transgender woman, subjecting her to ridicule.

According to Karayan's application, the legal department of the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO is dealing with this case. You can get additional information on the progress of the case by following our news.

# URGENT CASE



## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER LGBTIQ PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS: SUMMARY



Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, by emphasizing the mental and emotional health of Trans LGBTIQ people, while at the same time striving to reduce stigma, discrimination against them and ensure peace in the family of the community members, provided psychological support to about 259 people during 2020-2021, out of which:

- 42 people applied because of domestic violence.
- 9 people applied because of regular violence by a partner.
- 32 people applied for discussing gender identity and sexual orientation.
- 4 applied for the elimination of bad habits.
- 21 transsexual people applied because of a number of problems as a result of hormone therapy.
- 23 sex workers applied because of regular violence, humiliation, stigma and discrimination by their clients.
- Family members of 13 LGBTIQ people applied to settle family relationships, to resolve problems with their children and with other family members.
- 7 employees and 5 board members of the organization applied to prevent professional burnout and to recover.
- 15 people applied to resolve issues in interpersonal relationships, to overcome communication difficulties.
- 11 people applied for career building, professional orientation.
- 7 people applied for improving their self-esteem, overcoming distrust and inferiority complexes.
- 42 people applied to overcome anxiety, fear, phobia.
- 7 people applied for solving pre-marital problems.
- 11 people applied for work stress management.
- 15 people applied to overcome age crises.

Funding for the psychological support program is currently over, but we hope it will be ongoing, enabling our beneficiaries to improve their quality of life by making visible changes in their decisions and behavioral manifestations.

## CAN TRANSEXUAL PEOPLE UNDERGOING HORMONE THERAPY BE VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19?

The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO sent an official inquiry to the RA Ministry of Health to find out whether transsexual people undergoing hormone therapy could be vaccinated against COVID-19, and what side effects the vaccine might have.

In response to our inquiry, the RA Ministry of Health answered.

“In response to your inquiry dated 06.09.2021, I would like to inform you that the process of immunization in the Republic of Armenia, including vaccination contraindications, is regulated and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the RA Minister of Health order N21-N of August 17, 2020.

The medical contraindications for preventive vaccinations against coronavirus in Armenia are the same as for all the vaccines.

The only absolute contraindication to the vaccine is anaphylaxis caused by the previous dose of vaccine.

Temporary contraindications to the vaccine are acute diseases with moderate and severe course, as well as exacerbation of chronic diseases.

At the same time, the mentioned transsexual people who are receiving hormone therapy do not have contraindications for vaccination. They can be vaccinated under conservative therapy, that is, without interrupting the use of the hormonal medicine.”

We recommend that all the members of the transgender community be vaccinated, as vaccination can help us avoid complications, protect ourselves and our family members.

With respects,

RS HRD NGO Team



## “LGBTIQ PEER POWER” PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS

The “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, with the financial support of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, has been organizing public educational campaigns for the representatives of the Trans LGBTIQ community living in Yerevan and in different regions of Armenia to raise their awareness on the protection mechanisms from hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination. The public campaigns have been organized by the participants of the “Voice of Change” Youth Academy, who have shared their knowledge and skills with the community members, helping them to be engaged in youth work and civic activism.

The meeting organized on September 6, 2021 was attended by 10 LGBTIQ+ people and their allies. The meeting took place in one of the parks located in Yerevan, during which the participants discussed the feminist movement. They presented what feminism meant to them, why feminism should be one of the leading movements in the world, and then the participants did a little practical work, as a result of which they presented the activities of feminists famous to them, also talked about the involvement of transgender people in the feminist movement in Armenia and its importance. At the end of the meeting, the participants shared their impressions and expressed a desire for such meetings to be continuous.

The meeting held on September 10 was attended by 11 representatives of the Trans LGBTIQ community, who arrived in Yerevan from different regions of Armenia. During the meeting, the participants, being divided into groups, did practical work, as a result of which they presented the problems they faced in their daily lives, in particular, cases of stigma, discrimination, domestic violence, gaps in the health, education and legal systems. The regional community representatives thanked them for being involved in the meeting and suggested that similar events be held in the regions in order to involve more people.

Continuing the series of meetings, on September 13, the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO held a one-on-one meeting for members of the LGBTIQ+ community from Yerevan and regions who have never participated in such events. The participants emphasized that they want to receive formal or non-formal education, but often fail because of the discrimination, ridicule and violence based on their gender identity. The activists who participated in the academy shared their experiences, stories, urged the participants never to be afraid, to continue fighting for their prosperous future. The meeting was also attended by the “Right Side” NGO Program Manager, who presented the services provided by the NGO (such as training courses, IT and English courses), and encouraged the participants to use the projects possibilities as much as possible.



#CFLIforEquality #LGBTIQPeerPower

10 representatives of the Trans LGBTIQ community were present at the meeting-discussion on the topic of bullying organized on September 17. During the meeting, the participants shared cases of stigma and discrimination based on their gender identity and sexual orientation in educational institutions, they also talked about violence and hate crimes. After years of severe psychological pressure, three of the participants stated that they had dropped out of education because of such incidents and did not want to continue. The “Right Side” HRD NGO, collecting all the cases raised, offered the participants to benefit from the educational programs, legal and psychological support provided by the organization. At the end of the discussion, a small game was held between the participants, during which the attendees spoke about their characteristics, tried to understand how they could be involved in activism and advocacy. The community members who had participated in the academy promised to help and guide the participants in their activities.

And already on September 28, Vahe Babayan, a participant of the Youth Academy, held a meeting-discussion, involving 10 Trans LGBTIQ+ people from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia. The topic of the meeting was domestic violence. Vahe Babayan passed on the knowledge received from the Academy to the participants of the meeting, raising a number of issues that Trans LGBTIQ+ people faced in their families almost every day. The participants gained knowledge that they would later use to reduce stigma and discrimination in their families. At the end of the meeting, the participants wrote individual stories entitled “My Self”, which would later be included in a book on personal stories. At the end of the meeting, the participants thanked Vahe Babayan for organizing such a meeting and including them in that project.



#CFLIforEquality  
#LGBTIQPeerPower



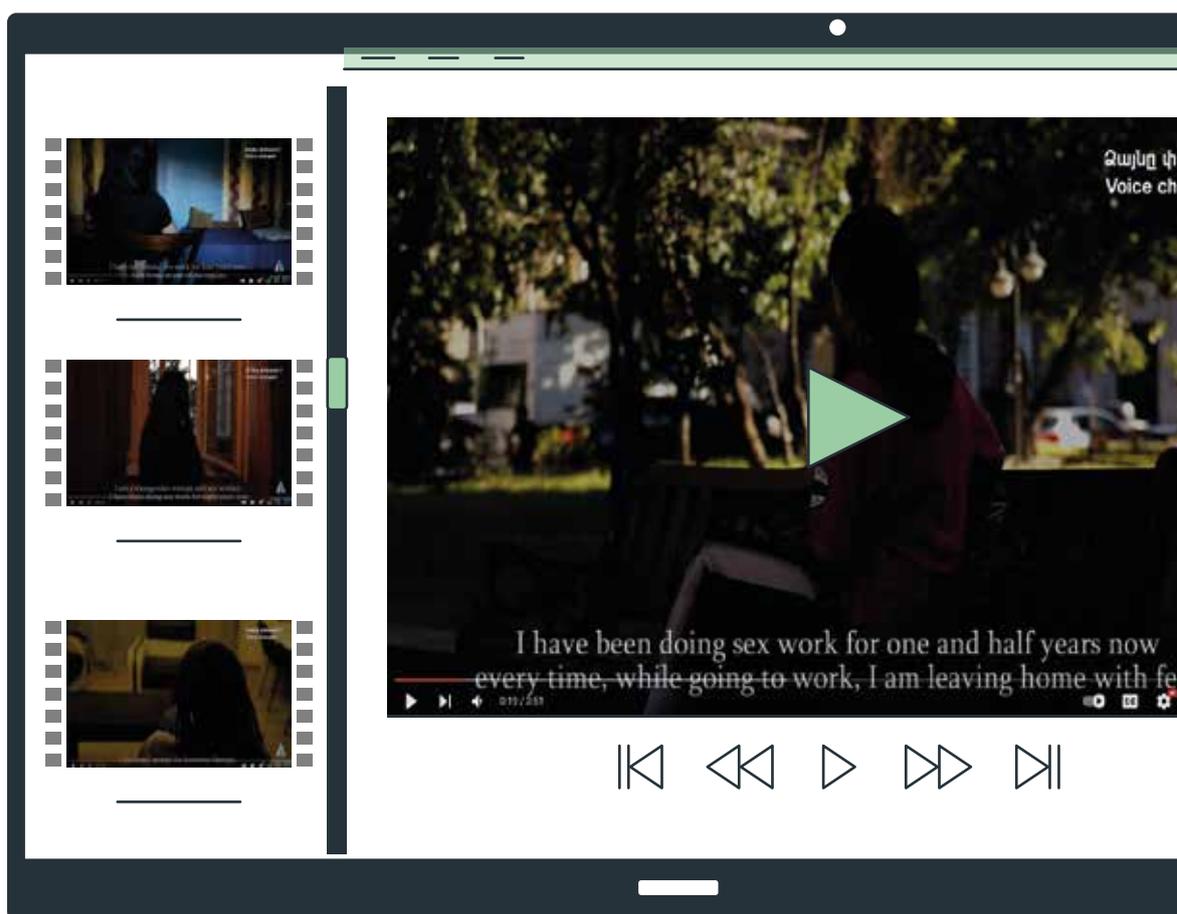
## MY RIGHTS TO LIVE

New Video about sex worker community in Armenia

My Rights to Live

This video is made by the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO within the framework of the "Addressing Stigma and Discrimination against Sex Workers through their Meaningful Engagement" project which is funded by the [SWAN - Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network](#) and [Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund](#).

The content and expressed views in this video belong to the "Right Side" Human Rights Defender NGO. The opinions in this video can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the SWAN - Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network and Robert Carr Fund



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR COMBATING ANTI-GENDER RHETORIC” TRAINING-COURSE

From October 4 to 8, 2021, the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO organized a training-course entitled “Communication Tools for Combating Anti-Gender Rhetoric” with the participation of the representatives of the Trans LGBTIQ community aged 18-30 from different regions of Armenia.

The aim of the training was to promote the level of involvement of young Trans LGBTIQ activists in advocacy to combat anti-gender rhetoric.

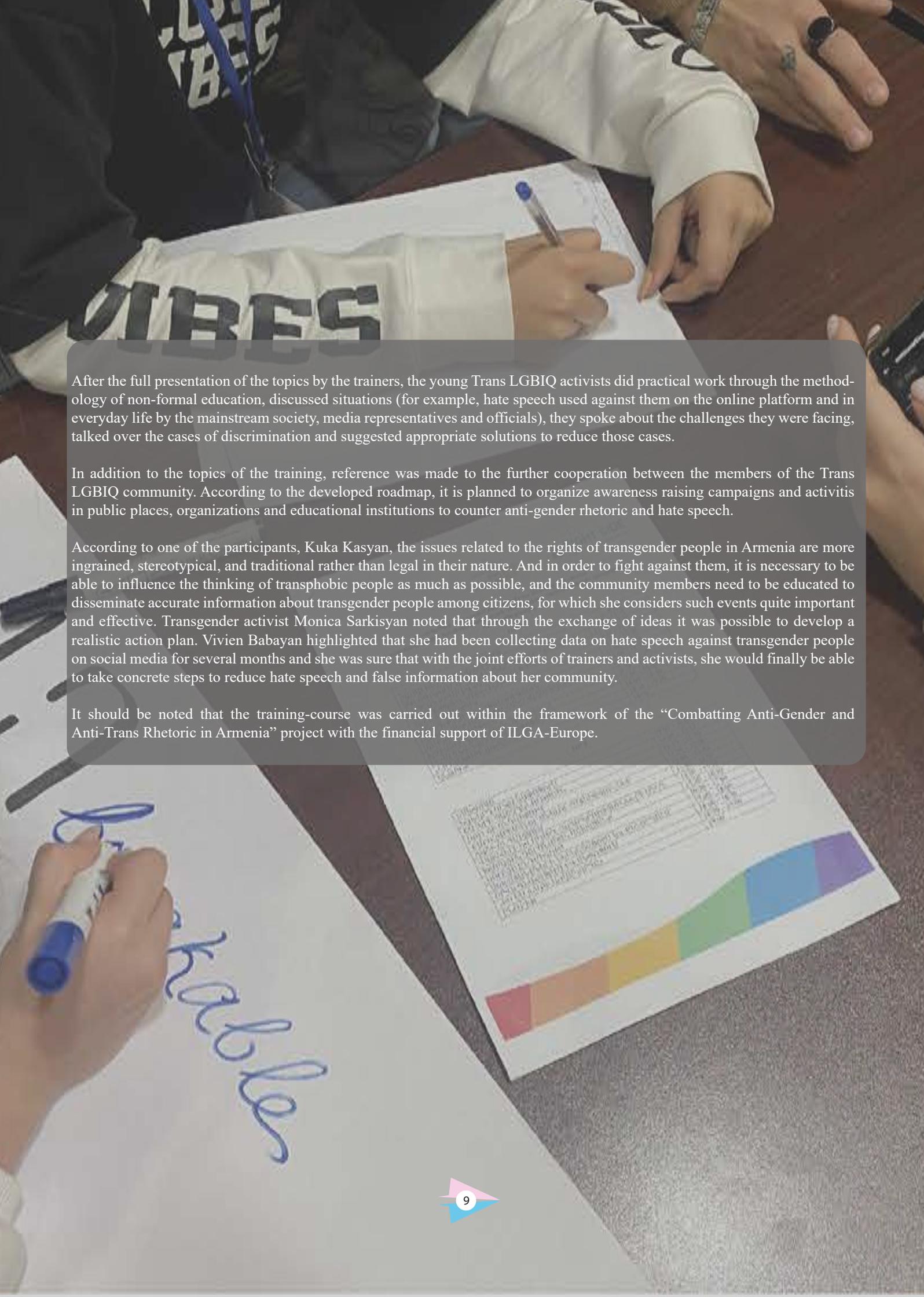
The invited experts in the field of communication and advocacy spoke on such topics as:

- Basic elements of communication and role of communication.
- Communication process and types of communication.
- Principles of effective communication.
- Communication barriers.
- Creating relationships, building trust and impact.
- Communication etiquette, creating a positive image.
- Advocacy: What is advocacy, what steps are needed to carry out advocacy? Problem identification, planning, mobilization and evaluation.
- Problem definition and analysis.
- Development of strategy, tactics and tools.
- Community mobilization, networking and advocacy.
- Development of an advocacy plan.
- Development of an effective communication plan with media representatives and decision makers.

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After the full presentation of the topics by the trainers, the young Trans LGBTIQ activists did practical work through the methodology of non-formal education, discussed situations (for example, hate speech used against them on the online platform and in everyday life by the mainstream society, media representatives and officials), they spoke about the challenges they were facing, talked over the cases of discrimination and suggested appropriate solutions to reduce those cases.

In addition to the topics of the training, reference was made to the further cooperation between the members of the Trans LGBTIQ community. According to the developed roadmap, it is planned to organize awareness raising campaigns and activities in public places, organizations and educational institutions to counter anti-gender rhetoric and hate speech.

According to one of the participants, Kuka Kasyan, the issues related to the rights of transgender people in Armenia are more ingrained, stereotypical, and traditional rather than legal in their nature. And in order to fight against them, it is necessary to be able to influence the thinking of transphobic people as much as possible, and the community members need to be educated to disseminate accurate information about transgender people among citizens, for which she considers such events quite important and effective. Transgender activist Monica Sarkisyan noted that through the exchange of ideas it was possible to develop a realistic action plan. Vivien Babayan highlighted that she had been collecting data on hate speech against transgender people on social media for several months and she was sure that with the joint efforts of trainers and activists, she would finally be able to take concrete steps to reduce hate speech and false information about her community.

It should be noted that the training-course was carried out within the framework of the “Combatting Anti-Gender and Anti-Trans Rhetoric in Armenia” project with the financial support of ILGA-Europe.

## PROJECT MONITORING



The Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO, with the financial support of the AFEW International and Emergency Support Fund for Key Populations in the EECA region (ESF) is conducting a free, anonymous and rapid HIV testing for transgender and sex workers community to reduce the spread of HIV.

Each month, the outreach workers undergo monitoring and evaluation of their implemented work.

The outreach workers of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO reach the target groups that have never been tested by other organizations.





## #QUEERSMAKINGHISTORY

Lilit Martirosyan

We are very proud to be a grantee of Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice for 3 years already and another 2 years ahead. Together we are building a stronger Transgender LGBTQI+ community who are able to protect their rights, feeling safer and more secure in Armenia.

Lilit Martirosyan is an Armenian transgender activist who has been committed to equal rights for all, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Despite unfavourable conditions, she managed to set up the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO in January 2016 which has become a safe space for the Armenian trans community and sex workers. It is the first and only NGO in Armenia run by and for trans people and sex workers and assists close to 200 people every month. Right Side NGO collectively aids vulnerable trans and queer people in finding jobs, getting an education and staying engaged in civic life, while providing free legal and socio-psychological support.

Lilit has also contributed to ongoing policy changes on hate crimes and speech against the LGBT community. In April 2019, Lilit Martirosyan became the first member of Armenia's LGBT community to take to a parliamentary podium when she spoke out against discrimination against transgender people at a session of the country's Committee on Human Rights. The speech caused severe criticism and was met with immediate objections from the body's conservative members, which ignited a backlash in Armenia marked by anti-LGBT protests in front of the national assembly. Lilit's speech also sparked a violent backlash against her and her family and colleagues with calls for them to be tortured and killed and for the Right Side NGO to be closed. Personal information, including her home address, was published, forcing her to move away from her home and to temporarily leave the country.

Speaking of the experience of trans people in Armenia, Lilit has said, "As a transgender community, we all constantly face hate crimes, hate speeches and discrimination. Armenia is a heteronormative society that cannot understand our gender identity. For me a transgender woman, when I openly speak about our problems, they want to kill me and to hurt me." Despite the hurdles Lilit and her community has faced in their organizing work, she is determined to keep fighting for the rights of transgender people in Armenia despite ongoing threats to her personhood. She is determined as she puts it to, "stay in Armenia and continue my work as it is vital for the transgender community."





**Lilit Martirosyan made a speech at the annual seminar organized by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**

On October 18, 2021, Lilit Martirosyan, President of the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO made a speech at the annual seminar organized by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) by talking about the continuing climate of intolerance against LGBTI people in Armenia and the region and NGO work in the field. The purpose of the meeting was to unite efforts to promote and protect the rights of LGBTI people. It provided an opportunity for participants to discuss and raise a number of issues faced by LGBTI people, as well as to further develop new partnerships for the well-being and security of LGBTI community. Attached, you can find the text of Lilit Martirosyan's speech.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ACTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT” TRAINING



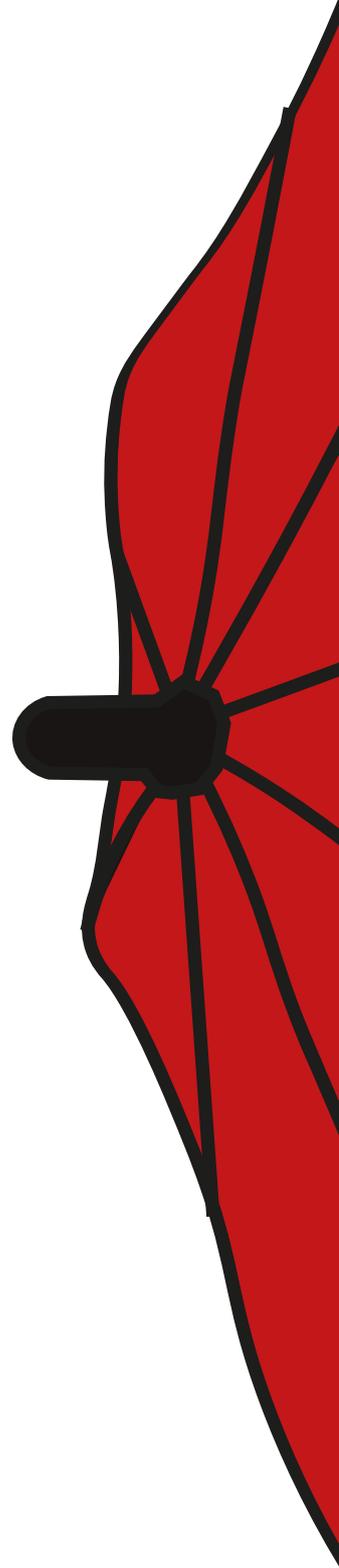
“Right Side” NGO being one of the first and leading trans and sex workers community-based rights defender organization for the protection of transgender people and sex workers in the region deals with the protection of the rights of sex workers, their education, social welfare provision, mental and physical security and protection, it also raises the level of public awareness about trans people and sex workers by reducing stigma and discrimination against them.

From October 1 to 3, 2020, the NGO organized a training on the theme of “Leadership Skills and Active Civic Engagement”, which was attended by the representatives of the sex workers community from Yerevan and different regions of Armenia.

The aim of the training was to promote the development and empowerment of sex workers’ capacities, to improve their level of involvement in socio-cultural and civic life, to ensure their safety both in the family and in society. In addition, the meeting was aimed at promoting the awareness of sex workers and it was educational in nature.

The topics of the meeting were:

- Stigma and discrimination against sex workers.
- Sex work and its legal regulations in Armenia.
- Mental and physical security.
- HIV / AIDS and STIs.
- Leadership skills.
- Civic engagement.
- Community mobilization.
- Working with the media.
- Creating a positive image of sex workers.



On the first day of the meeting, Lilit Martirosyan, President of the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO, made an opening speech. She greeted all the participants, expressed her gratitude to all the participants for their involvement in the meeting, she assured that would be one of their best trainings and everyone would gain new knowledge and have a wonderful time.

Then the participants got acquainted with each other, which was followed by the definition of rules for the whole course of the three-day training.

The first day was dedicated to developing leadership skills and promoting civic engagement. The participants acquired the skills needed to become leaders in their communities. Dividing into groups, they did practical work on leadership and advocacy. The expert spoke about the importance and opportunities for sex workers to be actively involved in civic life, stressed the need to create a positive image, and shared her experience working with the media. The participants suggested using their knowledge among those members of the community who were not present at the training.

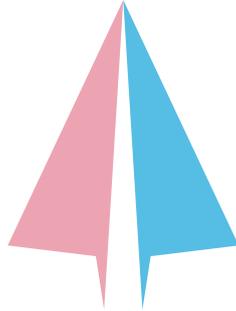
On the second day of the training a panel discussion took place: eight sex workers recounted the cases of violence, stigma, and discrimination they had faced as transgender people and sex workers, and how they had been able to protect themselves and survive in difficult life conditions. They discussed the topic of mental and physical security with the trainer, talked about the obstacles they had encountered in the field of healthcare, in their family, on the street, in all aspects of life, as well as they addressed the difficulties, problems and dangers of having sex work in the Republic of Armenia. The sex workers also answered the questions of the trainers, who in response expressed their willingness to stand by the sex workers to protect their rights and freedoms.

During the third day, the participants addressed the legal regulation of sex work in Armenia and their safety. They shared personal stories by talking about the crimes committed against them, describing how they were resisting cases of violence and hate speech in Armenia. All the participants obtained detailed information on self-defense.

Summing up the three days of the training, the President of the “Right Side” Human Rights Defender NGO thanked the participants, the funder of the training, the trainers, the entire “Right Side” NGO staff, and noted that such meetings would be continuous, as they were extremely important for the protection of the rights and freedoms of sex workers. She also mentioned that the meetings were the best platforms for the community to be united, discuss the needs and problems, looking for effective ways to solve them: “We will continue to unite sex workers, to raise their awareness for the sake of their well-being and welfare, and for the protection of their rights.”

At the end of the third day, the participants were given certificates of participation in the training.

The training was held by the Right Side Human Rights Defender NGO with the financial support of the Red Umbrella Fund



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