



Global Program to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls
Տղաների նախապատվության եւ աղջիկների թերարժեքման
կանխարգելմանն ուղղված գլոբալ ծրագիր

POLICY BRIEF
ՀԱՄԱՌՈՏԱԳԻՐ

This Policy Brief was produced by International Center for Human Development with the financial assistance of the European Union in the frame of “Global Program to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls” implemented by UNFPA. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union and/or UNFPA.

Համառոտագիրը պատրաստվել է Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոնի կողմից՝ Եվրոպական միության ֆինանսական աջակցությամբ և ՄԱԿ-ի Բնակչության հիմնադրամի կողմից իրականացվող «Տղաների նախապատվության և աղջիկների թերարժեքման կանխարգելմանն ուղղված գլոբալ ծրագրի» շրջանակներում: Սույն փաստաթղթի բովանդակությունը որևէ կերպ չի արտացոլում Եվրոպական միության և/կամ ՄԱԿ-ի Բնակչության հիմնադրամի տեսակետները:



Ծրագիրը ֆինանսավորվում է Եվրոպական
 միության կողմից
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Feasibility, costs and benefits of extending early childhood care and development services to prevent gender-biased sex selection



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Investing in early child care and development services is a crucial component of public policy to prevent gender-biased sex selection. Our numerous studies on prevalence and causes of gender-biased sex selection, women's labour force participation, and work-life balance issues unconditionally support this statement.

Investment in extending early childhood care and development services will greatly contribute to balancing the reproductive and productive roles of men and women in the society and family, as well as, to widening the currently limited opportunities for women to realise their expectations to work and reproduce and at the same time to effectively combine both. This will support replacing the option of "either...or" in decision-making with the option "both...and".

Increased women's labour force participation, and the visible increase in opportunities to combine employment and child care will prevent further undesirable decline in fertility rate and will contribute to appreciation of a female child, thus shaping some of the most important prerequisites for irreversible elimination of gender-biased sex selection.

Expanding current services: the principle underlying solutions at various stages

Our recent studies on feasibility and costs of policy reforms aimed at extending early childhood care and development services prove that in a short term it is imperative to extend child care services for children under three by expanding the range of relevant services provided in preschools in Yerevan. The implementation of such a program will create essential prerequisites for prevention of gender-biased sex selection and will make the significant changes achieved in the recent years irreversible and complete. Moreover, as a result of providing early childhood care services to around 660 children, only in the first two years of the program implementation, the RA state budget revenues will annually increase by 250-300 million AMD on average.

In the medium-term, it is important to develop and introduce various mechanisms of financing and financial guarantees for extending early childhood care services and supporting activities of child care centers. Such mechanisms may include, particularly, co-financing working-mothers for the use of such services by employers; subsidizing services for low-income and /or young families; providing child care credits to working mothers, equivalent to expenses of child care services; providing state and/or municipal grants to institutions which deliver early childhood care services; etc.

In the long-term, it is necessary to increase availability of early childhood care services for children under three to up to 10% by 2025 through extending these services in preschools of Yerevan, and by 2030 involvement of children under three should be increased to 15%. It is also imperative to raise awareness of working women and the whole society about child care services, possible benefits of using these services and the existing mechanisms.

From supply to demand

The research conducted in 2015 by the RA National Institute of Labour and Social Affairs proves that the child care services for children under three are in more demand than the projected figure (660



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children in Yerevan) in the short-term. According to the findings of this research, 83% of the mothers taking care of their children under three indicate the lack of alternative child care options as the main reason for not working. The increased number of private kindergartens in Armenia in the previous seven years (11.1%) is an indirect evidence which suggests that along with the increase in supply there is a prospect of increased demand.

Meanwhile, it is noteworthy to mention that the key factor promoting the demand for such services is the earnings of the woman and the income of the family, specifically the parent's return to labour market with the same or lesser workload. However, there is an important precondition: the child care services should be less costly than the earned income.

The analysis of financial reports of Yerevan preschools shows that the expenses for early child care services provided to a 6-36-months-old child comprise at least 44 to 51 thousand drams. Analysis of services used by women in the income group with the threshold of monthly nominal salaries of 100 and 139 thousand drams (the second is the average monthly salary of women in Armenia) indicates that the positive economic impact of extending early childhood care services is particularly tangible for women of middle and high-income groups, as their salaries allow them to pay for child care services, as well as significantly increase family budget revenues, which significantly increase women's opportunities of choosing to return to their work.

The cost-benefit ratio, which estimates the effectiveness of expenditures per child for a parent or a family is at least 1.13 in case of the highest service fees and the minimum income to cover expenditures, and 1.71 for minimum service fees and the average salary of women. This means that every 1 dram spent could not only be returned on the scale of the whole economy, but also could create an additional benefit worth from 0.13 drams to 0.71 drams maximum. The net profit of the state per child for the period of 24 months is around 620-790 thousand drams, and the cost-benefit ratio is from 7 to 8.5.

As a result of formalising early childhood care services, the state will receive an additional revenue of maximum 63-84 million drams within 18 months in the form of new jobs, related taxable income and other sources. 160-210 new jobs will be created.

Diverse funding models, common standards

There is no one best model, method or mechanism for funding early child care services. The expediency of their selection is conditioned by the objectives of the country's social and economic policies, by the nature of interrelations between the government and the family, as well as by the assessment of feasibility of various policies on early childhood care and development services. In Armenia, it is necessary to promote introduction of various models of early childhood care services. Thus, the nature of early child care services in the capital may differ from the models suitable for smaller communities. At the same time, one standard should apply to all the proposed models: the opportunity to make quality services available and accessible to various target groups.

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