



**Centrul de Informare în domeniul Drepturilor Omului**  
**Информационный Центр по Правам Человека**  
**Human Rights Information Center**

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**Tar  
SMI**

Asociația Obștească TarSMI  
Non-Governmental Organization TarSMI  
Общественная Организация TarСМИ

**Taraclia Single Mothers Group**

*Every Mother Matters – Nothing for Us without Us!*

**Joint (Coalition) Submission**

**of NGOs “TarSMI”, Human Rights Information Center (CIDO)  
and Taraclia Single Mothers Group  
towards the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle UPR review  
(country under review: Republic of Moldova)**

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## Brief Note on the Submitting Organizations

**Human Rights Information Center (CIDO)** is a Chisinau-based NGO established in 2010 to promote human rights through awareness-raising and education, monitoring and reporting, empowerment and consolidation of the human rights movement. Over the 10+ years of its activities CIDO trained several hundreds local activists and professionals on issues of human rights and non-discrimination, performed monitoring and reporting on human rights in Moldova, including towards UPR (in 2011 and 2016), ICESCR, CEDAW, etc.

CIDO collaborated with OHCHR, UNDP, US Embassy in Moldova, Soros Foundation – Moldova, Civil Rights Defenders, etc. The organization has been awarded the UN Moldova Human Rights Award in 2014.

**“TarSMI”** is an NGO from Taraclia district of Moldova established in 2018 and working on community projects and media awareness. NGO TarSMI is running the independent regional online media TUK.MD. Over the past years of its activities NGO TarSMI has trained over 100 of young people, and circa 50 members of vulnerable groups on the issues of local democracy and human rights.

NGO TarSMI collaborated with European Endowment for Democracy, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Eastern Europe Foundation, DW Akademie.

**Taraclia Single Mothers Group** is a self-help group established in December 2019 in the framework of a project implemented by NGO “TarSMI” and supported by the East Europe Foundation – Moldova. The group aims at protecting and promoting the rights of single mothers of Taraclia. The group is not registered with the public authorities and operates in collaboration with NGO “TarSMI”.

Taraclia Single Mothers Group, jointly with several other groups of vulnerable women and men from Taraclia, developed the first-ever Profile-Report on the human rights situation of vulnerable groups in Taraclia, as well as proposed a draft of new HRBA-compliant Development Strategy “Taraclia - 2030”. The groups has also submitted an alternative report towards the review of Moldova by CEDAW in 2020.

## The ALTERNATIVE REPORT

The below alternative report makes references to the **Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Moldova** (UN document A/HRC/34/12) under 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR cycle (2016), and the below mentioned points are as per the respective document.

- 121.145** – Strengthen women’s representation in the Parliament and Government (Greece);
- 121.146** – Take further measures to advance the participation of women in decision-making bodies (Latvia);
- 121.47** – Continue to take effective measures to promote gender equality (China);
- 121.48** – Strengthen its national policy for gender equity and equality (Côte d’Ivoire);
- 121.49** – Strengthen efforts to effectively implement laws aimed at the elimination of discrimination against women (Cyprus);
- 121.50** – Guarantee the implementation and effective application of legislation to eliminate discrimination against women, in order to mitigate the structural disadvantages which stand in the way of gender equality (Guatemala);
- 121.53** – Ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of existing legislation with a view to reducing structural disadvantages that hamper the effective realization of substantive gender equality (Slovakia);

In summer 2019 the Moldovan Parliament amended the electoral law to introduce the requirement of gender-quoted placement of candidates on party lists for elections. Yet, for a highly unclear reason, the Parliament made a reservation on this placement quota for the soon-coming general local elections. This reservation allowed parties to have on their lists of candidates a minimum 3 candidates of each sex in every segment of ten (i.e. 30%), instead of originally planned four (40%). This was a very ill-advised move.

As the result of this reservation only 22,4% of elected mayors across Moldova were women, which is an increase of just 2% compared to the local elections 4 years ago. And this figure is certainly very far from the objective of gender parity.

The political representation of women in Taraclia district of Moldova is emblematic in this context. Women were elected as mayors only in 4 out of 15 municipalities of Taraclia district (i.e. in 26,7% of municipalities).<sup>1</sup> There is no women-mayors elected for the top 5 most populous municipalities of the Taraclia district.

Of the total number of the local councilors elected in the Taraclia district only 33% are women (56 out of 169).<sup>2</sup> In 40% of the Taraclia district municipalities (including in the district capital) there are less than 30% of women among the local councilors. These data show that Moldova is still lagging behind with regard to balanced gender representation in its elected political bodies at the local and regional levels.

There are **specific problems faced by mothers taking care of child(ren) as a single parent** (hereinafter - “single mothers”). Taraclia Single Mothers Group from Taraclia district of Moldova has identified the following issues.

1) Single mothers face strong fears and stereotypes mounted by the patriarchal society over single mothers. Disapproving and condemning attitudes and comments are not rare from members of the public with regard to single mothers, particularly outside the capital. Single mothers need psychological support to deal with these fears and stereotypes, but such support is unavailable. Such psychological is also badly needed for children, whose father depart as the result of a divorce.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*Moldovan public officials and mass media should be trained to promote the most inclusive views on the family and its types in the Moldovan society. Special educational and informational campaigns should be designed and implemented to transform the patriarchal views on single mothers.*

2) The Moldovan educational system, most notably pre-schools and schools, promote an image of an “ideal” or “complete” family made of “mother, father and children”. Other types of families are presented within this system as “incomplete” or “deficient”. Children of single mothers often return from the school in tears after such school teachings about “complete” and “incomplete” families. Apparently, there is no state policy whatsoever on this subject and schools follow the old “hurting” practices of speaking about the families.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*Moldovan educational authorities should take this issue seriously and adopt policies obliging to treat the subject of family in the most inclusive manner, without classifying families into “complete” and “incomplete”. The school manuals and materials should be revised accordingly. School administration and staff should be retrained, and Ministry of Education should ensure effective supervision.*

3) Moldovan pre-schools operate based on policies which are not adapted to the needs of single mothers.

a) First of all, during the past several years a substantial number of Moldovan pre-schools practice closing down for 1-2 months for summer vacation. In rural areas, where only one single pre-school is operational this effectively leads to impossibility of parents to run a normal life with productive

<sup>1</sup> <https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/alegeri%20locale%202019/lista%20primarilor%20ale%20C8%99i.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 6 women out of 23 local councilors in the Taraclia town, 5 out of 15 in Tvardita, 5 out of 13 in Valea Perjei, 3 out of 13 in Corten, 4 out of 11 in Albota de Sus, 4 out of 11 in Vinogradovca, 5 out of 11 in Cairaclia, 2 out of 9 in Albota de Jos, 6 out of 9 in Novosiolovca, 1 out of 9 in Aluatu, 3 out of 9 in Musaitu, 2 out of 9 in Cealic, 5 out of 9 in Budai, 3 out of 9 in Balabanu, and 2 out of 9 in Salcia.

employment and an annual vacation to recreate. This practice negatively affects mainly women, and out of all women – worst of all single mothers, who do not have an option to share this responsibility with the father.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*No lengthy summer vacation should be allowed by the Moldovan legislation for pre-schools. Parents should have a guaranteed opportunity to ensure childcare for their children at public pre-schools all year round.*

**b)** Pre-schools in Taraclia finish their operation at 17.00-17.30. Yet there are many workplaces in Taraclia operating till 19.00, and some of them – till 21.00 (supermarkets, clothes production). There are no options for women at these establishments to have their children in care until these late hours. Again, this problem is particularly serious for single mothers.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*To establish a late-hours group in each of the pre-schools to serve the needs of late-hours working parents. This measure will have a particularly beneficial effect specifically on single mothers.*

**c)** Pre-schools in Moldova accept children at a minimum age of 3 years old (very exceptionally of 2-2,5 years old). This makes many women stay at home for 2-3 years for each their child. Again, in the case of single mothers this becomes an even graver problem.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*To legislate that pre-schools in Moldova should accept children at a minimum age of 6 months. All parents requiring such a service should have an effective opportunity to use it. This measure will have a particularly beneficial effect specifically on single mothers.*

**4)** Moldovan pre-schools charge fees for feeding the children. The fee amount is often a significant burden for single mothers.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*To legislate facilities for single mothers in paying pre-school fees, for instance in the form of a 50% discount.*

**5)** Moldovan school associations of parents practice collection of “fees” for “support of the school”. Due to peer-pressure such collection of fees ceases to be an act of voluntary donation, but is rather a “quasi-mandatory” fee, often triggering negative consequences for parents and children in case of no pay. The amount of the fee is often a serious problem of single mothers.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*To reform the domain of school associations of parents, transforming it from fee-collecting enterprise into what they are supposed to be – mechanisms for school accountability and for genuinely voluntary support of the schools.*

**6)** Single mothers very often face a problem of alimony (child support) non-payment by fathers. In many cases this happens because the fathers work and/or receive their wages in an undocumented and unaccounted way (in cash in envelopes). The situation aggravates even further when the fathers work abroad, as temporary labor migrants in Europe or Russia. In these cases, legal action to ensure the alimony (child support) payment is virtually ineffective.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*State authorities should find a solution to this problem, for instance, through paying an additional childcare benefit for children whose fathers are unable to support their children, or if there is no legally effective way to ensure such payment.*

**7)** There are very few specialized healthcare staff in Taraclia town, despite the fact that Taraclia town is the capital of the Taraclia district and is rather populous. For most of child-related healthcare specialists, parents (in most cases – women) have to travel to towns 30-40 kilometers away.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*Health institutions should have child-related healthcare specialists available in populous towns.*

8) There is little healthcare awareness-raising and prevention work done in Taraclia district and across Moldova. It is virtually impossible to obtain information about most popular diseases, vaccinations, state-compensated drugs, etc in Taraclia district. Doctors rarely, if at all, inform patients about upcoming flu outbursts. Instead, they prefer to prescribe antibiotics in most cases. This overuse of antibiotics triggers many subsequent health problems for children and their parents (mothers).

Despite the fact that in Taraclia district the majority of population are ethnic Bulgarians, there are no written health-related materials available for the public in Bulgarian language whatsoever.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*Moldovan health authorities should radically change the public policies with regard to public healthcare information delivery. The general public should get the maximum of information on insurance policies, most popular diseases, vaccinations, state-compensated drugs. This information should be available in written, oral and electronic form, including in Bulgarian language (at the territory of Taraclia district).*

**121.14** – Improve the internal mechanism of the State to implement international human rights obligations (Tajikistan);

**121.36** – Establish a monitoring and coordination mechanism to implement the national humans rights action plan (Sudan);

Despite efforts from international organizations, most notably the UN, gender equality and human rights remain outside the Moldova mainstream public policy and law-making processes.

In 2018-2019 the Moldovan authorities implemented a conceptually progressive reform by which a new institutional framework for human rights implementation coordination, inclusive of a new National Human Rights Council and permanent human rights secretariat by the office of the prime-minister. This reform aimed at consolidating the governmental gender equality and human rights work, and at mainstreaming gender and human rights into the public policy and decision-making. Although the government has established the permanent human rights secretariat, it did not invest yet efforts and resources in making it a truly strong gender and human rights mainstreaming body in the governmental architecture. In particular, gender equality coordination continues to be primarily performed by the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, and not at the permanent governmental secretariat for human rights. As the result, many see gender equality as the domain of sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, and not as a cross-cutting responsibility of all ministries and governmental departments.

The same is true for the minority and disability dimensions – these dimensions are not mainstreamed into the mandate and activities of all public authorities of Moldova across the board.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

*To urge the Moldovan authorities to make the full use of the new Moldovan human rights implementation coordination institutional framework, inclusive of the National Human Rights Council and permanent human rights secretariat:*

*a) To ensure regular convocation and workings of the National Human Rights Council;*

*b) To consolidate the permanent human rights secretariat by making it the main implementation coordination body on gender and human rights in Moldova, including by moving the Gender Unit from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection to the office of the prime minister, under the umbrella of the permanent human rights secretariat.*

*c) To reorganize the workflow within the State Chancellery in a such a way that the permanent human rights secretariat becomes the mandatory vetting unit for all governmental policy and law-making initiatives, thus performing an in-depth gender and human rights analysis of all such initiatives.*

- d) To deliver a strong capacity building program for the permanent human rights secretariat on in-depth gender and human rights analysis of public policies, laws, regulations, programs and budgets.*
- e) To make sure, through strengthening of the permanent human rights secretariat, that gender equality and human rights issues are included into the mainstream governmental agenda and meetings, rather than are discussed at the rare and peripheric meetings of “specialized” governmental councils and commissions (as was the case for many years).*

**121.17** – Consolidate the normative framework that regulates the activity and competences of the (Equality) Council (Azerbaijan);

Despite multiple calls and advocacy by national and international organizations, the Equality Council of Moldova is continuously limited in its operations because of its systemic underfunding and lack of effective sanctioning powers. In addition, despite being an independent state body, the Moldova Equality Council has to routinely engage into “negotiations” with the Ministry of Finances about the “opportunity” of the requested budget items. This practice effective is a control point of the executive authority over the Council.

**Proposed measure(s) to address this problem:**

- a) Legislative provision of sanctioning powers to the Equality Council of Moldova;
- b) Provision of sufficient funding to the Equality Council;
- c) Removal of Ministry of Finance controls over the budget of the Equality Council.

**121.118** – Implement reforms in the rule of law sphere to ensure fairness and due process, combat corruption, and improve transparency throughout the legal process (United States of America)

In the latest *Freedom in the World* report prepared by the US-based NGO Freedom House Moldova earned 1 point out of 4 under the question “Is there an independent judiciary?” with the following narrative “Moldova’s judicial branch continues to be highly susceptible to political pressures that hamper its independence, and judicial appointment processes lack transparency”. This record remains low years in the row.

Not only the situation in this field did not improve, but it has also substantially deteriorated. In autumn 2018 seven Turkish teachers from the national network of lyceums “Orizont” [“Horizon”] were effectively abducted by the Moldovan security forces and without following any legal procedures were by force transferred to Turkey. In Turkey they were put in jail for lengthy prison terms following a politically motivated process.

On 11 June 2019 the European Court of Human Rights unanimously found that Moldova violated article 5 §1 (right to liberty and security) and article 8 (right to respect for family and private life) of the European Convention of Human Rights with respect to the Turkish teacher (case of *Ozdil and Others v. the Republic of Moldova*, application no.42305/18).

Despite a concerted action in case of this illegal transfer of Turkish teachers, involving dozens of officers and approvals from several top officials (including head of Moldovan security service, head of Bureau for Migration and Asylum, head of border police), none of them was effectively punished for this outrageous and grave human rights violation. The only official who was symbolically “punished” for this crime is the former head of security service – Vasile Botnari – he received a suspended sentence and payed a symbolic amount as compensation of the damage. All of the officers and officials involved in this crime are free and enjoying their life, while some even continued working in their respective positions (e.g. head of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum).

**121.15** – Ensure proper implementation of the legislation on the promotion and protection of the rights, including linguistic rights, of individuals belonging to national minorities (Ukraine)

Over the past 5 year the Republic of Moldova did not advance substantially in promotion and protection of the rights, including linguistic rights, of women and men belonging to national minorities. To the contrary, in some respects the situation deteriorated.

In 2018 the Constitutional Court of Moldova adopted a politically motivated ruling declaring “obsolete” the 1989 Law on functioning of languages in Moldova, thus *de facto* acting as legislative assembly. In January 2021 the Constitutional Court invalidated a new Law on functioning of languages, adopted by the Parliament earlier in December 2020. Hence Moldova lacks a special law on the functioning of languages, and guarantees for regional and minority languages.

At the same time, the existing Law on national minorities in many respects is not implemented by the public authorities, most notably in parts concerning guaranteeing school education in the languages of minorities (*de facto* no schooling with instruction in Gagauz, Bulgarian or Romani language is available in Moldova).