

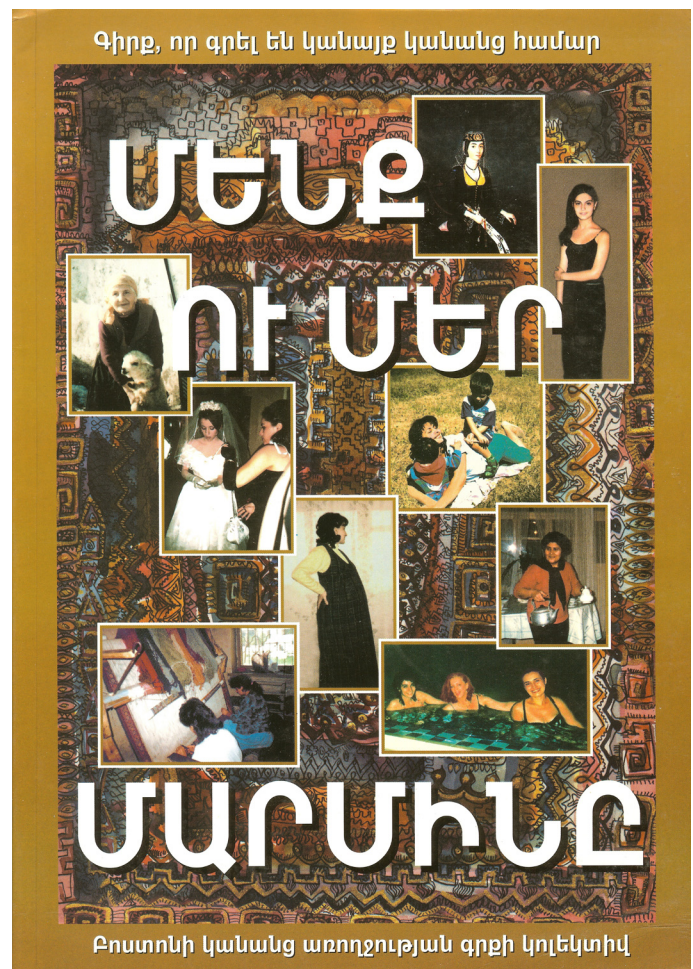
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Our Body and We

This translation and adaptation of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century* into the Armenian language is based on the latest English edition. It summarizes the achievements and approaches of traditional practices and modern medical science that relate to women's lives and health, and are useful for them. The book provides women, from their own perspectives, basic information about their bodies and sexual and reproductive health.

Women carry on their shoulders the overall responsibility for production of children, and therefore they have many and various problems that need to be resolved. Although these problems come from the very depths of the centuries, they still are not entirely resolved. Today they are still of high priority, and worrisome, even in developed countries and cultures, including the United States.

Some decades ago, as now, US women lacked information on such issues as painful menses, sexuality, child delivery, birth control, as well as abortion...In favor of women, and with the intention to find answers to many questions which concerned them, a group of women in Boston undertook the implementation of a very interesting program. In the aim of obtaining information they decided to make a list of all the midwives-gynecologists in the Boston area who took care of women. But surprisingly, the number of those doctors was very small and many did not want to share their knowledge. As for the disclosed information, it was strictly professional and not understandable for the ordinary reader.



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This was the reason that the Boston women decided to gather information on reproductive health themselves. They soon realized that they had initiated a very important activity, the implementation of which also requires great research ability. During the discussions around the material gathered, the women in that group started to talk about their personal experiences and practices, which was another source of information.

Thus, the group generalized all the material gathered which was needed for the implementation of teaching programs on the “body” in the different institutions of the community, in a short period of time. Further, on the basis of this material the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was created. This was the beginning of the activity of the “Health Book Collective of Boston Women”.

The Armenian reader will probably be also interested in what questions the American women have focused on during the last thirty years. Let's try to clarify some of them. It is known that the beneficiaries of the health services are mainly women. Even when they are mostly healthy, they apply to doctors for the regulation of birth, pregnancy and delivery. In addition, women live longer than men; therefore, they have more problems related to chronic diseases and functional disturbances which require special attention by the society and the family.

As everywhere, also in the United States, the woman is considered “an intermediary of the family health” who takes care of the children, the elderly, the husband, the relatives, as well as the surrounding people...However, in the USA which is one of the leading countries in the development of health and education policy, the role of women is insignificant, although they make up the majority in these systems. Currently their number does not exceed 10% in the management positions of these systems. American women are affected by gender, racial, age, sexual orientation and other kinds of discrimination. This discrimination is more obvious in the medical institutions, where they are exposed

to disrespect. Some elderly, black, fat and disabled women are more vulnerable in this respect.

Many of the women receive unnecessary medical interference. For example, assignment of drugs in large doses to relax the nervous system, doubtful hormonal treatment, unmotivated Caesarian section and removal of the uterus. The managers of the health system often neglect the importance of preventive and primary health care.

The current phase of the development of new medical technologies and medical care often includes such untested drugs and surgical interferences, which present danger for the health of the women. This is in the list of permanent issues of “Health book collective of Boston women”.

It should be noted that team work is characteristic in the creation of the original book, as well as for its translations in different languages. For example, more than 100 people have worked on the last, i.e. Japanese version (1998) as there was a demand to adapt the book to the Japanese traditions, as well as language features. In this respect we had also some difficulties as in different states of the United States, for people speak in different dialects and have different traditions. Many expressions can not be understandable for them. Censorship is also a problem. The chapters referring to certain groups of sexual minorities (for example, homosexuals) are not allowed everywhere for the broad audiences of readers, although these issues are currently subject to arguments. Despite all this, the demand for new publications is essential from the cognitive point of view.

The Armenian version of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, which is currently presented to the reader, is relevant to the wishes of women worldwide, which derives from the requirements and ideas which suggested in the gender conferences and included in the international documents.

Greeting the Armenian translation of the book we should mention that one of its sources was the International Association of Armenian Women (AIWA) whose objective is

to unite all the Armenian women of the world in the name of protection of women's rights. In the struggle for their survival, Armenians have spread all over the world. Wherever they go, they try to maintain the cultural values of their motherland. Four generations that have seen the Genocide of 1915 and lived in foreign lands have not lost their awareness of their origins even now, and the International Association of Armenian Women has its great role in it. This organization approved the activity of the Boston group and decided to implement the publication of the famous book *Our Body and We* devoted to the fundamentals of the women greatly supporting it.

The Ministry of Health also encouraged the issuance of the Armenian translation of the book. The fact that the preface to the book has been written by the Deputy Minister of Health, Ms. Nune Mangasaryan, evidences the concern of the Ministry for the women and families of the republic.

The pre-history of the publication of the book is rather long. At the beginning of the 1990s, Doctor Seda Khachartyan, together with her daughter Anahit Tovmasyan and deputy of the National Assembly Hranush Hakobyan, initiated the Armenian translation of this book. In the aim of assisting the program, Caroline Mougar from the United States allocated a small grant to the initiating group, which included the following: Liliana Edilyan, Nora Melikyan, Jasmen Harutjunyan, Sophia Kalantaryan, Hasmik Movsisyan, Marine Sahakyan, Bela Sarukhanyan, Armine Shaboyan, Armine Simonyan, Larisa Yedigaryova, Artsrun Hakobyan and Andranik Mkrtchyan. Many of them worked free of charge, overcoming the difficulties of the blockade of Armenia and the energy crisis. Unfortunately, due to the lack of financial resources, the work remained unfinished.

Some years later, upon the initiative of the Director of Huys publishing house, honored journalist of the Republic of Armenia, head of the media department of Armenpress, Ms. Nora Melikyan, the work restarted. This time, in the aim of publishing the book *Our Body and We: For the new century* in

Armenian, the publishing house applied to the Health Book Collective of Boston Women asking for technical and financial assistance. They also submitted an application to the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation) for receiving a grant.

I would like to mention the great investment of the Armenian Charity Fund of the Development of Population in the publication of the book in Armenian in response to the request of the publishing house Huys, that provided them with an office, free computers and stationery.

The Director of this Fund, qualified specialist in the sphere of reproductive health, doctor-gynecologist Mary Khachikyan, personally participated in the editing activities of the book on a voluntary basis. She united a large group of different specialists, which, together with the publishing network Artavazd, jointly supported Huys in all the stages of the publication of the book.

It should be noted that the old translation could not be used any more because the 1998 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* had been rewritten, with new chapters and new approaches to the fundamentals added. Thus, a lot of material from the work done previously could not be used. Health Book Collective of Boston Women suggested creating a new working group which would include experienced translators, editors, doctors-specialists, artists-designers and other professionals.

I would like to express my special gratitude to the author of many scientific books and brochures, doctor Jasmine Harutjunyan, and to Editor Alexander Khachikyan, who made a significant input in the implementation of this publication.

It is worth mentioning the names of the translators – Hrachya Tatevyan, Zohrab Sargsyan, Hasmik Yernknyan, Lusine Khachatryan, Gegham Aslibekyan, Cristine Barseghyan, Aida Sahakyan, Armine Avagyan, Anahit Khachatryan, Hasmik Tevosyan, Ruzanna Sarukhanyan, Anna Grigoryan, Lusine Dadayan, Astghik Hakobyan, Astghik Avagyan – as well as the doctors Liana Galstyan, Lusine Harutjunyan, Ruzan Avetisyan,

artist Maro Sargsyan, computer operators Anna Hovhanissyan and Mary Gharibyan, proof-reader Mardgik Melkonyan.

As many of the ideas in the English publication do not comply with the Armenian national traditions, the publishers have not included some of the chapters of the book, did not translate certain issues and shortened several chapters.

Finally, I would like to thank the numerous Armenian women for placing the book squarely in the context of their own lives, without which it would have been difficult to make this valuable book, written by American women, relevant to Armenian readers. Many of them are from both urban and rural areas and find this book very necessary as they currently face difficulties in getting information on gender and reproductive health issues. They have evaluated what the American women tell about their experience and conclusions.

Some words about the sponsors of the Armenian publication of the book. In response to the letter-request of the publishing house Huys, Health Book Collective of Boston Women sought funding for the project, applying to different charity organizations and individuals. In 1999 we succeeded in obtaining a definite sum of money, for which I would like to thank the Lincy Foundation, especially Ellen and Francis Sargsyan and Iva Metsoryan.

On behalf of my American and Armenian colleagues I would like to express my deep gratitude, especially to a woman from New York who preferred to remain anonymous. This woman's donation helped the Armenian publishers and allowed to prepare the first 1000 copies of the book in 2001. The quality of the translation has been controlled and was assessed also by the Open Society Institute. As a result the publishing house Huys received an OSI grant that allowed us to print an additional 1000 copies.

We would like to thank also the publishing house Tigran Mets and publishing cooperative Printex for the implementation of printing and publication of the book on a high level.

To our Armenian sisters with kind regards from the Health Book Collective of Boston Women.

Judy Norsigian

Co-author of the book "Our body and we",

One of the founders of the "Health book collective of Boston women," and Program Director

USEFUL MANUAL FOR WOMEN

We represent to the reader the publication of the first Armenian large book *Our Body and We*. This book is about the different issues related to the health of women, first authored by the famous group, Health Book Collective of Boston Women. It has been issued regularly with changes, additions and new achievements in medicine, as well as personal experiences and practices of many women including new publications...

This kind of book is very important for millions of women, as well as for Armenian women. Perfect health is possible in cases where not only the qualified and permanent medical care is available but also the existence of comprehensive and necessary information on health protection. Such a manual of encyclopedical nature is the book *Our Body and We*. Armenian women have a great need for this information..

In Armenia at present, migration of population has been increased, there are a great number of vulnerable groups, the surrounding environment has deteriorated, the birth rate has decreased, the danger of dissemination of sexual infections (especially AIDS) has increased, and the indicators of maternal and infant mortality and infertility have also increased. As the result of global market relations, regular use of health services is not available to all. Under such conditions, giving information to the population through publications, newspapers, and TV and radio programs is very important.

The book *Our Body and We* will help women understand their bodies and physical and social requirements correctly through the absolutely appropriate medical-scientific and

social formulations. Having this book in their hands, Armenian women can go through it every moment and follow its advice, which include a broad range of subjects, starting from sexual development up to pregnancy, delivery, child care and many other issues, enabling women to make informed decisions on issues related to their health.

It should be mentioned that in the current stage of medical technologies and medical care, sometimes untested drugs and surgical interferences are used which present serious dangers to women's health. Representing these new technologies and treatment, the authors of the book warn that their impact is not been clarified yet...

The book *Our Body and We* is written in an understandable way which is clear to all women regardless of age and educational level. A woman can see herself in this book and compare her past experience with others in different situations. Sometimes the reader can read about approaches, viewpoints, spiritual experience and descriptions that she had not paid attention to before.

On behalf of *Our Body and We*, the Armenian reader gains a lot of much needed information. Therefore, it is worth mentioning the grateful work that has been performed by the Armenian staff, i.e. translators, editors, doctors-consultants and others. Maintaining the original, they tried to overcome many difficulties, thinking hard about the professional terms and concepts which would make the book accessible for the reader.

Good luck with the Armenian publication of the book *Our Body and We*. We hope that Armenian women will find the answers to many questions related to different spheres of life in this book.

Nune Mangasaryan

RoA Deputy Minister of Health

The Armenian publishing staff of the valuable book *Our Body and We* especially thanks our Armenian colleague Judy

Norsigyan who has been the initiator and the sponsor of this work. She is the representative of the fourth generation of the Genocide 1915. Living far from her motherland, by the call of the ancestors and by her soul, she is connected with her country and tries to assist in all ways in the health maintenance of her sisters. Judy Norsigyan is one of the founders of the Health Book Collective of Boston Women and one of the authors of the book *Our Body and We*. Her family comes from Western Armenia, Kharberd, Shapingarahisar originally, but due to fate she was born in North America. She graduated from Harvard University and has a Bachelor's Degree. Since her college years she has been involved in publication activity related to the issues of reproductive health of women. She gives lectures in medical institutions. In her words, she has...become a bridge between society and health workers. Let's remember Judy Norsigyan's mother, Ms. Agnes, who had a great role in connecting her daughter living in the American environment with her national background, maintaining the love of her grandfathers in her soul.

Her husband, a famous doctor-sociologist, taught at Brandeis University for 36 years. He is an author of many books under the title "Social autobiography," protected the disabled and was one of the soldiers struggling against the wrong treatment of them... Many thanks to Judy Norsigyan and to other women from the Armenian Diaspora who provided moral and financial assistance for the implementation of this difficult program. We wish them health and new successes in their gender movement, humanitarian and patriotic endeavors.

...A woman can see herself in this book and compare her past experience with others in different situations...