

annual
report
2017



**EURASIA
PARTNERSHIP
FOUNDATION**

FINANCIALS 2017

| EURASIA PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION DECEMBER 31, 2017 | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | 31.12.16 | 31.12.17 |
| US dollars | As of December 31, 2016 | As of December 31, 2017 |
| ASSETS | | |
| <i>Non-current assets</i> | | |
| Property and equipment | 132,113 | 78,529 |
| Intangible assets | 591 | 147 |
| Deferred tax assets | - | - |
| Subtotal | 132,704 | 78,676 |
| <i>Current assets</i> | | |
| Inventories | - | - |
| Accounts receivable | 84,355 | 92,014 |
| Current income tax assets | 5,751 | 1,878 |
| Cash and bank balances | 412,900 | 363,474 |
| Subtotal | 503,006 | 457,366 |
| Total assets | 635,710 | 536,042 |
| LIABILITIES AND RESERVES | | |
| <i>Non-current liabilities</i> | | |
| Grants related to assets | 137,711 | 80,725 |
| Subtotal | 137,711 | 80,725 |
| <i>Current liabilities</i> | | |
| Accounts payable | 56,488 | 84,776 |
| Deferred income | 405,294 | 283,727 |
| Current income tax liabilities | - | - |
| Subtotal | 461,782 | 368,503 |
| RESERVES | | |
| Accumulated result (unrestricted) | 53,000 | 103,755 |
| Foreign currency translation reserve | (16,783) | (16,941) |
| Subtotal | 36,217 | 86,814 |
| Total liabilities and net assets | 635,710 | 536,042 |

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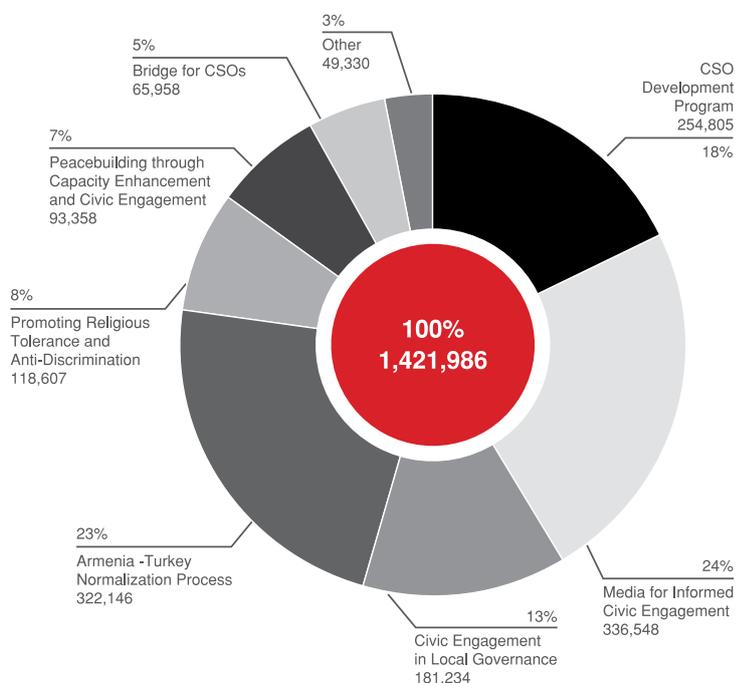
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EPF 2017 OVERVIEW

Several years ago, when we acquired our own office space and prepared our strategy, we formulated some expected results.

We were then funded mainly by USAID. We established the aim of being increasingly funded by European sources. Now, more than 50% of our funding comes from the EU or European states (mainly the Netherlands and Sweden).

When we started the CSO DePo program, it was clear for us that we needed to become a consultant organization, one that can provide fee-based services to other NGOs. Thanks to the development of the Capacity Enhancement Tool and its promotion, we are now invited on a daily basis to provide organizational development consultancies to NGOs. Even if we continue to charge a price that is lower than market rates and do it often pro bono, this is a source of modest sustainable funding for us in the future – for the case if and when we ever have the need for non-project related income.

The USAID-supported DePo (CSO development) program formulated the aim of developing the NGO market, e.g. making NGOs aware that if they don't pay for consultancies—whether for organizational development, legal advice or fundraising—they cannot really develop. Now we are asked to provide NGOs with information

about consultants every day: this means that the market, which was absent a few years ago, is evolving quickly.

The other aim of the DePo program was to make information about opportunities available to NGOs. We developed the hkdepo.am website, where all the opportunities for civil society that come to our attention are reflected. The most striking development is that small regional and newly-founded NGOs have learned about smaller-scale opportunities—such as participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, both local and international—and hundreds of them have gotten engaged in the big development world via this resource, and they have expressed their gratitude to us.

In the CeLoG (Capacity Enhancement for Local Governance) program, also funded by USAID, we had the aim of making local communities more active participants in local governance. We can now register six cases of a community petition development; the Local Government had to respond to them and satisfy the demands of the citizens. This tool, provided to the citizens by law—the community petition—was not being used at all before our project.

Similarly, during the process of community consolidation (this is a controversial reform since it unites together several communities within hubs which, theoretically, will have more resources), we were able, with the help of our partners, to change the shape of four consolidated communities predefined by the government without due regard for local needs and specific characteristics. The newly shaped consolidated communities unite localities in a more grounded and justified way.

None of this would have been possible without our partners, such as CFOA, MIC and others. We have started to work in consortia, and it paid off: all of the successes we have had are attributable to a joint allocation of efforts.

We have also had some very important, even if not very visible, successes in policy advocacy: it was EPF's initiative to ask the government for clarifications on the new draft law on religious organizations. We shared that request with the international community, and the government felt obliged to respond. Its response has been a brick in the wall of democracy building in Armenia, since its essence is that the law will apply also to the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) which, because of its special status, is often beyond the reach of laws and regulations which apply to smaller religious organizations operating in Armenia.

Our next step has been to ask the Ombudsman to go for an opinion about the draft law to the OSCE ODIHR; we shared our concerns with the international community, particularly Embassies, the EU and US, and the Ombudsman responded positively. NGOs cannot directly ask the ODIHR for an opinion, so an official request is needed. ODIHR developed an opinion despite the close deadline, and the government had to discuss the recommendations and improve the draft law before its adoption.

These policy successes are particularly valuable since it is a well-known fact that NGOs in Armenia have often been funded for advocacy projects by international donors, and yet the least visible results are reflected in their advocacy activities, because the government has learned to skillfully 'water down' civil society demands in many cases.

We invested in building our policy advocacy capacity for several years, mainly thanks to the

Dutch funding. It required some very serious collaboration between us, the government and the international community, the EU and US. But now we have the network and the established ways of working, and when it comes to religious tolerance, we have received recognition by smaller religious denominations for engaging them, for the first time since Armenia's independence, in a respectful and constructive dialogue with each other as well as, on an equal footing, with the AAC. EPF is the lead organization in Armenia which has been working on religious tolerance in such a strategic and determined way for several years.

The work on religious tolerance is a particular example of the larger strategy that we, as well as other NGOs, advised the EU and the government to adopt several years ago: the trilateral dialogue between civil society, the government and EU. This approach has been exemplified in the development of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF), where EPF engaged in the Armenian National Platform (ANP) since its appearance. In this trilateral format it became possible to move the government to reform, on one hand, at least in some areas, and to help it and the EU monitor reform from a concerned citizen's perspective, to adjust and move forward.

In 2017 we also developed recommendations for the role of civil society via a platform to be established to monitor the EU-Armenia new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The recommendations are presented to the stakeholders and discussed, and they signify a new and even more constructive stage in EU-government-civil society relations during the implementation of CEPA.

EPF has had many more successes that can be presented here, but the most important conclusion from these examples is the following: it is the determined work with a longer-term strategic and collaborative approach that brings about results, and they do not come fast. It is thanks to our donors who gave us a perspective for funding for longer than an annual basis that these advances have become possible.

November 2017

EPF Occasional Policy Brief

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Updated February 2018

The situation and recent developments in Armenia pertaining to tolerance and non-discrimination and respective policy recommendations are presented below. They are based on studies conducted by EPF as a part of its programmatic activities, hands-on experience accumulated through several years of grassroots work and feedback collected from the various beneficiaries.

TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

1. The lack of specific anti-discrimination legislation

SITUATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The adoption of Decision No. 303-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated February 27, 2014 has been one of the first steps in the state policy towards non-discrimination. The 2014-2016 Action Plan for the National Strategy on Human Rights Protection, approved by that decision, defined in point 8 the need for studying the compliance of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia with international legal norms on the prohibition of discrimination, as well as for discussing the feasibility of adopting a separate law “On anti-discrimination”. Within the framework of implementation of the above point with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Georgia and Armenia, EPF conducted a legal research entitled “**Is it expedient to adopt a separate ‘non-discrimination law’?**”¹, which highlighted the need for adopting a stand-alone anti-discrimination law in Armenia. Based on this research, an agreement was reached with the Ministry of Justice of Armenia (MoJ) to draft a new non-discrimination law, bearing in mind the fact that the adoption of comprehensive stand-alone anti-discrimination legislation has been prescribed as one of the specific conditions under the EU Direct Budget Support agreement with Armenia. To note, the indicators for the EU Direct Budget Support agreement relating to the anti-discrimination block were developed with EPF’s advice

¹ http://www.epfarmenia.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Research-on-Anti-discrimination_-21.05.15-ENG_Final-1.pdf

and guidance. It should be mentioned that back in May 2013, another draft anti-discrimination law was prepared and posted on the website of the Armenian Ombudsman, but discussions on it were then suspended mainly due to the controversy over the categories of gender and religious belief, their interpretation and incorporation in the law.

Alongside the study and development of the new draft law, EPF embarked upon gathering and coordinating the Government, Armenian CSOs and IOs to discuss and further develop the anti-discrimination draft law and its adoption strategy. The process marked an unprecedented level of cooperation between a CSO and the Government, since this was one of the rare instances in Armenia where a CSO facilitated the process of adoption of legislation and elaborated a legislative act together with the Armenian authorities. The Law on Equality combating discrimination was drafted by two independent experts and two representatives of the Ministry of Justice.

While formally the Draft Law addressed the gaps in the current legislation, it lacked the comprehensiveness needed for compliance with European and international anti-discrimination standards when it came to certain key provisions. Hence, EPF together with 11 civil society organizations revised the anti-discrimination draft law (with the preliminary title “On Equality”) through consultations, ensuring its compliance with international best practice and Armenia’s international obligations, and submitted it to the Ministry of Justice on **May 30, 2016**. These consultations have not been held in a more public setting due to a concern of unwanted speculations around the Draft and the adverse effect they might have on the entire process of its further negotiations and adoption (which had previously happened with the Anti-Discrimination Draft Law elaborated by the Armenian Ombudsman in 2013, resulting in its termination).

The redrafted law added more clarifying provisions and contains:

- 1. The necessary regulations on definitions of key concepts, burden of proof, forms of discrimination, independence of the Equality Council, provision of protected features in labor relations and educational processes, mechanisms for preventing and countering discrimination;**
- 2. It is free of discriminatory exclusions which would reflect the exceptional role of the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC), and consider the de-facto discriminatory in-family practices as not covered by the law.** Apparently, though, the old version prepared by the working group stayed as such and the hope is that the MoJ will be persuaded to incorporate regulations from the second Draft (the CSOs’ refined version) into the old one to the extent possible.

From **May 2016** till **September 2017**, no significant changes in Armenia’s anti-discrimination agenda have taken place, apart from drafting and adopting the new National Human Rights Action Plan (HRAP) 2017-2019 by the MoJ, which has been shared through the official website on circulating draft laws, following informal consultations with civil society (including EPF) and other governmental and international agencies, calling for civil society and all interested parties to submit recommendations on the draft.

EPF has submitted a package of recommendations primarily referring to anti-discrimination legislation and redrafting the Armenian textbooks in line with human rights friendly, tolerant approaches. The HRAP was adopted on May 4, 2017 and entered into force on May 21, 2017. Point 77 of the HRAP envisages “Establishing legislative mechanisms for ensuring equality

provided by the Constitution of Armenia,” which the MoJ, in response to EPF’s enquiry, interpreted as meaning to adopt a separate anti-discrimination law. EPF deems it worrying that, despite the MoJ’s interpretation, the HRAP does not specifically mention adoption of a separate legislation on non-discrimination. Moreover, since the HRAP does not contain the performance indicators essential for effective implementation and monitoring of human rights action plans, it is impossible to predict the standard that would be set for drafting the anti-discrimination law by the Government.

The fourth quarter of 2017 was set as the deadline for the adoption of the anti-discrimination law by the HRAP, but it appeared from non-formal discussions with the representatives of MoJ that the Law is now expected to be adopted in 2018.

Nonetheless, bearing in mind that societal and media discrimination remain the most prominent and difficult to combat forms of discrimination in Armenia, as well as public mistrust and deepening disappointment in the Government, the expected resistance to the process of adopting the draft law should not be overlooked. Given the present situation of political instability in Armenia, the MoJ and the government are becoming very receptive to negative attitudes with respect to the anti-discrimination agenda. In particular, there is a medium-to-high risk that the conservative, religious and marginal organizations will campaign against the anti-discrimination legislation; therefore, a carefully crafted public campaign with the involvement of CSOs, the government, media and international community needs to be organized in order to mitigate these risks.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA

With the engagement of civil society, ensure the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Equality” guaranteeing the protection and promotion of equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for every person and citizen. The anti-discrimination law should, inter alia:

- eliminate any provision pertaining to the discriminatory rule of interpretation of the law;
- provide the definitions of key concepts and forms of discrimination;
- stipulate a wider scope of protected attributes directly mentioning sexual orientation, gender identity, health condition, marital status among them, which is due to the necessity of setting forth additional safeguards against discrimination for the most vulnerable groups of society;
- include a separate chapter on the mechanisms for prevention and countering of discrimination, which defines in detail the obligations and rights of the National Assembly, the Human Rights Defender, Government, State and local self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations, natural and legal persons;
- guarantee the freedom of formation and functioning of the Equality Council, by providing it with additional support to ensure its objectivity, impartiality and independence. The Office of the Human Rights Defender should be allocated with additional resources in order to maintain the Secretariat of the “Equality Council”; ensure the procedural right of NGOs to *actio popularis* claims in discrimination cases set forth a provision regarding the burden of proof in compliance with European Union Council Directive 2000/43;

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CSOS, THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- accompany the process of the adoption of the anti-discrimination law with a coherent, meaningful, carefully crafted and well-coordinated public campaign, which should be done in a manner of delivering proactive messages to society before conservative, religious and marginal organizations start aggressive campaigning against the anti-discrimination legislation. It should be borne in mind that the majority of governmental offices, MPs and other decision makers are oftentimes ignorant of what discrimination is, hence they should be well prepared through informal explanatory discussions facilitated by the MoJ before the draft law reaches them for consideration.
- the nationwide media, having a strong influence on the public, communities, community-based CSOs and local authorities should also be the targets of the campaign.
- undertake special trainings and other capacity building measures for judges and lawyers following or in parallel with the adoption of the anti-discrimination legislation; conduct intensive work with CSOs, educational institutions and society in general.

2. Hate speech and hate crime

SITUATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

According to research² on hate crimes conducted by the Collaboration for Democracy Centre in 2016, no comprehensive report on hate crimes has been ever prepared by the Armenian Government, except for the research or statements produced by some human rights organizations dealing with specific spheres, and reports sent to international organizations related to concrete cases. Despite the Government's claims on the insignificant number of hate crimes in Armenia, information provided by human rights organizations, the mass media, and government bodies, if studied thoroughly, indicates the occurrence of elements of hate crimes. According to these sources, hate crimes in Armenia are **predominantly committed against people based on their ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation and gender identity**. Moreover, the Criminal Code of Armenia only covers hate crimes committed with motives of national, racial or religious hate or religious fanaticism, leaving out the sexual orientation and gender identity grounds. Hate speech also widely occurs in mass media and social networks, lacking adequate legislative regulation. Point 26 of the Armenian Human Rights Action Plan 2017-2019 envisages discussions of possible models of hate speech criminalization which are due to be accomplished by the end of 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA

- introduce the definition of “hate speech” and define liability for hate speech against persons with protected features, including on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- amend the existing criminal legislation on hate crimes to consider the committal of a crime on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person as a circumstance aggravating the guilt.

² <http://religions.am/en/article/hate-crimes-in-the-republic-of-armenia/>

3. Tolerance and education

Point 81 of the National Human Rights Action Plan envisages the revision of the content of school educational materials based on the Toledo Guiding Principles, UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, aiming to eliminate the dissemination of stereotypes leading to discrimination and intolerance. However, the point is excessively broad and no performance indicators are introduced to increase the effectiveness of its implementation and monitoring.

At the same time, the field study³ by EPF for the Council of Europe, which was conducted through focus group discussions with children, clearly indicates that the issue of compulsory teaching of the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church in schools is one of the main concerns of both children and their parents. History of the Armenian Church has been taught as a subject in public schools (5-10 grades) since 2002.

The Law on relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church was adopted in 2007 providing several privileges to the latter, such as budgetary support, the right to take part in drafting the school syllabus for the history of the Armenian Church course and in implementation of school curricula in educational institutions. The class is mandatory; students are not permitted to opt out of the course, and no alternatives are available to students of other religious groups. In addition, the law grants the Armenian Apostolic Church the right to organize voluntary extracurricular religious classes in state educational institutions. Other religious groups may provide religious instruction to members in their own facilities.

EPF has collected striking evidence of intolerance and discrimination towards the “others” over the last years while working on religious tolerance within the projects funded by the Government of the Netherlands. In order to understand **the roots of tolerance/intolerance** which are closely interlinked with discrimination and structural violence, EPF is trying to look deeper into the Armenian culture, literature, customs, traditions, folklore and arts.

EPF will soon publish a print and electronic book, consisting of 8 studies on manifestations of tolerance and intolerance in Armenian literature. One of the research pieces focuses on the themes of tolerance and intolerance in 9th, 10th, and 11th grade textbooks on Armenian literature, history of the Armenian nation and history of the Armenian Church. The research revealed that school textbooks in Armenia often display ethno-national, religious, gender, and social-based intolerance. The ethno-nationalism prevails in Armenian textbooks, being closely intertwined with religious and gender intolerance. Particularly, one can frequently encounter the uniqueness of the Armenian nation and the representation of its superior character in the textbooks, where this is also demonstrated as stemming from the Armenian apostolic direction of Christianity as the only true path, as well as the idea of the Armenian woman's decency based on her nationality. This phenomenon is particularly striking in the context of comparing two similar phenomena (Armenian-foreigner, Christian-Muslim, etc.).

Due to the fact that Armenian high school textbooks consist of the authors' comments and reviews, the subjective approaches of the textbook authors are displayed as the only acceptable

³ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/human-rights/rights-of-children-from-religious-and-ethnic-minority-groups-in-armenia-field-study/>

interpretations, which directly contributes to the formation of respective social constructs, containing at times intolerant approaches towards a number of phenomena, groups and other issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA

- before being officially approved, scrutinize school textbooks by human rights experts in order to exclude the presence of elements leading to intolerance or discrimination.
- study the perceptions of some or all school textbooks by schoolchildren to be able to identify the impact of apparently intolerant approaches the textbooks contain on schoolchildren.
- eliminate the subjective interpretation of literary pieces by the authors of the textbooks, particularly, on Armenian literature, to enable children to form and express their own views regarding Armenian literature and develop critical thinking skills.
- revise the content of the subject of the history of the Armenian Church, reflecting the coverage of historical events and excluding religious preaching.
- eliminate the instances of religious preaching in schools by the AAC as well as anti-preaching against other religions and beliefs, which lead to intolerant and discriminatory practices, through the intervention of authorized bodies (where necessary) guaranteeing that the education on religion is provided in line with the objective, impartial and democratic principles of pluralism.
- eliminate prayer, crossing oneself and other religious ceremonies while teaching the history of the Armenian Church at schools.

EPF Occasional Policy Brief

RECOMMENDATIONS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Updated February 2018

1. Legislation and policies relating to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

SITUATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The area of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is presently regulated by the law “On freedom of conscience and religious organizations,” adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia back in 1991, prior to the adoption of the Constitution of Armenia, based on the USSR Law “On freedom of conscience and religious organizations.” Bearing in mind the fact that the Law has a number of deficiencies, contradictions and fails to comply with Armenia’s international obligations, the Ministry of Justice of Armenia (MoJ) has developed and circulated on **June 1, 2017 the draft law (the Draft) on “Making Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations” and amendments and/or supplements to adjacent laws¹ through the Governmental www.e-draft.am website without duly notifying relevant stakeholders and with rather restricted timing for discussions – until July 2.**

The civil society organizations and religious communities with which EPF is in regular contact had already articulated several concerns regarding the Draft.

In particular, it could be inferred from the wording of the Draft that it would not be applicable to the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) as opposed to other religious communities, thus creating a risk of discriminatory approach and undermining the foundations of equality and secularism.

Hence, EPF, within the project supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Armenia and Georgia, **initiated public discussions with all interested parties**, which took place on **June 16.**

Representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the

¹ <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/246>

Staff of the Ombudsman of Armenia, religious groups and organizations, CSOs, international organizations and embassies attended the discussion. The discussion provided a platform for comprehensive, profound and inclusive considerations of the Draft, and development of relevant recommendations regarding its worrisome provisions.

For the draft law to be understandable to a wider audience and the international community, EPF translated it into English and provided it to all interested international parties.

“On October 27, International Religious Freedom Day, the Eurasia Partnership

Foundation (EPF), a local NGO, held the closing ceremony of its three-year program aimed at promoting religious tolerance and nondiscrimination. As part of the event, EPF held an awards ceremony for the best coverage of issues related to the freedom of religion or belief. EPF received 32 written articles, 14 videos, and 12 caricatures as submissions for the awards. Throughout the program, EPF trained hundreds of journalists on religious tolerance with its partner NGO. According to human rights NGOs and religious minority representatives, the program positively impacted media coverage of religious issues.”²

International Religious Freedom Report for 2017
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

To mitigate possible risks with the Draft, EPF also approached the OSCE/ODIHR Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, who suggested that that national human rights institution (the Ombudsman of Armenia) officially apply to OSCE/ODIHR with a request to provide a review of the Draft. Thanks to these timely advocacy measures, any possible plan by the Government to pass the law quietly to the Parliament failed since too many local and international actors were already engaged. The outcome of the campaign was the legal opinion on the Draft Law provided by OSCE/ODIHR on **October 16, 2017**. Since civil society actors cannot apply and receive recommendations from the ODIHR directly, it was a big success that EPF had convinced the Human Rights Defender Mr. Arman Tatoyan to request a legal opinion from OSCE. On top of this, based on EPF’s request, the MoJ confirmed that the draft law would be equally applicable to the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) – the dominant church in Armenia. It was a positive development that some religious organizations (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, Bahai Community of Armenia) and diplomatic missions, such as the Apostolic Nunciature, which are usually reserved in terms of engaging in such discussions, were part of the advocacy process due to the carefully crafted methodology of trust building EPF applies during human rights advocacy. On **November 21, 2017** the MoJ, having revised the Draft law, initiated public discussions where the concept of the revised Draft was presented to the participant CSOs and religious groups and organizations. The MoJ outlined that the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR had been taken into account and an improved Draft would be circulated for another round of opinions from stakeholders. The revised Draft law was shared by the MoJ for opinions on **November 30, 2017** with very disappointing content related to a number of restrictive and/or unprofessional provisions, unclear wording and lack of understanding of religion and religious life. EPF had consultations with a number of CSOs and the

² www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom

Evangelical community of Armenia on the revised Draft and they shared EPF's concerns. The suggested text reflected rather common and widespread stereotypes/misunderstandings/biases about religious/belief communities, minority or newly established religions and religious life. For instance, it was noticeable that there was a hidden (or not really hidden) perception that religious organizations: *i.* are dangerous for society, state security, morals etc.; *ii.* are actively pursuing children, elderly and other "vulnerable groups"; *iii.* follow mercenary goals; *iv.* are agents of foreign influence, etc. Hence, all those 'ways' were legally blocked though the revised Draft. EPF's key concerns are reflected in its text of recommendations on the Draft submitted to the MoJ. The revised Draft was furthermore submitted by the MoJ to the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR for a joint opinion, which is expected to be followed by another round of revision and then probably submission to the Parliament of Armenia for adoption. To note, according to the Point 25 of the National Human Rights Action Plan of Armenia 2017-2019, the Draft is expected to be adopted **in the second trimester of 2018.**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA

- include in the Draft not only the freedom of conscience and religion, but also the freedom of belief; provide for not only the concept of "religious organization" but also "belief organization";
- replace the phrase "grounds for prohibition" of FoRB into "grounds for limitation" of FoRB;
- replace the term "state security" with the term "public order", in line with ECHR, ECtHR case law and OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to Armenia; stipulate that the limitations of the manifestation of FoRB must be set in law, and be necessary and proportionate to the (legitimate) aims that they pursue; remove the terms "weakening of defense capacity", "propagating of religious hatred", "immoral" as a basis of limitation of FoRB from the Draft;
- remove or reword the provision imposing collective responsibility on a religious organization for activities of its members, in line with OSCE/ODIHR guidelines on Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities;
- remove the precondition of having at least 100 adult founders for registration of a religious organization according to OSCE/ODIHR standards, as well as remove the requirements relating to activities, directed towards religious spheres, based on a historically canonized holy book, the faith being part of the system of world's contemporary religious communities;
- either remove the provision on the precondition of an expert opinion for registration of a religious organization or reword this requirement, by specifying that an expert opinion shall be provided by an independent neutral body, which does not have representatives from other religions or belief communities and which is not entitled to assess whether or not the considered religion or belief is genuine;
- remove the total ban on religious organizations to be financed by and finance their spiritual centers located outside of the territory of the Republic of Armenia according to OSCE/ODIHR standards;
- revise the term "believer of a religious organization", instead providing for the category of "follower", having regard also to the fact that freedom of religion and belief extends to the

rights of non-believers;

- clarify the applicability of the articles of the Draft to the AAC, by guaranteeing that the privileges given to the AAC are justified and non-discriminatory. Ensure that other religious or belief communities have access to some of the privileges enjoyed by the AAC based on objective and non-discriminatory criteria;
- prescribe specifically an exhaustive list of documents to be requested and legitimate grounds for requesting such documents from religious organizations by giving them sufficient time to prepare them;
- remove the requirement on the detailed list of data to be included in the report, while mentioning the publication of only the statistical data and financial results of religious organizations;
- include the right to humanitarian, benevolent activities in the list of religious organizations' rights.

2. Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and the right to education

SITUATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The history of the Armenian Church was introduced in Armenian schools as a pilot subject starting from 2002 and later became compulsory, giving rise to practical problems in terms of the child's freedom of conscience.

A field study conducted by EPF with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands revealed that during the history of the Armenian Church course, some teachers arbitrarily, without following the program methodology, start the class with The Lord's Prayer, during which the children stand up, and at the end they make the sign of the cross.³

At the same time, studies illustrate that many of the representatives of religious minorities have a positive attitude towards the history of the Armenian Church. They regard the topics of this subject as part of their national history and if this is not in conflict with their conscience, they enjoy studying it⁴. However, there is also a viewpoint that the textbooks on the history of the Armenian Church are primarily aimed at teaching the theology of the Armenian Church, and there is no alternative course for the pupils whose parents do not wish for their children to participate in the course on the history of the Armenian Church.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has suggested in its concluding observations of 2013 that Armenia should revise the curriculum of schools in order to reflect the freedom of religion of all children and eliminate the compulsory subject of the history of Armenian Church from the curriculum.

In accordance with OSCE Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools, if a compulsory program involving teaching about religions and beliefs is not sufficiently objective, efforts should be made to revise it to make it more balanced and impartial, but where this is not possible, or cannot be accomplished immediately, recognizing

³ <https://rm.coe.int/16807023b9>

⁴ Ibid.

opt-out rights may be a satisfactory solution for parents and pupils, provided that the opt-out arrangements are structured in a sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA

- based on the 2013 recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations addressed to Armenia during the Universal Periodic Review in 2015, and bearing in mind the secular nature of education in Armenia stipulated by national legislation, revise the content of the subject called the history of the Armenian Church, reflecting the coverage of historical events and excluding religious preaching;
- eliminate the instances of religious preaching in schools by the AAC as well as anti-preaching against other religions and beliefs, which lead to intolerant and discriminatory practices, through intervention of authorized bodies (where necessary) guaranteeing that the education on religion is provided in line with the objective, impartial and democratic principles of pluralism;
- eliminate prayer, crossing oneself and other religious ceremonies while teaching the history of the Armenian Church at schools;
- opt out of the history of the Armenian Church as a compulsory school subject. In parallel to it or as an option, introduce the subject of world religions and/or history of culture, thus reducing the risk of endangering the freedom of conscience and religion of the child in the school, in line with recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Committee on Racial Discrimination, European Commission of Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and OSCE Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools. The teaching process should be exclusively secular, avoiding elements of religious indoctrination, usage of religious symbols or rituals in public school, which is in line with Armenia's Constitution and Law on Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Based on the study visit to the UK (March 2017)

While the United Kingdom and Armenia differ in many substantial characteristics, the mission participants observed several elements of the work on anti-discrimination done in the UK which trigger thinking and action in Armenia related to implementing anti-discrimination policies. One of the most striking characteristics of the UK approach is that it is systematic and covers several issues: gender, social equality, discrimination, hate crimes, domestic violence etc., within one united methodology; and it is dealt with from several angles: by different structures of the authorities, civil society, the media, businesses, etc.

The recommendations presented below are grouped into relevant sections: to and for the authorities, civil society, businesses, media, and the international community.

AUTHORITIES: EXECUTIVE

Some of the most striking elements of the anti-discrimination policies in the UK are the position of the women's minister, and the work of the police.

Women's minister: The post of Minister for Women and Equalities is a ministerial position in the UK Government Equalities Office, an independent department that is responsible for addressing all forms of discrimination, particularly emphasizing gender inequality. It would be very worthwhile for the Armenian Government to consider the creation of such a department and position, where one of the women portfolio ministers is also assigned the position of Minister for Women and Equalities within the Equalities Office. Moreover, as in the UK experience, her position should rotate, engaging, over time, different ministries whose heads happen to be women, with a small group of staff, specialized in women and equality issues, rotating with the position of the Minister. This idea can be modified to better fit the Armenian realities. Having such a rotating minister allows for saving resources; for addressing equality issues in different ministries in an in-depth manner over time; for mainstreaming the issues of women, gender and equality throughout the government and its work;

and it allows for in-depth tackling of discrimination and inequality in the area covered by every ministry whose head also becomes the Minister for Women and Equalities.

AUTHORITIES: PARLIAMENT

It is recommended that the Parliament (National Assembly) and the parliamentary standing committee on the protection of human rights and public affairs develop a strategic work plan on the issues of equality and anti-discrimination, including comparative research studies, etc. to study the issues of equality and anti-discrimination; or its existing research unit should have a strategic work plan concerning this issue; a formal or informal caucus on this issue is recommended to be built by parliamentarians voluntarily joining a group which is concerned with this issue.

The parliamentary standing committee on the protection of human rights and public affairs should have a clearly stipulated mandate on the above-mentioned issues. Its caucus and the research unit should be in permanent touch with the Ombudsman; corresponding governmental structure; and NGOs which work on this issue. Together with the executive, parliamentary experts and CSOs, the committee should form an ad-hoc working group to study every existing and incoming law draft to see how it corresponds to international human rights law and obligations in anti-discrimination and state policies, and suggest drafting new legislation or amending or supplementing the existing one(s) as necessary.

AUTHORITIES: THE JUDICIARY

It is very important for Armenia, after adopting the package of relevant laws, to engage in a few cases of strategic litigation on such issues. It is recommended to train some of the younger generation of judges, via studies both in Armenia and in the West, on how to address these issues. A legal textbook on such issues can be developed based on Armenian realities, or translated and adapted, and recommended at least as an elective course in the law departments of the universities. Special trainings should be organized for all judges in the Academy of Justice.

AUTHORITIES: OMBUDSMAN

It is assumed that when the Law on Equality is adopted, an Equality Council adjacent to the Ombudsman will be created to address anti-discrimination issues. Making this Council's work effective via creating a system for its support is crucial for the success of the policy. The members of the Council should also be trained and their capacities increased through in-house activities along with enrolment in similar study-trips, short-term educational programs abroad, etc.

AUTHORITIES: POLICE

There were two major learning points from the study visit to the Police:

a) The zero tolerance policy towards domestic violence in UK is understandable, given the levels of violence existing there also due to culture clashes. In Armenia, where the number of police is exaggerated and its level of education cannot be claimed to be satisfactory when it comes to its dealings with the population, the following actions are recommended:

- a. Police trainings and study trips, also for the police academy teachers, on how to behave with the population.

- b. Special trainings and tests for the police officers charged with investigating such crimes (domestic violence, hate crime etc.).
- c. Exams (role plays etc.) to be passed by the police officers charged with such authority in the presence of civil society representatives and specialized experts, after which a certificate is given to the officers who successfully passed these exams.
- d. Means for symbolic and career-related encouragement and discouragement developed in the police stations, presenting those who deserve mention in connection with addressing anti-discrimination.

b) The success of the police anti-discrimination work in the UK is dependent on cooperation with the relevant local authorities, NGOs, health and education authorities. The weekly meetings of these bodies help address the issues of individuals, families and children who have experience in addressing problems of domestic violence, discrimination etc. This experience of joint collegial work can be replicated in Armenia. At the same time, this means also developing specialized entities/positions in the health and education department, social services, as well as in the local authorities. In order to save resources, this can be done via assigning authoritative people from the existing staff (for instance, from the Community Councils) such additional respectful roles, after special training. The role of local NGOs to provide such training and participate in such councils is very important.

c) Participation of the police in conferences, seminars on anti-discrimination, organizing such seminars, having leaflets, publications, media events and hotlines, which should be also easily available in the offices of the local authorities, educational and health institutions, as well as other local community gathering places (barbers shops, supermarkets, other shops, restaurants, churches) should be encouraged.

d) Training for police on hate speech and hate crimes, bias indicators, special methods of reporting and investigation should be included in curricula of police academy, and other institutions (criminal law chairs in Law departments) dealing with preparation of police officers.

AUTHORITIES: OTHER

Every area ministry, but particularly those who deal with situations where discrimination may take place more frequently, such as education, health, defense, social, and dealing with business, should send some of their relevant people for special training. There should also be trainings for trainers from these ministries and other government structures so that these entities can successfully and creatively pass the anti-discrimination policies to the areas they cover. All government agencies and LGs should have anti-discrimination regulations in their policies and procedures.

CIVIL SOCIETY

It is recommended, following the example of the UK, to develop a network hub for all those NGOs which work on anti-discrimination, to better coordinate joint advocacy and action.

It is also recommended to boost the capacities and build on the existing voluntary network of lawyers specialized in anti-discrimination which appeared as a result of a Council of Europe (CoE) project. Such lawyers' networks should also have hotlines, alongside with specialized

NGOs, and these hotlines should be widely promoted. There should be a capacity developed to provide pro bono legal consulting and to engage in strategic litigation. Legal statistics should be gathered by this entity, to be shared and compared with the official one.

Human rights lawyers should also be concerned with a) passing their knowledge to the larger public to the extent that there is a level of legal education on these issues which is necessary to everybody, and b) involving and training in practice the next generations of lawyers who specialize in such issues.

It is recommended to specializing NGOs as well as such hubs to be in constant communication with the UK as well as selectively other European and US NGOs and civil society actors, to exchange experiences and build capacities. They should build solidarity and learn the tactics to be successful rather than merely confrontational; they should learn lobbying techniques; correct messaging; tackling counter-constructive opinions and opinion-makers; they should become more sustainable and work on collecting institutional memory, acquiring cutting edge research and evidence, supporting strategic litigation etc.

These NGOs and networks should also encourage that the anti-discrimination policy and thinking ‘trickle sideways’ to their peers who are specializing in other issues. They should creatively offer sticker labels and other means of encouragement to those entities—NGOs, the media, the businesses, the government—as well as to the population (for instance via car stickers) which demonstrate outstanding performance on these issues, and vice versa—to those who fail to demonstrate improvement. Some examples of such actions exist in Armenia: FOICA has had an annual prize for transparency (and an anti-prize for non-transparency) to the governmental institutions and the media. The annual Human Rights prize given by the US, European governments, CoE and UN can also be capitalized upon; however, it is recommended to make the prizes more specific, for them to be issued by national institutions of Armenia (in addition to the international community’s event), and have several nominations, such as ‘for tackling discrimination’, ‘for gender equality’, ‘for the culture of tolerance’ etc.

Major civil society networks, such as the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Armenia National Platform, can adopt, within their thematic directions, a special focus on AD, and present this chance to the other EaP platforms.

THE MEDIA

Trainings for the media on how to cover anti-discrimination policies and relevant cases, and tackling difficult and controversial issues, as done already by some NGOs, including EPF, should be carried out by engaging more media, particularly from the mainstream. Investigative reporting on anti-discrimination should be encouraged and relevant trainings offered. Anti-discrimination should be mainstreamed in any grant support to the media. Cutting edge international expertise on how to cover such issues should be made available, shared with the media, studied and internalized. Participation of the media in international projects on antidiscrimination should be encouraged. A regulation addressing AD issues can be developed by the media self-regulating body established by Yerevan Press Club. Strengthening the institute of self-regulation and Media Ethics commission is another tool for promoting discrimination-sensitive journalism.

A special effort should be made to engage the citizen journalists and new media producers and

users, as well as innovative institutions (such as TUMO) in this work. EPF's hub of citizen media centers (Infotuns) all over Armenia can be used as a starting point.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE MEDIA JOINTLY

All institutions of civil society, including also academia, educational institutions, cultural institutions, can join into tackling the deeper underlying causes of discrimination, intolerance and domestic violence. Textbooks, exhibitions should be developed; civil society has the great opportunity to use the potential of academic institutions and young scholars, to study the deeper underlying causes of discrimination and violence and present to the general public and the relevant institutions. Studies on anti-discrimination and how it is reflected in Armenian history (particular during the last century), culture, arts (architecture; visual arts), literature, organizational culture, religious denominations, traditions, etc. should be done. Anti-discrimination traditions of different Armenian settlements and diaspora colonies should be studied, compared, and lessons acquired.

In all such programming, cost-effectiveness should be taken into account. For example, deeper and more open discussions on LGBTI issues should be developed in the form of cost-effective talk shows; the issues of violent behavior in closed male environments (prisons, garrisons etc.) should be addressed via special at least elective educational courses and via enlightening those in charge of such spaces. Violent and discriminatory behavior should be actively discouraged via zero-tolerance campaigns.

Civil society and the media should jointly develop advocacy messages which can be capitalized upon by politicians, institutions etc., such as 'diversity is good for business', 'we are an equal rights and equal opportunities society', etc. EPF has developed some such messages during its former work; these messages attempt to connect the national identity with anti-discrimination. For instance, 'Armenians have suffered historically from discrimination; at the same time, it is thanks to the tolerance of many other societies that they were able to settle in different countries; therefore they should be particularly sensitive to discrimination.'

Civil society and the media should develop databases of best experts on these issues and offer their expertise to the authorities; they should do independent research, investigations, and shadow reporting; they should help society and the authorities to enhance society's knowledge about Armenia's immersion in the network of international organizations and its obligations which stem from its being a member of several international institutions. They should study and offer the educational institutions knowledge about the relevant international institutions, documents, cases, treaties etc., which can be used in the fight for anti-discrimination.

Media and civil society can develop behavioral guidelines, exemplary codes of ethics and other documents to be offered to those who want to adopt such practices.

BUSINESSES

Businesses should be encouraged to adopt equality policies; a part of their social responsibility should be equality policies inside their premises as well as promoting them in their environment. Businesses can also benefit from campaigns involving stickers 'most PWD-friendly office', 'we pay men and women equally', 'our business proves that equality is profitable', etc., if these campaigns are promoted by business fora, which also publish ratings of businesses and/or give

them annual and other mentions related to the same.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY (THE WEST)

The international community, in addition to continuing the development of a united value space with Armenia in the form of treaties and support schemes, including the new Armenia-EU agreement, helping Armenia with its HRAP and HR strategy, should also support the above-mentioned actions and change, either directly, via targeted projects, or also indirectly, via mainstreaming the need for anti-discrimination in their other types of support. Gender equality is being required by major international support schemes; its experience should be capitalized upon and expanded to counter any type of discrimination. Independent research on how successful the linkage is between the financial support schemes and change towards less discrimination and more equality should give lessons learned to adjust the support schemes accordingly. Independent NGOs are a major source of cooperation for the international community in this process. They should be trained in how to monitor budget support as related to advances in AD. Support via expertise transfer is also very important for the success of anti-discrimination policies.



ADOPTING EXPERIENCE ON BILATERAL EU-MOLDOVA AND EU-GEORGIA CS PLATFORMS TO ARMENIA

BACKGROUND

The proposed recommendations were developed within the framework of the Adopting experience on bilateral EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia CS platforms to Armenia project funded by the EU via the re-granting scheme of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The project is implemented by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (Armenia) in partnership with Promo-LEX Association (Moldova) and Foundation Liberal Academy (Georgia) and is aimed at examining the experience of Georgia and Moldova in terms of cooperation between the civil society and the Government in light of the European integration and implementation of Association Agreements.

The implementing partners of the project conducted series of in-depth interviews with representatives of national authorities, EU Delegations and civil society actors in Armenia, Georgia and Moldova; jointly analysed the experience of CSF National Platforms and EU-Georgia and EU-Moldova bilateral civil society platforms, as well as conducted desk research on existing official documents regulating cooperation between civil society and the authorities in the three countries.

As a result, a set of recommendations addressing national authorities in three countries and EU institutions was developed, suggesting improvements in operation of the platforms.

Based on the analyses of Georgian and Moldovan experiences, as well as interviews conducted with Armenian experts and MFA, the project has developed recommendations for envisaged cooperation in light of the implementation of to be signed Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between Armenia and the EU.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON ARMENIA

General recommendations

1. CEPA implementation creates a strong need to define a Civil Society subject that will be able to become the institutional entity to represent the civil society in the process of communication and

cooperation of Armenian authorities and the European institutions in the process of the implementation of CEPA. At the current stage ANP is the main civil society subject that has institutional strength, history and formulated mission that coincides with the philosophy of civil society engagement in the process of implementation of CEPA.

2. In terms of the possible functions of the civil society there are three major functions that the civil society can carry:

- a. Monitoring of the implementation of the CEPA that can include monitoring of sectoral reforms, legal approximation, as well as overall strategic monitoring with a special focus on defining of priorities, developing action plans for implementation and formulating deliverables and outcomes.
- b. Formulation and delivering of sectoral expertise to the decision makers, which is an ongoing process that will need certain institutional framework for engaging civil society in dialogue with the line state institutions responsible for particular sectors, directions or processes.
- c. Raising public awareness on CEPA and wider format of EU-Armenia relations. This function needs intensive communication with the EU as well as various EU funded projects and should aim at addressing specific issues, successes or expected results that are within the framework of the EU-Armenia cooperation. This function includes both raising awareness among the civil society itself and using the civil society as an information channel to reach the society at large.

3. It is necessary to involve the ANP in the process of making CEPA more instrumental, namely in the process of development of detailed priorities in each sector, development of monitoring mechanisms, identification of deliverables, cross-cutting themes and working formats. It is also important to ensure a single instrumental framework for CEPA similar to the Association Agenda in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, since it will allow to ensure conditionality and more precise formulation of deliverables, as well as will make the process of monitoring of the implementation more effective.

4. In order to make sure that the bi-lateral civil society platform envisioned by the CEPA is effective there is a strong need to link it with the ANP. There can be several mechanisms for this:

- a. Ensure that there is significant presence of the ANP in the bi-lateral platform through ensuring quota for the ANP in the bi-lateral platform.
- b. Making the bi-lateral platform a horizontal structure of the ANP with an opportunity to nominate WG members upon necessity and based on particular topics discussed in given period and ensuring a room for participation of CSOs that are willing to contribute to the implementation of CEPA but do not want to be involved in any institutional framework.
- c. The EU based CSOs of the bi-lateral platform should include the CSOs actively working in Armenia with a strong knowledge of the country situation. It is important to ensure sectoral variety of these CSOs. ANP members as well as EaP CSF can be a valuable source for identification and involvement of relevant EU based CSOs.

Recommendations to the Government of Armenia

1. Armenia needs a strict format of internal bilateral agreements between the ANP and the Armenian authorities not only outlining the principles of cooperation but also formulating duties and responsibilities of the parties and stating the mechanisms and the timeline of cooperation.
2. The Georgian experience in holding periodic sectoral dialogue meetings between the line ministries and NP Working Groups is very much applicable to Armenia and can ensure ongoing and content-based participatory process.
3. In order to ensure transparent implementation of CEPA it would be useful to develop www.cepa.am website similar to <http://aa.ge/en/> developed by OSGF where all the legal acts that are envisaged for approximation with the EU Acquis will be placed and room for providing feedback and receiving answers will be available. On top of this the Armenian version of the website can include information on other activities implemented within the framework of CEPA, provide details on Direct Budget Support, etc.
4. During the past decade Armenia has been involved in several integration frameworks (ENP, EaP, MDG, OGP, etc.) that are aimed at supporting a country to define its development priorities and identify mechanisms of their implementation. According to many civil society actors this process was more an imitation rather than a real one and resulted in huge discrepancy between the regulatory framework and vision of people. CEPA gives the Armenian society and state an opportunity to initiate deeper and more conceptual discussions on reforms, legislation, the process of development of legal acts and ways of simplification of the regulatory frameworks. This opportunity should be used to compensate the enormous amount of lost opportunities of doing so.

Recommendations to the EU institutions

1. Decision making on EU funding to the civil society needs more transparency and clarity. Often the principles behind funding decisions are unclear. This can be achieved through more significant capacity building for CSOs for successfully applying to EU for funding. ANP can become an important platform for these activities.
2. There is a strong need to intensify and institutionalize the communication between the EU Delegation and the ANP. The interactions of ANP and CSOs in general with different sections of the Delegation often create miscommunication in case there is no institutional involvement of both Political and Operational sections of the delegation.
3. There is a strong need to establish tripartite format for periodic communication between the EU, Armenian authorities and the civil societies that will allow to discuss issues in all their complexity with involvement of all interested parties.
4. It is important to build the capacities of the Armenian CSOs re the process of applying to EU calls, evaluation of applications, major principles in reading EU announced calls, etc. ANP can play the role of a major platform for such activities.

In order to do that, it is recommended developing a document which clarifies the elements in PRAG which are applicable to Armenia or to a group of countries, such as EaP. The areas that need clarification, issues can be mentioned such as:

- a. The background of NGOs applying: when did they register or start operation, do they have sufficient experience etc.
- b. The check-up process for NGOs approved for funding: what kind of inquiries should they expect
- c. Capacity-building for NGOs-funding recipients: what type of activities does EU envision for them to enhance their performance
- d. Level of flexibility in tendering: what is the threshold for allocation of funds for services with no open tenders
- e. Level of engagement of EU project managers: what are the mutual rights and obligations, i.e. which actions can be done only after approval by EUD and which ones can be done with no approval
- f. Level of flexibility in budget reallocations: what are the most appropriate rules for the conditions of Armenia/EaP

Such and other issues are important to be clarified for the local circumstances, since PRAG provides only very general guidelines which in some cases are too flexible for the local circumstances. In case the EU has restrictions in implementing these kind of initiatives, the sub-grantees that are implementing capacity building projects should be navigated by respective EU institutions to address these issues and to work closely with the ANP and other civil society entities working in sphere of EU-Armenia relations.

It is also advisable to study more carefully the background of EU applicants and their partners in Armenia: those applicants who have not worked in Armenia should have strong and well-known partners, to make up for the lack of expertise. If the EU applicants have worked in Armenia and have positive history, this is not so relevant.

Also, it is advised to arrange meetings between EU evaluators and failed applicants for direct personal feedback; comparison between winning proposals and those who did not pass, in order for the authors of the latter to understand better what have been their deficiencies.

There is an opinion that this may create conflict of interest, however, for NGO development in Armenia the best way is the openness as much as possible.

1. Decision making on direct budget support should also be made more participatory and involve civil society through ANP. This can be implemented through delegating ANP representatives in the Steering Committees of the direct budget support projects.
2. There should be steps ensuring at least partial synchronization of communication strategies between the ANP, the Government of Armenia and the EU Delegation re CEPA and broader EU assistance and cooperation with Armenia. The communication strategy should be aimed at opposing the disinformation on the processes initiated within the framework of the EU-Armenia cooperation and wider; more user friendly and strategically far looking awareness raising activities should be undertaken on the real outcomes of the EU-Armenia cooperation.
3. Communication between the ongoing EU funded projects and ANP can be important for both increasing their transparency and accountability and raising awareness on EU support to Armenia for wider audience.

Recommendations to ANP and Civil Society

1. There should be significant structural reform adapting ANP to the new situation, namely:
 - a. Strengthening Working Groups and making their work more result oriented and sustainable.
 - b. Development of horizontal cross-cutting structures that unite ANP members' activities in the spheres of monitoring, advocacy and awareness raising.
 - c. Developing ANP communication strategy and plan.
 - d. Initiating internal and public discussions of the CEPA content and developing proposals for making CEPA more instrumental at the stage of implementation of CEPA.
 - e. Implementing capacity building activities aimed at familiarizing CSOs on various content related aspects of the EU-Armenia cooperation (CEPA, HRD, GSP+, Creative Europe, etc.) on one hand and developing monitoring, advocacy and awareness raising capacities on another.
2. ANP should undertake steps on ensuring involvement of a wider spectrum of society in the Platform through business associations, labor unions and regional CSOs.
3. ANP should play the role of disseminator of its members' products. In order to ensure more effective utilization of products developed by its members the Platform can develop a mechanism of uniting products of its members under one format. This can be implemented particularly with monitoring reports and policy recommendations.
4. In order to ensure more effective circulation of information throughout the country ANP should establish regional representations through mandating this function to its strong regional members.
5. There should be intensive communication between ANP and other civil society entities involved in the EU-Armenia dialogue. Particularly, communication of ANP with the CSOs that are implementing various EU funded projects can ensure both additional flow of EU related information. ANP can also act as a platform for the EU funded capacity building projects to connect these projects with ANP member CSOs in terms of both institutional capacity development and building the capacities related to the EU policies and procedures (see point 2 of the recommendations to EU institutions for more details).
6. Representation mechanisms should be more actively utilized by the ANP in terms of delegating Platform members to the Steering Committees formed within the framework of Direct Budget Support projects. This will allow to increase the circulation of information both raising awareness of CSOs on the processes and allowing to deliver recommendations to the decision makers re particular programs and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON MOLDOVA

Recommendations to National Platform and Civil Society

1. There is a need to strengthen the National Platform in terms of development of its institutional capacities and positioning in Moldova.

2. The registration of the Secretariat and fundraising for NP activities via Secretariat to ensure regular meetings, expertise accumulation and communication.
3. Membership of CSOs in the NP should be more explicit, representation of the NP by its member organizations is important in terms of positioning the platform as a key actor in Moldova.
4. Expertise of separate organizations is significant, however the civil society in Moldova is lacking consolidation efforts, and the NP can become an important actor to play the consolidating role for the civil society.
5. The Georgian experience of sectoral meetings and annual conference can be applied, Armenian experience of registering the secretariat is also worth for consideration.

Recommendations to the Government of Moldova

1. Develop a trilateral communication mechanism between the EU-Government-Civil Society to facilitate the direct dialogue, thus eliminating parallel communication.
2. Establish an institutional framework for communication with the civil society that would allow to tailor MNP, the bi-lateral platform and other civil society entities involved in EU-Moldova dialogue.
3. Establish sectoral dialogue format to involve respective line ministries and sectoral CSOs represented in MNP working groups to communicate on regular basis and exchange information on sectoral reforms.
4. Use the experience of cooperation with civil society to formulate the general principles of cooperation with the MNP through developing and signing MoU with the MNP.
5. Organize periodic strategic consultations aimed at receiving feedback of the civil society on the general process of implementation of AA.

Recommendations to the EU Delegation in Moldova

1. To make sure that the Delegation is in permanent communication with the MNP through establishing a mechanism of regular consultations between the EU Delegation and MNP.
2. To support the MNP in terms of capacity building via providing technical assistance to the platform.
3. Ensure that the communication with civil society on major developments on EaP and EU-Moldova relations is held on periodic basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON GEORGIA

In Georgia, strengthening civic participation in the decision making is closely linked to the European integration process. Development of civic participation culture and respective institutions is often included in all agreements and programs that determine agenda of relations between the EU and Georgia.

Two most important civil society platforms, which should provide structural dialogue between civil society and authorities on the most important issues of the country's development, have

been created within the frameworks of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the EU Eastern Partnership Program. Together with efforts by the EU, it is important to note increased willingness of the Georgian government to cooperate with civil society on various issues. This is evident by the memorandums of cooperation signed by the Georgian National Platform with the Government of Georgia and the European Integration Committee of parliament, as well as by similar memorandums separately signed by other coalitions and CSOs operating in Georgia. Nevertheless, often the intensity and forms of civic participation do not determine civil society's influence on politics. The authorities often neglect civil society's views and recommendations in relation to a number of issues.

Despite significant progress, various complex challenges still remain that are associated with sustainability and efficiency of civic participation. Authorities often lack a uniform systematic approach to civic engagement and participation in the implementation of policy cycle. Additionally, CSOs do not have equal opportunities to actively participate in political decision-making even on the acute public problems, which is not a good practice.

It is noteworthy that in most cases the impact and effectiveness of civil participation have not been assessed, nor the relevant statistical data and the critical analysis and evaluation of the process have ever been carried out, which would have significantly enhanced the efficiency of the process.

Still, developing adequate skills and qualifications for both civil servants and civil society organizations remains a challenge, which impedes civil society participation to become as consistent and targeted as possible.

It is noteworthy that ensuring necessary financial resources for active civil involvement and participation is one of the strategic issues that should be given more attention from both the government and civil society. As the study reveals, in some cases lack of financial resources make it impossible to carry out very important activities, which negatively affects civil participation process.

For effective response to existing challenges, it is crucial to have strong political will by the government to increase opportunities for civil society involvement in policy planning, implementation and monitoring. On the other hand, it is important to further deepen cooperation between various civil society organizations and increase their capacities in order to elaborate and introduce the most effective instruments of civic participation in political decision-making based on wide public discussions.

Recommendations to the National Platform and Civil Society

1. Strengthening internal coordination and cooperation in order to enhance expertise and feedback;
2. Strengthening the communication between CSOs with their beneficiaries aimed at ensuring more effective representation of public and professional groups in the process of implementation of the AA;
3. Enhancing cooperation between different civil society platforms;
4. Strengthening coordination and cooperation with civil society organizations of Eastern Partnership countries and EU member states;

5. Ensuring equal quality of expertise in terms of WG representation through capacity building activities, involvement of new CSOs, involvement of international organizations and EU partner organizations;
6. Ensuring more periodic communication with the EU Delegation and EU institutions;
7. Ensuring civil society organizations with more information and training on civic participation tools and methods;
8. Developing mechanisms of closer communication and greater exchange of information between various civil society organizations in order to conduct appropriate joint preparatory works aimed at drastically enhancing quality of bilateral meetings;
9. Commencing active discussions on mechanisms for strengthening civil society's financial sustainability, including the possibilities of funding from the state budget;
10. Improving communication of Georgia-EU Civil Society Platform with EU-Georgia Association Council, Association Committee and Association Parliamentary Committee;
11. Ensuring more efficient utilization of Association Platform and EU Eastern Partnership capabilities by CSOs for more intensive participation in advocacy campaign, lobbying and political decision-making.

Recommendations to the Government of Georgia

1. Providing public servants and individual decision-makers with more information and training on civic participation tools and methods;
2. Developing mechanisms of closer communication and greater exchange of information with civil society organizations in order to enhance quality of bilateral meetings;
3. Ensuring civil society participation not only in the area of policy monitoring and evaluation, but also in policy planning and implementation, which will facilitate better decisions;
4. Strengthening cooperation with civil society, especially in those spheres where civil society can provide significant assistance (research, awareness raising, expert analysis, etc.);
5. Conducting relevant statistics related to civic participation in order to assess its results and improve existing practices;
6. Providing feedback on recommendations submitted by GNP in order to improve the quality of communication outlined in memorandum of cooperation signed between GNP and the government;
7. Creating working groups involving CSOs by the parliamentary committees; provide them with purposeful information and ensure their involvement in the lawmaking process;
8. Introducing the practice of preliminary work meetings with civil society to discuss draft laws initiated by the authorities in order to ensure feedback and efficient participation of the civil society;
9. Drafting by the parliament an annual, time-framed action plan for the legislative harmonization process with the EU to ensure appropriation of reasonable time for discussing the draft

laws, as well as better transparency and proper civic participation;

10. Conducting joint consultations and ensuring coordinated efforts of cooperation with donor organizations by the government and civil society;

11. Starting discussions about the possibilities of funding CSOs from the state budget of Georgia.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU INSTITUTIONS

1. Intensifying efforts to facilitate cooperation of Georgian CSOs with Eastern Partnership countries' CSOs on the one hand and with the EU member states' civil society on the other hand;

2. Ensuring financial assistance to EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform;

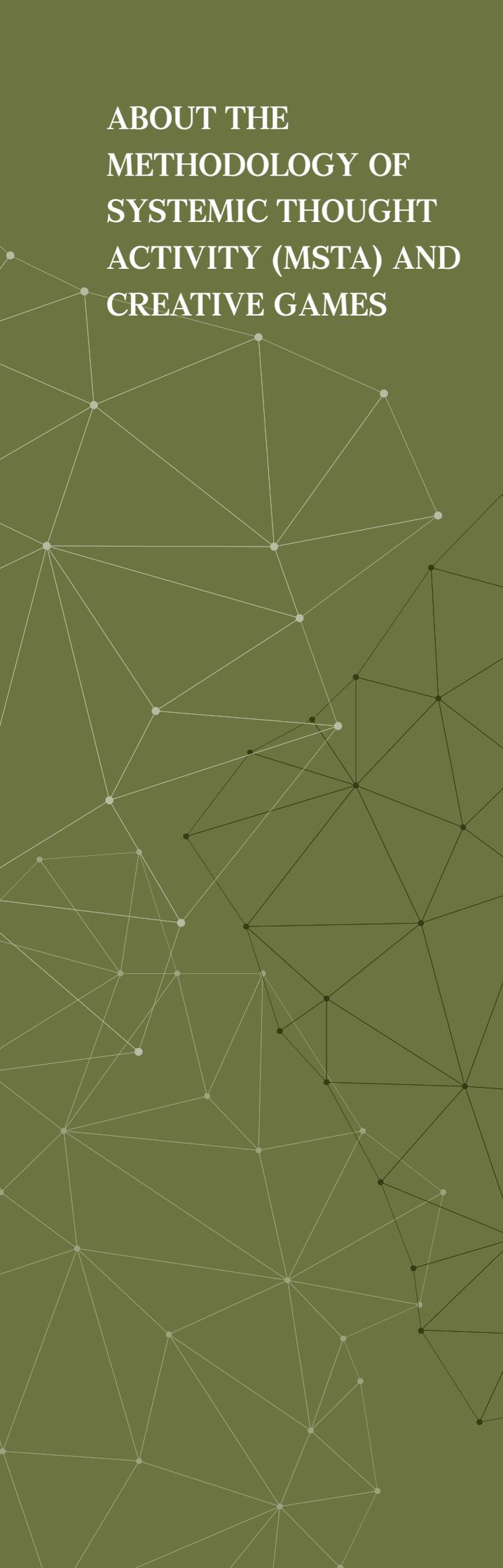
3. Introducing opportunities for institutional assistance in order to strengthen the sustainability of CSOs;

4. Improving communication and cooperation between EU representation in Georgia and civil society in the process of policy elaboration;

5. Strengthening the tripartite, EU-Government-CSOs, cooperation formats;

6. Creating additional format of participation for GNP aimed at ensuring representation of Georgian civil society at the EU-Georgia Association Council meeting;

7. Ensuring developing a format of regular meetings with EaP countries



ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY OF SYSTEMIC THOUGHT ACTIVITY (MSTA) AND CREATIVE GAMES

The Methodology of Systemic Thought Activity (MSTA) stems from the development of human civilization over millennia and such particular aspects of it as philosophy and science, with an emphasis on cognitive theory, axiology, communication, social psychology, logic, and creativity. It has taken shape as a separate method over the last 70 years and has been successfully applied to a variety of areas where new, innovative and creative ways for solving problems are needed. Among the western sciences, the multidisciplinary area called ‘cognitive science’ comes closest to MSTA today.

PART ONE

What is MSTA?

The Methodology of Systemic Thought Activity (MSTA) is a combination of several methodological tools aimed at the effective organization of collective thought and the discovery of out-of-the-box, often breakthrough solutions for complex issues. The rationale behind the method is the liberation of the mind from ‘snail-paced’ thinking and ‘tunnel vision’, which hamper human creativity to a great extent. An important tool with which MSTA operates is formalization through visualization. Concepts, ideas, assumptions, correlations and statements are visualized in order to be logical and clear. The language of the MSTA is a language of visual clarity.

Another important tool used is the ‘reflection position’, i.e. the ability to observe the attitude of the actor towards the problem as part of the problem; this creates an opportunity for ‘thinkers’ to identify connections and solutions that are beyond the borders of the problem itself. The application of these mechanisms builds a screen for collective thought (see picture 1) and develops a group vocabulary that allows participants to be on the same page while speaking about this or that notion and process. The collective thought screen also secures the flow of thinking from abusive interferences, since the flow is visible for the whole group, and any idea can be caught, developed, used or criticized by each member of the group. Moreover, thanks to formalization, when a group member picks up an idea, he or she continues the agreed

logical flow of the group, and incorporates it in the group thinking in a way visible for the whole group.

As mentioned, MSTA has existed over millennia, since the times when humankind looked at its own thinking process as a separate activity. The concept, however, was coined in 1950s by Russian philosopher Georgiy Shchedrovitsky¹, who had founded the 'Methodological Circle' at Moscow State University. The historical circumstances in which Shchedrovitsky developed his approach included the death of Stalin, which opened up the depth of the crisis in which the Soviet Union had found itself after totalitarianism; and the crisis of philosophy and value in general that the world experienced after World War II. In the 1970s, Shchedrovitsky introduced the application of MSTA into everyday human activity through what he called 'Organizational-Activity Games' (OAG).

He and his followers ran hundreds of such games in the late period of the Soviet Union and immediately after its collapse. Since then, there exist various groups of people² who have gone through one MSTA activity or the other in the former Soviet states. Many concrete actions have been undertaken as a result of using MSTA. Shchedrovitsky's followers use his legacy in different ways to this day. It is a well-known fact that at least one high official in today's Russian power circles, Sergey Kirienko, is an MSTA enthusiast and user.

The Armenia-based version of MSTA has been developed by methodologist, professor and diplomat David Hovhannisyan³. While stemming from a Russian thinker, the Armenian Methodological Committee is not Russian and is not linked to Russia. The version of MSTA we suggest has been modified over the years to make it more creative, more transparent, more result-oriented, and more capable of addressing the value crisis that Game participants experience, independently of the actual topic of the Game. We renamed the Organizational-Activity Games into Creative Games (CG).

Since 1989⁴ our team, our school of MSTA, has run about 30 medium-to-large-scale Creative Games (each for 30 to 70 people, each for 3 to 7 days), some in and for other countries, some international, on a variety of topics. Naturally, the majority of games have taken place in Armenia. Around 3000 individuals have taken part in the Games run by our team over this time, and many of them have become users of this method in their activities.

What is a Creative Game?

It is an event that lasts for several (3-20) days and brings together large groups of people (15-120) from different backgrounds to create a new vision, develop new strategies, find solutions to difficult problems, develop projects to resolve these problems, build teams, free people of their biases, and give new impetus to social and organizational change.

A CG is designed and run by a group of Methodologists, with the help of Game Facilitators. The development of a new Game is a very complex, difficult, challenging, but rewarding creative task.

MSTA and CGs are a unique approach which provides a space for in-depth discussion, helps building collective/shared identities, grouping people of different backgrounds and cultures,

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgiy_Shchedrovitsky

² Некоммерческий научный Фонд «Институт развития им. Г.П. Щедровицкого»: <http://www.fondgp.ru/>

³ <http://www.y-su.am/persons/en/David-Hovhannisyan>

⁴ ОДИ в Армении вчера, сегодня, завтра: <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/38.creativegamesfor-book6last-aug-2009-2012.pdf>

and, as a result, coming up with 'out-of-the-box' solutions for complex issues. The Game has its organic and holistic flow, its stages are not discrete and often go in parallel, and even this division into 'stages' is rather symbolic. The Game divides participants into groups which work under the guidance of Game Facilitators on the various aspects of the main topic. Every day the groups gather together to hear reports from each other; this allows the Game to build a joint identity and language.

The Game is based on drawing ideas, and its intermediary and final results are colorful drawings and schemes which demonstrate the participants' flow of thought. After the Game, some of these drawings are operationalized further. They can be also computerized, becoming useful technological tools for further addressing the issues raised in the Game. However, no particular drawing skills, or any other special talents are required from the participants.

The method of 'unpacking' ('de-objectification') used in the Game works for overcoming the effect of simplistic 'flat model' thinking. It helps participants get rid of knowledge/education/propaganda-based biases. During this stage, a process occurs of touching upon fundamental and very deep values. The Game builds a joint vocabulary with the input of all participants: notions, ideas and process descriptors referring to the topics discussed are created and they continue being referenced beyond the Game's lifetime. This 'joint language building' is often a key for developing shared identities and teams. This helps address compartmentalization, lack of solidarity and common ground for participants.

In the last stage of the game, 'pure thinking' or 'creative surge' processes take place, where people create new ideas and solutions to the issues raised from different perspectives in a highly intensive process.

The Game allocates sufficient time to address in-depth contradictions, team formation, create joint vocabularies and understanding, and eventually the development of working solutions.

What is the role of a Game Facilitator?

The Game Facilitators or Game Technicians are highly important in designing the modus and scenario of the Game under the leadership of the Game Methodologists; they lead the Game and the group work throughout the event. Their role is also crucial at the stage of putting findings together, and 'translating' the results of the Game, including graphs, into policy language.

S/he helps people to get rid of their prejudices by broadening their intellectual horizons. S/he leads the collective intellectual process in a Game group so that the process does not deviate from its route. Game Facilitators translate participants' ideas/concepts into the 'languages/vocabulary' of each team and into the 'language' of the Game. S/he helps the participants learn the 'language' of the Game, which requires that every idea is drawn on the board rather than merely told to the group. S/he may be strict, for example, by challenging those who consider themselves experts on the issue under discussion, in order to demonstrate the limitations of their knowledge. S/he may intervene when the group is deviating from the main intellectual point and guide the train of thought. At the same time s/he helps participants play by opening up their creative capacities, which helps them feel empowered and become more creative. In addition to concrete ideas, actual proposals and ways for solving problems, the Game provides a bird's eye view on how to approach problems like those examined during the event, thereby often turning its participants into leaders.

What are the results of a Game?

The reports from the facilitators contain the main conclusions, recommendations and project ideas. ‘Tangible’ results also consist of the drawings produced during the Game, and the minutes taken during the group presentations at joint sessions for all the groups. This material⁵ encapsulates some of the intellectual value of the Game. However, this written and visual evidence is only the tip of the iceberg. The main result consists of the participants of the Game, who leave this event filled with new ideas and vision, with a belief that they can implement these new projects in partnership with others. The participants are the fruits borne of the Game.

Why are other methods insufficient to achieve the same result?

Sometimes because of shortage of resources (time, money, people), conventional methods of problem⁶ solving can be too result-oriented and fall short of successful implementation, thus ending up being unproductive.

Simulations and role-games, brainstorming, even conferences, trainings, workshops, traditional or innovative teaching, seminars, consultative technologies (facilitation, consulting and so on) as well as any learning processes or the multitude of modern human management tools suggested by management consultancies, e.g. devoted to performance acceleration, may all have some superficial similarity to CG. However, CG is principally different from all of the above in several respects:

- a. It helps build a holistic worldview concerning a problem and the ways of its resolution.
- b. It helps build political will among the participants to address the problem after the Game based on the results achieved during it.
- c. It helps overcome value crises among the participants.
- d. It moves global knowledge concerning the issue at hand forward along with ways to address it.
- e. It builds ‘generalists’ rather than specialists from the participants, i.e. participants become leaders who can successfully implement the Game ideas.

Why does it seem so complex?

This method is no more complex than, say, writing a more conventional project proposal or strategy aiming at large-scale social and political impact. Like with any other method, it has developed its own ‘vocabulary’ and tools which may appear to be inaccessible at first. If one has not sufficiently looked at the *how* rather than only the *what*, or has not thought enough about the processes of implementation of the project, it will fail. Specialists know the importance of the *process* which, if wrong or left unattended, will jeopardize *results*. MSTA and CG offer a process which is well-thought through, has been tested over a number of years in different contexts, and is also fun and aesthetically attractive (the resulting multi-color drawings of ideas catch one’s eye).

⁵ Armenia’s Policies in The Light of The Russian-Georgian War and Its Consequences: http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/expert_workshop_english.pdf

⁶ MSTA differentiates between the ‘problem’, which does not have a known algorithm as a solution, from the ‘issue’, which has already been solved several times in the past and only needs the correct algorithm to be applied for its solution. MTSA focuses on the first of the two – problems.

In which areas can it be used?

MSTA and CGs can essentially be applied to any area. They have been used in urban work, architecture, environmental work, ethnic conflict transformation, civil society development, legal work, organizational development, design, education, politics, economics, finances, etc. They have helped design successful and viable inter-governmental and intra-governmental institutions; structure societal systems; and in other large-scale governance and organizational tasks.

They are very successful when applied to organizational change: the results are shared by the entire organization and its environment and implemented by the leadership, developing a joint vision and reforming institutions. They can also be used while addressing scientific problems. In this case, the method provides an environment in which scientists can spot which elements of the problem they have missed so far. The Game may also help them solve problems which seemed unsolvable earlier, make discoveries and inventions, and create new tools.

What are its shortcomings?

Not every participant is able to grasp the entire result of the Game. Therefore, some of them may feel dissatisfied (while the majority feel even if not totally satisfied by the results, at least significantly intellectually refreshed). If the participants are particularly intellectually weak, graduates of a poor education system or small in number, the results of the Game may suffer. People who did not take part in the Game may have difficulties understanding its results. Those who have never taken part in such a Game may find it more difficult to understand the conclusions of the Game than those who have some experience of a CG. Its results may be left unimplemented (for instance, when its recommendations go against the plans of the beneficiary leadership). The Game does not promise or provide easy solutions, but it brings about a feeling of unity among the participants which does not happen in day-to-day life. Therefore, some of those who took part in the Game may feel withdrawal symptoms when returning to their daily routines. Sometimes, the Game may frustrate those participants who link their personal authority to their professional expertise: the Game environment challenges professional expertise by trying to get people to put aside their prior knowledge in order to see new and untried opportunities.

The outcomes of the MSTA exercise are manifold: in addition to projects on and commitment for institutional change, creation of new institutions, reform of the existing ones, abandoning the plans for the creation of unnecessary ones, etc.; they include personal advancement, development of individual capacities of reflection, planning, strategic thinking, creativity, and networking.

Along the way of working towards this aim, contradictions between the varying value systems and interests of the individuals or agencies they represent will be resolved via specific processes of MSTA called 'moving upwards alongside the reflection lift', 'de-compartmentalization' and 'de-objectification', and 'achieving a joint space of thought-activity'. When the group reaches this level, which happens in a matter of one or two days during the Game, it abandons the prejudices of its members and of their expertise, their stereotypes and 'homework luggage'. True group creativity is unleashed, which results in creative ideas and projects that are fully doable since they take into account all the necessary elements of achievability, such as the issues of resource, monitoring, realism, red-tape, planning, leadership, and they are also strengthened by the fact that the group participants become the authors, protagonists and doers of the project themselves. The chance of manipulation is reduced in the CG by the fact that, in the common

thought-activity space, all participants are equal and any deviation from the common thought flow is easily discernible by them and is discarded through the process of thought-activity. This process allows avoiding the usual traps associated with other types of brainstorming (such as groupthink, for example), as well as the limitations of existing decision-making mechanisms, such as voting, consensus, consensus minus one, arbitrary decision-making, veto, subordination, etc.

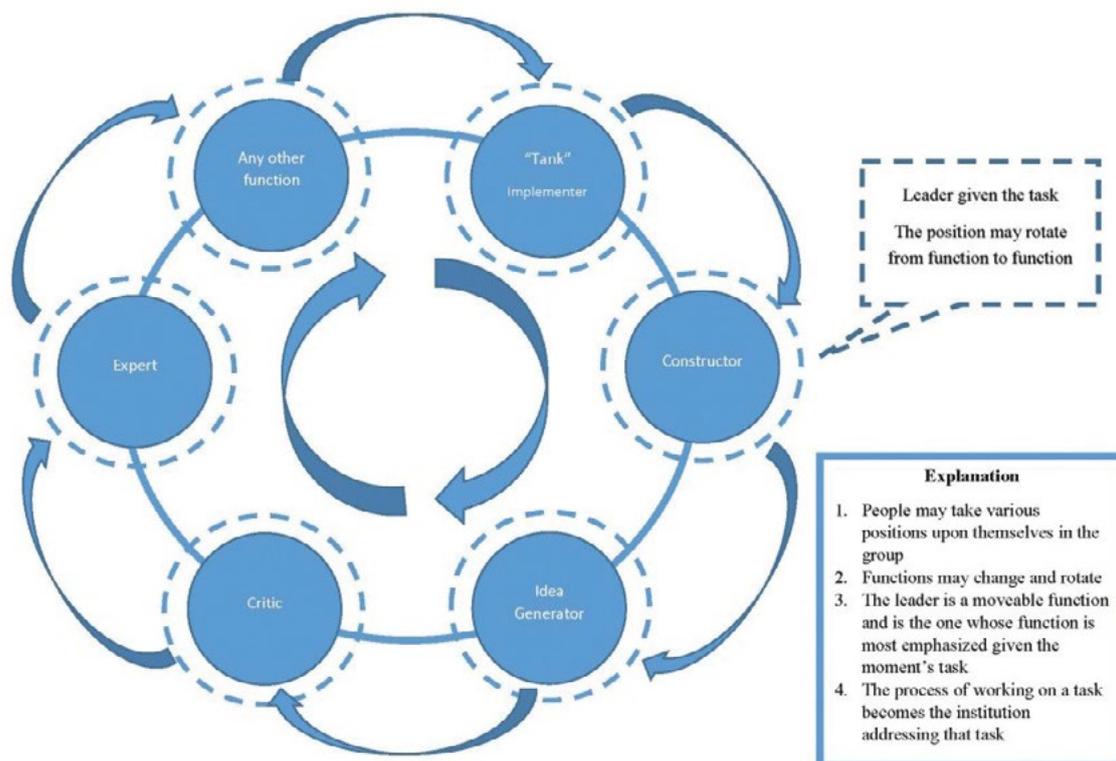
For more information on MSTA and CG, see the next part.

PART TWO

MORE ABOUT MSTA AND CREATIVE GAMES

Decision Making

The principle of “sliding general”



Picture 1

To see an example of how **decision making**, as well as the **group dynamic and leadership** work can be accomplished in an MSTA-based system, please refer to the scheme in Picture 1: here we have a group which has built a joint identity related to the implementation of a strategic task. Its members acquire dynamic functions necessary for the group to accomplish its task: ‘the generator of ideas’, ‘the implementer’, ‘the constructor’, the ‘critic’, etc. These functions can change depending on the stage of the implementation of the task. For instance, the idea generator at the stage of implementation can become a critic, and the implementer can become an idea generator when this task is most relevant. Each one of them takes upon himself or herself the temporary leadership at the point in time when a particular stage of the project at hand

has to be accomplished, based on the most pressing need: at the stage of idea generation it is the generator who is in charge; at the stage of implementation it is the implementer; etc. This scheme itself is the result of a past CG and has been used since then for many group systems which require dynamic and flexible leadership and decision making outside of the usual decision-making types.

This is just one illustrative and simplified example of decision-making principles that can result from applying MSTA.

Rebuilding Identities and Renaming Reality

MSTA allows us to bring back the broken identity of any unit⁷—an individual, a group or team, a community, and/or a larger group—say, a society—into a more or less holistic unity. Unity which is not totalitarian but is capable of achieving targets as a well-functioning group.

The simplistic picture of today's global—and Armenian—world is that too much specialization, too much information, too many opportunities, as well as crises of management and values have fragmented the individual worldview, global perception and visions, including individual or social perception. Our task is to make it whole again but avoid too much mythology, making the individual—and the group—critically-minded, creative and educated.

MSTA is a human technology rather than an automatable one. Computer technologies can help us, while using MSTA, to improve its usage and make its impact more effective. But, as we know, the issue is that humans can do things that non-human technology cannot: humans develop objectives and ways to achieve them, and automated technologies are simply the means and resources in this process. So, we need, first of all, human technologies. The 'fourth industrial revolution does not convey the reality of global developments' – these are words that Shchedrovitsky would have liked. The words 'industry' and 'revolution' sound for many as outdated today as many other such words: 'ideology', 'left', 'right', 'enlightenment' etc. They are considered stereotypically if only one part, domain, or form of their meaning or capacity is taken and presented as the whole, and it is believed by the speaker that everyone agrees that this partial picture represents the whole object. The person taking this fragment usually mistakenly believes that everyone agrees that the content of that concept is understood the way they mean it.

What we are talking about here is *renaming reality* to go beyond stereotypes, to move from discussing a part of the object to its whole.

The Value Crisis

Value systems are constructed in all possible ways: genetically, perhaps, some of them are transferred from parents to their offspring; epigenetically and socially they are constructed by families, societies and states, by the environment of individuals. Humans are extremely flexible and adaptable, as compared to many other species, therefore they are capable of adapting to the value systems in which they operate. They can agree on some values and disagree on others, but they can adapt by fitting their desire for freedom within some value systems and change other values with which they do not want to agree.

A major way of influencing value systems is, obviously, the education system of humankind in its entirety. It is this institution with its formal and informal components that makes individuals

⁷ «Перспективы, цели и задачи молодежных движений на Кавказе в условиях неурегулированных конфликтов»: <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/obshchekavkazskaya-igra-pitsunda-2003-fevral-final.pdf>

behave in one way or another. There is no doubt that the elements of the current global crisis would be absent or different if it were not for the education institutions which shaped humanity for the last several centuries of the history of civilization.

There is also no doubt that the education system globally is in crisis today. What are the manifestations of that crisis?

Higher levels of education have ceased to be a guarantee for success in the market, either individually or collectively. It is more and more visible that formal education institutions are often unable to form the type of individual they aim to develop; the one illustration of this is the fact that people from Western Europe (presumably educated according to the ‘western’ standards) adopt an aggressive and twisted form of Islam and go to join the Islamic State. Another illustration is that the number of people educated in formal institutions who, however, remain functionally illiterate, is growing.

To this, one should add technological growth with its unexpected effects. If we follow the logic of Ken Robinson, we can say that the system of education that exists today was developed in the previous, pre-internet, period of civilization. This education system, with its proposal for analyzing the flow of information the way it was done in times past, is now outdated.

Relative freedom and ease of mobility for a majority of humankind—both in real as well as virtual space—allows for potential learning opportunities unsurpassed by previous eras of history. On the other hand, this brings about several challenges. To take only the internet, first, it is filled with information that may be misleading; second, it does not provide any guidance on how to select what one may need. This brings about the change in the value system orientation that a major part of humankind relied on in the past: that there is a ‘mainstream’ value system that an individual belongs to, versus all other values. But since possessing a ‘mainstream’ value system is ‘hard-wired’ in humankind’s psychology as it has evolved over the centuries (because it was a precondition for the capacity to adapt and cope with challenges), this situation of challenging the ‘former mainstream,’ in turn, results in ‘easy adoption’ of a mainstream as a defensive measure, a way of ‘saving’ one’s psychology from the challenge posed to it by the ‘unruly’ information world’s onslaught. This is similar to a scenario when the brain is unable to react in time and it is the spinal cord that gives the signal but ends up being mistaken and produces a signal that does not match the situation correctly.

Thus, globalization and new technological opportunities bring about a new challenge: *returning to the archaic mindset* as a defense against the complexity of the world.

Those who have the capacity for *critical thinking*, those who have had an ‘exceptionally good’ education, those who have acquired the capacity to orientate in the complexity of values flooding the world today, can resist that effect. However, they are a minority, since very few education systems today take into account the factors mentioned above, and most of them are designed to be even more conservative than some other systems, precisely for the reason of preserving the ‘mainstream value system’ that they have successfully relied upon over the times of their existence, without realizing that this is no longer sufficient to guarantee the progress of humankind.

The result is a clash of two mega-value systems: one which is capable of orientating in the world today and making informed and effective decisions that are beneficial for the future of humankind, and one which is not, and the latter is a majority.

These two mega-value systems permeate all the other institutions and sides of society, be they social, cultural, economic, state-interest (e.g. ‘geopolitical’), etc. It is also understandable that the clash between them has existed historically, it was just not realized in these terms. For instance, the clash between the ‘West’ and the ‘rest’ is a flat model of this conflict. A lack of realization of the true essence of this conflict brings about a situation where those who think their position is ‘correct’ have to accept a challenge to their position which comes from the ‘cultural corner’. That is why gender studies and feminism, or anti-colonial discourse have become so important, because the domination of the ‘truth paradigm’ by a ‘white western man’ was deficient and unjust. At the same time, exaggerating identity politics results in another ‘flat model’ approach, which exacerbates the conflict between mega-value systems rather than resolves it. The critique is usually not based on a conscious discussion of the two “mega-value” systems; it simply casts aside the “western” approach as one that is dominant, “imperialist” and culturally limited.

We have several manifestations of this replacement of the mega-issue by its flat models. For instance, Human Rights are interpreted as a manifestation of ‘western values’ that is not applicable in the case of other cultures, and the fact that they are of a value created by humankind universally is lost in this kind of relativistic approach.

If the idea of Human Rights is replaced by the idea of ‘western values’, it immediately becomes deficient. Human Rights can be conceived as globally applicable. Independently if a ‘western’ or a ‘non-western’ person argues that they are ‘western values’, in both cases they become deficient, because they lose their global significance. If the problem is formulated as a ‘flat model’ then either side can be accused, sincerely or manipulatively, in simplistic distortion or motivated reasoning while using this concept.

Similarly, there is a conflict between mega-discourses versus ‘*compartmentalization*’ of knowledge. Professions have become more and more complex. Mega-discourses, such as religion, even if followed by individuals, are no more directly linked to the other elements of the individual’s identity, such as his or her profession. Just like the dollar is no longer linked to gold; and governance is no longer linked, in many places, to divine origins. In earlier times, one’s identity could be linked to the prevalent mega-discourse within which one is situated. Here is a simple example. The Russian word for “peasant” is *крестьянин*, stemming from the root which means “Christian”. In such very obvious or other, not-so-obvious ways, and one’s worldview was being kept holistic. Today, many people do not have such a holistic worldview.

More on Education and Other Crises

MSTA exposes the fact that education is in crisis—and, in fact, it is in crisis at a global, post-Soviet⁸ and national Armenian level⁹. MSTa protagonists have talked¹⁰ and written about the fact that if an element of a global or post-Soviet crisis is not being addressed while the focus is on the national crisis—the effect will not be positive. So, we need a methodologically new educational system. We suggest using MSTa to review mental processes, deconstruct the possibilities for prognostic strategy and collective thinking, as well as for many other things.

⁸ <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/39.otchiot-chetverg-for-web-nov-2009-full.pdf>

⁹ Игра «Лидерство», февраль 2009 г. Севан: <http://gtergab.com/ru/news/methodology-2/leadership-a-creative-game-february-2009-sevan/119/>

¹⁰ Armenia 3.0 Understanding 20th Century: Part 9: http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Armenia-3.0_Part-9_transcript_English_March-14-2017_final_published-on-March-31-2017.pdf

MSTA is a great tool to develop a concept of an innovative educational/scientific system¹¹ and implement it. Incidentally, a crisis was felt strongly by Shchedrovitsky in the Soviet education system of the second half of the 20th century, and this was one of the reasons why he developed his system as well.

The Russian school after Shchedrovitsky stayed distrustful towards creativity, which made their approach too technical and technological and, in some cases, devoid of the capacity ‘to fly’. Perhaps that is why they were accused of totalitarianism and manipulation, eventually ending in crisis.

Meanwhile this is a method which made many of its participants and protagonists successful, happy, and able to help their countries, societies, teams, and the issues they tried to address with scarce means. MSTA is not a panacea. But it has a chance of helping overcome the impasse of the global educational crisis.

MSTA is a very human- and individual-dependent method. The most difficult thing in it, perhaps, is to find people who can work alongside the leader of the method—the methodologist; i.e. to have followers not at the level of beneficiaries, but at the level of those who will continue the development of the method.

That is why it is crucial to pick up from the present MSTA team what we know and can do, strengthen and magnify the capacities of the limited group of people who can continue what we do, bring in new people into that pool, and use the method to the fullest.

Like many other methods, MSTA is art, science and skill, so conveying it verbally will always be deficient. It has to be experienced. It is about practice and action, a method most useful in the project paradigm: it unites the highest levels of abstract philosophy with the minutiae of mundane actions. MSTA is the most disruptive technology one can imagine.

MSTA, when applied on a large scale, can positively impact any area of its application¹².

Governance

Our governance is so deeply dysfunctional that it almost does not make sense suggesting a holistic reform plan. That is why political parties do not have any such during the election circles, nor do the opposition ones pursue piecemeal changes in-between of elections. Although such plans do exist, they face the risk of being ‘eaten up’ by the systemic dysfunctionality of the whole.

MSTA can be used to address this deep crisis¹³ and suggest ways for reconciling the plan of particular change with the process of systemic reform¹⁴.

Business

The various branches of MSTA that evolved in Russia around the students of Shchedrovitsky, independently of their particular successes and failures, failed in one major task: turning this into an international methodology and breaking into the international market. Our Creative

¹¹ <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/37.bruisov-odi-report-gev.pdf>

¹² https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1558140017543617&id=256028707754761

¹³ Необходимые действия Армении в свете Российско-Грузинской войны и ее последствий:
http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/30.expert_workshop_russian-sept-2008.pdf

¹⁴ http://am.epfarmania.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CELoG-CG-Major-Highlights_Arm.pdf

Games have been successful in that, although internationally we have so far addressed only the non-profit sphere. Our team members have consulted several post-Soviet businesses¹⁵ using MSTA. In Armenia today, the following applications of MSTA in business seem most pertinent in the short- to medium-term:

- Using MSTA with and for businesses which want to innovate; educating them in creativity and innovation¹⁶. Identifying clear ways forward for innovative ideas with high likelihood of success. This is a way different from the usual path of startups: the majority of such technologies which are today used in the world and in Armenia are based on ‘ad hoc searching’ of ideas or, consciously or inadvertently, replicate the success of already existing ideas. None of them educates participants into targeted thinking, creativity, and innovation, and combining ideas and values with market approaches. Needless to say, the world today dreams about such a combination. Of course, if particular ideas need support, MSTA can be applied to boost them as well, in a more narrow and targeted way.
- Armenia—and the Armenian branch of MSTA—can become an international hub for bringing back meaning into the world’s undertakings. The capacities of MSTA are very large and they are as yet untapped fully. Armenia will then indeed become something that Armenians like to boast about – a globally renowned location where meaning is produced and radiated worldwide, shaping the global future.

The idea of applying MSTA on a larger scale than before is fully feasible. The resources that its one round will require will not be more than the resources needed for a high quality international conference, at least in the beginning.

The unintended and incalculable additional outcomes of Creative Games may include computer game scenarios, simulation scenarios, research scenarios, policy recommendations, particular inventions, gadgets etc. For instance, ideas such as sending SMS via landline phones, or having double-screen computers in shops so that the client sees the same information that the salesperson is looking at, thus increasing transparency, were invented by the participants of MSTA exercises long before they began being produced industrially. But of course, the major potential impact of MSTA as a whole is in revolutionizing the life and business success of individuals which possess that skill, and of the groups and entire societies which acquire meaning and a capacity to create their future.

Novelty

MSTA’s practical application exists since 1973, when Shchedrovitsky ran his first Organizational-Activity Game. It has been applied in Russia in business and governance and has probably been partly successful – see Kirienko’s career. However, turning it into an open, transparent and internationally marketable tool has been achieved only by the Armenian team¹⁷, and only partially. It will be a novelty to do it on a larger scale for Armenia’s benefit.

Drawing ideas¹⁸ and thoughts and coming to a consensus via drawings rather than mere words is probably one of the most innovative ways of overcoming the crisis of notions in today’s global

¹⁵ <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/20.business-ocean-spring-2007.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://am.epfarmenia.am/innovation-creative-thinking/>

¹⁷ Towards Peace Games: Facilitation and Creative Games in Conflict Transformation A Comparison and Contrast: <http://gtergab.com/files/uploads/methodology/17.calgaryarticle-july-2006-2013.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://web.facebook.com/groups/276237769459786/photos/>

world. This crisis has been identified as early as the beginning of the 20th century, but became an endemic condition with postmodernism; this crisis is also very much linked to the pervasive mistrust that permeates the world today, because mistrust of words is a part of global mistrust. Needless to say, it is also very pertinent to Armenia today.

Where does one learn thinking today, both in Armenia and in the world? People are taught, whether consciously or unconsciously, by their surroundings, their families and schools, but almost never addressing the tools for thinking directly. In the best-case scenario, they learn formal logic and rhetoric. In rare cases, they study philosophy and critical thinking. In science they use the process of thinking but usually do not study it. Thinking, meanwhile, is a much more all-encompassing skill than logic, and is used in philosophy, science but also in many other areas. *People think that when they experience psychological processes they think—but in fact that is not thinking.* MSTA offers people a toolset to learn how to think—and makes them acquire that skill fast and successfully. In today's world, where 'critical thinking' has become another buzzword and nobody really understands what it means, MSTA offers people *the reflection paradigm, or 'the reflection lift'*—perhaps one of the most important 'inventions' of Shchedrovitsky, and one of the most important inventions of the last 100 years—equal to such groundbreaking ideas as the invention of syntax. To be certain, neither reflection nor syntax have been invented by any known individuals in history, but the reflection upon both of them, the capacity to see them 'from beyond' and to make them, apart from a phenomenon, into usable tools is attributable to this or that historical time, thinker and groups of thinkers.

One cannot understand fully what MSTA is theoretically: one has to experience it. Becoming well-armed with MSTA requires effort, willpower, and decisiveness. One has to read volumes to understand MSTA, and even then it requires a philosophical background and/or mind. Meanwhile, experiencing it in practice allows one to dive into development and grasp the method. In the opinion of university professors engaged in MSTA, participation in one good MSTA exercise—a game of, say, five days' duration—is equal to studying for one semester in a good university. A part of the reason why Armenia's NGOs are so robust despite the rest of the country's crisis is the use of MSTA over the years, promoted by the Armenian Methodological Committee members, which has had its influence on the success of at least certain social activities, their vitality and stability.

Today's global problem is not 'what to do': it is 'what to do; why to do it; how. And doing it'. MSTA addresses this entire circle.

This text was finalized in 2018

“SOCIETY AND LOCAL
SELF-GOVERNANCE:
PERSPECTIVES FOR
DEVELOPMENT”
PRELIMINARY
CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE
ORGANIZATIONAL
ACTIVITY SEMINAR

INTRODUCTION

Within the scope of the Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) project, from September 8-12, 2017 in Aghveran, Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) convened an **organizational activity seminar**¹ (OAS), the objective of which was to involve representatives of all the stakeholder groups and comprehensively discuss the process of local self-governance reform, issues related to decentralization, and to develop an effective strategy and tools for public participation.

This was the second organizational activity seminar organized within the scope of the CELoG project. The previous seminar was organized during the first year of the project's implementation and was directed at the development of strategic recommendations for public participation in local self-governance. The third seminar is also planned at the end of the five-year program. These events allow one to understand, on the one hand, the stakeholders' attitude regarding issues of local self-governance and, on the other hand, to see how the CELoG program is developing overall and what changes and additions need to be made to the program. In order to analyze this practical summary from the second seminar in more detail, it can be compared to the **summary**² of the first seminar.

The seminar was organized within the context of important LSG reforms; consolidation had already occurred in several communities, and the lessons and issues raised by this process have also been voiced among the recommendations. The additional need for decentralization was also emphasized in parallel to the consolidation process. All the results of the seminar were directed at providing more meaning to the idea of “decentralization” within the conditions of consolidation.

The event participants included representatives of LSGs, community NGOs, the authorities, donor

¹ Organizational Activity Seminar:
<http://www.epfarmeria.am/creative-game-msta/>

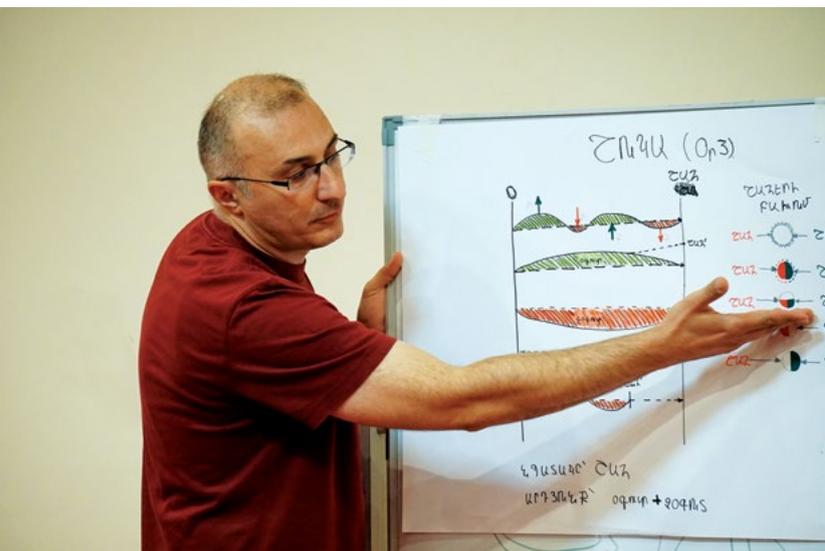
² <http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CELoG-CG-Major-Highlights-Eng.pdf>

and international organizations, the media as well as experts in local self-governance and related sectors.

The preliminary conclusions and recommendations extracted by EPF from the OAS report are presented below. In this brief report we included the ideas that can be particularly important and applicable for the CELoG program.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. The fragmentation of the value system in Armenia leads to a process of continuous searching, the purpose of which is to help the individual, structure, group of people, or other unit to find their identity, including their place, role and connections given the context of the disunited and fragmented rules of the situation in Armenia. Because it is almost impossible to insert any clarity in this situation in the given conditions, this search either turns into an endless process, or it repels the subject from the system and/or defeats the subject's will, as a result of which it does not have any significant impact on the development of a united set of rules.



2. The fragmentation of the value system leads to communication breakdowns, as a result of which the central authorities, LSGs and the population are unable to communicate with each other effectively. This leads to mutual discontent, because information exchanges occur ineffectively.

3. In the horizontal plane, a lack of communication and joint decision making lead to a further hierarchization of the system, and a narrowing of the scope of decisions that can be taken independently at the community level. In turn, this slows down and distorts the process of developing a community identity.

4. The tendencies to find new solutions in the governance system are highly limited because the governance process is directed at preserving what exists, or adjusting it. As a result, at the local level, the establishment of independent decisions, and the tendency to generate such decisions is also limited.

5. There is a necessity for institutional systems and algorithms to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of actions that are taken at all levels. This need stems from not only the lack of confidence in governance bodies on the part of the recipients of services, but also from the necessity to have an objective picture and the need to clearly see where one belongs and what one should do in the country, society and community.

6. The presumed scarcity of the necessary resources available for community development has been disputed at the seminar: the issue of the scarcity/lack of resources was referred to from a different viewpoint, which consists of three main approaches:

- The resources exist but they are not used effectively and in a result-oriented fashion,

- The resources can be found, but the necessary environment must exist for that to happen,
- In order to use various kinds of resources in a more effective manner, favorable conditions must be created for their pooling.

“Resource” here refers to all kinds of resources, first and foremost, the creative ability of community residents to solve problems and to see possibilities. For that to happen, the residents of a community must be empowered, they must feel that they are the “owners” of the community and they should relate to other community residents as owners or “shareholders”. The community members must also be educated in order to see the options for solutions to the problems, thus adding to the available resources.

7. The term “participation” has lost its value, which has happened for two main reasons. First, the real result of participation does not match its expected results. Second, a distortion has occurred of the term “participation”, i.e. it does not involve the engagement of citizens in governance processes in a way that is sufficient for the people to consider themselves to be stakeholders in the process. Essentially what participation means today in practice is a situation where the government or LG set agendas and ask or demand citizens to support them, with only very limited chance for the latter to modify the predefined decisions. It is for this reason that one of the groups proposed the term “**whole-icipation**” instead of “participation”. This term is, in essence, a demand to provide new meaning and value to participatory processes, turning decision-making into citizen-centered processes, and not transforming participation into “favors” being provided to the citizens by the authorities.

8. The three main issues for effective inter-community collaboration are **trust, identification of mutual interest and a lack of resources**. It is clear that these issues are closely related to each other. If the overall interest is understood, the necessity for communication to discuss collaborative action will appear. As a result of this, the communities will have a motivation to build trust towards each other. In turn, this will create the need for a resource assessment and investment, with the aim of solving the shared problem. In the case of effective implementation of such communication, the communities will first be able to develop the main principles for collaboration, after which it will be possible to create the necessary systems to coordinate them.

The same issue, i.e. an indicator of the extensive lack of trust, is typical also of other public spheres and even cases of interpersonal social collaboration. The ability of people to come to an agreement with each other for the greater good, without leadership “from above”, in the case when the greater good is larger than the benefits to each of the individuals separately, is an indicator of a healthy society, and the guarantee of the presence of a community in the broad sense. This is a topic of wide research in academic circles, and some studies have shown that lack of trust, so understood, is particularly present in post-Soviet societies. Researchers sometimes link this to the influence of Soviet society; people’s connections to each other in a totalitarian society would be cut off or weakened, because each individual would be connected directly with the commands coming from the “above”, the one at the “top”. Thus, there was a “society” but there was not really a “community”. Johan Galtung called this process “atomie, anomie and anemie” saying that, as a consequence of this “atomization” there was the inability to develop “names” and “rules”, norms and agreements, which resulted in a lack of action. This happens when the price of collaboration seems greater than the use of one’s personal resources to tackle the issue for oneself, and the benefits expected from collaboration seem less realistic,

more distant and smaller, than the resource that would be saved if there were no attempt at collaboration. In everyday language, we refer to this as the psychology of a “sure thing” (“naghd” in conversational Armenian), while researchers refer to it as a lack of trust in the future and the tactics to avoid planning for the unknown. This is one of the most important factors that acts as an obstacle to individuals, as well as communities, preventing them from developing and expressing their creative abilities, and it must be opposed by everyone who sincerely wishes to change the situation.

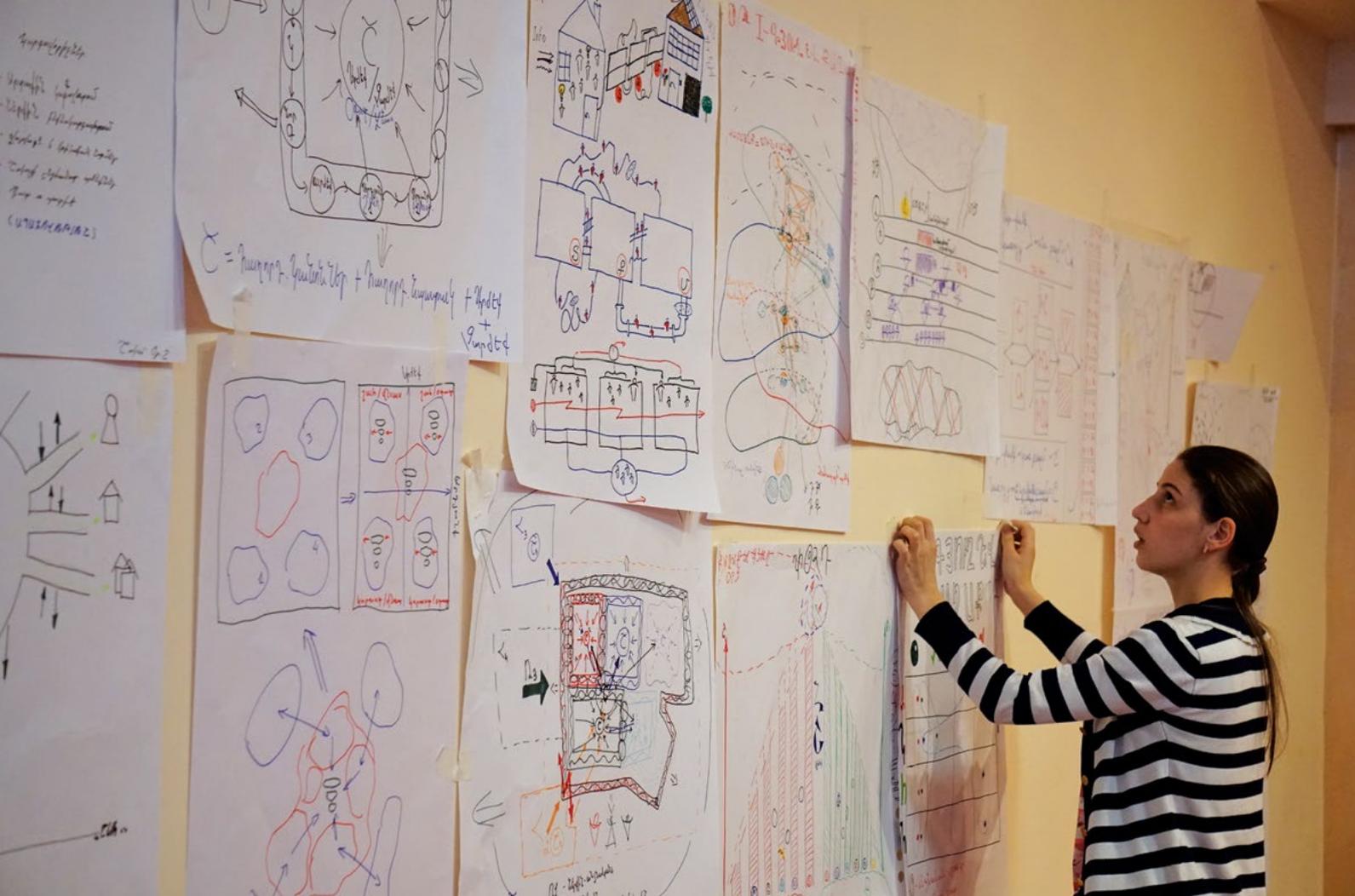
9. When the differences among the various structures and infrastructures involved in the LSG sector, the supra-community units, LSGs, communities, community structures are viewed in the context of conflicts of interest, it becomes possible to understand and imagine the possible issues and opportunities that can arise, for example, between the community and supra-community units. If the resources of the community are assessed adequately, the community can act not as someone resisting the “plunder” of a resource belonging to it, but rather as a unit that initiates extra-community communication, and/or it can put its own intra-community resource to work, in order to prevent any designs on them by a supra-community unit. The initiation of a mutually beneficial collaboration between communities based on this community resource will, on the one hand, consolidate the community’s identity while, on the other hand, thanks to the efforts centered around the community resource, the community will develop as an owner and manager of the resource, making it much more difficult for external actors to “plunder” a community resource without taking the community’s needs into consideration.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS (SELECTED)

1. Make **inter-community collaboration** a mandatory part of five-year LSG programs, being reflected in the strategy for the community and plans for collaboration of a community with the neighboring ones. This can be developed as a project/program that will include a description of the expected objectives of the collaboration, the issues and actions.
2. The new “**whole-icipation**” **methodology** for community development assumes the planning of community development perspectives in two main ways:
 - “First” by sector
 - “Then” by infrastructures

The planning of separate sectors is first conducted in the form of discussions. Each sector is discussed separately—the environmental unit, educational, cultural, or, in more detail, extracurricular education, waste management, road construction and other issues—involving as broad a range of the relevant structures, experts and residents as possible. Visions are brought forward.

The “next” stage of planning, by infrastructures, consists of strategic discussions organized by community institutions, which involve both the representatives of the actual structures as well as the main beneficiaries. For example, the planning of the kindergarten is organized with the participation of the kindergarten, the relevant department of the village municipality office, with bearers of expert knowledge in the community, and parents. The planning of other infrastructures is conducted in the same way. During the discussions, each infrastructure leaders try to formulate their own vision as an autonomous body as well as the actions that will take them towards that vision, the necessary resources, their possible results and so on. It is important for



participants to already have an understanding of sectoral development during the discussions developing the vision and strategy of the infrastructure, so that they can plan the development of their infrastructure by placing it in line with strategies related to the sector.

This proposal is, in essence, a long-term communication mechanism that, on the one hand, is meant to fill the information gaps between decision makers and the population, thus removing differences to the extent possible, and, on the other hand, it is meant to form and develop as detailed a common vision as possible as well as separate visions. The ongoing result of the process will be to evaluate the non-financial resources of the community and the engagement of the population as the direct participant of community development programs.

We have put the “first” and “then” in quotes, because the initiation of these processes will happen in parallel from time to time. After all, life in the community will not come to a standstill until the inter-sectoral discussions can take place, and there will be the need for discussions on infrastructures on many occasions. However, methodologically, the correct approach is to go from broader and larger visions to more concrete steps, and even if the concrete part falls ahead, decision makers will be driven by the clarity or lack thereof in the broad and large issues. For example, if the sectoral policy has not yet been developed, the infrastructure issues can receive more “flexible” solutions, so that they do not end up in conflict with the broader strategies when the sectoral clarifications are in place.

This methodological application to planning allows one also to discover long-term opportunities for partnership with other communities. For example, if the music school of the community has a vision that includes providing services to surrounding communities, then the planning of future activities by the school would include transportation options for children from neighboring communities,



and agreements with the LSGs of these communities for the provision of the necessary resources for these services. This would give the opportunity for the effective planning of inter-community partnership.

3. The OAS recommends to study examples of successful “**sustainable**” **communities**³ in Armenia, to extract the main reasons for success and to analyze

the applicability of the identified models for other communities. The results of the study will be applicable for all communities that have commonalities with the models or the studied communities. For example, communities with a similar demographic, natural and/or infrastructure conditions can benefit from learning each other’s ways of work. When examining the results of the study, the community can learn lessons from the studied case and contact the ‘case study’ community to gain a better understanding of its experience.

4. **Diversification**: there is a need for discussions of opportunities for diversification in sectors, directions and processes for the communities with a long-term dependence on one rigid solution or resource. This process must include not just the LSG representatives, but also the local NGOs, active citizens, community members with sector-related expertise, as well as the accessible expert resource located outside the community.

Even if this process does not lead to the diversification of the sector or process being discussed, it will at least change the stereotypical thinking of the community towards its long-term perspectives, exposing this long-term dependence by the community on one source or resource.

5. **“Visionometer”**: The community will first undergo an in-depth study of programs that emerge from the contracts signed by the state with regional structures, business units, and international organizations, as well as those obligations related to membership in international structures (such as the EEU, EU and so on), followed by a triangulation of these data with the community issues. Which functions and obligations of the Armenian state are relevant when it comes to the community needs? The matching data will be identified, as will be common points. The opportunities for collaboration or participation will be extracted. This step will also identify potential clashes, which would allow the community to understand in advance how to avoid the conflict or gain from it. This is particularly relevant for communities that have resources that are of interest outside the community, like mines, water resources, historic and cultural monuments and so on. For example, a mining company supported by the state is planning to exploit a mine on the territory belonging to the community, while the international environmental community has placed its faith in the development of renewable energy or a green economy. Armenia has taken on certain obligations as part of its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including to tackle problems in environmental management and alternative energy. The community can use the conflict between these two developments as part of its strategy to develop its economy.

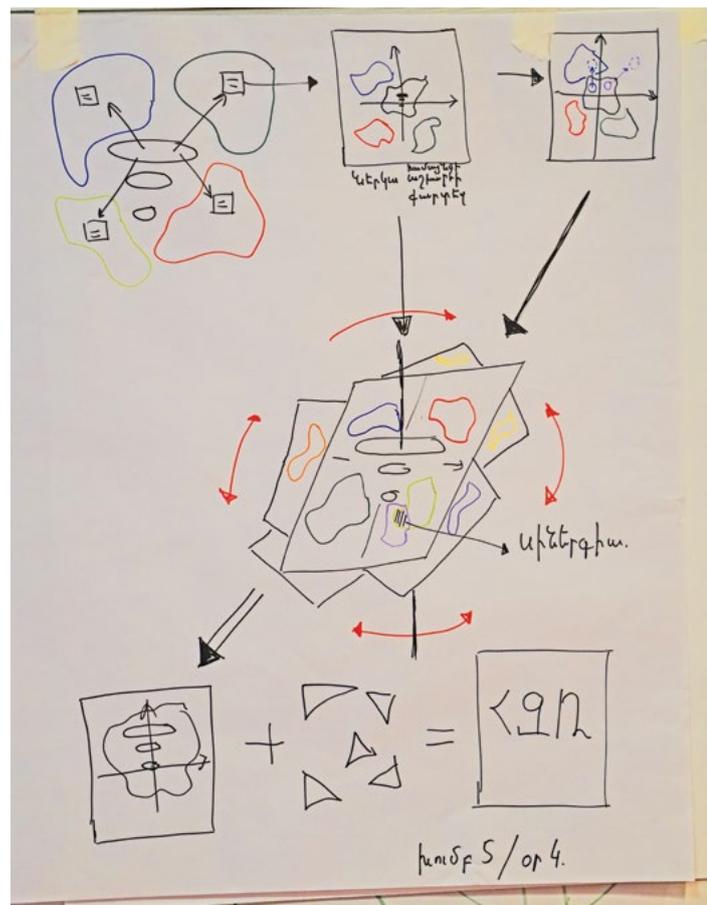
³ By a “sustainable” community we mean a community in which the LSG is able to adequately provide the services required by the population, and to implement development programs using its own resources.

6. The “visionometer” proposal can find another application in the context of **inter-community collaboration**. This process, in contrast to the previous one, does not combine various strategies to develop the vision of one community, but does this rather for the combination of the various visions of different communities into a general strategy. This process also has a serious communication component, because communication between communities should serve to identify the commonalities and differences, the mutual interests, and the development of an inter-community strategy. This approach opposes, to a certain extent, the current approach to inter-community collaboration, in which the partnership occurs sometimes only around a single function, for example with the objective to create an intercommunity waste management unit. According to the proposed approach, the collaboration will be developed based on the strategic directions identified by the combination of visions, and it will then be specified into a functional or multi-functional set of projects. That is, the strategic description of the inter-community collaboration must be shaped by a memorandum signed by the communities, or a framework agreement that will then lead to specific projects to organize the partnership in various sectors.

7. **“Legal acts archive”**. The “legal acts archive” is a collection and analysis of all the normative documents produced on a local basis, as well as all the governance mechanisms that emerge from them and the development of an inception plan for actions in cases when the normative act is there, but has not been applied. A “normative document” in this case includes the orders, decisions and procedures developed by the LSG with the direct participation of the community, which delineate the local approaches to the rules associated with the local solution of a problem, for example, how social support will be provided, based on the community’s resources, opportunities, the current consensus in the community on the issue and so on. In a practical sense, this component is not just the development of the analysis and classification of the LSG decisions, but is also part of the process of developing community members’ capacities to make decisions for themselves and for the community. During the course of this classification, the “real” decisions generated by the community are identified along with their typology, while the normative acts that have come from the supra-community layer are also analyzed from the point of view of whether they are “real” or “pseudo”. This will essentially serve as the foundation for developing a methodology, which will be related to the typology of decisions.

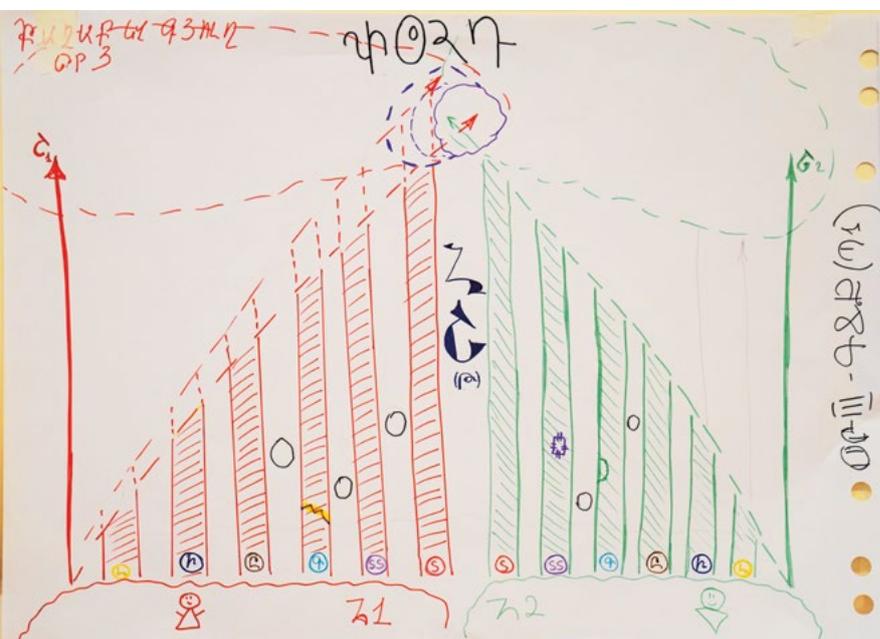
The methodology of differentiating “real” decisions from “pseudo” ones is based on a range of factors and is not limited to whether or not the population of the community “likes” the decision. This is a basis for differentiation and an indicator of the level of sophistication of the community members as well as their LSG. In order to understand this classification in more detail, contact the EPF team, which has developed some methodologies in the area of teaching critical thinking.

8. **“Self-Governance House”**. The “Self-Governance House” is essentially the reformed LSG, where the basis for reform has consisted, first of



all, of the processes taking place in the **legal acts archive**, and the results associated with it. When this component is combined with the collaboration projects developed with neighboring communities and the purpose of supra-community unit programs is made to serve the community population, it becomes possible to secure a logical connection between the normative acts produced at the community level and the activities directed at its development, because it will create the possibility to inter-relate the community development strategy with the norms accepted and/or adapted by the community, based on its real needs.

This process can be depicted in the following way. If a comparison is conducted with the resources and efforts of a neighboring community with the objective of this exercise being to improve community services, this is reflected in a corresponding normative act – an order, agreement, or decision. If this is taking place for the first time, then it becomes an example that can then also lead to a general principle of inter-community collaboration that will be more broadly practiced. Similarly, if the focus is on the green economy, which is a priority, the community



can set this as part of its development program and then establish the green economy as part of its parameters, after which it works to make this a “real” and not a “pseudo” decision, which will require very clear actions in broad areas of decision making, for example, creating job opportunities not only in the mining sector.

9. Triple coordination model. This model can be understood as a proposed approach for the ongoing coordination of community governance. The model proposes three layers – “automatic”, “editorial” and “creative”. These are the

filters for coordination through which the community residents or LSG representatives can evaluate the effectiveness of procedures, programs and infrastructure.

A process at the level of its application in the community is considered to be at the “automatic-editorial-creative” levels and, based on the level at which the issue has been identified, the corresponding adjustments can be made. Let us assume that the principle is correct but it was wrongly defined at the level of the normative document, then this document can be edited; if everything is functioning normally at the level of the normative document, then the applicability level is examined; if the issue is systemic, then the principle is reviewed.

This model is similar to the **Cynefin** framework⁴, which was initially proposed by the IBM corporation. In our OAS this idea evolved independently. Perhaps the OAS model can be enriched by the fourth level, the “chaotic” domain (a term from the Cynefin approach): this fourth part of the model is the situation in which it is unknown how one should make a decision.

Through the three layers noted it is possible to also evaluate the LSG system. This model allows one to understand, first of all, the extent to which this or that direction of the self-governance

⁴ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynefin_framework

system is accurate and relevant to the needs of the community. This occurs at the creative level, i.e. the principle or the strategic approach is evaluated. After this, there is an assessment of the extent to which it is correctly formulated at a normative level, which takes place at the second—the editorial—level, and is reflected, to a certain extent, in the processes that form a part of the “legal acts archive” project. If the normative document needs to be edited, it is edited. The third level considers the extent to which the existing technologies and procedural systems are suitable (adapted) for the implementation of the normative acts, norms and the principles that they embody. This occurs at the “automatic” level, where the practical-procedural processes are assessed.

AFTERWORD

The ideas expressed in this document constitute only a part of the whole that was covered and developed by the seminar. The objective of this document is to express in a non-seminar language, understandable to a general audience, the ideas that were considered by the compilers of this text to be the most applicable, important and implementable. The remaining ideas and the material related to the seminar can be seen in the seminar ‘long’ report and the schemas developed as a result of it.

This document has several objectives. First, it will be used within the CELoG program, and some ideas will be implemented, albeit at a pilot level. Second, it will be provided to decision makers at all levels. Third, it will also be provided to a broad range of project stakeholders, including regular community members, because the ideas presented here can, as we have seen, both be implemented “from above” as well as “from below” or with collaborative participation (which lies at the very heart of the ideology of the CELoG program). They are interrelated and, together, if they are implemented, they will allow the development of communities to achieve a new level, solving, to a certain extent, issues related to resources, and making community governance much more “participatory”.

A pre-condition for the success of this approach is the “education” of the community members. Education should be organized for community members as well as for LSGs, allowing them to get more familiar with that broad scope of international opportunities and obligations within which Armenia currently exists (international obligations, opportunities and so on, including the UN SDGs, the EU-Armenia agreement, EEU and so on), as an issue of the highest priority. The second issue, which had been reflected in the summary of the first seminar as well, is building those capacities of LSG representatives, NGOs and active citizens that are usually referred to as facilitation skills, for them to be able to develop strategies, which will lead to the empowerment of the whole community, allowing the implementation of the recommendations provided in this document via expressions of local initiative.

There is also a possibility of working with other USAID programs (DePo, MICE and others) as well as EU and other donor-funded programs, in order to develop these skills among community members and LSGs.

It is worth noting that these ideas, usually coming from a high level of specialized knowledge in governance and management, were produced locally through an active and participatory process, thus creating a bridge between LSG staff members, including their leadership, and regular beneficiaries, which made all participants the owners of these ideas, to a certain extent, and the strategic who for the implementation of these ideas.

EURASIA

PARTNERSHIP

FOUNDATION

Culture, Literature & Art

EPF's long-term involvement in the culture and art sector has been directed towards articulation of the compelling issues in the Armenian society via arts and culture and creating links between various stakeholders. The engagement varies from providing capacity building for the culture and art NGOs and institutions to the direct involvement in fieldwork, e.g. architectural assessments of ancient Armenian cultural sites in Turkey, as well as supporting the build-up of connections and cooperation in the field of literature, film production and music. In November 2017, EPF conducted a training for the CSO leaders in the field of culture and art for the improvement of sustainable management, development of cultural experiences, branding and fundraising skills through the use of new business models. During the training, experts shared theoretical and practical approaches to the management of cultural institutions, introduced social entrepreneurship approaches in content creation, fundraising and business, as well as in software management and in creative and cultural spheres.

Starting from 2016, EPF has developed a special type of targeted broadcast, called 'Jam Session'¹, which contains video-recorded and transcribed lectures, presentations and training sessions that are being disseminated through Internet and delivered in a targeted way to EPF's beneficiary community in English and Armenian (currently around 2,300 individuals). These broadcasts discuss the issues related to peace-building, cross-border cooperation, critical thinking, human rights, as well as the contemporary issues of art and literature. The session 'Art, Culture, Civilization, Value. Formulation of the problems' (in Armenian) is available here². EPF also puts a great emphasis on discussing the issues which touch upon the recent history of Armenia and post-Soviet space, such as the broadcast/video lecture³ on the repressions of the writers, literary actors and intellectuals during

¹ Jam Sessions in Armenian: <http://am.epfarmeria.am/am/thought-leadership/videos/jam-session-video-series/>

² Art, culture, civilization, value. Formulation of the problems (in Armenian): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT1qW0splA8>

³ Negative Selection and Culture. Lessons from 21 Century (in Armenian): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=114_1Lxz_yE

the entire existence of the Soviet Union, in the context of some parallels with the post-Soviet Armenian reality.

EPF provides continuous support to the creation and development of art and culture related platforms which encourage information exchange and critical dialogue among culturally and socially active communities. In 2011, EPF, with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), supported the creation of an interactive cultural platform www.arteria.am contributing to the development of critical thinking and critical writing in Armenia through encouraging constructive public discussion on issues of cultural and social importance, which features significant cultural events and developments in Armenia. The platform survives independently and is active since 2011. Currently, EPF implements another project with www.arteria.am via its CSO DePo program funded by USAID.

EPF addressed literature, film production, architecture and music also within the scope of its Armenia-Turkey Dialogue and Human Rights Programs.

The text below presents the highlights of EPF's work in the field of arts and culture, focusing on some of the major projects supported and conducted by EPF over the last ten years. The full list of such projects is much larger.

LITERATURE

START! Youth Book Gathering (2018)

The Armenian Book Center (ABC) with a mission to promote contemporary arts, culture and literature, is a platform for showcasing authors, references, translations of contemporary literature, etc. Within CSO DePo project, ABC will tackle the problem of lack of professional services for young writers, via introducing affordable mechanisms for advertising and disseminating contemporary writers' works. The organization will set-up a package of services: promotion, professional consulting, editorial and editing works, formatting and writing support, review, publication in small quantities. As part of this project, ABC will start also a discussion club called "6:40" as a socializing event for contemporary writers and critiques, who will come together to discuss various works, get to know each other, build linkages with professionals and available services.

"HAH" Workshop for Literary Translators (2017)

As part of its Armenia-Turkey dialogue work, HCA Armenia brought together 10 translators of Turkish language and organized a literature workshop in Armenia to co-translate contemporary writer Birgul Oguz's novel "HAH" from Turkish into Armenian⁴. Recognized instructors and distinguished professionals in literary translation and the author of the book herself took part in the workshop. The workshop primarily focused on developing the skills of literary translators. The book was published in Armenia by Antares publishing house, and is currently available in book stores. EPF also produced a talk show⁵ with the main instructor Aron Aji, the Director of Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Literary Translation Program at the University of Iowa (USA) and the president of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA). The talk is about literary translation, creativity of translation and its peculiarities, as well as Armenia-Tur-

⁴ Watch the one-week workshop in Armenia and the impressions from the authors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRfy4e5jJo4>

⁵ Translating Turkish prose into Armenian: another way of dialogue (Jam Session): <http://www.epfarmenia.am/translating-turkish-prose-into-armenian-another-way-of-dialogue/>

key joint literary translation initiatives. The project was funded by the European Union.

Negotiation of Differences in the Shared Urban Space (2017)

This project resulted in a book which is a collection of essays that encompass various insights on the Armenians' and Turks' experiences of sharing common urban space, negotiating differences, striving to attain or seize space for representation of belonging, identity, history, power, etc. The essays discuss the negotiation of the differences in the shared urban space from the perspectives of urban planning, literature, musicology and travel experiences. The book was published in Armenia and is currently available in libraries.

Manifestations of Tolerance and Intolerance in Armenian Literature (2017)

This is a collection of essays⁶ and studies, conducted with support of the Netherlands, aimed at examining the roots of tolerance and intolerance and their manifestations in the Armenian literature. The book analyzes Armenian medieval epic sagas, the classic prose of the 19th and 20th centuries along with the literature of the Diaspora, the prose of post-Soviet Armenia, as well as today's history and literature school textbooks. The book essentially provides a guided tour through the whole body of the Armenian literature; this, in turn, provides a particular pleasure to the reader and presents a condensed image of the tendencies in Armenian literature. Some essays are available also in English, particularly those that present overviews. All articles have English summaries.

Armenian Publishers Meet Turkish Publishers (2017)

The project was conducted by the Turkish Publishers Association with the partnership of Antares Publishing House in 2017. The main objective of this project was to welcome publishers from Armenia in Turkey, bring them together with the publishers from Turkey to allow new business connections and a fruitful discussion on the potential of and obstacles against publishing trade between the two countries. Strengthening the publishing relations and literary bonds will lead to democratic pluralism and social inclusion across and within each society. The project was planned to take the previous Yerevan visit of the TPA executives in 2014 a step further. In this visit, the Armenian Publishers Association and several publishers met, and a discussion on the ways to develop publishing relations between the two countries was initiated. The project was funded by the European Union. The final report of the project results can be accessed here⁷.

Study on Freedom of Expression and Democracy in Armenian Literature (2011)

A series of studies on Freedom of Expression and Democracy in Armenian Literature were conducted under the EPF's Freedom of Expression program with the support of the SIDA. The purpose of the project was to explore and make publicly available articles on how much the Armenian literature has displayed such values as freedom of expression, human rights and

⁶ The electronic version of the book can be accessed here: http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Tolerance_Intolerance_in_Armenian_Literature_book_2017.pdf

⁷ 'Armenian Publishers Meet Turkish Publishers' final report: http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Armenian_Publishers_meet_Turkish_Publishers_2017_Report.pdf

democracy. Seven articles were developed, which can be accessed here (in Armenian)⁸. One of them is on the work of Zapel Yesayan, a woman prose writer who fought for women's rights, experienced the genocide and eventually was killed during Stalin's purges. This article is written by a French-Armenian journalist Seda Mavian. This analysis was among the first ones done on the work of Zapel, which was previously almost unknown. Another article is about the modern prose which discusses informal relations and hazing in the army, another topic previously untouched upon in Armenia.

ARCHITECTURE

Armenian-Turkish Young Professionals as Advocates of Common Urban Heritage (2017)

This is an album⁹ which contains illustrations of the 19-20th century buildings of Kars and Gyumri and helps visualizing the historical value needed to be protected and maintained. The publication is an output of the Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development (Armenia), urbanlab Socio-Cultural Foundation (Armenia), and International Inclusion Institute (Turkey). Partners implemented the assessment of urban heritage in the cities of Gyumri and Kars as well as organized interactive workshops and study tours for urban development experts from Armenia and Turkey to learn about the history of common urban heritage of the two cities. The project aimed at promoting dialogue through cooperation between young people, architects and urban planning professionals of the two countries by learning their common history and contributing to the protection of their common urban heritage.

Mush Assessment Report of Tangible Cultural Heritage (2017)

The report is the joint work of a group of architects and experts from Armenia and Turkey, working together on the cultural heritage in the Mush district of the modern Turkey. The report focused on identifying and assessing the state of Armenian heritage in Mush. Participants developed a joint methodology of assessment and conducted it jointly, thus breaking the perception that Armenia- and Turkey-based architects cannot agree on joint approach to the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey.

The report¹⁰, conducted within the Armenia- Turkey normalization program funded by EU, is being presented to the international community, UNESCO, governments and other specialized institutions with the aim of raising the issue of the need of preserving and restoring Armenian monuments in Turkey.

Earlier similar work has been done on Ani¹¹. The next assessment report will be on Artvin.

⁸ <http://am.epfarmeria.am/am/program-portfolio/media-programs/freedom-of-expression-and-democracy-in-armenian-literature/>

⁹ The electronic version of the book can be accessed here: <http://epfarmeria.am/document/Gyumri-Kars-Urban-Heritage-Common-Notepad>

¹⁰ Mush Assessment Report of Tangible Cultural Heritage: <http://epfarmeria.am/document/Mush-Report-2017>

¹¹ http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Ani_in_Context_Report_2018.pdf

FILM AND PERFORMANCE ARTS

Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform (ATCP)

ATCP¹² began in 2008 as cooperation between Anadolu Kültür (Turkey) and the Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival (Armenia). It is a unique platform for filmmakers from both countries to explore cooperative projects and co-productions. The Platform promotes the network and films in festival circuits, international networks and distribution agencies. The activity promotes screening opportunities for the films produced with the participation of directors, producers and actors from both countries and the Diaspora. Wherever possible, these screenings are accompanied by a panel discussion, where the participants are able to speak about the films and issues related to the reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. EPF has been supporting and cooperating with ATCP throughout its lifetime.

EPF has also supported **Rolan International Film Festival**¹³ and **KIN International Women Film Festival**¹⁴ in 2016.

Cross-cultural Bridge between the Youth of Armenia and Turkey (2015)

Forum Theatre aimed to contribute to the increased mutual understanding and tolerance between the youth of Armenia and Turkey through the means of art and culture. Forum Theatre (Armenia), the Turkey-based Dynamic Development Association in Istanbul and Kulp Gençlik Girişimi in Diyarbakir, used the methods of interactive theatre and simulation game as a tool for civic education and engagement with regard to the Armenia-Turkey relations.

The partners engaged Turkey- and Armenia-based young artists in a series of in-country and joint workshops and performances. These performances were attended by hundreds of people in Armenia and Turkey, and became a suitable platform to effectively exchange information and come to common terms on issues of mutual concern related to the Armenia-Turkey relations.

Through theatrical exercises, discussions and storytelling, the participants tried to understand the Armenian-Turkish relations and present their personal opinions on possible ways of improving the existing situation. Ideas, opinions, fears and concerns were summarized and presented to the public through the performances of Bertolt Brecht's "He Who Says Yes, He Who Says No" in Istanbul and Yerevan in March and April 2015 respectively¹⁵.

Closed Border Dialogue Documentary

Versus Studio LLC produced a 55-minute documentary titled "Dialogue over the Closed Border"^{16 17} telling about the political and diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey over the last 25 years. The film was presented in Armenia in October 2015. The film tells about Armenian-Turkish relations from the initial engagement between the newly independent Armenia and Turkey in 1991-1992 and closing of Armenia-Turkey border in 1993, to the appearance of the Armenian Genocide issue in Armenia's foreign policy agenda in 1998-2008, to the works of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission in 2001-2004, to Hrant Dink's assassination

¹² <http://www.cinemaplatform.org/en>

¹³ <http://www.rolanbf.com/>

¹⁴ <http://kinfestival.com/>

¹⁵ The trailer on the rehearsals in Armenia and Turkey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldnDr5QaRgM>

¹⁶ The film in Armenian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2F6CQzjEo94>

¹⁷ The film with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OidJE4TjTYU>

in 2007, ending with discussing the Armenia-Turkey protocols and “football” diplomacy in 2008-2010.

Films on National & Religious Minorities

These films have been produced with the support of the Netherlands.

Language of Tolerance (2016)

The film¹⁸ tells about the situation of Religious Tolerance in Armenia and the role the Armenian mass media play when writing about different religious groups. Sometimes mass media reproduce stereotypes about different religious groups as well as allegations without even checking the information available. The film was produced by Media Initiatives Center.

Molokans: Reality without myths (2014)

This documentary¹⁹ aimed at depicting the life of Molokans living in Armenia. The author of the film reveals this theme through his own personal story about his first encounters with this community during school years. The production took place in the Fioletovo village where the majority of the population are Molokans. *Scriptwriter and producer: Naira Martikyan, the idea of the film: Seyran Akopov.*

Under the same sky (2014)

The film²⁰ dwells upon the issue of human intolerance towards the adherents of different religions and its consequences. The author of the film draws comparison of Armenian and Jewish immigrations to US. The participants of the film make an effort to answer the question whether the representatives of national minorities face only social problems or there are also religious grounds for their emigration. In addition, the life and the traditions of the Jewish community in Armenia are presented. *Scriptwriter and producer: Ashot Hambardzumyan.*

Women of Archangel Mikael (2014)

This is a story²¹ of a Russian-populated village Privolnoe in Armenia. The opening scene shows the daily routine of the Privolnoe village which was founded by Russian recruits at the second half of the 19th century. Every week, five middle-aged women conduct the Sunday Mass without a priest. Not long ago, the choir of the Saint Michael's Church were much larger... The once prosperous village is now suffering from neglect and the heirs of the soldiers have mostly emigrated. There are only 80 Russians left in the village today, primarily older women. In this forgotten corner of the world, they find meaning only in the church and their faith. The Women of Saint Michael tells the story of these women during the preparations for the Feast of the Holy Trinity. *Scriptwriter and producer: Vahan Ishkhanyan, Director and editing: Vigen Galstyan.*

Persian spaghetti (2013)

A personal story²² about Armenian-Iranian friendship. The film features monologues of two young persons – one from Iran, who has moved to live in Armenia and another young person from Armenia, who is traveling to Iran. They share their experiences of how they feel them-

¹⁸ Language of Tolerance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLApTCQhhGM>

¹⁹ Molokans: Reality without myths: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_cyTXqSmrl

²⁰ Under the same sky: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_U8fscKh2s

²¹ Women of Archangel Mikael: <https://vimeo.com/105556438>

²² Persian spaghetti: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpE50tXiQmM>

selves in “another” culture, which stereotypes they are faced with and how do they educate themselves about people of other religions. *Scriptwriter: Nona Sisakyan, Director: Shahen Nazarenko*

Expectation (2013)

A story about Jehovah’s Witnesses who served terms in prison due to conscientious objections. Anri Khachatryan is a member of the religious organization, Jehovah’s Witnesses. In 2000 he was imprisoned for 2 years for refusing to serve in the army, and now, on September 29, 2012, the time for freedom has come. At the exit of the prison, Nubarashen Criminal-Executive Institution, his friends and relatives gather to greet him. On the way from the prison to his home Anri talks about his principles, which led to his imprisonment, and the notions of freedom. His father and mother who have been eagerly waiting for this moment for the past two years are waiting at home. In the film, four other followers of the religious organization, who at different periods were imprisoned for the same reason, tell their stories. *Scriptwriter and producer: Vahan Ishkhanyan.*

Films on the recent History of Armenia

Starting from 2010, EPF has also supported the production and dissemination of films on the issues of past and recent history, such as on the events of the aftermath of 1944 (repatriation of Armenians to their homeland and subsequent Stalin’s purges); on dissidents and freedom of speech in the USSR; on the downwards slop in women’s rights after independence (on silent housewives); on the four presidential elections in Armenia; and on March 1, 2008 events.

My Unfamiliar Fatherland (2014)

The film²³ provides the summary of the history of the Great Repatriation of 1945–49, which brought around 100,000 Diaspora Armenians to Armenia, focusing on the policies implemented by the Soviet Union after the Second WW, the utilized propaganda, the process of organized repatriation, the acceptance of the idea of repatriation within the Diasporan communities and the challenges faced by repatriates in their homeland. It enables the understanding of historical, economic, sociological, and psychological reasons that forced Armenians to migrate to and from their homeland throughout the 20th century. For many of repatriates the return to homeland resulted in frustration, moreover, for a number of them it became a tragedy as they were exiled to Siberia. Starting from 1960’s many of the repatriated people left Armenia, mainly for USA, Canada, Australia and France. The film was shot in Armenia, Lebanon and USA, and features the stories of Armenian migrants of different generations throughout the world. *Scriptwriter: Tigran Paskevichyan, Director: Ara Shirinyan.*

Eyewitness Memories: Elections in Armenia: 1990-2013 (2014)

This is a documentary²⁴ aimed at depicting on the history of elections in Armenia starting from 1990 up to the presidential elections of February 2013 that analyses the role of the elections in the formation of the new statehood of Armenia. Democratic elections in Independent Armenia are still deficient. There is a lack of public trust towards the integrity of administration and the legitimacy of outcomes of elections, given the widespread violence, falsifications and impunity, typically accompanying these events. Usually violations of electoral processes start taking

²³ Trailer of the documentary: <https://vimeo.com/104587764> For more information about the project and the other series of the film, please refer to the following website: <http://hayrenadardz.org/en/>

²⁴ <https://vimeo.com/104587763>

place in the period preceding the officially launched election campaigns, and reach their peak on the day of elections; dissent continues afterwards through public protests and legal claims challenging the processes and results, which usually do not bring about any solutions. Thus, the legitimacy of all elected bodies is low and stays low. The film provides the holistic comprehensive picture of all the elections of modern Armenia until 2013, diagnosing the situation through critical approach and pointing out possible ways of overcoming the elections' "impasse". *Script-writer: Tigran Paskevichyan, Director: Ara Shirinyan.*

After the Peaceful Revolution of April 2018 the film acquires additional significance as a learning source on how to avoid the repetition of electoral impasse next time.

***The impossible possible (2014)*²⁵**

The documentary depicts the story of the dissident activity across Soviet Union and particularly Armenia during the post-Stalin period, when individuals reproduced censored and underground publications by hand and passed the documents from reader to reader, using different ways to gather friends and new people. This practice, called *Samizdat*, was the only opportunity for free expression, and alternative to the state propaganda, as the Internet is nowadays. The documentary describes the creation and development of *Samizdat*, the story of its various incarnations, and the activities of devoted *Samizdat* publishers in the Soviet Union, who worked underground, knowing that they could be imprisoned or exiled for years. The film also features the work of Armenian dissidents and *Samizdat* authors. They mainly addressed issues of preserving the Armenian national identity and the purity of the Armenian language and called for Armenia's separation from the USSR and becoming an independent state. *Script-writer: Tigran Paskevichyan, Producer: Satenik Faramazyan.*

Films on the Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Information

In 2008-2009, EPF produced several documentaries on Freedom of Expression. Documentaries are diverse, filmed in different artistic styles, highlighting very wide spectrum of problems. However, all of them are similar in attempt to address boundaries and taboos that exist in Armenian society, the written or unwritten codes that predominate over an individual, affecting his life and choices. The documentaries also focus on the Armenian society's perceptions of freedom of expression and censorship, the stereotypes that exist in the society.

Ara Shirinyan's "Parallel Reality"²⁶ contrasts tradition and modernization in the Armenian society, telling a story of 'chkhoskan harser' (daughters-in-law who are not allowed to speak to their fathers-in-law throughout their lives) versus the art of a conceptual artist Grigor Khachatryan.

Tigran Khzmalyan in his "Armenia minus A1 plus"²⁷ is addressing the issue of free media and censorship. Using the example of the banned A1+ TV channel he reveals how the Armenian government established control over TV and imposed tough censorship on journalists and media outlets.

Tigran Paskevichyan's and Suren Ter-Grigoryan's "Interwoven"²⁸ is rather an allegoric, thought-provoking film about the individual, his freedom and choice.

²⁵ <https://vimeo.com/104587766>

²⁶ Parallel Reality: <https://vimeo.com/8257689>

²⁷ Armenia minus A1 plus. Part 1: <https://vimeo.com/7914196>, Armenia minus, A1 plus. Part 2: <https://vimeo.com/7897345>

²⁸ Interwoven: <https://vimeo.com/7936814>

The ‘SOS: Timeless Hostages of Overriding Interests’ documentary²⁹, directed by Armen Yepremyan, is telling a story of property alienation on Yerevan’s Teryan Street, and citizens who are fighting for their property and fair trial rights in a creative way.

MUSIC

Among many musical projects supported and implemented by EPF, the recent one called ‘**Female Minstrels**’, done with Anadolu Kultur, is special.

The Female Minstrels Dengbêj Gazîn and Ashugh Leyli from Van in Turkey and Yerevan in Armenia rehearsed together under the supervision of the project’s music director Norayr Kartashyan. Their repertoire consisted of songs composed by Dengbêj Gazîn and Ashugh Leyli, as well as of Armenian and Kurdish common songs. Their joint concert “From Van to Yerevan” took place in the Yerevan’s National Center for Chamber Music on May 26, 2014. Three hundred people attended the concert; it was also broadcasted live on CivilNet. Being of Kurdish origin, Dengbêj Gazîn recorded a song at the Yerevan Radio – a radio station that once broadcasted special Kurdish-language programs for the Kurdish communities in Turkey.

Their second meeting took place in September, 2014 in Van. They gave their joint concert on the Akhtamar Island in Van, following the mass at the Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Cross of Akhtamar Island. Thanks to the mass that is being held only once a year, a considerable number of local and international tourists, believers and clergymen attended the concert, while the media interest in the concert on the Island was very high. The concert was broadcasted live on Van TV.

The female minstrels performed their final concert in Istanbul, where the number of attendees reached about 700 people. Following this concert, they recorded and published their album by Kalan Music with a booklet including the lyrics of the songs and articles written by musicologist Lusine Nazaryan and anthropologist Marlene Schäfers.

NEW MEDIA AND ART

EPF was the first actor in the region who experimented with the new media and ICT in the context of confidence building, and provided pro-rapprochement stakeholders a number of effective peace-building and cross-border youth interaction tools that help creative youth learn about one another. In 2011, EPF organized two exchange Pecha Kucha Night (PKN) events (one in Yerevan, one in Istanbul) as a confidence-building tool. PechaKucha is a presentation style in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each. Since PKN focuses on creative and innovative industries, these exchanges created an opportunity to further engage Armenian and Turkish entrepreneurs in high-tech and other areas, such as fashion, design, and architecture. The events created professional and personal ties that will grow into long-lasting partnerships and friendships. PKN events were jointly organized by EPF and the Istanbul holder of the Pecha Kucha license 34solo.

End

June 2018

²⁹ SOS: Timeless hostages of Interest priority: <https://vimeo.com/8310249>

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION SCHOOL TOWARDS A NEW GENERATION OF PEACEBUILDERS

Civil society peacebuilding and conflict transformation (CT) approaches constitute the forte of EPF Armenia and one of the methodological pillars on which a major part of its work is based. For many years, EPF has built and continues building its expertise in these areas, and its portfolio of working across open and closed borders and conflict divides contains several undertakings. Roughly fifty percent of EPF's work relates to these issues.

Apart from programmatic activities that you can see by visiting this link¹, EPF also runs a Conflict Transformation School² for a variety of actors, from civil society representatives, media, youth, international organization personnel to state employees, both Armenia-based as well as international.

The CTS is not a traditional educational institution but rather a coherent, continuous and methodologically determined peacebuilding learning and sharing process. EPF sees the CTS as a sustainable platform to support the new generation of civil society peacebuilders to access alternative sources and counterbalance mainstream propaganda with critical thinking skills.

The School offers different foci, based on the needs of the applicants. Civil society and media folks, for instance, may need a focus on critical thinking³, which is indispensable in the current era of so-called 'post-truth'. International personnel may need knowledge and skills in conflict sensitivity⁴ and emergency planning, i.e. knowledge and understanding of conflict dynamics, as they may affect development work. Those actors who plan dialogues with the 'other side' may need facilitation skills⁵. Those who want to acquire a 'bird's eye' view on the situation and find solutions to problems which seem insurmountable may ask EPF with its partners and networks to help them via organizing a Creative Game⁶. See an example of a module⁷ of the CTS here.

In today's world, working in conflict and for its transformation becomes a skill which is useful to everybody rather than only to those who are directly engaged in dialogue and negotiations with the 'other side' of a large-scale violent conflict. While EPF does not specifically train on other types of CT, such as interpersonal or organizational, its CSO DePo school⁸ contains modules⁹ on these issues and can address them as well.

EPF's success in helping CSOs, media and other actors in strategic planning and organizational

¹ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/cross-border/>

² <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/program-portfolio/armenia-azerbaijan/armenia-azerbaijan/conflict-transformation-school-cts/>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhfkelTgcG0>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iQKsnK3cR0>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbp6I5Zqa5A>

⁶ http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/creative_game_faq.pdf

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLze7VHI5SyYiOFapUxWRPaK9AlHpKhdJZ>

⁸ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/cso-depo/cso-management-school/>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLze7VHI5SyYii-l-zSPo59XF70sgHKfQA>

development, particularly via its CSO DePo¹⁰ project and Creative Games¹¹, is based on the understanding that correct and constructive orientation and capacity to act in conflict situations so that there is a positive impact is a sine qua none for any strategic endeavor and its protagonists, whom we call The Strategic Who. It is EPF's position that any development strategy—and particularly in the regions where we work—benefits from adopting a CT approach and using CT skills.

EPF learns CT and peacebuilding alongside its beneficiaries. We have developed large reading and viewing lists¹², as well as a series of online presentations¹³, which may help deeper engage in some of the aspects of peace and conflict, such as the language of peace and conflict¹⁴, etc.

EPF's peace work is also intrinsically linked to its other areas of work. Its link with civil society development has been mentioned above. Its link and relationship with Human Rights is visible from the fact that we expressly address the CT approaches in the methods of our Human Rights¹⁵ work, as well as periodically renewing the mutual understanding of the actors who work on peace and those who work on Human Rights, on their relationships, complementarity and tensions.

The vectors of state propaganda, situational developments, and peer and societal pressure create fertile grounds for people who acquire peaceful attitudes and interests to be either sidelined, or indeed reverse their attitudes, thus diminishing the peace projects' long-term impact. EPF's CTS is trying to address this issue, building capacities of select young people to: understand what conflict transformation is about, become a peacebuilder, and stay one. At the same time it also tries to engage the previous generation, giving them an opportunity to design their own dialogue processes and be in charge of the strategies of peace projects, which is the best educational tool for becoming a peace-builder.

You can also visit a selection of the opinions of participants in our CTS. If you would like to contact EPF for further discussions on possible CTS tailored to your or your target groups' needs, or any other relevant type of work of EPF, such as setting up consortia across the conflict divide¹⁶, etc., please go here¹⁷.

The CTS targets the following:

- Equip the participants with knowledge and skills to counter the traditional narrative of nationalism and national history (to challenge the primordial/parochial concepts of history);
- Provide them with means to deconstruct and counter the flood of propaganda messages coming via textbooks during traditional education process and/or from the media; students learn to critically deconstruct this propaganda (also called 'post-truth' today), devoted to

¹⁰ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/cso-depo/>

¹¹ http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/creative_game_faq.pdf

¹² http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CTS_Recommended-literature_web_Eng.pdf

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLze7VHI5SyYjc4pjdmiHjqjBAvJGryi-M>

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4syx-cg3C4>

¹⁵ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/human-rights/>

¹⁶ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/current-programs/cross-border/armenia-turkey/support-to-the-armenia-turkey-normalization-process/>

¹⁷ <http://www.epfarmeria.am/en/contact-us/>

enemy-image building;

- Give students general knowledge about the conflict transformation and civil society peace-building paradigm, familiarizing them with such concepts as sustainable and just peace, the 'strategic who', etc. Students learn to 'put themselves in the shoes of the other';
- Situate this new knowledge in the general picture of knowledge on international relations, conflict resolution, ethnic studies, geopolitics, etc. Provide them with state-of-the-art and cutting-edge information about developments in these spheres;
- Familiarize students with the important events in the history of the Nagorny Karabakh (NK) conflict in an unbiased manner, including the international community's position on the conflict;
- Give them opportunities to discuss these issues with state representatives and/or experts directly involved in the negotiations and/or other ways of addressing the conflict for its resolution;
- Unleash their creative thinking capacities and generate ideas that, if accepted by the other side, could become a basis for confidence-building steps.

The traditional educational system raises specialists in conflict resolution and international relations in order to brew good 'soldiers' and 'diplomats' for defending their side's positions in negotiations and interactions. This leads to a dead-end, since it is impossible to achieve a compromise while defending one's side and not taking into account the views of the other side. The conflict becomes antagonistic, zero-sum, and therefore intractable. The CTS teaches students to become Conflict Transformers who suggest actions which generate and/or increase peaceful outcomes, benefitting all.

EPF has started to film some of the sessions. EPF offers a combined set of School sessions: online and offline. Online sessions will allow the participants to absorb information, and offline sessions will allow them to ask questions, criticize the information they have acquired, and build their own active attitude to the issues discussed, increasing practical skills of working for conflict transformation.

EPF Occasional Policy Brief

CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Updated Summer 2017

EPF has worked on civil society development for about 20 years, since its inception. In recent years, EPF implements the USAID-funded CSO Development Program (CSO DePo) as a lead agency and the EU-funded Bridge for CSOs project with AGBU as the lead agency. Both projects are focused on building the capacities of civil society.

Over the years of its work, EPF has done numerous studies of CSO development trends in Armenia and internationally; it provides such studies to CSOs, analyzes the existing ever-increasing literature on the subject and also uses its knowledge to build the capacities of CSOs in a variety of ways. As a result, EPF has developed the following set of policy recommendations for addressing the issues of CSOs in Armenia, which are pertinent to the situation with CSOs typical for 2016 onwards.

CLUSTERING OF CSOs IN NETWORKS AND CONSORTIA

ISSUE: A large number of civil society actors having the same focal field of action such as culture, education, environment, inclusion of persons with disabilities into all areas of public life, etc. mostly compete with each other, rather than collaborate. Meanwhile the tendency in the developing world shows donors' inclination to fund consortia and networks instead of funding individual entities.

RECOMMENDATION: There is a need for CSOs to learn to work in consortia and become proactive in building mutually beneficial relations with various CSOs and civil society actors. Through consortia and networks, CSOs will be able to complement their capacities, as well as become more successful in fundraising and increase their sustainability.

RATIONALE: Clustering will allow common platforms for networking and consortium building. Also, such platforms will be to the benefit of newly created CSOs and for civil society actors such as university-foundations, writers' and artists' unions, etc., which are civil society actors de facto but are not involved in civil society developments and usually do not work on developing organizational capacities.

LEGAL LITERACY FOR CSOs

ISSUE: Most of the CSOs (except the ones which exercise advocacy) are not aware of Armenian legislation regarding both basic laws such as the Labor Code, the Law "On CSOs", the Tax Code, etc., and specific legislation regarding their fields of activities such as the Law "On the Rights of the Child", the Law "On the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities", the Law "On Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men", the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations" etc. Additionally, there is a need to sensitize CSOs on the procedure and peculiarities of drafting laws in Armenia (including the ones affecting CSOs and/or their stakeholders) and/or initiating legislative changes and how they can be

engaged in these processes. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness and understanding¹ among Armenian CSOs of Armenia's obligations under international law and vis-a-vis a variety of international organizations which Armenia is a member to. This knowledge would enable them to address many issues they identify during their day-to-day work before international bodies; it would allow them to use the international standards in their recommendations on draft laws developed by the state.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop legal consultancy and legal literacy packages, continuously amend the changes in accordance with legislation and communicate with the CSOs, inform CSOs of legislative amendments affecting their respective areas and support in drafting legislative recommendations to the state. This can become a specific service/consultancy direction.

RATIONALE: There is currently no such service for CSOs in Armenia. There are a number of CSO networks, CSOs and lawyers, which address the issues hindering smooth operation under Armenian legislation, but in terms of “legal literacy” most of the CSO employees, including heads of organizations, are not aware of national and international laws. In case of need, they seek the assistance of lawyers; however, they should be aware of the laws at their own level to be able to operate successfully and benefit from opportunities provided by legislation or question the problematic laws and advocate for their respective changes.

SIMPLIFY CSO “CLOSING-DOWN” PROCEDURES

ISSUE: In Armenia, there are 4,499 public organizations, while a large majority of them have stopped their operations de facto or have never functioned for various reasons. Because the “closing down” procedure is too burdensome, CSOs prefer to cease operations yet remain registered legal entities. As a result, the numbers of CSOs in Armenia as well as all estimates regarding CSOs are inaccurate and statistics are biased.

RECOMMENDATION: The government should create a clear and simple administrative procedure for closing down CSOs. This procedure should be clearly communicated to the CSOs.

RATIONALE: Once inactive CSOs exit the market, it would be possible to have a clearer picture of the Armenian development actors – something that would be beneficial for the government, local and international support actors, and civil society.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (LG)-CSO COOPERATION

ISSUE: A number of CSO programs aim to build bridges between LG and communities, enhance democracy and participatory governance, strengthen the role of LG in the communities, etc. This kind of projects are often a result of CSO-LG partnership. But there is a need to take these partnerships to the next level: LGs should start supporting CSOs as key community actors and allocate resources for the smooth operation of CSOs on their territory, by channeling some community development funds through CSOs.

RECOMMENDATION: Enhance direct cooperation of LG agencies and civil society actors by promoting targeted initiatives of LGs to fund various CSO programs and activities, perhaps also via legislative means (allocating a budget percentage of LGs to CSO programs).

RATIONALE: Once LGs start funding some programs of CSOs, there is a high probability that

¹ <http://www.epfarmenia.am/en/current-programs/human-rights/assessing-the-involvement-of-armenian-csos-in-the-preparation-of-alternative-reports-for-un-treaty-bodies-and-the-upr/>

the CSOs and LGs will increase their credibility and will gain trust in their communities. The funded programs will be better administered, because CSOs usually have a lower rate of inefficiency and corruption than other entities; therefore, their impact will be higher. The CSOs will report to the LGs, and the reports will be publicly available, resulting in an increase in transparency.

CSO BRIDGING TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ISSUE: As the CSO market survey² and other research have indicated, CSOs face the issue of sustainability, which can be addressed by strengthening financial management capacities, enhancing entrepreneurial skills and helping them acquiring additional resources through social enterprises.

RECOMMENDATION: To develop realistic and locally-tailored methodologies and provide business trainings for CSOs to engage in social enterprise and enhance business thinking with the objective of encouraging those starting viable and successful social enterprises. This should include trainings in business psychology, marketing, etc.

Being civil society actors, CSOs and their leaders and personnel are sometimes distant from business thinking and skills which are needed in order to build up a successful profit-making enterprise, even if their profits will go to advance the CSO mission. Trainings conducted so far have been numerous but they sometimes have not focused on entrepreneurial thinking; and have not addressed contradictions in business versus non-profit approach. If the CSO works as a business, it should serve its clients and not comment on them. Its mission may happen to be in contradiction with some activities of the client, e.g. if the client is an oligarch. These issues have not been addressed yet in Armenia in a systematic manner.

RATIONALE: According to the new Law “On Civil Society Organizations,” which enters into force in the beginning of 2017, CSOs are eligible to conduct entrepreneurial activities. Once CSOs manage to build successful social enterprises, this will contribute to the implementation of their missions and will allow them to ensure an average of 10-20% of their CSO operational costs from a sustainable core source.

EMPOWERING CITIZENS’ MOVEMENTS

ISSUE: In recent years, a number of citizen movements have taken place which have evolved in response to specific social, economic or political causes and have faded with time without their benefits being fully capitalized upon, studied and made more effective next time, and without keeping the institutional memory from the lessons learned. Thus, there is a need to build the capacities of potential social movement leaders and to build a database of their history, as well as to analyze them from an organizational behavior perspective.

RECOMMENDATION: A specific strategic approach should be developed to address the capacity needs of past and future citizen movements and informal active groups.

RATIONALE: There is a need to study the effectiveness of citizen movements, conduct discussions with the key participants and organize trainings for civil society actors on how to contribute or increase the effectiveness of citizen movements, how to make the movements successful in achieving their objectives. As a result, civil society actors will be better informed

² http://www.epfarmenia.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CSO-Market-Research-Su-mmmary_English-1.pdf

and equipped with tools to lead citizen movements rather than participating in them on an ad hoc basis or simply observing.

Movement leaders often do not want to be associated with institutional CSOs in order to avoid being coined as implementing the plans and policies of donors. At the same time, a lack of institutional capacities greatly affects the movements' efficiency. Therefore, trust building is needed between movement leaders and CSOs, and new methodologies should be worked out which allow for movements to acquire the means for efficiency and institutional memory without aiming at official institutionalization.

CSO EDUCATION FOR MAKING THEM SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTERS OF VALUE SYSTEMS CHANGE

ISSUE: Critical thinking and capacity to act effectively remain vital for civil society actors, so that they become the driving forces of social transformation and changes in value systems.

RECOMMENDATION: There is a need to strengthen the media literacy, decision making, critical thinking, conflict transformation and investigative journalism skills of CSO actors, as well as enhance the effective advocacy skills of local CSOs.

RATIONALE: While many CSOs have attended advocacy trainings and conduct advocacy programs, the CSO Market Research as well as other research demonstrates that the rates of successful advocacy of CSOs are low. This means that something is wrong with selecting targets, devising strategies and implementing them. CSO leaders need state-of-the-art knowledge in decision making, critical thinking and other such skills in order to be able to realistically select the targets and work in such a way as to achieve the aims of advocacy rather than to merely spend the resources. This need is intrinsically linked with the need for CSOs to be able to have international remit, i.e. to cooperate with international advocacy issues and platforms, as well as to rely on international support, including that of the state and intergovernmental actors which support reforms in Armenia, while advancing causes important for Armenia's development.