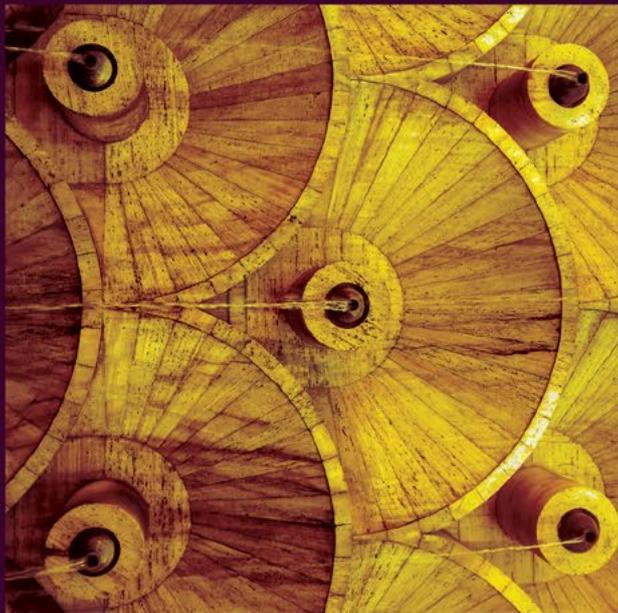


**20**  
annual report  
**18**



EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION

## FINANCIALS 2018

EURASIA PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION DECEMBER 31, 2018		
	31.12.17	31.12.18
US dollars	As of December 31, 2017	As of December 31, 2018
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<i>Non-current assets</i>		
Property and equipment	88,011	50,462
Intangible assets	147	-
Deferred tax assets	-	-
Subtotal	88,158	50,462
<i>Current assets</i>		
Inventories	-	-
Accounts receivable	152,171	243,458
Current income tax assets	1,878	436
Cash and bank balances	363,474	147,789
Subtotal	517,523	391,683
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>605,681</b>	<b>442,145</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND RESERVES</b>		
<i>Non-current liabilities</i>		
Grants related to assets	88,157	50,462
Subtotal	88,157	50,462
<i>Current liabilities</i>		
Accounts payable	84,776	118,271
Deferred income	350,459	189,805
Current income tax liabilities	-	-
Subtotal	435,235	308,076
<b>RESERVES</b>		
Accumulated result (unrestricted)	99,246	100,507
Foreign currency translation reserve	(16,957)	(16,900)
Subtotal	82,289	83,607
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>605,681</b>	<b>442,145</b>

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Roy Southworth** (Chair) McLain Association for Children, Georgia

**Anna Ohanyan** Stonehill College

**Mary Sheehan** International Organization for Migration, ret.

**Dieter Boden** German Ambassador, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, ret.

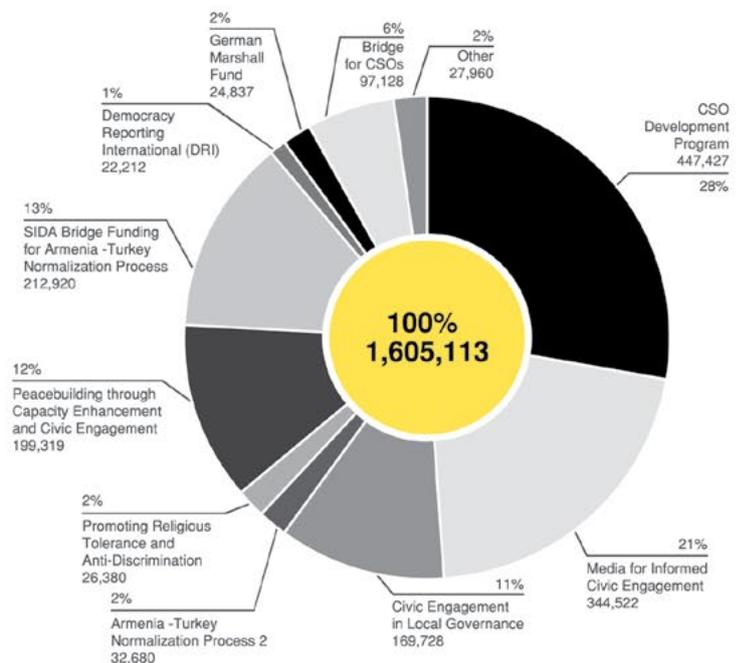
**Andrew Coxshall** KPMG

**Sarhat Petrosyan** Committee of Real Estate Cadastre of RA

**Deana Arsenian** Carnegie Corporation

**Laurens Ayvazian** Former Program Director at Eurasia Foundation (Washington D.C.)

**William Hanlon** UNICEF



## MAJOR DONORS IN 2018



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Government Offices of Sweden  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

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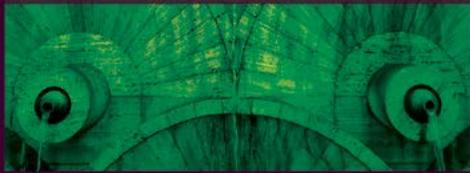
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**VALUES**



**CULTURE**



**LEARNING**





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

2018 was the year of the Revolution.

The members of our organization actively joined the wave of the Revolution. The Revolution heralded the values that have been central to our organization's activities – real democracy, human rights, nonviolence, defeating corruption, and sovereignty.

The victory of the Revolution forced our organization to change. Previously, we had tried within all our projects to either interact with the state system as little as possible, or have close partnerships in special cases when we could build relations based on trust. Now that many of our supporters, partners, and beneficiaries hold public office, and, in general, state bodies are composed of people who mostly uphold the same set of values as us and our organization, it would seem logical for us to revisit the previous approach to our work. First, we would interact more actively with the state system, addressing the issues that the state itself was trying to tackle. Second, we would help the new group of state officials and civil society join forces to address the upcoming tasks.

We didn't change our main strategy and projects, but this new task enhanced their significance and certainly added to our workload. In August 2018, we organized a broad discussion with the participation of the newly appointed officials and civil society, hosting over one hundred people in Tsaghkadzor and discussing future tasks over several days. We summed up the results and continued to refine them, attempting to update our strategy and that of a broad circle of our partners, to provide consultancy to the state and, as always, support civil society. This laid the foundation for our new approach to working.

Both successes and challenges await this course of state reform. The new officials and civil society are both actively working to understand the necessary changes and how to achieve them. We are happy that our previous plans in some cases, as well as our new plans currently coincide with the vision of the state, for example, the abolition of all forms of violence. We are ready to provide all our experience and competencies to support the renewed state so that the right changes occur more quickly and effectively.

Applied over many years, our approach to discussing issues has now stopped being marginal and has become an equally powerful voice in the discourse for change. So far, this is a major positive development. However, we will not hesitate to continue criticizing the state, perhaps even more actively than before, because we are hopeful that officials will take our opinion into account and consider it.

In some cases, the new generation of officials that has come to power has not been quick to understand the range of issues to be addressed, because they did not expect to find such a large segment of the state "poisoned" with the kleptocratic and criminal system of the previous ruling power, which we called a rhizome ("tuberous root"). And it is still going to take a lot of effort to replace that system with a viable and effective one.

Moreover, manipulative forces and trolls have launched a campaign for the "souls" of

citizens, blurring the lines between real and fake news, trying to shake any confidence in the coming changes, targeting the weaknesses of the new officials, sneaking into their ranks, and availing of massive private assets that were most likely illegally privatized – all in order to discredit the revolution and make it fail. As our partner, art critic Ruben Arevshatyan puts it, “The most dangerous thing is happening, when the system itself internalizes the revolutionary rhetoric and turns this against the tendency for real change, which is currently still underway.”

In this respect, we have prioritized and reinvigorated our activities especially in the domains of promoting critical thinking, overcoming retrograde stereotypes and restoring the value of a good reputation. In the present conditions of broad freedom of speech and assembly, and given that only some branches of the state system have been renewed, these values are among the most significant that need to be comprehended by citizens so that they can correctly assess the situation, find their own way forward, and act correctly and actively. Our major priorities now include non-formal education, culture in the broad sense of the word—including behavioral culture—and sowing counter-regressive values.

Hence, the revolution is not over at all and is still far from its conclusion. Quite the contrary. We are continuing our work. Our staff members, the treasures of our organization, are dedicated like never before to the mission of helping society based on the EPF values. We are grateful to all our donors and the broad network of partners, without whom we would be unable to implement the projects and whose support was the guarantee for our small success in the context of the greater achievements that await Armenia. It was a modest, yet a very symbolic event in this reporting period that EPF received a grant from the renewed state of the Republic of Armenia for the first time ever in its history. I will quickly add that this fact has not hindered and will certainly not keep us from criticizing the state constructively, when necessary.

***Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan***



## TRANSITION TO OPEN SPACE: VISIONING AND STRATEGIZING CIVIL SOCIETY IN ARMENIA

*The Revolution of Open Hands* that happened in April-May 2018 took the international community by surprise. It took place in a semi-authoritarian country on a downward spiral towards more authoritarianism, causing more and more narrowing civic space. The peaceful, non-violent Velvet Revolution created more opportunities for democratic and sustainable development of the country. To operationalize these opportunities, civil society (CS) should invest efforts in sustaining the gains of the Revolution and help build a vision and strategy for initiating or furthering the reform processes in many spheres.

To address the civil society organizations' (CSO) concerns and aspirations for sustaining the gains of the Revolution and moving them forward into a constructive and viable change, EPF organized a CSO strategizing event - an ambitious effort to bring together active civil society representatives, government officials and experts from a large variety of sectors to think together in a three-day setting. The event called "**CSO visioning and strategizing for the future**" was organized as a part of the USAID funded CSO DePo - Civil Society Development program, on August 24-26, 2018.

The big objective of the gathering was to enable civil society actors to define a common vision for the strategic development of Armenia in the new historical circumstances. One hundred twenty participants, 40 from CS, 30 from government and others from local government (LG), social movements, media, community and academic fields, spent 3 days of intensive discussions on issues related to current reforms and transitional processes, clarifying, developing and creating communication and cooperation mechanisms between civil society and the government, formulating innovative ideas, outlining and sharing the civil society vision and the action plans towards its implementation.

The participants chose about nine issues to debate and reflect upon, from around thirty preliminarily suggested areas: the State - CS Relations; Governance / Public Administration; CS Development; Sustainable Development - Environment; Media; Digital Technologies & Tools in the Management Systems; Global Armenia (External Relations); Culture; Role of Women in New Circumstances; Balanced Development of Peripheries; Ideologies & Parties; and Trade Unions. The event produced 140 general and specific recommendations addressed to various groups of stakeholders.



The 3-day event allowed participants to move away from day-to-day issues, think big about global societal challenges, elaborate possible solutions and risks, address unsolved problems and, communicate with government representatives.

Government representatives had an intriguing opportunity of receiving information from the most concerned and informed groups of the society – community-based organizations, civic activists, community representatives; they received first-hand information about what has advanced and what is left behind in terms of reform and democratic change processes; people’s aspirations and expectations; visions for Armenia’s development in a space expected to become increasingly free and more open for cooperation.

Some highlights of the issues discussed are the following.

### Civil Society and Government Cooperation

Civil Society should engage with the Government at an early stage of reform, in order to influence and shape the agenda of ministries, rather than stay merely discussants of proposals coming from the Government, or members of formal public councils which are often dysfunctional. For this CSOs need to become more capable of understanding the priorities that Armenia faces and formulating desired reforms. The government should develop more viable mechanisms and models to be able to utilize the CSO power to affect change. CSOs can also help the government agencies sharing their experience in management best practice: teambuilding, operations management, leadership and motivation building, program management, corporate culture, anticorruption, institutional memory, transparent and fair organization of state procurement processes – tenders, biddings; accountability to public; and transparency of decision making practices. It was suggested that the state changes the allocation principles of its funding available for development, which is currently run by state-owned Project Implementation Units (PIU) and various foundations. The state should engage CSOs as service providers. The state should adhere to the transparent and fair decision making practices in the funding allocation. This will be a clear act reducing corruption risks; it will increase the trust of the civil society towards the government; it will also help saving administrative costs of

maintaining 'heavy' PIUs and foundations. At the same time, CSOs should be able to deliver high quality work. The mechanism of state grant and tender making targeting CSOs is much more flexible than the budgetary commitments to maintaining PIUs and foundations for several years. If CSOs do not deliver a quality service, the state can and should recruit other, newer agents at the next stage of grant and tender advertising.

### External Relations (Global Armenia)

CSOs can help better utilize the expertise and capacities of the Diaspora for Armenia's development processes: CS can help create global professional cooperation networks of Armenians and non-Armenians. The Diaspora and international community need to better understand the processes that take place in Armenia, to make informed decisions and invest their capabilities and mental and technical resources in a way tailored to local needs. In this CSOs can also be instrumental. Such two-way cooperation will also stimulate that development and innovation models proven successful globally be invested in local development in Armenia.

### Culture

There is a need to integrate culture and cultural thinking in all aspects of transitional development, via promoting **behavioral culture**: the culture of language, the culture of following rules, the culture of adhering to values, ethics, etc., both in the society and in public administration. The end-result, the cultural artefacts, should be tailored to the needs of changing attitudes and behaviors. Such concepts as non-violence, transparency, anti-corruption ethics, avoiding conflict of interest (Col), tolerance etc. should be promoted via cultural projects producing artefacts which embody these values and give an opportunity to the culture consumer to reflect upon them in his/her life.

### Balanced development of Rural and Urban communities

The biggest concerns the group raised were nepotism, conflicts of interest and other biased approaches. These result in the total absence of innovation and motivation from local residents to engage in development projects, leading to disbelief in state funding and social justice. Capacity building of local government (LG) staff is crucial to break this vicious cycle: trainings in skills such as leadership, participation practices, project design and management, anticorruption & Col, project management, business thinking and other topics are needed. The role of CSOs was emphasized as potent agents that can help LGs incorporate creative, innovative (culture, education, enterprise development) local development strategic plans in community development strategies. Advocacy for policy reform is needed to ensure fair distribution of state appropriations, improved formulas with better criteria and mechanisms of proportional distribution of resources, and promoting development and innovation projects for communities, with intense involvement of community development experts in local budgeting.

## Environmental protection

The working group recommended increased transparency and public oversight mechanisms over mining, small hydro-power stations & fisheries, open for public and CSOs, and the need to formulate state strategy for renewable energy resources and management of water resources and infrastructure.

Some recommendations from various groups touched upon issues which are **cross-cutting** across various sectors. These include: Promoting new management culture vs. old rules of game in Governance / Management / Public Administration: ensure generational cooperation between old and new staffs of government, incorporate business thinking, interagency cooperation, inter- and intra-departmental communication, systems for managing public expectations from the government; and pay attention to the public's better understanding of improved policies to make them appreciate the change and to become constructive supporters of change.

The CSOs stated that they have several serious capacity gaps that need to be addressed. These include: understanding policy formulation processes, inter-governmental agreements and foreign policies re Armenia; how to propose policy recommendations and how to advocate for them; how to engage the public and evaluate the changing needs of society and sectors; how to collect and analyze data, write position papers, facilitate sectoral networks, cooperate with and manage expectations in CSO-Government, CSO-LG, CSO-Business contexts; how to engage and retain volunteers, incorporate critical thinking, creative and innovative design into strategies; utilize new media, technologies, and build lasting international partnerships.

To conclude, 120 participants of nine mixed sectoral groups proposed 140 plus recommendations and challenges that CSOs and government agencies, international organizations, donors and development professionals need and can take into account while building priorities and strategies to support Armenia's development in the period of transition from authoritarian to a more democratic state.



*The “CSO DePo: CSO Development Program” is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents and the views expressed as part of the Program are the sole responsibility of Eurasia Partnership Foundation and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*



## THE MISSION TO FORM “THE STRATEGIC WHO-S”: EPF AS MEDIA AND A NEXT GENERATION MEDIA MODEL

In 2010, when EPF began its first large media program, in partnership with Media Initiatives Center (MIC, then called Internews Armenia) and funding from USAID, professor Davit Hovhannisyan<sup>1</sup> led a creative game<sup>2</sup> where one of the groups was called “I am a newspaper”. Many years have gone by since then, but this thinking continues, reflected by the slogan “People are the media” used by the very important resource media.am created by MIC. This is not just the continuation of Marshall McLuhan’s thinking, it is also an admission of the fact that the information and internet revolution in the world is irreversible, and this is the most important event in human development since Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press.

The internet revolution changed everything, including the proportion of impact attributable to previous means of mass communication (newspapers, radio, television) and the new ones in existence today. This is the basis for the strategic planning of media programs at EPF.

The media is no longer an authority from whose words you cannot escape, which pursues people 24/7 like an Orwellian “Big Brother”, dictating its “sole truth” without any options for feedback.

The media is turning into citizen support, a real means of communication, supportive and congruent, and the professional and citizen media, being radically different from each other, are complementary through their values-based approaches and missions.

Considering that we work in these programs with such organizations as MIC, Yerevan Press Club (YPC) and others, that have laid the foundation for the development of the media sphere in independent Armenia starting from the first Law on Mass Media (1991), EPF and its partners focus on issues that address

- the simple fact that “each citizen is a potential or actual media source”

1. Hy.wikipedia.org. (2019). *Davit Hovhannisyan, Orientalist*. [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://bit.ly/2WslcyR> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019]

2. Gtergab.com (2010). *The Information World: A Group Report, December 2010 - Nouvelle Observatoire Kreatiff* 3. [online] Gtergab.com. Available at: <https://gtergab.com/en/news/projects/the-information-world-a-group-report/110/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

- the fact that traditional media must quickly adapt and change in order to remain competitive in the era of the internet revolution, and
- the “EPF is media and the media is EPF” approach.

This is the reason why EPF has traditionally been working in the following three areas since 2010 –

- a. developing citizen media activities (“I am the media”),
- b. supporting other professional media programs that would not have been implemented otherwise,
- c. to be a source of media on the one hand and, on the other, to make the media in Armenia strong and capable “like EPF”, from an organizational point of view.

### A. “I am the media”

With the support of its partners in the marzes, EPF has developed a unique network – the **Infotun** system<sup>3</sup>. These structures help citizens, particularly the youth, become media sources, develop their skills of performing meaningful work online and in social media, learn media literacy and critical thinking, use their citizen media activities to influence a more “bottom up” approach to their local self-governance, address human rights and transparency issues, as well as bring people together to implement important, positive reforms.

The Infotun system is complemented by the **Mardamej** annual Social Innovation Camp<sup>4</sup>, where young people learn, via a special technique, being more creative and innovative, and develop innovative ideas to address the needs of their communities, which are then supported and turned into reality<sup>5</sup>.

This system is reinforced by annual sessions of the **Critical Thinking School**<sup>6</sup>, through which around forty young people from all over Armenia and Artsakh participate in active discussions and learn to discern information from fake over three days in Yerevan. Various types of schools are also organized in the Infotuns in the marzes. EPF is one of the pioneers of critical thinking development in Armenia – it has created several videos<sup>7</sup> and

3. Epfarmeria.am. (2005). *Infotun Telecommunication Centers (2005-2009) / EPF*. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/Infotun-Telecommunication-Centers> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

4. EPF YouTube channel. (2019). *Mardamej 2019*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/nwdm0Jg3Bns> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

5. See details and examples in the text on “Urban development” Epfarmeria.am (2019). *Urban Planning and Development*. [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/urban-planning-and-development> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

6. EPF YouTube channel. (2019). *Critical Thinking School* [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbp6I5Zqa5A&t=1s> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

7. EPF YouTube channel. (2016). *Critical thinking: Theories. Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan* [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://youtu.be/EhfkelTgcG0> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019]., YouTube. (2016). Introduction to critical thinking of texts. Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://youtu.be/i6ADipZCcqW> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

recently published one important booklet<sup>8</sup> on this topic.

This school is closely related to another educational initiative of the EPF cross-border programs, the ***Conflict Transformation School***<sup>9</sup>: both formats are dedicated to teaching young people how to overcome stereotypes and discuss issues considered taboo, to separate the true from the false and to develop defenses and tools against the aggressive trolls common in this “post truth” era, and against campaigns of archaic and retrograde (regressive) thinking<sup>10</sup> that aim to stop human development and progress. In order to do this, it is necessary also for the Infotun beneficiaries to develop a value system that is clear but not primitive<sup>11</sup>, because values form the fundamental basis for orientation and decision making in life.

It is rewarding to see that the leaders of the Infotun movement and the beneficiaries of the EPF “I am the media” direction and its non-formal education strategy have become “resource people” and outcome multipliers, taking on the education of more and more networks with the same values-based and professional approach.

## **B. Supporting what would not have been implemented otherwise**

The other part of EPF’s work, in close partnership with MIC and usually with funding from USAID, consists of support to professional media. MIC and EPF pursue several objectives on this front as well –

- a. Allow the professional media to use new technologies and genres,
- b. Reduce or eliminate the gap between the traditional media and people who develop media such as the beneficiaries of the “I am the media” direction,
- c. Strengthen the impact of the most important and innovative products of the professional media by exposing them to audiences that might otherwise not be aware of them.

The latest multimedia genres, fact checking, investigative journalism, the data revolution – these are all topics that MIC and EPF address in their media support programs.

An example of innovation is the series of debates that were broadcast by H1 before the December 2018 parliamentary elections.<sup>12</sup>

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8. Epfarmeria.am. (2019). *Critical Thinking: Logical Fallacies and Misleading Rhetorical Tricks* | EPF. [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/hy/document/Logical-Fallacies-and-Misleading-Rhetorical-Tricks-Critical-Thinking> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

9. Epfarmeria.am. (2017). *Conflict Transformation School. Towards a New Generation of Peacebuilders* | EPF. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/CTS-infoleaflet> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

10. EPF YouTube channel. (2019). Archaic Thinking: Part 1. Vision and objective – a necessary part of critical thinking [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://youtu.be/JsZ6JPrwMyQ> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019], YouTube. (2019). Archaic Thinking: Part 2 [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://youtu.be/jeXR1PWlp8g> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

11. Boon TV (2018). Our values | Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan | Boon TV. [online, Armenian] Boon.am. Available at: <https://boon.am/values/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019]., Epfarmeria.am. (2017). The issue of defining art, culture, civilization, value (Jam Session 27) | EPF. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/hy/video/art-culture-civilization-lecture> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

12. See, for example: 1tv.am. (2018). *Election debate: Education, science, culture (My Step, RPA, Bright Armenia, Rule of Law Party)*, [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://bit.ly/2o2RNku> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

Tigran Paskevichyan's multimedia *GALLERY Textile* "essay"<sup>13</sup> was a new step in using the potential of this genre in order to tell the Leninakan Textile Factory's story.

The database developed by *Hetq.am* of assets and financial resources owned by state officials<sup>14</sup> heralds a new level of transparency.

### C. "EPF is media and the media is EPF"

EPF is not media from the professional point of view, but one thing is already clear today – any organization or even individual that wants to influence society must also be a media source. For that reason, EPF—while conscious of the fact that most of its products will remain at the level of "civil media"—has been producing its own media material for several years, such as the Jam Session series<sup>15</sup>, presenting such issues as critical thinking, peace-building, civil society development, conspiracy theories, archaic thinking, Armenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and many more. This is one of the main methodological principles of EPF – every person or organization can be a teacher if they can do something well. They must learn to share their knowledge and start doing so. It would, naturally, be strange for our organization to educate people in an area where we do not exist.

EPF's other mission, particularly related to the professional media, is the guarantee of quality from the point of view of the consumer, i.e. to teach the professional media to consider their product in its final version from the point of view of the consumer and to change it, to improve its quality in order to make it better suited for the consumer, before it is released.

This is also one of the methodological principles of EPF. It is a basis of our peacebuilding work ("put yourself in the other's shoes") and educational methods, where we do not apply "top down" or "authoritarian" methods, but rather use a participatory and interactive approach, eliciting knowledge and creativity from "within" the beneficiaries and helping them systematize and organize their pre-existing knowledge. In doing so, EPF is as much in the role of learner from the beneficiaries as the teacher, and vice versa.

There is still a lot of work to do both in the area of sector policy as well as by way of institutional investment in media literacy and critical thinking. And, finally, we understand well that formal and non-formal education as well as public awareness raising are constant needs.

But several important steps have been taken and these are ongoing. Beneficiaries are gradually learning to capitalize what they have been given and to become, in turn, the pioneers and leaders of these approaches, i.e. they are becoming "**Strategic Who-s**" – individuals and structures that are implementing successful initiatives aiming at development and progress.

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13. GALLERY TEXTILE. (2019). 'GALLERY TEXTILE' by Tigran Paskevichyan. [online, Armenian] Available at: <https://readymag.com/u49594707/1274026/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

14. Data.hetq.am. (2019). <https://data.hetq.am/en/> | Database of Officials' Property. [online] Available at: <https://data.hetq.am/en/> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].

15. Epfarmeria.am. (2019). *Jam Session / EPF*. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/Jam-Session> [Accessed 30 Sep. 2019].



The PeaCE<sup>1</sup> program that EPF-Armenia, EPF-Azerbaijan, CRRC-Georgia and International Alert are engaged in, funded by EU, has several aims, and some of them are to demonstrate to the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies that joint projects among the civil society members are possible; challenge stereotypes; recruit ‘new faces’ and therefore expand the ranks of ‘usual suspects’, who have been engaged in such projects for many years, but recently have become quite pessimistic of their worth. This program aims at moving at least some members of the societies to discuss difficult issues, between themselves as well as inside their societies; and overcoming the taboos that are being imposed by the daily official and social propaganda, which usually promote exclusively the war and conflict discourses. Many of the projects of numerous partners of EPFs within PeaCE are still in the making, but some of them have already come to fruition.

### Together is Possible



*Figure 1. Nelli Shishmanyana. The traces of Armenian and Azerbaijani children's hands on the wall of the House of Culture in Tsopi village, Georgia.*

1. Epfarmeria.am. (2019). *Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement (PeaCE) | EPF*. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/project/peace> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].

Nelli Shishmanyanyan from 4Plus Documentary Photography Centre captured this image in Tsopi village in Georgia, where Armenians and Azerbaijanis share the same community to this day. They live in peace even though many other points of contact between these two nations have nearly disappeared due to the conflict. Nelli together with her Azerbaijani colleagues Ahmad Mukhtarov and Famil Mahmudbeily decided to shed light on the fact that these two nations used to live side by side, share many cultural customs and build joint communities. The three photographers travelled to the places where Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to live together. Nelly visited Tavush and Ararat regions in Armenia, while Ahmad and Famil visited Shamakhi and Aghdam regions in Azerbaijan. They also made a joint trip to Tsopi and Khozhorni villages in Georgia where Armenians and Azerbaijanis continue living together until this day.

In Georgia, the partners compiled photographs, video and interviews to produce a multimedia film<sup>2</sup> that presents the life of the villagers who are engaged in farming. These villagers share the common space: children study at the same school and play together; people drink water from the same fountain, celebrate together and take part in each other's sadness or joy. These simple, yet impactful captures of the 'forgotten shared past of peaceful cohabitation' were first presented at a two-week joint exhibition called "Together is Possible" in Tbilisi, Georgia.

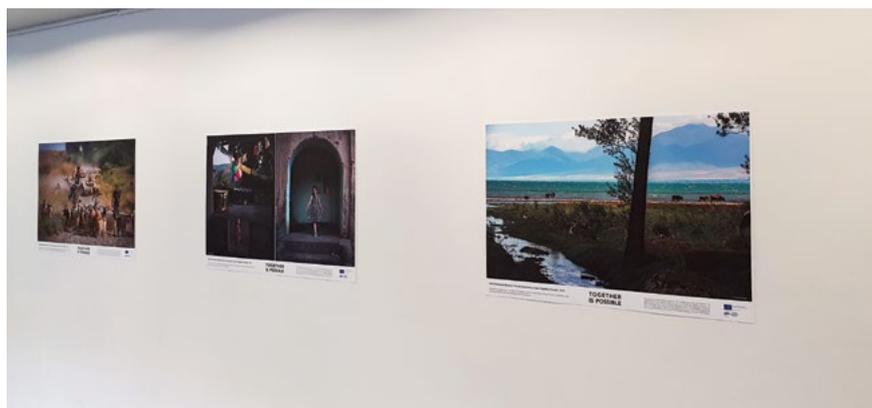


Figure 2. "Together is possible" photo exhibition in Brussels.

In early 2019, the photographers also held exhibitions in Yerevan and Baku. The opening of Nelli's exhibition in the Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (NPAK) was attended by over 120 people.

While implementing this project, the partner photographers lived through a unique cultural experience: they were accepted with hospitality and kindness in the mixed Armenian-Azerbaijani communities in Georgia. Nelli shares her experience:

“When I was leaving for Khozhorni, Georgia, my mother said with a worried face: “Be careful there...” My answer was as always: “Everything will be fine.” I knew I was right when I had my first cup of tea in the house of an Azerbaijani family.

2. Nelli Shishmanyanyan. (2019). *Together is possible*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-1GnTXo1sA> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].

Later I enjoyed borshch in Hamlet's house, and had some more tea, this time in Nazim's house, who was Hamlet's close friend. I had many chances to interact with people from neighboring countries, but it is a unique experience when you are hosted in an Azerbaijani home, and share a family meal. This project changed a lot in me. For the first time, I have seen with my eyes and captured with my camera the friendship of an Armenian and an Azerbaijani.

Human relationships and affinities evolve in spite of the conflict. The project confirms the importance of cultural exchange and dialogue between people, and the importance of humanization of the images of ordinary people in each other's eyes.

Nelli and Ahmad arranged a poster exhibition of their photographs at the Brussels Press Club, in June 2019. The participants of the event, including EU officials, took copies of the posters with them, and currently many of these posters are on the walls of various offices of the EU at Schuman Square.

### Deconstructing the Myths: Alter'notion

EPF's signature Conflict Transformation School<sup>3</sup> (CTS) aims at providing youth with critical thinking and confidence-building skills. One example of its longer-term impact is the Alter'notion project, implemented by a team of four Armenian and four Azerbaijani young individuals, some of whom are the alumni of CTS 2016.

In February 2018, the team used the Travel Grants Opportunity of the PeaCE programme to get together in Tbilisi and jointly develop a project proposal. By that time, the team members from the two sides were already friends: they studied in the US through an exchange programme years ago. The motivation to continue their friendship and their CTS experience led them to come up with a joint initiative.

The team engaged 20 Armenian and 20 Azerbaijani young people into a mutual learning platform comprising in-country and regional (joint) workshops. The in-country workshops focused on basics of blogging, tools for creating multimedia content, storytelling, and on their use for cross-conflict dialogue. The most motivated participants of in-country workshops attended a regional workshop in Georgia where they discussed topics such as society, gender, soviet influences, common vocabulary, family values, etc. The regional workshop moved participants to identify a co-author (peer-blogger) from the other side with whom they would work on a draft article/blog-post. Below are some of the experiences that the participants of the regional workshop shared with us:

“ My best experience was the one where we were all dancing together. At that moment, we were in a world where everything had a potential of getting better.

The project was one of the best experiences in my life. It made me understand how similar we are, our languages, culture, memories, everything. It's both scary and pleasant. Another best gift that I will take with me is friends. ”

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3. Epfarmeria.am. (2018). *Conflict Transformation School. Towards a New Generation of Peacebuilders* | EPF. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/CTS-infoleaflet> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].

“The best part was discussions with people from the opposite side, because we have realized how we were “fooled” by media, political discourse, history books, “facts” throughout these years. It was surprising to learn about some customs that we thought were related to our religion particularly and practiced by us only, but it turned out that they were common in both societies.

Not surprisingly, when asked whether they would agree if a participant from the other country is their roommate in a similar future meeting, 15 out of 19 participants of the regional meeting answered “Yes”.

Thirty joint blog-posts have been co-created and published since then on the blog-platform<sup>4</sup>, covering a wide array of topics: similar cultural influences inherited from the Soviet Union-times’ common traditions; social issues that are similar and yet different in both societies; discrimination on the ground of gender and sexual orientation<sup>5</sup>.

An issue that both societies are still struggling with is the articulation of women’s rights and raising awareness about the societal impediments women face. There is a need in changing perceptions of women’s roles in both societies which often promote patriarchal values<sup>6</sup>.

One of the most viewed blog-posts is the joint performance of the song “Sari Gelin | Sari Aghjik” that both nations claim as their own. The Armenian and Azerbaijani versions of the song united in one recording transform the topic of conflict into one of interaction.

As of August 2019, there were around 80 thousand visits to the blog-platform, and the figure keeps growing. Presentation of similar problems in both societies is an eye-opener and mind-changer, effects so much needed for civil societies to work together for peace.



Peacebuilding through Capacity  
Enhancement and Civic Engagement

European Union Initiative

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4. alter’notion. (2019). *alter’notion | alternative frame to caucasus*. [online] Available at: <https://alternotion.org/> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].

5. alter’notion. (2019). *Alienation of LGBT+ Rights in Azerbaijan and Armenia | alter’notion*. [online] Available at: <https://alternotion.org/alienation-of-lgbt-rights-in-azerbaijan-and-armenia/> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].

6. alter’notion. (2019). *How We Celebrated March 8th in USSR and How We Do It Now | alter’notion*. [online] Available at: <https://alternotion.org/how-we-celebrated-march-8th-in-ussr-and-how-we-do-it-now/> [Accessed 19 Sep. 2019].



Internal management and development of an organization is often considered boring and tedious. CSO DePo's aim is to change the attitude to it and demonstrate that it is fun, adventurous, creative and effective. CSOs often do not have means to work on their internal development and sustainability, but also they are used to paying less attention to it, not appreciating what they may consider 'bureaucratizing'. But those who become the beneficiaries of CSO DePo, have a very different story to tell.

Arevik Petrosyan and Ashkhen Babayan are two young women, who decided to join Spitak Helsinki Group (SHG) to organize their efforts of defending Human Rights in Spitak and nearby communities of Lori region. Various donors supported the organization which worked on protection of the rights of women and children. While working on various projects and fundraising for the organization's mission, the small team of young women did not have time and resources to think about strategic growth and internal development. Questions such as how the organization will grow during the upcoming five years, how to have stronger communication systems to increase impact of the CSO, how CSOs conduct effective advocacy and many others were in the agenda but there was no clarity on how to address them.

When CSO DePo offered to support the organizational growth of CSOs, SHG did not miss the chance. At the beginning of 2015 SHG came by the [www.hkdepo.am](http://www.hkdepo.am) portal and applied to take part in the CSO Management School. After the school, SHG evaluated its capacities using **the Capacity Enhancement Tool (CET)** – a unique methodology for CSO consultancy developed by CSO DePo in order to identify the needs and priorities of civil society organizations. Based on the results, SHG applied to "CSO Sustainability Strategy" funding opportunity, and received support to implement study visits to various CSOs across Armenia, to learn from their experiences and adapt best practices in the areas of organizational policies, procedures and communication systems.

The internal capacity building towards sustainability is a long journey, and the results become visible only after a few years of dedicated work. At the end of 2018, when concluding the DePo-funded project, SHG registered its evolution: it had enlarged the scope of its activities; had moved from one small-scale project to having five ongoing

projects. It had a larger office and four staff members in addition to Ashkhen and Arevik. The organization had managed to build a countrywide partners' network while conducting the study visits, launched its website [www.spitakhelsinki.org](http://www.spitakhelsinki.org), and plans to start a social enterprise. In three years it has developed significantly as compared to the previous six years of its existence, when its growth had been stagnant.



Staff members of Equal Rights, Equal opportunities (EREO) CSO for people with disabilities say that [www.hkdepo.am](http://www.hkdepo.am) is the most commonly used by them resource for information relevant for CSOs. EREO benefited from various capacity building activities of DePo, including consultancies, Management School and evaluation through the CET.

“Anush Aslanyan, the President of the NGO states that: We launched our organization to bring people with various forms of disabilities out of isolation and protect equal opportunities for them. We used to rely on charity support for small contributions, but we knew well that we needed a stronger organization to sustainably address the problems of people with disabilities. Therefore, learning how to improve institutionally, how to attract institutional donors and improve our communication and visibility – became key priorities for us.

They decided to request support for the most urgent need – communication and visibility. EREO had its social enterprise – EREO Style, which employs people with disabilities to ensure their economic inclusion and certain income. They needed to improve the promotion of their products. As part of the grant support EREO organized trainings on graphic design, video-photo shooting and editing. Also, the organization acquired necessary equipment in order to be able to have in-house capacity and provide communication and visibility services to others.

“You might think that the DePo grant was small support, but it gave the confidence to hire two more staff members, which was a considerable step forward, *says Anush*. Additionally, we pursued other strategic goals - launched a crowdfunding campaign and managed to acquire our own large office – an important contribution to our sustainability. Now, we have more services and better promotion of the products of our social enterprise, which gives us “wings” to fly farther and try reaching more people who need equal opportunities.

In Hrazdan, Marine Yegoryan and her team recently opened the doors of Child and Family

Development Charitable NGO. Marine built the organization all on her own: when going through various challenges of bringing-up her child with special needs, she understood that many parents who face similar issues needed to be better informed and supported.

She started gathering children with disabilities around her, organizing regular events and charity campaigns. Within a year, Marine applied to CSO DePo for support to establish an organization with all policies and procedures in place, to ensure the trust of donors and community. Shortly after the launch of the project, Marine acquired a team of five staff members and eight volunteers, developed a strategic development plan, communication strategy for the next three years and started to apply to various donors.

The foundation organized a charity marathon, raising awareness on the needs of children with disability among people in their community. The fundraised amount was the first “capital of trust”. Within a few months the CSO started to cooperate with local authorities, and received an office space for fifteen years.

In Goris EPF supported Sose CSO, which promotes women rights, gender equality and reproductive health. People and families in Syunik are strongly attached to national traditions, which at certain point might lead to heavy patriarchy and violation of basic rights of women – leading to domestic violence and discrimination. There is a need for an organization that empowers women and creates a balance in the communities, so that the traditions nurture the best values for the society rather than generate violence.

Liana Sahakyan established Sose with the mission to empower young women and girls. Sose had occasional projects, mostly implemented by the voluntary efforts of the team. When applying for a DePo sub-grant, Liana described the development path at the end of which the CSO will have its office space, three staff members, many volunteers, and, most importantly, support from three more donors. Now, the staff regularly participates in trainings to improve their skills and expand the operations. Success is clearly

demonstrated on the website **www.sose-ngo.am**, which was also created thanks to the DePo grant. The grant included support to developing branding and communication strategy.

The number of CSOs that benefited from the DePo resources exceeds 300. They received support in the forms of training, coaching, consultations, capacity enhancement



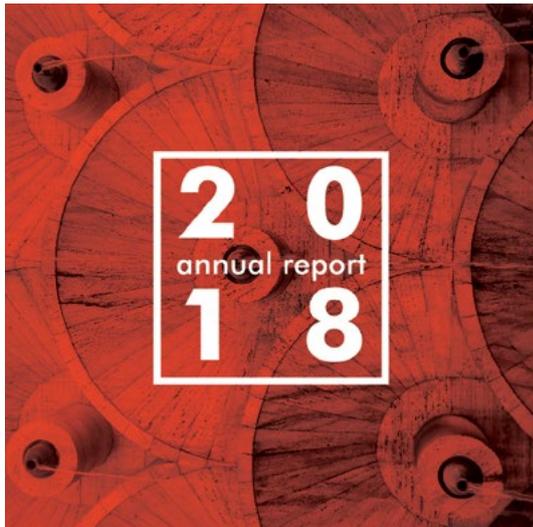


and/or grants. Twenty-one organizations who received funding also received EPF's and other CSO experts' support to meet their strategic development goals, understand the developmental niches, improve their management and learn to look further than their day-to-day operations.

One of the biggest gains of the DePo is that beneficiary CSOs were able to tune away from a short-term survival mode to thinking large-scale and planning strategic development, in order to be able to reach more people, address more problems with effective projects and services and make the country a better place for each and every one. These achievements are there to stay, i.e. they are sustainable, because DePo provided them, as the adage goes, 'not with the fish but with the fishing rode'.



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## URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

One of EPF's cross-cutting foci is on the preservation, improvement and development of cities' culture and architecture. EPF attaches a great importance to the development of urban culture in all its manifestations. Over the years, EPF has implemented or supported projects in the fields of urban ecology, environmental architecture, homelessness, tree felling, urban tourism, museums, etc. EPF employs a systematic and comprehensive approach to its urban planning-related work in order to find effective, complex and mutually enriching solutions even if the projects are small.

The nexus of human rights-related issues and changing behavioral culture via informal education is at the core of EPF's work in general and urban development work in particular. This work unites in one knot the issues of environment, non-violence, taste, education, gender, anti-corruption and citizenship values. Cities should be convenient for people with disabilities. Urban planning should be implemented taking into account people living in poverty and in difficult socio-economic conditions, and present the valuable culture of the past.

Over the years, EPF, via grant-making and partners, has addressed such issues as the urban sub-cultures: the hippy sub-culture in the Soviet-times Yerevan; the *kyartu* sub-culture<sup>1</sup> today (a youth behavioral culture, usually expressing narrow-mindedness, pseudo-conservative values, tastelessness and intolerance), with its roots stemming from several Soviet sub-cultures; and the *blatnoy* (criminal) sub-culture, which can be called 'anti-culture': the seemingly or really violent behavior inherited from the specific Soviet-type criminal world that the times spent by many Armenians in *gulag*, the Soviet concentration camp system, brought to Yerevan and other major Soviet cities. Unfortunately, this anti-culture survives until today and is at the core of many expressions

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<sup>1</sup> Gabrielyan, A. and Nikoghosyan, A. (2017). *The Kyartu Character as a Representation of Intolerance in Modern Armenian Prose*. In: *Research Book. Manifestations of Tolerance and Intolerance in Armenian Literature | Yerevan, EPF*, pp. 201-224. (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://epfarmeria.am/document/Manifestations-of-Tolerance-and-Intolerance-in-Armenian-Literature> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019]. Please see the summary of this publication in English at p. 31, p. 332.

of physical or psychological violence, such as domestic violence, bullying at schools or hazing in the army. The root of this anti-culture is the denial of human dignity. EPF studies it and builds recommendations on how to wipe it out from the behavior of independent Armenia's city and town dwellers. Intolerant and violent attitudes to the nature, plants, and animals are also from this range, and also at the forefront of EPF's attention<sup>2</sup>.

One of the problems that Armenia experienced after independence has been the ruthless destruction of valuable old monuments, public and green spaces, at the expense of people's financial and strategic interests. This destruction was brought about by the actions of corrupt oligarchy in the name of short and fast money. EPF has produced several talk shows and movies which addresses these issues. *Old and New Yerevan*<sup>3</sup> focuses on transformations Yerevan goes through, positive and negative changes. *Sos: Termless Hostages of Overarching State Interest*<sup>4</sup> addressed the issues of illegal destruction of old habitat and people's homes. Another show<sup>5</sup> focused on the 2012 struggle to preserve the *Mashtots Park*. This was one of the rare instances during the previous political power, overturned by the 2018 revolution, when people's will and struggle and the common sense eventually won over the banditism of cleptocratic oligarchy.

Started in 2019 with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, a joint project of the Armenian Center for Ethnological Research "Hazarashen" and EPF documents Yerevan's urban cultural history using the methodology of oral history. In-depth interviews with several senior residents of Yerevan are being conducted, their life stories are being recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The research aims at answering to a wide array of questions on Yerevan's history and intangible cultural heritage.

EPF also addresses the urban development issues outside Yerevan: in February, 2019, EPF organized a discussion on the development of Martuni with representatives of educational, cultural, economic, local government and other relevant institutions. A sectoral mapping was exercised on the basis of the actual city map. A number of approaches to further urban development of Martuni were unfolded, holistically and in an interconnected way touching upon many aspects of city development including cultural, economic, environmental, architectural and other angles, to be capitalized upon by the local government, civil society, and other actors in their future steps.

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2. YouTube. (2018). Animal Protection Issue in Armenia (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/vELYm2EAra4> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

3. YouTube (2012). *Article 27. Old and New Yerevan*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/2re9BAHMyq4> [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

4. YouTube (2009). *SOS: Termless hostages of Interest priority*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/uRqq9OG1OCs> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

5. YouTube (2012). *Article 27. Mashtots Park Issue (April 11, 2012). English version*. [online] Available at: [https://youtu.be/dYokc\\_alluU](https://youtu.be/dYokc_alluU) [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

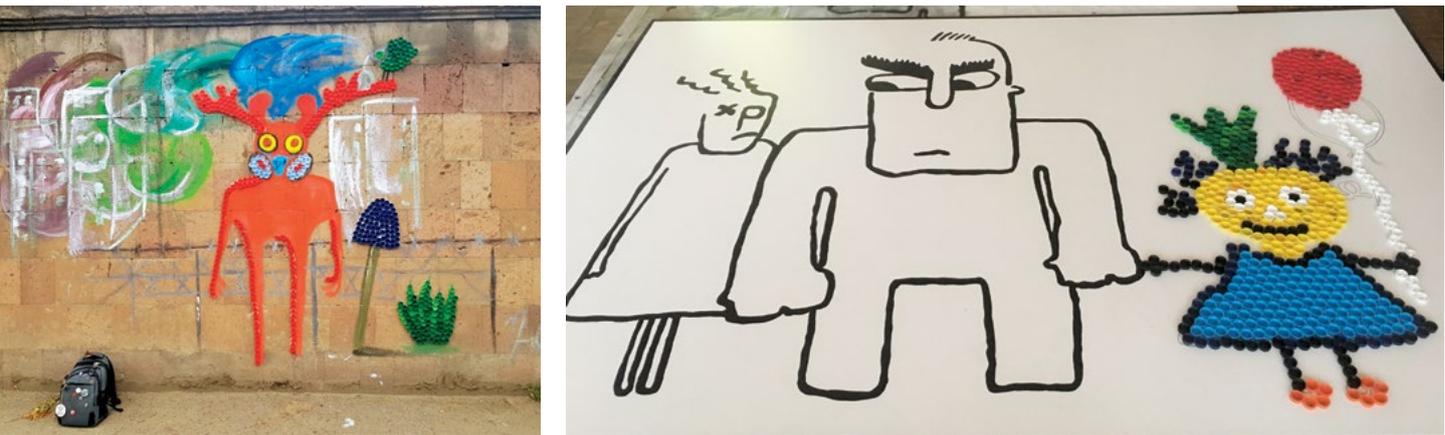


Figure 1. Mosaics from plastic bottle caps in Vanadzor and Ararat raising issues of air pollution and domestic violence.

For several years now, EPF organizes an annual Social Innovation Camp called ‘Mardamej’<sup>6</sup> (Among the People), supported by USAID. This project gives young people from all over Armenia opportunities to learn how to develop innovative and creative ideas addressing needs in the regions of Armenia. Often the resulting ideas touch upon the needs in improving urban environment and cities’ convenience for the inhabitants. One of examples is a project that is developing a set of mosaics from plastic bottle caps in various towns of Armenia. The project will be a touristic attraction as well as enhance the inhabitants’ consciousness on the need to reduce plastic waste.

In another project, “Votnahetq” (Foot mark), young people from Gyumri, Martuni, Sisian and Goris are mapping the accessibility of buildings and putting signs: green if the building is accessible and red if not. Information about the accessible and inaccessible buildings is being pinned on an online interactive map. Special boxes are being installed next to the inaccessible buildings for fundraising to install ramps later on.

Recently a publication<sup>7</sup> on the multi-ethnic ‘Firdus’ district in the center of Yerevan came out. On another occasion, EPF published the work of an international group of architects and experts, who developed a list of architectural monuments of Ani, the medieval Armenian capital, which is currently in Turkey, a wonder included by UNESCO in its world heritage monuments list. The Armenia- and Turkey-based specialists for the first time ever together evaluated the preservation chances of these monuments and worked out methods for joint assessment of the levels of their dilapidation and response urgency<sup>8</sup>.

6. Epfarmenia.am. (2017). “Mardamej” Social Innovation Camp | EPF. [online] Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/project/mardamej-social-innovation-camp> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].

7. Facebook.com. (2019). *Firdus: The Memory of a Place / Ֆիրդուս. տեղի հիշողությունը*. [online] Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/firdusmemory/> [Accessed 9 Sep. 2019].

8. World Monuments Fund, Anadolu Kültür and Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) (2013). Ani in Context. Workshop Report. [ebook] World Monuments Fund. Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/ani-in-context> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].



Figure 2. Ani exhibition in the Museum of Architecture of Armenia.

Similar projects were implemented focusing on Mush<sup>9</sup> and Artvin. This work has been done under the leadership of EPF's long-term partner Anadolu Kültür. The reports are being shared with the governments of Armenia and Turkey, UNESCO and other relevant institutions. Also, in 2017 EPF partners did a comparative assessment of the urban heritage of Gyumri and Kars<sup>10</sup>. The issues of Armenian architectural heritage in Turkey are at the constant attention of EPF<sup>11</sup>. In June 2018, the Ani exhibition by Anadolu Kültür was for the first time opened in the Museum of Architecture of Armenia, with support of EPF. This strand of work is usually funded by the European Union and Sweden.

EPF's focus on urban development issues is one of its long cross-cutting strategic areas of interest, and EPF plans to continue its work on this via its various projects.

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9. Dörter, G. and et al. (2017). Mush. Assessment Report of Tangible Cultural Heritage. [ebook] Anadolu Kültür. Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/Mush-Report-2017> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].

10. Petrosyan, S. and et al. (2017). Common Notepad. Gyumri-Kars Urban Heritage. [ebook] Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://epfarmenia.am/document/Gyumri-Kars-Urban-Heritage-Common-Notepad> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2019].

11. YouTube. (2016). Armenian Architecture in Turkey. Talk with Journalist and Architect Zakarya Mildanoglu (in Armenian). [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/YOhYiAmYtsU> [Accessed 11 Sep. 2019].