



**EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION**

**EURASIA PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION  
2023-2027 STRATEGY**

**Yerevan, Armenia / 2022**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) is an Armenia-based civil society organization that has accumulated 25 years of experience in program implementation, grant-making, and cooperation with the Armenian civil society and other local and international stakeholders. EPF positions itself as a ‘think and do’ tank with expertise lying in the nexus of project design and management, and the development of networks and consortia. EPF is specialized in civil society capacity-building, policy research and advocacy, alternative content development, critical thinking, and working for regional peace. EPF’s mission is to empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity through hands-on programs, helping them to improve their communities and their own lives.

EPF’s major strengths include its Board of Trustees and the staff. The strong, interested and motivated Board is a key to success of EPF. The Board is made up of diverse figures from Armenia, Europe and North America who bring a unique set of skills to the governance of EPF. This includes deep knowledge of the South Caucasus, Armenia and civil society development and expertise in diplomacy, business, non-profit sector, finance and law to ensure that the Foundation is professional, accountable and fiscally responsible. The Board makes decisions of financial and strategic significance. The Board members work flexibly and devotedly, helping EPF staff build on and apply their talents to successfully address the organization’s mandate in a challenging environment, including at times of an ongoing international crisis.

EPF’s **theory of change** is based on the assumption that a vibrant, independent, sustainable and well-developed civil society cooperating with and challenging the state, as well as working with the private sector and the Diaspora, will help Armenia build a sustainable and complex set of participatory democratic institutions and overcome current challenges. This will make Armenia strong enough to enable it to find a common language with its neighbors that it is in conflict with, Turkey and Azerbaijan, and contribute to the development of a stable and viable South Caucasus region. EPF will also work on strengthening ties with Georgia, as both countries build democracy and are members of Eastern Partnership. This theory is supported by a complex web of programmatic approaches, methods, principles and expertise accumulated by EPF over its lifespan. EPF’s methods are gender-sensitive, and they are based on a human rights approach. These methods target the most vulnerable sections of the population, support policy advocacy initiatives, constantly study and flexibly take into account risks, opportunities and lessons learned.

The April 2018 ‘Velvet Revolution,’ the COVID-19 pandemic, the 44-day Karabakh war of 2020 and its aftermath, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war have significantly impacted Armenia’s development, and also provided lessons to be learned for EPF’s programming. Lessons from COVID-19 are mostly positive: EPF was able to restructure its operations and adopt new tools, such as Zoom and hybrid meetings. Lessons from the 44-day war include the awareness of the gaps in Armenia’s entire state system and in discourses about war and peace, which EPF has been trying to address in previous years. EPF promoted critical thinking on issues of war, peace and Armenia’s Soviet past. EPF also discussed issues of violence, gender, and reforms needed in closed groups, such as the army and the penitentiary system, and this work needs to be continued. Another thing learned is that EPF needs more research in global knowledge of addressing unexpected risks. These events also showed that Armenian society faces internal and external disinformation and propaganda threats, compounded by an unprecedented rise in hate speech and verbal abuse online. EPF plans to continue addressing these issues through strengthening of media literacy and critical thinking capacities of its beneficiaries. Another pressing need is the diversification of funding sources and financial sustainability of CSOs, the lack of which prevents CSOs from growing and dedicating resources to meaningfully engage in policy dialogue.

EPF’s **signature tools** and **approaches** are cross-cutting, and include the following:

- **Grant-making** is one of the major tools that EPF has used over the years to provide support to CSOs. EPF includes grant-making in most of its projects and work directions. In addition to

grants selection, distribution, evaluation, and project oversight, EPF builds the institutional capacity and internal controls of its sub-grantees. In 2008-2019, EPF awarded around 400 grants totaling \$8.5 million.

- **Conflict transformation (CT)** and **critical thinking (CrT)** are specific proprietary methodologies that EPF developed to enhance the skills of civil society members, particularly youth. The CT approach paves the way for civil society actors across the conflict divide to build trust using critical thinking skills and accumulating experience via joint undertakings. The CrT helps beneficiaries become more conscious and literate media users and producers, and learn to recognize propaganda and manipulation tricks and their impact on an audience.
- **‘Mardamej’ Social Innovation Camp** is a specific proprietary format boosting the creativity of young people while addressing the issues of public interest or concern through the implementation of innovative projects with social impact tailored to the needs of regions of Armenia.
- Using the **‘EPF University’** publications line, EPF contributes to education and learning in Armenia through texts and video presentations on various topics that usually are not sufficiently addressed in Armenia, such as CSO governance and management, critical thinking, conspiracy theories, project management, the Soviet past, violence, transparency, and accountability.
- EPF’s network of 10 **InfoTuns** (one in each region of Armenia) promotes critical thinking and media literacy, anti-plagiarism, understanding of conflict of interest, urban development, anti-discrimination, gender sensitivity and other important issues all over Armenia. InfoTuns have grown into recognized resource centers of local expertise that are used by local and international development actors that want their projects to reach across the regions of Armenia.
- **Human rights-based approach** and **gender mainstreaming** have been and will remain EPF’s focus throughout its activities. EPF’s projects will promote equal opportunities and access to goods and services, gender-sensitive planning and management, and inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels.
- **Environmental mainstreaming** is another strategic approach in EPF’s programming, promoted in all its undertakings as well as in the design and implementation of all grant projects. EPF will continue communicating its approach to environmental mainstreaming to all beneficiaries and civil society at large to build solidarity on this issue.

EPF’s strategic **directions of work** each come with a regularly updated set of activities, objectives, outputs and outcomes, while relying on the above signature tools and approaches:

- The direction of **Civil Society Development** will use EPF’s tools, methods, and resources to make the Armenian civil society a more trusted, institutionally strong, impactful and sustainable actor. EPF will strive to make sure that by 2027 the Armenian civil society (a) has become more sustainable and resilient with advanced institutional systems and financial viability, capable of providing services to public, beneficiaries, and state; (b) has built a stronger capacity for policy participation, and has been playing a considerable role in democratic processes in Armenia; (c) has developed better inter-sectoral networking capacities, which would contribute to a more favorable environment for a viable civil society.
- The direction of **Human Rights and Justice** will help change the structural causes of intolerance, violence, injustice and discrimination, as well as the attitudes and behavior of actors. EPF’s efforts will strive to make sure that by 2027 (a) Armenian journalists, editors and opinion-makers have demonstrated increased sensitivity to and knowledge of religions, which is reflected in the coverage of issues related to religious freedom and diversity; (b) the discriminatory regulations regarding religious, ethnoreligious, national minorities and other vulnerable communities in various laws and draft legislative proposals have been removed and/or amended via an effective joint advocacy effort by EPF, civil society partners and members of the targeted communities; (c) vulnerable groups have enjoyed improved access to justice due to the efforts of civil society to

identify and address gaps in the legislation and practice related to the Judicial Compulsory Enforcement Service, child guardianship system, and access to courts, including the Cassation Court.

- The **Cross-border** work will continue focusing on conflict transformation and confidence-building between Armenia and Turkey, and between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, as well as on civil society and economic cooperation between Armenia and Georgia. EPF's objective is that by 2027 (a) civil society, grassroots, business and state interactions will have prepared a fertile ground for bolder political developments and larger-scale interventions, which substantially support and advance the process of establishing diplomatic relations and the opening of the land border between Armenia and Turkey; (b) a small but vocal constituency will be established in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorny Karabakh (NK) comprising civil society actors and grassroots, including many newcomers, and it will remain open for a constructive dialogue, confidence-building and crisis response with their counterparts across the conflict divide; (c) cooperation and dialogue will be established or strengthened between civil society organizations, businesses, and expert/opinion-maker communities of Armenia and Georgia.
- The direction of **Democratic Governance and Media** will continue supporting civic engagement and oversight of the decentralization and local self-government reform at national and local levels, as well as supporting independent media organizations to ensure higher standards of media discourse, production and dissemination. EPF's aim is to achieve the following changes by 2027: (a) the selected local self-government bodies will have become more resilient, competent, and developed with increased citizen engagement in and oversight of community life; (b) the Armenian independent media will be producing and disseminating high-quality, compelling and facts-based media content and alternative narratives covering ongoing reforms and processes in the country.

The combination of core funding, non-competitive funding from the EU, and the successful cases of competitive fundraising will provide EPF with sufficient financial resources to successfully continue and expand its operations.

As with any organization, EPF has **organizational development** (OD) needs that it plans to address as part of its strategy for 2023-2027, including separation of the human resources and procurement functions; development of the R&D department; and establishing a 'center of excellence.' EPF also plans to (a) work on tools that were developed previously (e.g., the expansion of the Advocacy Handbook); (b) explore newer programmatic avenues, such as undertaking more work on urban development, on addressing criminal subculture, and on engaging the Diaspora; and most importantly (c) develop and test ideas for an EPF-run social enterprise, so that a non-interrupted stream of funding is secured.

EPF's project management and **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning** (MEL) practices are embedded in EPF's programmatic and administrative policies and procedures, and extend to its partners and beneficiaries. EPF's MEL practices are consistent with the requirements of major international donors including the European Union, the US government, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and others. EPF MEL guides internal decision-making and informs conversations with donors and stakeholders about EPF's impact and influence. In addition, throughout the 2023-2027 period, EPF will arrange for two independent comprehensive external evaluations: mid-term and final, which will complement the data accumulated via the internal M&E, and help EPF innovate, learn and maintain the highest quality of operations.

In addition to the comprehensive Policies and Procedures, EPF has developed several strategic documents that cover major internal (corruption-related, financial) and external (political instability, pandemic, war) **risks**, and the ways to respond to them. EPF has also developed and is annually updating an Emergency Preparedness Plan as well as an Incident Management Plan.

EPF's approach to **sustainability** includes focusing on its own organizational sustainability; sustainability of the results of its programmatic activities; and sustainability of its partners. EPF's organizational sustainability is based on such major achievements as its own office space, highly-skilled staff, non-stop fundraising and innovative management. Years of operation without core funding moved EPF to devise a fundraising methodology which has become the major instrument that helps sustain the programmatic and administrative functioning of the organization. EPF's sustainability is intimately linked to its **flexibility and rapid response practices**, and to its practice of developing algorithms and tools for its internal use, such as the Grant-Making System, Institutional Memory System, Event Organization System, the proprietary Database, Communication System, as well as such programmatic tools as Capacity Enhancement Tool, Municipal Capacity Enhancement Tool, Policy Development Guidebook and Youth Programming Assessment Tool, all of which EPF offers to its partners for their organizational development, program implementation and sustainability. The sustainability of project results includes policy advocacy documents that EPF and/or its partners have developed to be used long after the project's end, both as an advocacy tool as well as a learning tool; laws that EPF and partners have influenced to support the sustainable path towards institutionalization of democratic practices (9 laws over 7 years); institutional changes, such as the use of petitions or introduction of a budget line for CSOs in Local Government (LG) budgets, to be replicated country-wide. EPF's civil society direction and the capacity building of its sub-grantees are tailored to achieving the sustainability of civil society in Armenia. A five-year-long core funding allocation will allow EPF to build strong capacities, including in fundraising, which will enhance EPF's and its partners' effectiveness and increase the impact of their work supporting Armenia's transition to a sustainable democracy.