



EPF Capacity Statement

[Eurasia Partnership Foundation's](#) (EPF) mission is to enable civil society actors to effect change and effectively participate in the governance of their communities and of the state. EPF has accumulated 26 years of experience in program implementation, grant making, and cooperation with the Armenian civil society. EPF has developed a unique portfolio of services to position itself as a 'think and do' tank with expertise in the nexus of project design and management, network building and consortium management, civil society capacity building, and policy research and advocacy. One of the major tools that EPF has used over the years to support civil society organizations (CSOs) is grant-making. In addition to the selection, distribution, evaluation, and oversight of grants, EPF builds the institutional capacity and internal controls of its beneficiaries and partners. Prior to grant implementation, EPF staff work jointly with grantees on project design, implementation schedule, evaluation process, and risk mitigation. Afterwards, EPF staff accompany and coach grantees throughout the grant project. EPF employs a unique proprietary grants management system, which enables a strict fiscal oversight of grant recipients. EPF provides a variety of types of grants: open-door (unsolicited) grants, based on open competition procedures; target (topical) grants; invited grants; as well as grants to individuals and unregistered groups. EPF may allocate grants of various sizes and various durations to various entities including physical persons, non-profits, and for-profits inside and outside of Armenia. Since mid-1990s, EPF (and its predecessor Eurasia Foundation) have allocated around \$30 million in grants in Armenia. The majority of this money came from USAID. Other key donors included EU, SIDA, the Netherlands, FCO. In 2008-2019, EPF awarded around 400 grants totaling \$8.5 million in Armenia. Major thematic areas of EPF grants include civil society development, local governance, human rights, anti-corruption, conflict transformation, media development, and youth. In its grant-making, EPF adheres to human rights based approach, gender equality, environmental consciousness, inclusiveness and participation at all levels. Currently, EPF has four major program portfolios: **Cross-border** ([Armenia-Turkey](#) and [Armenian-Azerbaijani](#) dialogue); **Human Rights** (anti-discrimination, religious tolerance, and justice sector reform); **Good Governance** ([local government](#), [media](#), and [promotion of non-violence](#)); and **Civil Society Development**. EPF has developed an [InfoTun Network](#) comprising ten training and resource centers located in every region of Armenia. Over the years, EPF has developed a unique holistic signature methodology for CSO capacity building. Some of the methods and tools listed below are cross-cutting, such as Capacity Enhancement Tool, network-building, advocacy and communication trainings, etc.

Objective 1: Financial viability improved:

ER1.1: Legal-regulatory reform/improvements for financial sustainability pursued.

The [CSO Comprehensive Market Research](#) (CSO DePo: 2015) demonstrated that 56% of surveyed CSOs in Armenia were funded from intergovernmental or foreign government sources (with 70% of income of the recipients generated from that source), while the state-run grant making to local CSOs was insignificant, ineffective, and non-transparent. To address this issue, prior to 2018, EPF participated in the network of CSOs working on legislative changes. The ensuing amendments to the Law on Public Organizations, gave NGOs the right to undertake for-profit activities. After the 2018 Velvet Revolution, EPF engaged in helping the new government with correcting the procedures of disbursing grants to local CSOs. EPF particularly addressed the grant-making systems of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). In this work, EPF used its research of previous years, e.g. the ["How to avoid corruption while living in Armenia"](#) publication that addressed the lack of knowledge of state employees of conflict of interest (CoI). A successful example was the improved grant-making procedures of MoESCS for creative writing in 2019:

EPF advised that members of the jury were known in advance, criteria were clarified, CoI statement was required. However, there is still a huge work needed to improve the grant-making and tendering practices and procedures of the state, in addition to working on the legal provisions motivating businesses to cooperate with and invest in civil society. Earlier, EPF developed a draft law on endowments, but it was not capitalized upon by the government.

ER 1.2: Capacity to fundraise and diversify funding sources enhanced.

In 2014-2019, within [CSO DePo](#) and [Bridge4CSOs](#) projects, EPF enhanced fundraising skills (including [crowdfunding](#) and [social entrepreneurship](#)) of 280 CSOs. Since 2010, EPF has been elaborating on its own concept of [Social Entrepreneurship](#). In 2018, EPF organized a [2-month capacity building event](#) on Idea Validation for Social Enterprises for 30 CSOs. Among the successful results are: the [“Agarak Center for Dog’s Place” NGO](#) established animal support services and operates successfully to date, [“Martuni Women’s Community Council” NGO](#) re-branded its sewing enterprise into a [“Tagani”](#) traditional garment production enterprise. EPF also initiated a dialogue between businesses and CSOs to increase businesses’ trust in CSOs and make sure that their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies also address CSO needs. In all these areas further work is needed, given the generation change, the appearance of new CSOs, and the new challenges that Armenia faces today.

ER:1.3: Financial management systems strengthened.

Since 2014, EPF has provided 70 trainings to 570 CSOs (of which 340 are community-based organizations,) which included sessions on financial management, responsible budgeting, source diversification, audits, etc. Many CSOs did not have an overall organizational budget, and operated based on on-going project budgets. EPF’s trainings helped many of them put an end to this short-term approach, e.g. CSO DePo beneficiaries were able to shift from the “short-term survival” mode to thinking large-scale and planning long-term. [“Child and Family Development Center” NGO](#) and [“Sose Women’s Issues” NGO](#) were run by young women based on enthusiasm. As a result of DePo, they set up and equipped office facilities, hired and trained managers, accountants, went online, revised charters and strategies, attracted more resources, and now implement larger-scale and longer-term projects.

Objective 2: Organizational capacity enhanced (with a focus on community-based organizations)

ER 2.1: Governance and management systems and practices strengthened.

Since 2014, EPF has provided 70 trainings to 570 CSOs (of which 340 are community-based organizations), which included sessions on governance and management. CSO DePo established a [CSO Management School](#) that became a hub of support with practical learning modules offered to CSOs. The CSO Management School is a 3-day workshop, followed by several smaller-scale group consultations. EPF also produced a series of 40 multimedia-based lectures - [“Jam Sessions”](#), on topics of CSO development or issues that CSOs address, which are free to use (see also below). CSO DePo experts offered CSOs the following OD-related modules: Leadership and Governance; “What should NGOs know about the international community”; Policies and Procedures; Human Resource Management; Program Management; Consortium Building; Network Building; Anti-corruption; and others. EPF also developed the [Capacity Enhancement Tool \(CET\)](#) (open access) to address major areas of improvement: 50 CSOs applied this tool accompanied by EPF experts; 200 CSOs consulted the CET on their own initiative.

ER 2.2: Constituent linkages/engagement strengthened.

Since 2018, the InfoTun network has organized 600 discussions and capacity building trainings with local constituents in the areas of media literacy, critical thinking, fundraising, and civic engagement. Within [DATA](#), 20 discussions with local constituents took place in 2019-2021. The DePo partner Goris Press Club (GPC) worked in a rather conservative environment, focusing on using media tools for raising awareness in local communities on problems of municipal mismanagement, poverty, human rights violations, etc. With the help of EPF, GPC shifted from using only media reports and articles to conducting public debates and discussions with engagement of new groups of stakeholders, intensified its work with youth groups, training young journalists and activists able to reveal and cover local issues in

local news portals. When working on improving governance of CSOs, EPF also addresses their needs in membership management and trust building with constituencies. Another element of EPF's strategy is attention to institutional memory and network building: after events, one should not let the beneficiary CSOs disperse, they should have clear chances for continued engagement with each other and with service provider CSOs long after the specific training or event ends. To support networking, EPF provides small grant opportunities to beneficiaries after capacity-building events.

ER 2.3: Communication with all stakeholders improved.

Under CSO DePo, EPF provided training on external communication to 320 organizations, and advised on their internet presence. EPF created and maintains the [DePo Portal](#) where CSOs display their profile, learn CSO news, see opportunities, and connect with each other. Since its inception in 2015, it has an average of 4,000 monthly visitors. EPF also provided CSOs with media literacy skills to orientate in information and avoid fake-news (see above the information on the work of InfoTuns and below - on Jam Sessions). Building networks for advocacy, including CSO-government and CSO-local government (LG) networks, is also part of this work. EPF also worked on improving society-CSO communication via engaging media as intermediaries, to make the CSO work more understandable to the media and therefore to the public. In 2014-2021, 23 instances of media-CSO cooperation took place, and 120 films and other media stories were produced about CSO work. EPF also works as an intermediary-facilitator of CSO-government and CSO-business dialogues, supporting CSO efforts to reach the government and businesses.

Objective 3: Dialogue on public policy enhanced.

ER 3.1: Formal mechanisms for advocacy and policy dialogue with stakeholders strengthened and institutionalized.

EPF has built strong constituencies who engage in policy advocacy, including the religious communities' network - [a unique one in Armenia](#), the anti-discrimination legislation network, and the judicial reform network. **Since 2016, EPF with partners have influenced nine legislative initiatives.** EPF is also engaged in public councils adjacent to the Police, Ministry of Justice, working group of the Council of Women's Affairs with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, working group on Combating Hate Speech established by the Standing Committee on Human Rights Protection and Public Affairs of the National Assembly. In this and other work with government, EPF advises the government agencies on how to make these councils more productive and effective.

ER 3.2: Ability to engage in unbiased and evidence-based (with no hidden agenda) policy discourse improved.

Since 2013, EPF organized 17 critical thinking schools engaging 400 participants, and 4 schools on research methodology for 30 CSOs. EPF's grantee trained 75 CSOs on advocacy. CSO DePo's grantee Journalists for Future (JFF) produced a ["Key to Open Data" Manual](#). Since 2016, EPF produced 20 [critical thinking-related Jam Sessions](#) which are freely available on the net with 10,000 viewership in total. A series of guidebooks on policy participation are developed: ["Participation of Civil Society Organizations in Legislative Initiatives"](#), ["Practical Skills for Initiating Legislative Amendments"](#), and ["How to Initiate Amendments in the Constitution"](#). Bridge4CSOs produced an online manual: [Current Knowledge for Effective Advocacy](#). Since 2017, EPF produced 15 studies and policy papers within its Human Rights program. [EPF's Critical Thinking Handbook](#), [the book on Tolerance in Armenian Literature](#), and the [book on Culture of Violence in Armenia](#) (all in Armenian) are groundbreaking evidence-based and analytical undertakings which are being used by CSOs as primary sources for their planning of evidence-based research and advocacy. EPF's partner CRRC within CSO DePo conducted 15 trainings on evidence-based research. Currently, within DATA, five network consortia aim at evidence-based advocacy. Socies Expert Research Center produced [Ethical Research Manual](#) (in Armenian) as part of DATA.