

YOUTH AFTER THE WAR: CHALLENGES, NEEDS, SOLUTIONS

The analysis of online discussions' results

January 2021



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The goal of **DATA project** is to improve the capacity of CSOs to identify, analyze, and effectively communicate evidence to policy makers, promote inter-sectoral cooperation through establishment of networks engaging CSOs and government in evidence-based policy development.

DATA partners are **Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Boon TV Foundation, Sociés Expert Centre NGO, Youth Cooperation Center of Dilijan NGO and SOSE Women’s Issues NGO.**

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METHODOLOGY

The **aim** of discussions is to reveal the changes that happened in daily life and lifestyle of youth, lay out their expectations, challenges, the ways to face challenges and the needs of young people after the war in Artsakh happened in September, 2020.

2 group discussions were conducted.

Participants were from various communities of Aragatsotn, Syunik, Shirak, Tavush regions, and Yerevan.

Overall, 31 young people participated in the discussions.

VALUES SPECIFIC TO THE ARMENIAN YOUTH

Values specific to youth in pre-war period	Values specific to youth in post-war period	Values that youth should have in post-war period
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•• Personal dignity• Willpower and perseverance• Loyalty• Innovative spirit• Love• Values perceived as negative• Material wellbeing• Sthrengthening one's own positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase of perseverance and willpower• Growth of the feeling of patriotism• Negative values• Intolerance• Lack of solidarity and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tolerance• Perseverance• Personal dignity• Loyalty• Unity• Care• Respect• Innovative spirit• Love• Patriotism

**When talking about desired values young people mainly see them in the context of their usefulness in the macro level, in terms of leading the country out of crisis, stabilizing the situation, contributing to development and progress.*

VALUES SPECIFIC TO THE ARMENIAN YOUTH

“Many people value material well-being a lot and it greatly hinders other things. Well-being is indeed important, since living without material comfort is impossible, however, its prioritization will constantly push the society back.” (Female)

“Innovative spirit is a vital value... we all have seen how important technologies are and we can achieve success by our knowledge. Willpower is also important... also, everyone should do their best in their field without disturbing others.” (Male)

“We should value patriotism, love, and respect towards others, willpower and perseverance more after the war in order to move forward.” (Female)

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE WAR ON THE LIFESTYLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Covid-19 and the war affected both education and employment of young people.
- The labor rights of some young people who volunteered for war were violated since they were either paid partially or did not get the salary at all.
- Both the pandemic and the war created uncertainty in people's everyday life and towards their future.
- There have been psychological changes and the topic of war still prevails in their lives.
- Although the pandemic and the war disrupted education process, they also created **new opportunities for young people to volunteer** and help those who suffered from the crises.

“Our daily life has changed a lot. Formerly we couldn't imagine that such crises are possible, we were planning our daily lives without considering them. But now when making plans, I take into consideration how such crises can affect them.” (Female)

“Nothing visible has changed in terms of returning to work. However, there have been deep psychological changes among people. Many of them who have lost their relatives are in a psychological stress.” (Male)

ON LEAVING ARMENIA

• Many people are waiting for the borders to open to be able to leave Armenia as they cannot find jobs or do not consider the environment stable and safe

• Some of the participants' decision to stay or to leave Armenia depends on the state of stability in the country.

Some of the participants will leave the country only to gain new knowledge and skills, but will return back to utilize them in Armenia.

Many of participants want to stay in Armenia and bring changes but do not mention actions or do not specify how they should do

"I agree that for self-development and positive growth it is necessary to go to other countries, to acquire new knowledge. But you should collect all that and use it for the development of your country. It is important now for young people to return to their country." (Female)

"There are people who stayed in Armenia and tried to change something and they encountered this reality [they did not succeed due to the external factors]. It affects me a lot. But there is also the idea that I should stay and change something. I have an inner conflict of thoughts. It is a matter of time and during the upcoming year we will understand what needs to be done. There is no need to take impulsive steps now." (Male)

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

- Mostly young people were actively engaged both on the frontline and in the rear activities during the war: the youth fought on the frontline and the youth did the majority of the rear work.
- Young people showed high level of **proactiveness, volunteerism and unity** throughout the war.

Skills necessary for
young people in
crisis situations

- Quick orientation
- Flexibility
- Strategic thinking
- Resource mobilization
- Resource management

Skills/capacities necessary for young people to become problem solvers, self-organized and independent decision-makers

- Ability to formulate problems and goals
- Critical thinking
- Self-reflection
- Perseverance
- Flexibility
- Team work
- Proactiveness
- Leadership
- Media literacy
- Communication
- Ability to use new technologies
- Volunteering

“We should find solutions, options. We should not suffocate ourselves emotionally... self-control and self-awareness... If everyone did a SWOT analysis for themselves, e.g., what could I do, what would help me, we could move forward.” (Male)

THE ROLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES AND CSOs

- Local self-government bodies and CSOs have a major role in increasing the participation of youth in various processes.
- Local authorities' and CSOs' projects that refer to youth should not be fictitious but rather tangible.
- The work of CSOs is more visible and tangible while local self-government bodies mainly do not pay any attention to the needs of youth and their engagement in various processes.
- Young people should also be interested in demanding and initiating more engagement in the decision-making processes and local government programs and not wait for it to happen from the top. However, in order to make bottom-up changes knowledge of several tools and mechanisms are required.

EXPECTATIONS FROM LSG BODIES AND CSOs

Engage more young people in their projects

Maintain connections with participants after the projects end

Conduct need's assessment before project implementation

Take into account changes, development and trends happening in the world when implementing projects

Take into consideration the experience and opinions of young people in LSG bodies strategic documents

EXPECTATIONS FROM LSG BODIES AND CSOs

“Until now the number of young members in Community Council was very small. Once there was a plan to open a youth branch, but it didn’t happen. But I would like the experience of youth to be considered when designing a five-year plan. We want the NGO’s to implement projects for youth, to establish relations and connections with youth and do not waste their money.” (Female)

“You can find many things in the community development documents that are just written. In the five-year development plan of Talin there is only one word about the youth. It is written ‘make it so that the smart youth of Talin do not leave the community’. And you understand their attitude and perception toward youth. If we want to be engaged in the development plans and see that the community cares about us [young people], we must suffocate them so that they do not decide on our behalf, whether we are smart or not, whether we are needed or not.” (Male)

SOME REMARKS

- When talking about the values specific to the Armenian young people, some participants mainly list desired values rather than the ones that are actually common among the youth. It may be possible that they just do not have any idea about the value system of their peers or they have never thought about the topic and hence, find it difficult to give any description.
- In the context of post-war period participants talk about reconsideration of work and everyday activities, their desire to stay in Armenia and change something. However, they don't have a clear understanding on how they should do that or how this reconsideration is being done at all.
- While discussing the role of CSOs and local self-government bodies the participants who were somehow involved in various projects and to some extent were aware of various CSOs' activities, local self-government bodies' strategies were more active, rather than others. The inactivity of other participants about this topic may be related to the lack of awareness about the activities of CSOs and local self-government bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organize training for young people about the activities and the role of CSOs and local self-government bodies, about tools and mechanisms for influencing local authorities as well as about the opportunities for being engaged in the decision-making processes. This will give young people an opportunity to be more informed, have an idea about the role and work of CSOs and local self-government bodies and the ways of possible engagement in their activities.
- Organize training courses for young people on critical thinking and teach them to define, formulate, and find solutions to the problems since knowing this is vital for the youth to bring the change in their communities.
- Create platform(s) that will inform young people from various communities about volunteering, educational and other opportunities. Very often young people are not aware of various projects and also do not know where to look for that opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct needs assessment of young people or organize group discussions before designing projects. This will make the projects more targeted and useful for young people from various communities as well as will engage them in the decision-making process. This refers to both CSOs and local authorities.
- Expand the geography of projects and events for young people by implementing them in those communities where they were unavailable before due to the absence of foundations, organizations or volunteering opportunities.
- Organize networking events for young people from various communities. The latter will create an opportunity for young people to exchange their experience, as well as build relations between their peers from other communities creating new opportunities for cooperation and impact.
- Organize meetings with specialists where young people will have an opportunity to discuss the mechanisms of overcoming uncertainty and explore ways from crisis situations.