

# YOUTH AND INEQUALITY IN ARMENIA



# YOUTH AND INEQUALITY IN ARMENIA REPORT

## Research team

**Anush Khachatryan (Social Inclusion)**

**Mane Tadevosyan (Civic Participation)**

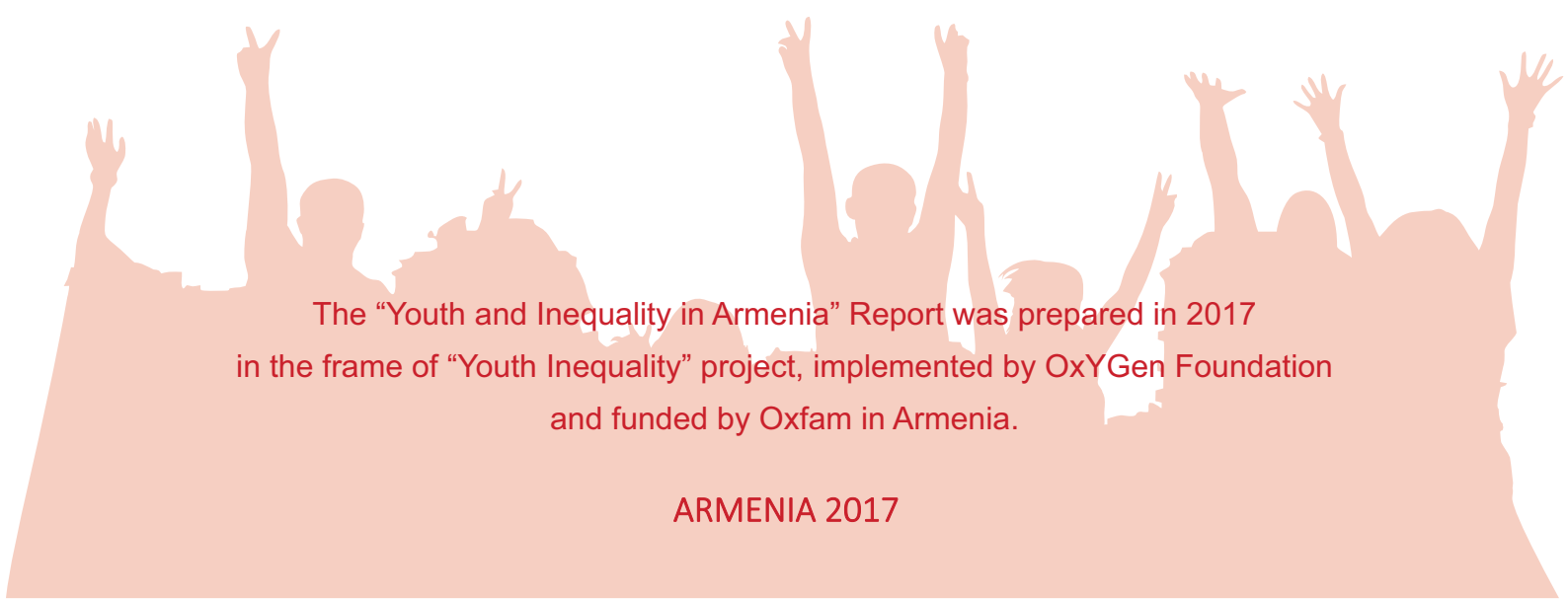
**Taron Yeghoyan (Economic Participation)**

## Team Lead

**Arsen Simonyan**

## Designer

**Meri Matervosyan**



The “Youth and Inequality in Armenia” Report was prepared in 2017 in the frame of “Youth Inequality” project, implemented by OxYGen Foundation and funded by Oxfam in Armenia.

ARMENIA 2017

# Table of Contents

---

1.	Introduction .....	
2.	Methodology .....	
3.	Civic Participation of Young People .....	
	Introduction .....	
	Inter-Age Inequalities .....	
	The Geographical Pattern of Civic Participation: Exploring the Urban-Rural Divide .....	
	Gender and Leadership Divide .....	
	Conclusions of the Chapter “Civic Participation of Young People” .....	
4.	Economic Participation of Young People .....	
	Introduction .....	
	Geography: So Close, And So Far Away .....	
	Gender Divide: Provoking the Narrative .....	
	Age: Exploring the Age Ranges .....	
	Conclusions for Economic Participation Section .....	
5.	Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities .....	
	Introduction .....	
	The Burden of Double Discrimination .....	
	National minorities and/or repatriated young people .....	
	Young People with Disabilities .....	
	Young single mothers and/or mothers in/after maternity leave .....	
	Social Inclusion Issues among Discharged Young Men .....	
	Conclusions for .....	
	Recommendations .....	
	Conclusions .....	
	Acknowledgement .....	
	References .....	
	Annexes .....	
	Annex 1 - List of experts .....	
	Annex 2 - List of focus groups and their parameters .....	
	Annex 3. Questionnaire for Expert Interviews and Focus Group Discussions .....	

---

# 1. Introduction

---

The “Youth and Inequality in Armenia” Report (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”) was prepared between July and December 2017. The Report is based on existing official data relating to young people, other pieces of research, analytical papers and expert opinions, as well as other relevant sources identified for this purpose. The Report provides recommendations on national youth policy development and possible measures to eliminate the existing youth divide. The “Youth and Inequality in Armenia” Report was prepared in the frame of the “Youth Inequality” project, implemented by OxYGen Foundation for Protection of Youth and Women Rights (hereinafter, OxYGen) funded by Oxfam in Armenia.

The Report includes qualitative information on the differences young people are facing based on age, gender and geography. It explores the effects that young people and more specifically young people with fewer opportunities are facing in terms of civic participation, social inclusion and economic participation based on the mentioned factors.

**The main aim of this Report is to analyse the current inequalities young people are facing in Armenia nowadays.** The Report aims to provide answers to the following framework of questions:

- Are there any forms of inequality between sub-groups of young people?
- How do factors such as gender, age and urban/rural residence affect young people?
- How can policies and programs be improved in order to address any inequalities young people are facing in Armenia?
- What supportive measures and procedures can be identified to improve the national youth policy and youth programs in Armenia?

By analysing the unequal situation of different sub-groups of young people, the Report will serve as main evidence base for efforts by all interested entities targeting national and regional youth policy development and youth program development. The scope of recommendations developed are based on critical findings elaborated on the analysed data and can be used by state agencies, international organizations and the civil society, individual researchers, youth workers and leaders, as well other stakeholders. The Report will be used by the OxYGen for further development of its Youth program portfolio for the years of 2018-2022.

It should be highlighted that the “Youth and Inequality ” Report has been substantially used as a major source of evidence in the course of the development of the National Youth Policy Strategy for 2018-2022: particularly, several major findings and recommendations of the Report are reflected in the Strategy.

In Armenia, citizens and residents (including citizens of other countries, stateless persons and refugees) aged between 16 and 30 are considered youth or young people. The current definition derives from the State Youth Policy Concept (14.10.2015) elaborated by the RA Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs. Young people are not a visible statistical category in Armenia. National statistics are collected in five-year sub-groups (except for up to 1-year-old category and 1-4-year-olds), including sub-groups of 15-19, 20-24, 25-29- and 30-34-year-olds. The data officially published by the National Statistical Service of Armenia is thus not aligned with the national definition of youth (16-30). This fact and the absence of specific youth development indicators were, therefore, major obvious obstacles for data collection process for this Report.

The Concept on State Youth Policy, adopted in 1998, had been the main youth policy document in Armenia for a long time. It was followed by two Youth Policy Strategies for the years of 2005 – 2007 and 2008-2012 as well as a Work Plan providing for the implementation of the National Youth Policy Strategy for 2009-2012. This was followed by the National Youth Policy Strategy, adopted on 27.12.2012, covering the 2013-2017 timeframe. The second and the most recent National Youth Policy Concept Paper was adopted on 14.12.2014. As of December 2017, the final draft of the National Youth Policy Strategy for 2018-2022 was presented to the Government of Armenia for adoption. The drafting process was highly participatory, relied on high quality evidence base (including this Report), ensured engagement of all major stakeholders including young people from all regions of Armenia into the development. The OxYGen intensively supported the RA Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs along the process through the “Youth and Inequality” project funded by Oxfam.

## 2. Methodology

---

The Report provides a perspective of the inequalities that different groups of young people are facing in Armenia. It aims to build a stronger theory and empirical evidence on policies and practices affecting the status of youth in Armenia. Hypothesizing that young people in Armenia are growing up in an era of economic, social, civic and political inequalities, the report seeks to understand how these various types of inequality affect young people and their opportunities to thrive, and what can be done to effectively respond to inequality and reduce it. The Report examines the situation that youth encounter in the following three areas: economic participation, civic participation and social inclusion.

The hypothesis of the Report is the following: there is a youth divide in Armenia based on gender, age and geography. In order to test the hypothesis, the Report allows a logical flow of the analytical process and makes strategically comparable recommendations on different areas of the Report by following single conceptual framework, seeking to answer the following questions:

- Is there inequality in economic participation among youth based on gender, age and geography?
- Is there inequality in civic participation among youth based on gender, age and geography?
- What are the obstacles that young people with fewer opportunities encounter, disaggregated by gender, age and geography?

The Report is built around extensive qualitative research conducted in Armenia. Apart from desk research and analysis of relevant publications, there are two main strands to the Report: focus groups with young people and key informant interviews. Report findings and recommendations are based on triangulation from the mentioned 3 sources of information, and analysis and interpretation by the research team.

### a) Desk research

As an initial step, the Report explored the existing data from official sources, national youth policy and analytical papers such as research and reports. Desk research allowed to identify main standards, principles, definitions that are accepted by youth stakeholders in Armenia, avoid redundancy, gather wider perspective on the issues and analyse recent development trends of the youth sector.

The desk research revealed substantial analytical work done on assessing the youth situation in Armenia. Several international organizations, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and its affiliates, local youth organizations have done research of the youth situation from different perspectives in the recent years. However, at the same time the desk research identified gaps in the statistics and indicators, from mismatch of provided data age range and youth age brackets to lack of almost any data on important indicators for youth development as Number/% of NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

Sources used for the Report are provided in the Reference section.

### b) Focus Groups

13 focus groups were held over the course of the research, with a total of 126 young persons as participants. Focus groups were conducted in August and September 2017, each lasting between sixty

and ninety minutes. The composition of focus group participants, within the practical constraints and the time available, included young people from all age groups, geography and inclusion profiles researched. Efforts were made to ensure a representative balance with respect to gender, age, ethnicity, ability, and other demographic variables. For the purposes of focus group discussions representatives of civil society organizations, community groups and non-formal civic groups were selected from the whole country proportionately representing Yerevan, northern and southern provinces of Armenia. The discussion groups represented all urban/rural, centre/periphery, affluent/poorer regions. The focus groups represented various sectors, including the civil society, private sector, academia, local authorities and mass media.

Facilitators took a semi-structured approach, gathering opinions on initially agreed set of questions, allowing the discussion to flow as freely as possible but in case of need guiding with probing questions to seek clarification of important points or further information on especially salient contributions. All the focus group discussions were audio-recorded (with the consent of the participants). The list and description of the focus groups are provided in the Annex 2 and questionnaire for the focus groups is attached as Annex 3.

### c) Interviews

21 in-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders in the field of youth. Interviews were conducted in the semi-structured manner, with follow up questions concentrating on interviewee's field of expertise. Interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes, most of them were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewee. Initial questions for the interviews explored the same topics as for the focus groups to allow several perspectives on the report topics. Interviews were conducted after the focus groups in order to ask for expert opinion on the findings from focus groups. The list of the experts and institutions represented by them are provided in the Annex 1, and the questionnaire for the interviews is provided as Annex 3.

## 3. Civic Participation of Young People

### Introduction

While different studies define civic participation differently, there is a consensus over its substantial effects on the quality of democracy<sup>1</sup>, its importance as a feature of a well-functioning state<sup>2</sup> as well as the “enormous capacity of young people for civic leadership and participation.”<sup>3</sup> When analyzing democratic participation, Verba (1967) notes that people's participation is shaped and stimulated through certain channels and structures, including participation in the activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). While NGOs are an important component of civil society, they are by no means the only 'players' in this field. Other channels embrace but are not limited to volunteerism<sup>4</sup>, citizen participation in mass public activities<sup>5</sup>, civic activism in policy-making processes and actual implementation<sup>6</sup> as well as internet and social media with their capacity to facilitate collective action<sup>7</sup>.

This study attempts to reflect on various forms of civic participation, both organized and less-organized, formal and associational, conventional and newly emerging, electronic and live. For the purposes of the study, civic participation is defined as a formal and informal engagement of individuals in community life, including membership in civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteering, civic activism, electronic participation as well as participation in the overall decision-making cycle, from policy development to policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

While many studies were conducted to measure civic engagement patterns in Armenia, this Report looks at civic participation from a practically untapped perspective. Recognizing that youth is not a homogenous group, and certain young people are more affected by various inequalities than others, it seeks to better understand the ways in which unequal power structures affect the level of civic participation of young people. Hypothesizing that multiple inequalities affect the capacity of young people in Armenia to engage in civic life, this section of the Report seeks to reveal the background knowledge on participation patterns in different types of civic activities as well as understand how various types of inequality affect young people and their capacity to engage in civic life based on gender, age and residence. The final section offers conclusions and recommendations for policy makers, youth organizations and development groups to challenge inequality in participation and increase civic participation of youth.

### PATTERNS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

**Membership in NGOs:** The past two decades witnessed significant progress and development of non-governmental organizations operating in Armenia. A number of NGOs have acquired considerable technical capabilities, became respected players in their fields of activity, and are recognized by the government and international community as able partners in dealing with various issues of public concern. Moreover, many NGOs have achieved a reasonable level of financial, institutional and organizational viability and sustainability. Several other variables such as internal NGO governing structures, fundraising activities, and public outreach suggest that the NGO sector is much more institutionalized and stable than was the case twenty or even ten years ago<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Zukin, Keeter et al. (2006)

<sup>2</sup> Bellah et al. 2007; Scheufele and Shah (2000)

<sup>3</sup> Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan (2010)

<sup>4</sup> Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995)

<sup>5</sup> Inglehart (1997)

<sup>6</sup> Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001)

<sup>7</sup> Yang (2003)

<sup>8</sup> Paturyan and Gevorgyan (2014b)



However, if these organizations are considered in the broader context of public engagement, the picture is discouraging. Public trust in NGOs is low: according to Caucasus Barometer, only 23% of the population either trusts or somewhat trusts NGOs<sup>9</sup>. Membership figures are no less discouraging. Two thirds of the respondents of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment say that they do not participate in civil society activities. Overall, three quarters of survey respondents are not members of any organization. The potential for participation remains low as well: for all forms of civic participation, the percentage of respondents saying they would never do it is consistently higher than the percentage of people saying they might do it or have done it in the past. The 'refuses' are more numerous than the 'doers' and the 'might doers'.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the organizational sector of civil society can be described as fairly institutionalized but detached from the broader public. On a positive note, some restoration of balance is observed in the civil society ecosystem, which was previously largely equated with NGOs. Since 2008, other forms of particularly spontaneous organization have emerged and gradually become more visible, vocal, and prominent in recent years.<sup>11</sup>

**Civic activism:** As distinct from formal participation, the entirely new development in Armenian civil society is the rise of civic activism of a novel type: case-focused, largely spontaneous, mostly driven by youth, and powered by social media. Along with institutionalized NGOs the rise of civic activism is manifested in 'citizen initiatives' coalescing to collectively address a particular issue. These non-institutionalized activists are young, educated and highly conscious citizens with the potential to galvanize the country's civil society.<sup>12</sup>

This new “awakening” locally known as “civic initiatives” began in 2008, greatly expanded in 2011 and continues today. These are grassroots, volunteer based, non-partisan groups usually consisting of between twenty to a couple hundred (in rare instances) individuals, who come together to collectively raise awareness of and address particular issues. Civic initiatives have promoted a form of active and empowered citizenship, which links the rights of citizens to the responsibilities they should bear toward their communities and their country. This has involved encouraging people to take greater ownership of the problems facing their communities and becoming active subjects who voice their concerns rather than remaining as passive and silent bystanders in society. Civic initiatives have attracted and led to growing participation and civic engagement by young people. The age range of the participants is between 20 – 45 years of age, with the most active participants being in their mid-20s – mid- 30s.<sup>13</sup>

It should also be stressed that there is both cooperation and tension between the 'old' NGO sector and the 'new' civic activism elements of Armenian civil society. While NGO's perceptions of activists are overwhelmingly positive, activists' perceptions of NGOs are rather varied, nuanced, and generally guarded, differentiating between “good” and “bad” NGOs, and between the ones that “serve the public interest” and the NGOs that are 'grant-eaters' and in the 'government's pocket'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2017/CB2017\\_ENG\\_presentation\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2017/CB2017_ENG_presentation_final_.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.civicus.org/images/Civicus-Report\\_August-2014\\_FFfinal.pdf](https://www.civicus.org/images/Civicus-Report_August-2014_FFfinal.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Paturyan and Gevorgyan (2016).

<sup>12</sup>Ishkhanyan (2014)

<sup>13</sup>Ishkhanyan (2015).

<sup>14</sup>Paturyan and Gevorgyan (2016)

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

More often than not, activists refrain from being associated with the formal NGOs due to lack of public trust towards the sector.

**Volunteerism:** A number of authors analyze the reciprocal relationship between civic activism and volunteerism. Flanagan (2004) examines the notion and practical aspects of volunteerism in the context of political socialization and civic activism. The author analyses volunteerism among the youth, noting that the characteristics necessary for development of a democratic citizen are shaped during voluntary extracurricular activities. Similarly, Wilson and Musick (1997) note that volunteering improves people's civic skills, making their later civic and political participation more effective.

Volunteerism in Armenia has manifested itself in various forms. It ranged from the so-called “compulsory, coercive volunteering” with the former Soviet government, which mostly required that citizens provided free services to public projects, to “natural, freewill volunteering” such as after the 1988 Spitak earthquake and during the Karabakh conflict in the early 1990s, when thousands of people voluntarily assisted earthquake victims, refugees and other vulnerable groups. Presently, large-scale, yet scattershot and irregular volunteering describes the volunteer contributions of Armenians. Formal organizations have not yet channeled and succeeded in taking full advantage of the wider volunteer resource base that exists in Armenia: only 14% of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index respondents do unpaid voluntary work for organizations. Additionally, the regulatory environment in Armenia fails to support volunteerism since there is not enough legal framework to facilitate the development of volunteerism. Even though volunteering is practiced in the majority of civil society organizations, there are several intergovernmental programs supporting international volunteering activities in Armenia, but the only legal act describing volunteering is the RA Law on Non-Governmental Organizations dated 16.12.2016. This law provides a possibility to NGOs to use volunteering labour for reaching their statutory goals. In 2017, the Law on Voluntary Activity and Voluntary Work was actively drafted and discussed, but so far, no agreement was reached on the matter.

**Electronic participation:** The increasing use of ICTs has created new ways to communicate and share experiences as well as new tools to make public voice heard. For the majority of young people, digital media and social networks are major platforms for information-sharing and communication. The ever-expanding range of technological possibilities gives young people new opportunities to engage online. Furthermore, some authors approach social networks as a tool for change<sup>15</sup> and for empowering ordinary people worldwide to have a public voice.<sup>16</sup> The Internet has a positive effect on civic engagement, and social media is able to facilitate collective action.<sup>17</sup> Gil de Zuniga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) analyze the impact of social media networks on civic participation, demonstrating that the use of social networks positively affects civic participation.

In Armenia, internet usage is on the rise. Studies show that young people in Armenia go online relatively more frequently than they watch television. The vast majority of them (96.1 per cent) go online while 55.9 per cent of them use the Internet on average three or more hours a day.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Raouf et al. (2013)

<sup>16</sup>Kirkpatrick (2011)

<sup>17</sup>Yang (2003)

<sup>18</sup><http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/13149.pdf>

Moreover, there is a statistically significant correlation between age and trust in both online media and social networks: younger people are more trustful. Younger people are also more frequent users of social networking sites as a source of information about current events.<sup>19</sup> Thus, online platforms, social media and similar networking channels have considerable potential for triggering activism in Armenia. For the moment being, space-independent access to law-making processes as well as electronic participation in decision-making processes has yet to be witnessed in the country.

**Youth participation in policy-making processes:** One of the eight international principles for youth policies states that the policies should be “designed, developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with the meaningful participation of young people, and with the involvement of all concerned stakeholders, from the local to the national level, in both rural and urban settings, and in all development contexts, including post-conflict and transition situations.”<sup>20</sup> Youth participation is one of the key priorities identified within youth policy documents in the Eastern Partnership region, including Armenia. The Government of Armenia at all levels declares youth to be the key element behind the development of Armenia with youth participation identified as strategic priority in National Youth Policy Concept (2015-2025) and Strategy (2013-2017). Furthermore, the action plan of the 2013-2017 State Law on Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia (2012) lists 19 activities to promote youth participation under “Priority No. 1: Promotion of youth participation in the political, economic and cultural life.” However, while participation is declared a strategic priority, the mechanisms of implementation are not strong and impactful. Regardless of the political will and statements by officials, there is a lack of direct actions in supporting youth participation in any form. In most of the cases, youth is associated with education, sports or cultural aspects of the community life, but not considered as a separate stakeholder group. With rare exceptions of youth policy development at national level, for instance, participation of young people in policy making process gets the form of decoration or tokenism only.

While obstacles to greater youth participation in decision-making processes still persist, young people also feel that the youth-led civil society organizations that participate formally in youth policy development are difficult to join and represent a certain elite. Wider youth participation, particularly of those not involved in civil society organizations, seems to be limited.<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, the country is faced with low level of civic and political engagement of youth: Armenia ranks only the 127<sup>th</sup> on political participation and the 151<sup>st</sup> - on civic participation out of 184 countries in the 2016 Youth Development Index.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the majority of young people are not even willing to be involved in the activities of political parties, local self-governing bodies and civil initiative groups.<sup>23</sup>

Lack of trust in political systems amongst young people, lack of transparency in those political systems, lack of co-management structures with youth participation, lack of monitoring and evaluation measures still challenge youth policy development processes and civil society participation in decision-making processes at large. Perception and attitude towards civic activism pose problems of their own. When asked whether they think civic activism was useful for their family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and people in general,

<sup>19</sup>Paturyan and Gevorgyan (2016)

<sup>20</sup>Global Forum on Youth Policies (2014)

<sup>21</sup>UNICEF, 2016

<sup>22</sup>Alex Farrow et al., 2016

<sup>23</sup>UNDP, 2012

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

23% of CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment respondents gave no answer. The opinion of those who did provide an answer was almost equally split with 51% considering it useful and 49% considering it not useful or not useful at all<sup>24</sup>. This shows that there are serious obstacles facing civil society organizations and activists in their efforts to ensure greater accountability, participation and transparency in policy-making processes. The civic activism sector faces the challenge of scaling up its efforts in extending their outreach and rallying greater support and higher levels of active and meaningful participation of the young people in the society and in democratic practices and processes.

#### Inter-Age Inequalities

Youth civic engagement leads to reduced risky behavior, increased success in school and leads to greater civic participation later in life. However, youth today do not exhibit many important characteristics of citizenship.<sup>25</sup> Youth participation is one of the key priorities identified within youth policy documents in the Eastern Partnership region, including Armenia. However, while countries declare that participation is an important priority, there is little evidence of its implementation.<sup>26</sup> Armenia is not an exception, civil and political participation of young people is still at very low level. This chapter of the Report examines the level of civic participation as practiced by different age groups within Armenian youth. Recognizing that age-brackets used to define youth in Armenia are quite expanded – 16-30, the Report disaggregates the age cohort into 16-19, 20-24, 25-30 age sub-groups to explore whether or not the level of civic participation is affected by age structure as well as reveal the potential dichotomy within the three age groups specified. All participants of the study confirm that these three age groups are drastically different from each other and have fundamentally different potential, capacity and interest towards engaging in civic life.

*“Not only is there drastic heterogeneity within these age groups but also they are changing at every point in time. The actions and description of 16-19 age group back in some ten years ago is extremely different from the same age group today. Usually policies are guided by illusionary vision of what these age groups constitute rather than by evidence-based findings of their needs for the moment being.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

**16-19 age group:** The participants of the study characterize this age group as a group that has rigorous energy and enthusiasm. These are young girls and boys who have less experience and have not experienced major challenges, failures and disappointments. At the same time, they are more naïve in its positive sense; they are ready for new endeavors and easily get mobilized. Not surprising though, they are more actively involved in civil society organizations, volunteer activities and civic initiatives. As confirmed by a study of UNDP, the average rate of the willingness to be engaged in NGOs and civil initiative groups in Armenia is definitely higher in the 16–18-year-old age group<sup>27</sup>.

*“They have not still realized that they have no job. For the most part, they still do not struggle to earn their living; they are more inclined to take the initiative, are more persevere and struggling and believe that they should claim their space in this society. One should 'seize' their vigor at this point in time. (Expert, Yerevan)*

<sup>24</sup>CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment, 2014

<sup>25</sup>Flanagan, C., and Levine, P. (2010)

<sup>26</sup><http://library.e.uneighbours.eu/content/eastern-partnership-youth-policy-analytic-report>

<sup>27</sup>National Youth Aspirations Research Report, 2012

In addition, the age range of 16 to 19 is a period of life when young people form their beliefs on how society and politics work. These are years of individual growth and their experiences during these years tend to have lifelong impacts. Furthermore, most young people in this age group face the dilemma of making strategic choice: shifting from school to university, labor market and army or joining the segment of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The policy issue at this stage, or perhaps earlier, is to support 'life management' capacity of youth with accent on shaping their civic identity and attracting their engagement in the decisions that affect their life.

Some of the experts interviewed for this study believe that the age limit of youth should be reduced to exclude those over 24 and be expanded to include those under 16, taking into account societal realities around the world. Some others recommend inclusion of younger age children (13 to 15) into youth category.

*“The 16-30 age range sounds ridiculous to me. The state is implementing projects targeting the development of people with already formed identity, mindset, beliefs and values. Unlike Europe where they work with young people starting at the age of 14, we leave our young people sailing across the sea on their own and then suddenly realize that they are bad captains.”* (Expert, Gyumri)

It was stressed that this was the age group that should be under particular focus of policy-makers, a group whom policy should want to get 'in good shape.' This is a critical time to lay the foundation for life skills, positive values, and constructive behaviors as well as prepare for citizenship. Once the momentum is missed, chances are low that these people will be attracted to civic engagement at later stages of their adulthood.

**20-24 age group:** As reiterated by study participants, youth in this age span is still active, yet they typically continue to remain at the margins of the social and political mainstream. Very often, they are already disillusioned with public institutions and political leadership and excluded from policy development. At the same time, it was highlighted that this was an age group with already sufficient level of knowledge and capacity to have critical input to policy development and decision-making processes.

*“At this age, they face the dilemma of choosing between serving the public benefit or facing their financial constraints. Usually they choose the latter.”* (Expert, Alaverdi)  
*“They become less and less active unless they gain achievements when engaging in decision-making processes. It is vital to support their fading efforts of influencing the policy development process.”* (Expert, Yerevan)

It should be stressed here that youth participation in the entire youth policy cycle is low in Armenia. Most participation measures are ad hoc, do not follow long-term strategies, and, above all, their impact is unknown due to lack of monitoring measures. Youth participation often reaches only the 'Informed' level and there is very little evidence of meaningful and responsible participation of young people in policy elaboration or their involvement in monitoring and evaluation of youth policies. Participatory measures are not comprehensive, and they often neglect non-active and non-organized youth. Furthermore, participation of young people at the local level strongly depends on the individual's will and the interest of local officials<sup>28</sup>. There has been a positive exception during the National Youth Policy Strategy 2018-2022 development process, which

<sup>28</sup><http://library.euneighbours.eu/content/eastern-partnership-youth-policy-analytic-report>

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

---

allowed high levels of participation in policy formation both for young people and youth experts, however limited to small number of people. Additionally, newer tools adopted by the Government for public participation in public policy formation (e.g. [www.e-draft.com](http://www.e-draft.com)) allow e-participation by any interested person through provision of recommendations on draft legal documents posted for public feedback. Despite current improvements, youth policy cycle as well as decision-making processes at large should involve meaningful and wider participation of young people, which will, inter alia, protract their motivation towards civic participation.

**2530 age group:** One of the hallmarks of this age span in Armenian society is the gradual move towards autonomy and independent decision-making. Young people at this stage become more engaged in independent living, rarely studying but closer to, or already in the labor market. This move automatically reflects on the civic participation patterns of youth, with the vast majority of them getting disengaged from civic life.

*“Upon the age of 25 or so young people usually start thinking about making career and earning their living and the society loses its citizens.” (Male FGD participant, Yerevan)*

Perhaps more worrisome is the fact that gender-based stereotypes serve as yet another threat to the continuance of the commitment towards civic engagement. Young women and girls are reportedly disengaged from civic life once they get married. On the one hand, family and other domestic chores limit the capacity of girls to sustain their presence in civic space. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence collected during focus group discussions suggests that there are cases of explicit attempts by husbands to repress women's civic participation. In one way or another, “marriage effect” has its stake in this strange disappearance of social capital and civic engagement.

While there is a natural crossover between these three age spans, the findings of this study confirm that there are drastic differences between participation patterns of these groups. Hence, this dichotomy should be considered when planning policies and programs: each stage of the youth development cycle holds unique characteristics and requires specific interventions. Meanwhile, as it appears, there are gaps in data and statistics on youth. On the one hand, no age-disaggregated data is collected on youth development in the country:

*“We do not have disaggregated data on youth whatsoever. All the data sources that we look to for evidence on youth reflect on 16 to 30 age span only. Perhaps we should start looking at sub-age-groups.” (Representative of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Armenia)*

On the other hand, there is considerable incompatibility noticed between statistical data on youth provided by the Armenian Statistical Service (analyzed for 15-29 age group and displayed by 5-year increments) and official youth age defined as those aged 16-30. There is an obvious need to close the gaps in data analysis for young people to provide age-disaggregated evidence for effective youth policy development, implementation and monitoring.

## The Geographical Pattern of Civic Participation: Exploring the Urban-Rural Divide

***“If you behave like a sheep you’ll be much happier - this has been a guiding principle in our system of education, and still is in some regions. We were punished for asking a question, especially the right one. This has enhanced our manageability and naturally limited civic engagement capacity.”***  
(Expert, Yerevan)

It is a general presumption that a community's civic health, as valuable as it is, can also translate into community's economic prosperity due to local people working together to improve the well-being and quality of life in the community. This section of the Report examines various aspects of civic participation as experienced by urban and rural communities. It specifically seeks to find out if rural communities demonstrate a similar level of civic engagement as urban communities, explore the hypothesized rural-urban divide and propose ways to bridge the gaps identified.

The findings of the study suggest that there is still clear divide between rural and urban patterns of civic engagement, which varies significantly according to the place of residence and types of participation.

The presence of formal civil society structures is one area where urban-rural divide is obvious. About half of the registered CSOs are located in Yerevan, and the other half is almost evenly distributed among regions, with more CSOs in Shirak, Lori, and less in Ararat, Aragatsotn and Vayots Dzor. Though there is no statistical data on urban and rural distribution of CSOs, according to reports in the field and expert estimations, rural CSOs compose a small group in Armenia while most of regional CSOs are located in central cities of regions. The pattern of urban-rural divide holds true in case of youth organizations as well, with urban youth organizations largely outnumbering rural-based NGOs. Further, there is no accurate data on rural CSOs in Armenia: they are harder to reach as they often do not register with internet resources<sup>29</sup>. Generally speaking, access to technology is still concentrated in urban settings and less accessible to rural areas. Moreover, access to technology is concentrated in urban settings and less accessible to rural areas. For example, despite the mobile penetration rate for the country at 116% in 2014, villages often only had one or two mobile broadband services to choose from, compared to the wide variety of providers in Yerevan<sup>30</sup>. The digital divide between urban and rural youth is further exacerbated, given the unequal income distribution across the country that further limits electronic participation by rural-based youth.

As far as civic activism is concerned, since 2010, protests sparked by civic initiatives have become very common in Armenia's capital Yerevan and, to a lesser extent, in the smaller cities of Gyumri and Vanadzor. Still, the vast majority of civic initiatives are either based in Yerevan or include the active participation of Yerevan-based activists while people of rural areas remain conservative. Yerevan-based activists recognize that if they are to achieve more structural and political-level changes, they will need to widen participation, fight the reigning fear and apathy and encourage a greater sense of agency among their fellow citizens. It remains to be seen how civic initiatives will develop and what form protest and activism will take in the future. For the moment being, lack of a culture of protest is typical of rural areas and there is a need to build links with communities and individuals outside the capital to widen participation<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup>Margaryan and Hakobyan (2014).

<sup>30</sup>Farrow et al.(2016)

<sup>31</sup>Ishkhanyan (2015)

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

The low participation levels described above are somewhat counterbalanced by the community members' active participation in the life of their communities, taking part in various local initiatives and communal projects, especially in rural regions. The most common form of such participation is reported to be the contribution of voluntary labor in community infrastructure and environmental maintenance initiatives. In particular, residents participate in cleaning canals, rehabilitating roads and systems for both potable and irrigation water, collecting rubbish, planting trees and improving school areas. Many residents often take part in these initiatives even if they do not personally benefit from the initiatives, mostly as a sign of solidarity with their co-villagers<sup>32</sup>. A study conducted by UNDP observes that the average rate of the willingness to be engaged in NGOs and civil initiative groups is higher in the villages of Armenia than in urban areas<sup>33</sup>. Consistent with this finding, focus group discussions in the frame of this study also portrayed rural communities as the most fertile ground for community involvement, volunteering activities and, more generally, social engagement since rural residents are more likely to know all or most of their neighbors and are more likely to trust them.

*Rural residents have a strong sense of belonging to their local community. During the “April Kharabakh conflict escalation,” for example, the majority of those who volunteered to protect the borders represented rural areas. They [rural residents] are also more perseverant. These are great qualities to trigger civic potential. (Expert, Gyumri)*

This potential, however, remains largely unused. As reiterated by most participants of the study, in rural areas, young people have little to no opportunity to develop as active citizens and the majority of rural youth lacks access to meaningful civic engagement options. All participants of the study representing rural communities stated that civic initiatives were hardly ever carried out in rural areas stressing the virtually non-existence of CSOs in villages.

*“There are many rural communities which have never 'seen' any CSO. The displayed social-territorial inequalities are rooted in a centripetal approach to urban development. Hence, civic engagement is also rather passive.” (Expert, Alaverdi)*  
*“Policies, strategies and projects are designed and implemented exclusively for the urban-based youth. Rural-based youth is always left aside.” (Expert, Gyumri)*

When it comes to participation in decision-making processes, again the situation is not promising. The proportion of neighbors and family members in the close social networks of decision-making bodies is relatively greater in rural areas. Hence, youth in regions have clearer vision of whom they will cast their ballot for.

*In villages, everybody knows each other. Communication and collaboration seem to work better and there are better chances to benefit from the community 'spirit.' Paradoxically, however, this does not happen.” (Female FGD participant, Yerevan)*

It appears that often, social capital in rural communities does not serve the public interest but is rather used as a tool to exert effective social control. As explained by the “Independence Generation” youth study, within Armenia's rural communities, the impact of kinship on youth is higher because the social control over the individual is incomparably higher in rural areas. This explains the clearer dispositions of rural youth towards voting for one political party or another. Here, the discussion is not about informed choices, but relates to a manifestation of clan solidarity<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>CIVICUS Civil Society Index Country Analytical Report (2010)

<sup>33</sup>[http://www.undp.org/content/dam/armenia/docs/National%20youth%20aspirations%20survey%20report\\_ENG\\_edited%20final.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/armenia/docs/National%20youth%20aspirations%20survey%20report_ENG_edited%20final.pdf)

<sup>34</sup>Independence Generation Study, 2016



Furthermore, the findings of this Report show that age discrimination against youth is particularly typical of rural communities. This involves assumptions surrounding age and capability, with young people facing imbalanced power structure in an 'adult society' and, hence, feeling more marginalized. On the one hand, social stereotypes rooted in certain regions of the country dictate norms of obedience, with the very act of protesting considered as an immoral act. On the other hand, there is a sense of alienation from civic and political life because young people think that their voices do not and cannot affect the major decision-making processes.

Geographical inequalities are further reinforced by gender, creating multiple segregations. In rural areas, civic participation of girls is almost non-existent when it comes to decision-making processes. In conservative rural communities, civic engagement is considered to be a non-proper area of activity for girls. Deeply entrenched social norms sometimes negatively affect the decision of girls to get into the social mainstream. The following quote speaks for itself:

*“Civic activism is definitely not a standard in the non-negotiable “wife qualities’ list” that some rural men have in mind.” (Expert)*

Gender-based participation in civic life differs across regions. According to the experts of the study, women and girls, for example, predominantly lead civic life in Lori region, while civic participation of young girls in Gegharkunik and Aragatsotn regions is very limited. Counterintuitively however, such disparity in the level of participation is not attributed to the differences in civic culture and traditions but the region-specific stereotypes:

*“In Lori region, civic participation – a non-profitable endeavor as it is, is not considered to be a “manly” business. So, the empty space is taken up by women. In Gegharkunik and Aragatsotn regions, for example, where being socially active is not the most ‘appropriate’ function of women, such participation is low.” (Expert, Alaverdi)*

While gender-specific patterns of participation are discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, this section ends with reference to positive examples of civic participation in rural areas, which although mostly triggered by international funding still allow certain space for optimism. As acknowledged by study participants, in recent years, youth and community active groups were established through the technical and financial support of international donors. Many of these groups have managed to sustain themselves upon the withdrawal of international funding and continue functioning in certain rural communities, serving as notable examples of social dedication in rural communities.

*“Much depends on the personality of the community leader. I am coming from a village where the leader used to listen to the voice of the youth and even proactively involve them in the decision-making process. So, we managed to solve the issue of street illumination, applied for a grant as a consortium and so on and so forth.” (Female FGD participant, Yerevan)*

Thus, there are unique examples of rural communities with explicit civic engagement patterns and their very existence shows that it is possible to have villages where there is active youth. Turning occasional manifestations of civic engagement into the mainstream practice of rural life remains to be wished for.

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

#### Gender and Leadership Divide

Young people of today's Armenia are not very engaged in civic life. Indeed, as the findings of this study reconfirm the vast majority of Armenia's youth – both male and female – fall among the disengaged. This section of the study considers obstacles to civic participation as experienced by both young women and young men. In an effort to recognize where young women and young men differ, it explores the potential of gender-balanced civic participation and notes the ways in which their activism can be encouraged.

As the findings of this study show girls and young women are ahead of their male counterparts on several indicators of civic engagement, including volunteering, membership in CSOs, participation in community action programs and the like.

*“The gender aspect is an important dimension of civic activism. Many of the prominent Armenian activists are young women. They advocate feminist causes such as social and cultural inequalities, domestic violence, and selective abortion but also join environmental protests and other civic campaigns.” (Expert)*

As reiterated by participants of the study, young women are more interested in effecting social change, more active in taking various social initiatives and more engaged as volunteers and members of a variety of organizations than young men. Thus, gender appears to be playing significant role in shaping citizen engagement among youth: when it comes to the extent of civic participation, young boys are unequally represented and there is a clear imbalance in the sector with young women far outnumbering young men.

FGD participants and experts in the frame of this study bring several structural, sociological and gender-specific impediments to getting young men interested in and engaged in civic life. Accordingly, gender biases and discrimination faced in educational, cultural and political contexts as well as in the labour market are one of the persistent impediments to civic activism in the country. On one hand, the perceived role of men as primary income-earners and breadwinners in the family and the subsequent expectations from them puts great burden on men and leaves them with almost no time to indulge into socially beneficial, yet financially non-rewarding activities. At the same time, this traditional role model of men is rooted to the extent that social work is considered inappropriate for men in certain regions of the country. Given the gender perceptions on the role men have in our society, it is no surprise that women outnumber men among those who are active in civic life.

*“This is not considered to be a “manly” job. It seems that women are taking the opportunity and self-realizing themselves in the space that is left for them by men.” (Expert)*

These findings stand as the logical continuation of a study conducted by UNDP back in 2012, which revealed that male respondents in Armenia outnumber female respondents in their willingness to engage in the activities of political parties and local self-governing bodies. And vice versa, the willingness of female respondents exceeded that of male respondents regarding engagement in NGOs, civil initiative groups and structures within higher educational institutions and schools<sup>35</sup>. Thus, men in the country usually associate themselves with leadership roles and decision-making power, while women, on the other hand, prefer taking up social responsibilities.

<sup>35</sup>UNDP (2012)

Some studies relate this to the gender attitudes clearly outlined in Armenian families where supervision and control are certainly firmer for girls than boys. As perceived by the youth themselves, manifestations of individuality are attributed to men, while women are ascribed mostly with marital-familial roles and responsibilities<sup>36</sup>. Girls are often treated as inferiors and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. As widely perceived by the public, boys should always be strong and independent, and girls should be weak and obedient.

The whole system of upbringing is distorted as viewed by one of the experts of the study who claimed that parents in Armenia, for the most part, try to “save little girls” from problems, because of which they do not develop leadership skills and are not prepared to take responsibility. Expressions like “weak gender” and “manly behavior” guide the public discourse. Transmission of non-egalitarian values from the parents, teachers and the wider society to children form the public construct. Such discrimination and neglect in childhood often initiates a lifelong downward spiral of disengagement from active leadership roles. Limiting cultural attitudes and practices, as well as gender biased educational processes including curricula, educational materials and practices<sup>37</sup>, teachers' attitudes and classroom interaction, reinforce existing gender inequalities.

*Young women are not self-reliant and are dependent on their parents. To diversify their life, they engage in activities that are most “womanly” and suitable for them, such as caring in institutions such as kindergartens or schools. (Male FGD participant, Jermuk)*

Not surprisingly, public attitude towards feminists and female activism is sometimes negative. Some segments of the society perceive their activities to be anti-traditional and immoral, contradicting traditional Armenian family values. The idea of having female activists in the civic space is not very appealing to men.

*The attitude towards activism is distorted. When a woman takes away a policeman's hat during the protest, it is considered being bad not because of the act itself, but because it was done by a female, who behaved in a shameful way, not “like a woman”. (Expert, Yerevan)*

Marriage is yet another factor that effectively disenfranchises young women in the country. Ironically, in occasional instances and usually in rural areas, the very act of activism endangers “chances” of young girls to get married.

*“In some villages, even participation in event organization may be deemed shameful for young women. And yes, in such cases chances are low that your marriage is in the prospect.” (Expert, Alaverdi)*

*Sometimes you visit a rural community and get impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of young girls. Next time when you return and unconsciously search for those active, knowledgeable and energetic women, but they are no more there... they leave the civic space once they get married. And it happens so naturally...” (Expert, Yerevan)*

The abovementioned phenomenon somewhat explains the seemingly counterintuitive finding that despite their high level of engagement in certain dimensions of public life, young women are not similarly visible among leaders of the country. It appears that evolutionary sex-based division of labor in which women were

<sup>36</sup>Gender Barometer Survey: A Sociological Survey, 2015

<sup>37</sup>See for example the “Integration of Gender Component into Social Science Subject” recommendations package (2014) which analyses the content and educational methods of Social Science textbooks and reveals that textbooks contain materials with gender-based discrimination examples as well as pictures presenting gender stereotypes. The analysis concludes that today's education system does not yet provide gender-balanced role expectations and equality ideals between women and men.

### 3. Civic Participation of Young People

---

historically homemakers, limits young women's potential to act as leaders of communities or well-deserved participants of decision-making processes. Moreover, many women themselves do not identify themselves with decision-making processes; they often seem to reject the practice of power, authority and leadership. As reiterated throughout the study, young women in Armenia generally prefer taking the backstage. They are very active and productive behind the scenes. In “front stage space”, however, they often switch to arguments such as “our main job is upbringing children,” “that's a manly job” and other stereotypical judgments. Qualitative findings of this study suggest that women prefer or are sometimes forced to lead from behind the scene, rather than from the top. The “Electric Yerevan” campaign comes to support this statement. During the campaign, females were present in the demonstrations in at least equal proportion to males and they were actively involved in the organizational activities of protests. Surprisingly, however, all visible leaders were males. An interviewed expert, who studied the campaign, explains:

*“Several female activists in the Electric Yerevan campaign recall occasions of male activists asking them to stop going forward onto the barricades because they are either women or girls. Because they are female, they should stand behind the men, as it might be dangerous to occupy the first rows. Thus, whenever there is an opportunity to take on greater responsibility, such as speaking to public via microphone, people are looking for a man to accomplish it.”*

This shows that participation in decision-making processes is yet another area where gender differences are significant but in this case, unlike the extent of civic participation, young women are coming up short in comparison to young men, severely underrepresented in decision making positions. They are not at the table when important policy decisions are made. Young men, on the other hand face specific challenges and are generally more marginalized across all other civic engagement dimensions.

### Conclusions for “Civic Participation of Young People” section

Civic engagement of young people—whether in the form of volunteering, civic activism, membership in CSOs, participation in decision-making process or anything else—is important to ensure sound and healthy democracy and good governance. It is also important for personal growth and identity formation during the transition to adulthood. Young people in Armenia remain at the margin of civic and political life while opportunities for civic engagement are not evenly distributed across various youth groups.

Built on the premise that equal participation of youth depends on the integration of all young people – male and female, urban and rural, adolescent and adult – into active public life, this section of the Report examined civic engagement patterns of Armenian youth as experienced by each of the groups specified. The findings supported the hypothesis that multiple factors develop inequalities that limit the capacity of young people in Armenia to engage in civic life, with different forms of civic participation affecting different groups of youth under consideration. The study looked at civic participation from a range of different perspectives and revealed systemic pattern of unequal treatment that reinforces the inequalities faced by different groups of young people, especially young women, youth from rural areas and different age groups within youth.

One of the noteworthy findings that emerged upon consideration of the age factor is the need for disaggregated and consistent data set across the whole lifecycle of youth. Age-brackets of youth in Armenia are quite expanded (16-30) and so are the data collected on youth. This almost 15-year span in data collection lacks the necessary sensitivity to describe the lives of young people because of the rapid development and social milestones, which young people undergo. Furthermore, findings of the study confirm that young people are excluded from monitoring and reporting of critical youth development indicators and execution of policy development at large.

The representation of rural-based youth in decision making structures and enhanced access to civic engagement opportunities is yet another area that should be addressed. Equally important is the recognition that all forms of inequality are further compounded by gender, creating multiple segregations. Taking a close look at gender and citizen engagement among youth has yielded discouraging insights on young people's involvement in public life. On one hand, young men enter adulthood with tendencies that make them less likely to be civically engaged than young women. Their perceived role as a breadwinner reduces the potential and the level of input of young men in the civic sector. On the other hand, young women in Armenia are still entering adulthood with such 'rules' in decision-making processes that yet put them behind men.

Youth development and empowerment are crucial stages in life for building the human capital that allows young people to avoid poverty and live better, and possibly have a more fulfilling life. Starting at age of 16 young people have the legal right to employment (without parental consent) and throughout the youth years transition from economically dependent on family status to economically independent individuals. The human capital formed in youth is hence an important determinant of long-term progress that a nation can invest on. Hence, making sure that youths are well prepared for their future is enormously significant to the course of poverty reduction and growth<sup>38</sup>. The extent to which people participate in the economy either in terms of employment or/and entrepreneurial activities, is closely related to their living standards, and affects many aspects of their wellbeing. Having a job or being involved in an entrepreneurial activity not only leads to improved incomes for families and communities, it also enhances self-esteem and reduces social alienation<sup>39</sup>.

The following study discusses various forms of economic participation, both in terms of formal and informal employment as well as entrepreneurship. For the purposes of this study, economic participation is defined as formal and informal economic activity of individuals, including employment and entrepreneurship. It also confers upon education both in terms of formal and informal means that may reflect young people's career opportunities.

This Report examines economic participation and development from quite a new perspective. By acknowledging youth group heterogeneity and the fact that certain young people are more affected by various inequalities than others, this study seeks to interpret how different variables affect economic opportunities in Armenia. Hypothesizing that multiple inequalities affect the capacity of young people in Armenia to engage in economic life, this section of the study seeks to comprehend the following: 1) How youth participation in various types of economic activities operates, and 2) How various types of inequalities influence young people and their capacity to engage in economic life. As a result, it seeks the answer to the following research question: is there inequality in economic participation among youth based on gender, age and geography? The final section offers conclusions and recommendations for policy makers, youth organizations and development groups to challenge inequality in economic participation and increase economic participation of youth.

### ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION: ECONOMY AND THE IMPLICATIONS

During the 25 years of independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenian youth face huge social and economic instabilities such as rampant poverty, vast unemployment accompanied by lack of trust in political institutions. A combination of low commodity prices, declining remittances and increase in political uncertainty undermined Armenia's growth and fiscal position, reversing the trend in poverty reduction<sup>40</sup>.

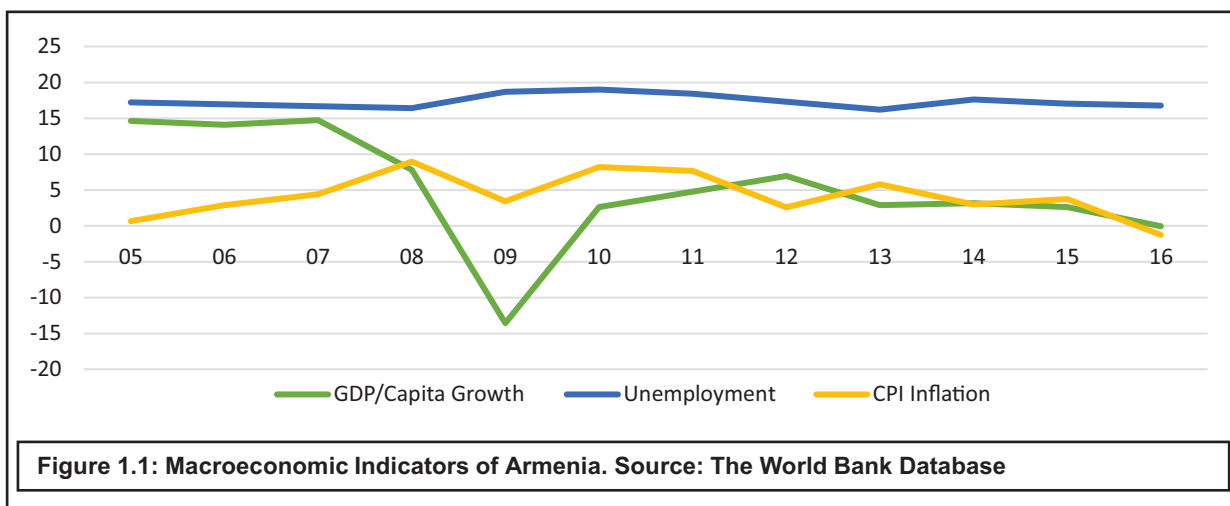
In the real economy, Armenia's national and regional contexts show that the country is at an inflection point. In 2015, the actual value of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Armenia was recorded to be 10.529 Billion USD.

<sup>38</sup>Awogbenle A. C., Iwuamadi C. K. (2010), Youth unemployment: Entrepreneurship development programme as an intervention mechanism, Ota, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJBM/article-full-text-pdf/841B08423424>

<sup>39</sup>Australian Government (2007), Overcoming indigenous disadvantage, Economic Participation and Development, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/documents/chapter11.pdf>

<sup>40</sup>The World Bank in Armenia (2017). Overview, Yerevan <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview>

In 2016, the GDP raised by 0.018 Billion USD constituting 10.547 Billion USD. The major contributors to the GDP were agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, real estate activities and manufacturing, drawing 15.9, 10.6, 9.7 and 9.2 percent of GDP respectively (NACE 2 classification, Production structure). In terms of GDP expenditure, exports of goods and services comprise 33 percent of GDP. In 2016, Armenia exported \$1.79B, making it the 90th largest exporter in the world. During the last five years, the exports of Armenia have increased at an annualized rate of 21.2%, from \$1.34B in 2011 to \$1.79B in 2016. However, due to Imports exceeding exports, Armenia has negative balance of \$1.4B in the net exports account in 2016.



The recession in economic growth in Armenia since 2014 continued in 2016. Even though consumer price inflation (CPI) experienced a 1.27 deflation, the annual GDP growth was 0.2 percent in 2016, speculating 2.8 percent decline over 2015 growth. Weaker performance in the country's main trading partners and a slowdown in remittance-providing countries were some of the explanations for decline (The World Bank).

**Poverty:** Across the country, poverty remains a serious economic hardship challenging the development of the country and impeding the wellbeing of the population. It is split into three categories of income per month: extremely poor (USD \$54.1), very poor (USD \$76) and poor (USD \$92)<sup>43</sup>. No segregated data concerning youth poverty could be identified.

Starting from 2008 economic crisis up to 2012, the extreme poverty rate increased in Armenia by 1.8 times, almost doubled, the portion of the very poor increased by 7.1 percent leading by total poverty increase at 17.4 percent<sup>44</sup>. In 2015, the poverty rate in Armenia amounted 29.8%, i.e. 3 out of every 10 residents fell below the upper poverty line of 41,698 AMD. The extreme poverty rate was by 0.4 percentage points yet higher than in 2008, whilst poverty at the upper poverty line was 2.2 percentage points higher in 2015 compared with 2008. After the crisis, however, the indicator for the very poor dropped by 2.2 percentage as compared to 2008<sup>45</sup>. Armenia's economy has improved throughout 2017, on the back of resurging global metal prices and enhanced private investment and consumption, which have also led to a progress in the fiscal outcomes<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>43</sup>Farrow A., Bacalso C., Hao A. (2016). A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area, Yerevan, UNICEF

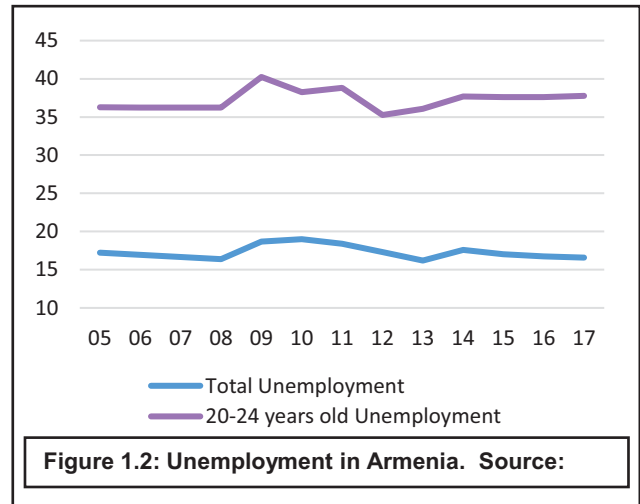
<sup>44</sup>National Statistics Service of the Republic of Armenia and the World Bank (2013). Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, Yerevan, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99477213.pdf>

<sup>45</sup>National Statistics Service of the Republic of Armenia, The World Bank (2016). Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, Yerevan, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99498923.pdf>

<sup>46</sup>World Bank Group (2017). Migration and Mobility, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, Washington DC, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28534/9781464812194.pdf>

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

**Employment and Unemployment:** Employment is one of the key factors for future development of the country and is even more significant since it substantially affects the demonstration of self-identity and progress for young people and their planning of the future. The EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 proposes that EU and its Member States shall undertake a series of initiatives in support of employment targeting young people. Moreover, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs has identified



employment and socio-economic issues of young people as strategic priority in the National Youth Policy Concept (2015-2025) and the National Youth Policy Strategy for 2013-2017. Under the National Youth Policy Concept (2015-2025), the provision of necessary conditions for the realization of young citizens to work and to acquire economic independence is defined as the main task and commitment for the sector. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the main body in Armenia responsible for addressing employment issues in Armenia and it also supports the employment of young people through various programs. The 2017 Government Program on Employment Management describes 14 projects addressing employment issues as such: consultations to job seekers, job fairs, knowledge and skill-based trainings. Unemployment, however, remains a serious concern in Armenia. While literacy and secondary school enrollment rates of young Armenians are very high, 37.8 percent of 15-24-year-old youth are unemployed in 2017<sup>47</sup>. As the Figure 1.2 shows, youth unemployment draws much higher percentage than the total unemployment since the past decade, amounting to gap of 21%. Interestingly, the total unemployment is decreasing starting from 2014, while youth unemployment experiences an increase for the same period. In fact, across the CEE/CIS, Armenia is one of those countries with the highest youth unemployment – exceeded only by Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia<sup>48</sup>.

### Migration

Lack of job opportunities is a crucial reason behind young people's emigration. In 2011, 889,900 young people resided in Armenia. In 2014, this number decreased to 750,000. In the same period, the total population of Armenia decreased from 3,262,600 to 3,017,100. The total decrease in population is 245,500 for the period of 2011-2014 and youth were over the half of this number amounting to 140,000<sup>49</sup>. Armenian migration has a long history of outwards migration: while figures vary, an estimated 8-10 million Armenians live outside of Armenia, with the national population being approximately 3 million. Migration is common both for those with higher education as well as lower-skill workers. The largest Armenian diaspora communities are located in Russia, the United States and France. In 2008, the Government of Armenia established the Ministry of Diaspora to coordinate policy and affairs with its international diaspora communities<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>47</sup>Farrow Alex, Cristina Bacalso and Ani Hao(2016)"A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area." Youth Policy Labs for UNICEF Armenia – Final report

<sup>48</sup>World Bank, International Labour Organization (2017). ILOSTAT database <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

<sup>49</sup>Armenian National Statistical Service (2017). Demographic Data of Armenia, <http://www.armstat.am/en/>

<sup>50</sup>Farrow A., Bacalso C., Hao A. (2016). A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area, Yerevan, UNICEF



## Geography: So Close, And So Far Away ...

Young people aged 15-29 comprise approximately one fifth of Armenia's population, amounting to 655,900 people. More than one-third (265,400 people) live in rural areas<sup>51</sup>. Young people, particularly those in rural areas, are disproportionately affected by the unemployment trend when comparing those living in the cities<sup>52</sup>. In this regard, recently significant efforts have been made to foster agriculture- creating competitive markets across the country and yet, young producers still do not play a vital role in commercial trade, and/or entrepreneurial activities.

This study intends to explore differences and commonalities of youth economic participation in rural and urban areas and to shed some light on the urban/rural heterogeneity. As we see in the analysis, there is a clear divide among youth in urban and rural areas with regard to employment and entrepreneurship. This stems from lack of knowledge and skills, as well as cultural barriers and adverse socio-economic conditions. According to the National Statistical Service of Armenia, approximately 37% of Armenia's population lives in rural communities. The majority of local population in rural areas engage in substantive agriculture on small farms with an average monthly income of USD 110. Deprivations caused by the multidimensional poverty and restricted access to infrastructures make everyday lives of rural people hard. At the same time, the income generating opportunities in rural areas are restricted by the environmental risks and low production capacities. All this drop both the living standards and income level increasing the intensity of rural poverty<sup>53</sup>. The poverty rate itself, differs significantly when comparing various regions of Armenia. In 2015, poverty amounted to 29.4% in urban areas and 30.4% in rural areas. However, the picture is completely different while studying Yerevan separately from other urban areas: the poverty rate in the capital is 25%, while in other towns of the country it is higher than in rural areas. In 2015, the poverty rate in the Shirak region was 45.3%, being 15.5% higher than the average index in the country, while in Aragatsotn and Vayots Dzor regions, the same index was 16-17%<sup>54</sup>.

Economic inequality affects access to education, health and other services for young people. Poverty interacts with economic inequality to create 'traps of disadvantage' that push the poorest and most marginalized people to the bottom and keep them there<sup>55</sup>. Youth live in Armenia where education is quite expensive, both for tuition and supplies, especially for university<sup>10</sup>. In 2013, university tuition fees amounted on average 1048 USD per year<sup>56</sup>, while the GDP per capita in Armenia compounded 3843 USD<sup>57</sup>. Because of lack of jobs and financial support from the family, young people often fail to pursue their studies in higher institutions. The focus group participants mention that they cannot afford to come to Yerevan to get better education. As a result, they take a profession/degree that is not in demand by the labour market and has a low pay. According to the experts, low-income families cannot even afford school education. Lack of quality education hence, becomes a logical explanation of the unemployment vicious circle.

<sup>51</sup>Armenian National Statistical Service (2017). Statistical Yearbook of Armenia.

Population by age groups, disaggregated by geography, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99504343.pdf>

<sup>52</sup>Eurasia Partnership Foundation (2016). Empowering Young Entrepreneurs in the regions of Armenia, Yerevan, [http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/YB\\_Entrepreneurship\\_FINAL-REPORT.pdf](http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/YB_Entrepreneurship_FINAL-REPORT.pdf)

<sup>53</sup>UNDP (2017). Integrated Support to Rural Communities

[http://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction/integrated-support-to-rural-communities.html](http://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-support-to-rural-communities.html)

<sup>54</sup>Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2017). The economic situation in Armenia : opportunities and challenges in 2017, Yerevan, Compass Center,

<http://www.fes-caucasus.org/news-list/e/the-economic-situation-in-armenia-opportunities-and-challenges-in-2017/>

<sup>55</sup>Oxfam (2016). Youth and Inequality Report

<sup>56</sup>European Students' Union (2013). A tuition fee hike in Armenia is out of touch with economic reality,

<http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6001/A-tuition-fee-hike-in-Armenia-is-out-of-touch-with-economic-reality/>

<sup>57</sup>The World Bank (2017). The World Bank national accounts data and OECD national accounts data files <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?view=map>

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

One of the most important influence on person's life is job. It affects young person's family structure, social and intellectual activities, economic position and behavior. In this regard, having a realistic career strategy in place is often vital for our personal growth and development. Without a plan to strive for, most people find it difficult to apprehend what skills to gain and what education to choose. As the findings of this study outline, both in rural and urban areas decisions young people often make about their future professional career result from family preferences or stereotypes rather than predictability of workforce and close analysis of market demand. The discussions during the focus groups revealed that in many cases students made career choices based on the most picked career among their peers. According to the focus group discussions, young students often become unable to understand the changing needs of the market because of unavailability/inaccessibility of respective sources. Experts state that there is no actual job market analysis, showing the trends in the Armenian job market as to which professions will prosper and which ones will lose their demand in the future.

*“Armenia will not be competent in the global market unless the future educational background of youth is free from stereotypes or family bias preferences.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

“There is a tendency in the world in making algorithms when seeing dynamic changes of work market and professions that will stay actual and in demand in the close future. The Atlas of Emerging Jobs<sup>59</sup>, for example, is an analogy of promising sectors and occupations for the next 15-20 years. It helps to see which industries will develop, whether new technologies or products will be produced. It helps to answer the questions of what management practices and what new competencies will be needed for employers, what professions will stay actual and which of those will disappear. Despite this, in Armenia, we choose the professions which are “more fashionable”.” (from an interview by an expert).

Career orientation is offered mainly by universities and youth NGOs. Their activities include trainings, organization of career fairs, dissemination of announcements, cross-cooperation with events scientists and researchers, seeking possible partnerships. These measures mostly target university students. Outside the education system, career orientation and other support measures for employment are offered by the employment centres of the State Employment Agency (including 51 centres in Armenia). Their activities target any citizen with the priority given to 'uncompetitive individuals' (e.g. those with low skills, young people just entering the labour market, people with disabilities, etc.)<sup>60</sup>. Youth NGOs, aiming to foster employability and entrepreneurship mainly focus on conducting capacity building programs, trainings and mentorship programs. According to some insights, however, entrepreneurship development programs, are less targeted for specific age groups and are mainly too general. When it comes to teenagers, some experts hold the opinion that children receive insufficient career orientation outside home and do not follow an appropriate educational plan for real-world career opportunities and needs in many schools. They lack career orientation opportunities in schools that increases their uncertainty about their preferences and future collaborations. However, to address this issue, there are educational organizations, which direct university graduates to the most disadvantaged schools in Armenia to raise lifelong transformational leaders by implementing both formal and informal education.

<sup>58</sup>Nweze T., Okolie U. C., (2014). Effective Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Secondary Schools: Issues and Roles in Students' Career Decision Making, Department of Education Foundation, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b901/bca2efd57ac6d7179334ca279ec5a3ca4205.pdf>

<sup>59</sup>Atlas of Emerging Jobs (2017), <http://atlas100.ru/en/>

<sup>60</sup>Motamed-Afshari B., Frasn M. (2015). Eastern Partnership Youth Policy Analytic Report, Eastern Partnership

“My goal as a teacher has become to keep students at schools by showing them future perspectives that are a bit difficult to reach but surely better ones. This is difficult, but I believe in a crucial investment in Armenian progress.”  
 (Expert, Tavush)

*“Interviews with teenagers show that people are not dreaming at all. They have pragmatic goals. We ask children about who they want to become. They say: a boss. Most of them say they'd like to be IT specialists not even knowing what profession it is... If a child wants to establish a civilization in Mars and wants to become an IT specialist, then this is entirely another path...”* (Expert, Yerevan)

According to expert interviews, rural youth in many communities are willing to migrate to neighboring countries in search of education opportunities, and due to the lack of gainful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and related rural economic activities. Because of social and economic underdevelopment in some rural communities, urban migration is getting new impetus in recent times particularly Yerevan, where young people find jobs. Focus group discussions make it clear that better employment and education opportunities as well as entertainment in destination cities are the main determinants for the decision to migrate.

*“There are no workplaces in our community. Although we love our community, if we succeed to get an education opportunity in Yerevan, we will stay there longer.”*  
 (FGD participant, Ijevan)

Those staying in the villages are most likely to be self-employed engaged in seasonal works. Selling agricultural products, raising and maintaining livestock are general occupation these people are engaged in. Young women most probably engage in hairdressing, sewing, cooking or baking activities. Sometimes delivery of services (e.g. working at hotels) is a good substitute in areas where tourists usually visit. Rural communities in border regions are among the most remote and isolated ones from larger cities and towns and among those hit the hardest by poverty. Border villages suffer from particularly high unemployment and drastic economic circumstances. Those who are not engaged in education most probably link their career with military services by becoming a contractor in the army.

*“There is no work to do here, then why to study? I know I will become a soldier.”*  
 (FGD male participant, Noyemberyan city, Tavush)

Getting full secondary education is not always possible for teenagers in rural areas. You can meet young people that left secondary education for 2-3 months at a very early age and started to work in subsistence agriculture, without which the family cannot overcome difficulties of the seasons. According to some of the expert interviews, a typical day in the life of working children in agriculture starts early through a full day in the field herding livestock in the mountains. From a young age - 6 to 8 years, they are required to combine school with long working hours that takes it hard on their schedule. In senior classes, a teen engaged in agriculture works longer hours and may have an overloaded schedule to attend school regularly. In some cases, a child temporarily stops school while herding cattle up to the mountains. As a consequence, over-involvement of rural youth in agriculture prevents them from being active both socially and to engage in full educational process.

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

Youth entrepreneurship is crucial for economic growth, increasing social and economic activity for young people, self-employment, and income generation opportunities. Youth entrepreneurial activity is essential to the continual dynamism of the private sector, with the generation of new businesses fostering competition and economic growth. This is particularly relevant for Armenia whose government aims to find new sources of long-term economic growth to become an upper- middle-income country.<sup>61</sup> The main state body responsible for entrepreneurship development in Armenia is the 'Small and Medium Enterprise Development National Center' (SME DNC). In addition to many of activities, it offers business trainings, provides information/consultations, support for acquiring loans, developing economic potential of each community and agricultural development projects. Besides the state, the capacity building and skills on entrepreneurship is facilitated by local and international NGOs.

Running a business, however, is not an effective occupation according to many of focus group participants. In fact, focus group participants consider it a demotivation to take on the business because of fear of failure, weak taxation literacy as well as high level of corruption. As the World Bank research<sup>19</sup> suggested the top three cited obstacles in setting up or operating a firm in Armenia were difficulty recruiting highly skilled employees, market risk/ uncertainty, and difficulty finding necessary funding.

*“We are trying to acquire new skills such as hairdressing, sewing or design and as we enter into market, others also enter there, making the market exhausted. We then acquire new certificates with less hope to succeed in the market.”  
(Female FGD participant, Ijevan)*

Access to financial capital is a key determinant of innovative activity for both new and existing firms. Financial access facilitates day-to-day life and helps households and businesses to plan for everything from long-term goals, to grow and sustain<sup>62</sup>. Access to financial instruments however, is a huge concern in Armenia. The percentage of the adult population holding an account at a formal financial institution in Armenia was 18 percent in 2014 while the same indicator in Europe and Central Asia was 51 percent<sup>63</sup>. According to one of the interviewed experts, access to finance, is still a huge obstacle for young small and medium enterprises. The expert states that credit is more readily available to businesses that have immovable property (land and buildings) to be used as collateral than to those having movable assets, as banks strongly prefer immovable property to secure a loan. Insufficient suitable collateral is often cited among the top reasons for difficulty accessing credit, especially for small firms.

Banks and other institutions are providing consumers with credit opportunities and without the proper knowledge, it is easy to get into financial trouble<sup>64</sup>. According to the experts, lack of financial literacy, such knowledge on credit and debt portfolio management, transaction processes, checking account operations, and other respective knowledge is another factor hindering entrepreneurship in Armenia.

<sup>61</sup>Kuriakose (2013). Fostering Entrepreneurship in Armenia, the World Bank.

<sup>62</sup>The World Bank, Financial Inclusion, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/financialinclusion/overview#1>

<sup>63</sup>The World Bank, Financial Inclusion Data / Global Findex, Armenia, Europe & Central Asia <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/financialinclusion/region/europe-and-central-asia>

<sup>64</sup>Investopedia. Why Financial Literacy is So Important, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100615/why-financial-literacy-and-education-so-important.asp#ixzz50pZzy8Dp>

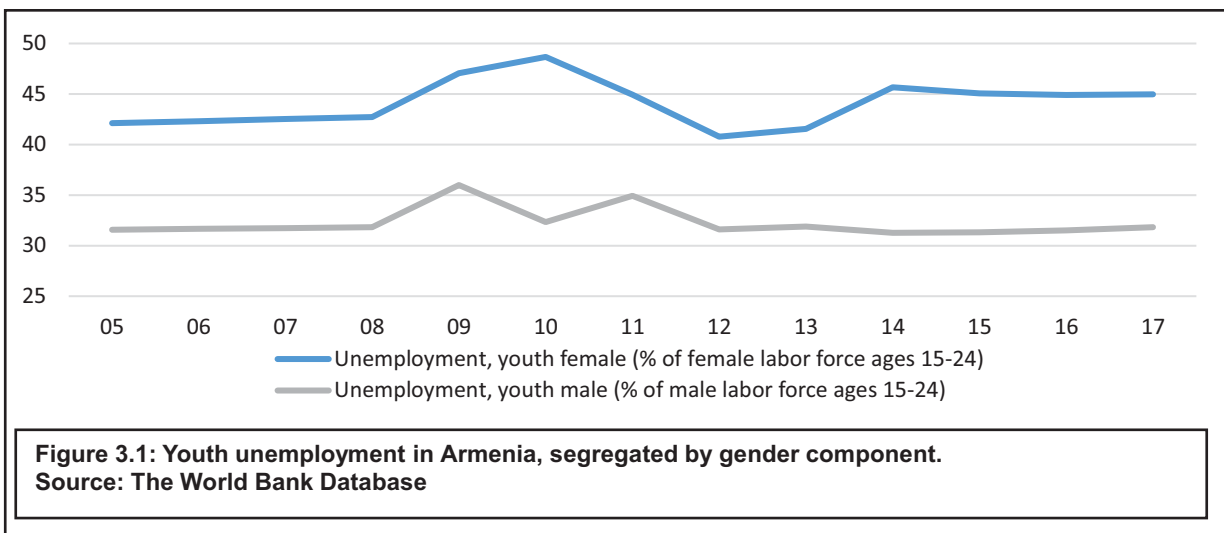
*“There are families that have several credit loans. People take loans to cover previous loans. This speaks of financial illiteracy.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

*“In many communities, young people don’t possess minimum financial knowledge. They do not do risk management. They think business loan is a money for their pocket. They can use it for any reason and easily give it back to the bank.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

As the study shows there are special examples of rural and urban heterogeneity in terms of employment and entrepreneurship and their existence urges specific mechanisms to tackle the aforementioned concerns, which unfortunately do not yet exist. There are vivid differences in employment and entrepreneurial activities in general, which get even more severe to tackle for young people. Addressing those inequalities is crucial for development of economically active citizens, but even more for sustainable community development based on the potential that young people possess.

### Gender Divide: Provoking the Narrative

Equality between sexes is defined in the Armenian Constitution and is reflected in the national legislation. Furthermore, in 1993 the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia (RA) approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and overtook the commitment to implement its provisions. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women under the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)<sup>65</sup>. Yet, the de jure equality does not necessarily translate into the de facto gender equality. Despite women's achievements in many occupations, gender stereotypes contribute to women's lower levels of representation in politics, in formal employment, and as business leaders.<sup>66</sup>



<sup>65</sup>United Nations (2000). Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/ARMENIA-English.pdf>

<sup>66</sup>UNFPA Armenia, Men and Gender Equality in Armenia, Report on Sociological Survey Findings

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

As the study demonstrates, there is a significant difference between male and female youth with regard to their economic participation. In the Armenian labor market, 15-24 year-old women are significantly more likely to be without work than the men in the same age range. The total unemployment rate of 15-24 year-olds is 38 percent. Among them, females compound 44 percent and males' 32 percent respectively<sup>67</sup>. Between 2011 and 2013 the trend showed that youth unemployment was declining, while between 2013- 2014 youth unemployment increased overall and for both men and women, which correlates to the overall employment situation in Armenia. In 2014, the youth unemployment figures were similar to those in 2012<sup>68</sup>.

The number of economically active women in the Armenian labour market is 54.3 percent and is significantly lower than that of men's rate, which is 72.6 percent. 90 percent of economically inactive women are housewives; while 40 percent of them have higher or vocational education.

In the Armenian labor market, the gap between average wage of men and women draws 34 percent, while the income gap is even greater and approaches 40 percent. In EU member states though the average gap is 15.9 percent, and the world average index is 22.9 percent, no to little systematic data on income levels of young men and women could be identified<sup>69</sup>.

According to some focus group participants, the labor market experiences vertical segregation, where women are underrepresented in upper management. Often it is easier to meet more male and not female managers.

*“As much as you refine your skills, do the job better, nicer and more effective, as soon as you are woman, higher positions are harder to get.” (FGD Female participant, Ijevan)*  
*“In many cases young men replace their fathers as directors. There are less cases when we have female directors.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

According to the experts, labor migration is mainly a male phenomenon in rural communities. In most cases people migrate because of inability to get a job or unsatisfactory wages and are powerless to improve the standard of living in their families or career prospects in Armenia. Educational attainment also attracts young people to immigration.

*“I would be much happier to stay at home and work in my homeland. I am migrating not by my wish but forced by the need to feed my family.” (Interviewee, male, Noyemberyan, Tavush)*

Among household members aged 15 and above, who left their permanent residence during 2012-2015 for a 3-month period or longer and did not return as of 2015, 11.9 percent were the ones residing within the country – (in Yerevan and regions), 13.0% in NKR, and 75.1% in other countries, predominantly in the Russian Federation. According to the Armenian National Statistical Service, as of 2015 the net migration<sup>70</sup> in Armenia amounted to 25900 people experiencing a 19 percent decline in value (more migration) than in 2014.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup>The World Bank (2017), International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.FE.ZS>

<sup>68</sup>Farrow Alex, Cristina Bacalso and Ani Hao(2016)“A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area.” Youth Policy Labs for UNICEF Armenia – Final report

<sup>69</sup>Campaign “EQUAL” (2017). Women's Agenda, In the light of the Upcoming Parliamentary Elections in Armenia,

<sup>70</sup>The net migration rate is the difference between the number of immigrants (people coming into an area) and the number of emigrants (people leaving an area) throughout the year. When the number of immigrants is larger than the number of emigrants, a positive net migration rate occurs.

<sup>71</sup>Armenian National Statistical Service, The Demographic Handbook of Armenia, 2016  
[http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demog\\_2016\\_7.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demog_2016_7.pdf)

According to the focus group discussion participants, those engaged in domestic services, construction and transportation are much more likely to want to migrate than people with other professions, mainly for taking responsibility for family income generation. Women generally do not migrate with their spouses, taking on the responsibility of family care and income earning.

*“Sometimes I feel lost in so much I ought to carry. While working in the farm I think of my children's education, I think about what my children will eat then. I am working now both for myself and for my husband.” (Interviewee, Tavush)*

What can be stated at this point is that the wish to migrate is high because people think that they will have better opportunities to work outside of their community. Indeed, for some of them living conditions improve, however, a lot of migrants end up in poverty because of low skills and/or incapability to adapt to the newer environments.

Nowadays female entrepreneurship is becoming a global trend and policies are continually written to explore the features and motivations of female entrepreneurs. Despite of the increasing number of initiatives and means to promote and develop female entrepreneurship, there is a considerable divide between women and men entrepreneurs in rural areas in terms of their financial structures and the sectors they operate in. As the findings of this study show, there are several reasons for this phenomenon:

Although both women and men are eligible for similar types and interests of loans in banks, some of the interviewed experts state that barriers in accessing credit and finance are higher for women. Lack of traditional collateral, which is often inherited by and registered in men's names, such as land or property hinders women entrepreneurs to acquire loans from banks or from credit companies, i.e. becoming unable to offer a capital guarantee for loans. This in its turn challenges women entrepreneurs in creating start-up capital and leads to less likelihood to fund it from the private sector.

Furthermore, given the lack of entrepreneurial experience among women, traditionally less ownership (both legal and factual) over family assets, accompanied by weak/no credit history, the access to financial instruments becomes even weaker. These usually become a reason for rejection of credit provision by the banks.

Women entrepreneurs gradually recognize the commercial importance of professional networking - both among women and among women and men: this is what some of the FGD participants stated. In rural communities, young women, however generally have less access to professional networks and usually engage in smaller networks generally composed by women. As reiterated by participants of the study, there is a prevalent cultural perception that women are not the most appropriate candidates to negotiate for business decisions. In fact, the barriers of entrance into decision making cycles for women stand very high.

*“As a businesswoman, I have many troubles. My male competitors don't treat me as a serious colleague. They are less willful to negotiate, and it's difficult to enter into the game.” (Female FGD participant, Tavush)*

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

There is a clear difference between genders in terms of economic participation for overall population. There are several analytical works covering this issue. Unfortunately, empirical data was not enough to provide quantitative analysis, but the gathered qualitative data showed clear inequality between young men and women in this aspect. This inequality is evident in both entrepreneurial, environmental and in labor market, mostly creating unfavorable or even discriminative conditions for young women or men, expressed in various forms described above. Addressing those issues is key for gender equality and for economic growth of Armenia through utilizing the full potential of all young men and young women.

### Age: Exploring the Age Ranges

The youth population of the world is the largest it has ever been 1.8 billion people between the ages of 15 and 24, the majority of whom live in urban areas of developing countries. Through education, action and empowerment, youth can lead to social transformation and engagement in a range of ways. In a world that has observed a string of political uprisings led by youth in recent years, governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector must better understand the ways in which inequality affects the lives of young people. The need to find ways of tackling and voicing policies to all youth subgroups is vital for quality youth development policy<sup>72</sup>.

This section of the study examines employment trends among youth at 16–19, 20–24, and 25-30 age groups.

Both focus group participants and experts participating in this study confirm that these age groups feature various characteristics and differ from each other. They have different behavioral characteristics, distinctive potential and interest when observed in the context of economic participation. Additionally, these age groups are correlating with formal education system phases, which have crucial influence on interests and perspectives of young people in terms of employment. The age children attend school is almost fixed, age for army service is set, attending university is common after high-school, etc. These and other factors create a pattern, correlation with age in young people's life development with a precision of 1-3 years. Hence age groups have changing priority focus from education (16-19 y.o.) to employment (25-30).

It is important to note that the national statistics is segregated by 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29. The inconsistency between age range provided by the National Armenian Statistical Service (15-19, 20-24, 25-29) and the state youth range definition (16-30) must be addressed for better decision making on youth issues towards more effective and evidence-based programs and services directed targeting youth.

In 2016, according to the Armenian National Statistical Service out of 23,700 economically active<sup>73</sup> 15-19-aged youth 9,600 are employed. Within the age group of 20-24 that includes 101,200 economically active youth, employed people are 36,100. Youth aged 25-29 constitute 140,200 of whom 111,900 are employed<sup>74</sup>. Hence, the unemployment rate<sup>75</sup> in the afore-mentioned age groups is 40.5 percent, 35.7 percent and 20.2 percent respectively.

<sup>72</sup>Oxfam (2016), Youth and Inequality, [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-youth-inequality-global-120816-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-youth-inequality-global-120816-en_0.pdf)

<sup>73</sup>Employed and unemployed youth group in the observation period, who form the labour force supply in the labour market for production of goods and rendering of services.

<sup>74</sup>Armenian National Statistical Service (2016), Labour Market in the Republic of Armenia, [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud\\_2017\\_6.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud_2017_6.pdf)

<sup>75</sup>The share of unemployed in the total number of economically active population



**16-19 age group:** These young people are characterized by growing enthusiasm and energy to engage in various social activities. Less imprisoned by ideological and institutional structures, they have demonstrated the ability to think outside the box and develop innovative solutions.

*“I am fascinated by what kind of children we have in the next generation. The free generation endowed with rigorous potential and completely crazy endeavors. I believe they will completely change Armenia.”*  
(Male FGD participant)

Those who intend to continue their educational career, university is likely to be these young people's primary activity until high school graduation. During their academic career, young people of this age are experiencing a shift from school to university. Students at the university bear bigger responsibility and the scope of making decisions grows during this phase. They may be taking on part-time jobs, paying for tuition themselves, and deciding on budgeting for the first time in their lives. More often ones who move away from home might feel the pressure of financial difficulties. There is also the need to take care of general self-management skills such as cooking and cleaning and other activities.

*“That is an extreme culture shift from high school to university. The classes are larger, there's less class time than young people have had and there's more independent work to be done that needs to happen. Learning becomes their responsibility in university.”* (Expert, Yerevan)

Early work experiences both in formal and informal ways such as volunteerism, internships, or/and part-time jobs provide these people with valuable opportunities to learn new skills, gain experience, expand their networks, and develop positive relationships with adults.

*“Doing an internship is the greatest thing that could happen to my professional career development. I enjoy not only the skills and knowledge, I could not acquire at the university, but I also link myself with leading professionals and potential employers in the sphere.”*  
(Female FGD participant, Yerevan)

According to some of the interviewed experts, those with no education and/or engagement in employment structures can face increased risk for a host of negative outcomes: long spells of unemployment, poverty and criminal behavior are a few of many challenges these people can face with. Among the worst case-scenarios, some experts bring in examples, when at 16, a child has reached the minimum age for employment, but is often engaged in risky labour with limited or no education opportunities. When stepping into young adulthood, they end up having few skills to obtain decent jobs and engage in unskilled employment. They have no formal jobs, receive low salaries and have no social security guarantees. As a result, low labour income, large underemployment, and limited chances to enter the formal sector are the only characteristics of their employment opportunities or actual employment. This reflects the rural-urban migrations of unskilled young workers who are seeking job opportunities in the urban economic centers. In this case, however, young people face higher demotivation because of low professional skills and academic qualifications. Capacity building opportunities and educational trainings adapted to the specific circumstances of a community, according to some of the focus group participants, are little to no in the communities and the very fact of their absence worsens the abovementioned phenomenon.

## 4. Economic Participation of Young People

**20-24 age group:** University enrollment and educational attainment affect employment rates to go down among this age group. In general, employment rates are lower among those who are in their first degree and grow as levels of educational attainment increase. Although many do combine work and school, according to the focus group participants, students are generally more concentrated on education and are not much eager to seek full-time work opportunities.

According to the experts, it becomes harder for the new graduates to find a good job in rural communities, and the very fact that they are new graduates makes the search even more difficult. The lack of experience and practical skills complicates pursuing a career in the community. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs implements a number of employment programs for recent graduates. However, the majority of young people, especially those from rural areas, still consider personal/family connections more influential in getting their first employment. There is substantial work to be done to address these issues by the state (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Employment Centers) and by other stakeholders to support young people's transition from education to labour market.

*“- Many young people don't know how to introduce themselves. They don't possess the simplest skills like drafting a professional CV or a motivation letter to present those to employers. Above all, I believe this is one of the crucial issues young men and women face today.” (Expert, Yerevan)*

While some youth engage in internships and voluntary activities, to gain practical experience so much in demand by employers, those activities do not enjoy popularity among youth, especially in rural communities. A very common reason is that people don't have information about where to volunteer and how to use it to support their career perspectives, or if they do, they not always see the long-term benefit of the voluntary activity. While motivation to volunteer can vary by age, with younger volunteers more motivated by future preparation, such as increasing skills, knowledge, and career advance, most people are motivated to volunteer driven by personal satisfaction and acquisition of meaningful experience. For more experienced people motivation to volunteer is different, which in majority of offered volunteering opportunities by local CSOs is not considered. Therefore, youth organizations should design volunteering possibilities appropriate for the capacity and interests of this age group and the one aged 25-30.

*“If you want to get a good job, you need to have experience in that sector. Most employers look for proficient workers only.”  
(FGD participant, Yerevan)*

For some youth, employment after high school is a transitional experience, in support of plans for post-secondary education. For other young people, employment marks their entry into the adult workforce, and the beginning of a difficult path toward economic self-sufficiency. In either case, this period is typically marked by multiple jobs of relatively short duration.

**25-30 age group:** Young people in this group are usually independent and are mainly engaged in labor market. At this age, they usually establish their own families and are usually more concentrating in pursuing a sustainable career. As mentioned earlier, this is the youth age group with a lower unemployment rate than the last two groups, according to the National Statistical Service of Armenia.

As the findings of this study show there is little to no analysis done on this age group. It seems from some of the discussions that this age group is partially to fully excluded from the actions done by youth CSOs. The available statistical analysis/research on the other hand are not sufficiently available and less explored. Specific details on the content of this age group are not available either. There is hence a necessity to address the gaps in the segment and to provide age-aggregated evidence for an effective youth policy development and implementation specifically for this age group.

### Conclusions for Economic Participation Section

In a world that has observed a string of socio-economic uprisings led by youth in recent years, governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector must better understand the ways in which inequality affects the lives of young people. The need to find ways of tackling and voicing policies to all youth range subgroups is vital for quality youth strategy.

There are inequalities that young people face in such an important matter for themselves as economic participation. Gender, age and residence all affect the opportunities that young people have both in employment and entrepreneurship. With the age the needs, interest and perspectives for young people change substantially, going from formal education towards employment and independence. Young men and women face different obstacles in labour market and there is clear disaggregation from one sector of economy to another. The labour market situation and entrepreneurial environment vary substantially in rural and urban areas. All of these are factors and needs to consider for designing any level/sector youth policy or program. These differences and inequalities young people are facing show that only targeted approach can be effective and efficient.

Youth play a crucial role in creating a future in which they can succeed and lead meaningful lives. Economic participation of young people through employment or entrepreneurship is important to the social and economic development of the community. It is crucial for personal growth and is even more significant since it considerably affects the demonstration of self-identity and progress for young people and their planning of the future. Young people in Armenia, remain at the margin of economic life while opportunities for economic engagement both in employment and entrepreneurship are not evenly distributed across various youth groups.

Policy reforms are required to address growing gap between the rich and the poor, the employed and the unemployed, and as a result we can hope to narrow the economic inequality between youth and older generations and between various groups of young people themselves. The findings supported the hypothesis that various inequalities block capacities of young people in Armenia to economic life, with various forms of economic participation affecting different subgroups of youths. The study explored economic participation from a range of different perspectives.

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

### Introduction

In the youth inequality context, social inclusion of young people remains one of the most important issues worldwide. Definitions and approaches to social inclusion vary greatly among different countries, while there is a consensus that it is the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important<sup>76</sup>. It is worth mentioning, that social inclusion of youth implies they are not only entitled to certain rights by legislation but should also enjoy the same level of opportunity to enjoy these rights.

Social inclusion of young people in Armenia is still one of the most important youth challenges. For the purposes of the given study, social inclusion is defined as access to equal opportunities for people with fewer opportunities to fully engage in social and public life, to have access to education and healthcare, labour market and leisure. Having a hypothesis in mind, that certain groups of young people with fewer opportunities are facing hardships regarding social inclusion, specifically disaggregated by gender, age and geography, the given section of the study aims to 1) identify clearly the barriers, mechanisms and processes that currently block the pathways for certain youth groups to social inclusion, 2) visualize potential inequality patterns based on gender, age and residence regarding social inclusion among the identified groups with fewer opportunities and 3) develop recommendations for overcoming those barriers and addressing inequalities.

The study prioritizes four groups with fewer opportunities, namely young people with disabilities, national minorities and/or returnees/repatriated young people, young single mothers and/or mothers in/after maternity leave, young man discharged from the army, as specific targets to be analyzed in terms of their social inclusion. The choice of those four specific groups is conditioned by several underlying factors presented below. The study also aimed to explore young people “Not in Education, Employment, or Training” (NEET), but unfortunately there is not enough evidence base and lessons learnt in the field to analyze this group as a separate group.

As stated in the report entitled “Social Inclusion of Youth in Armenia”<sup>77</sup>, in order to remove certain groups from the experience of social exclusion, it is first necessary to identify clearly the challenges that currently hinder and block their equal opportunities to social inclusion. In accordance with those factors it is already possible to separate the correspondent groups of young people in social exclusion or within the risk zone of the latter. In the Republic of Armenia such factors are considered:

- The impossibility or existing obstacles of being included in the labour market.
- The impossibility or existing obstacles of being included in educational programs.

The report<sup>78</sup> by Youth Policy Lab on needs assessment on adolescent and youth programming classifies vulnerable groups in relation to their ability to participation in the labour market under the Armenian law. According to the report, the vulnerable youth groups include but are not limited to the people with disabilities, refugees, those returning from military service and who remain unemployed, those recovering from drug addictions, those formerly incarcerated, and victim of trafficking. The same report further opens up the list of vulnerable groups to those living in rural areas, ethnic and religious minority youth, and young women and girls.

<sup>76</sup><https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/social-inclusion>

<sup>77</sup>Information template “Social Inclusion of Youth in Armenia”, EU, COE

<sup>78</sup>Needs assessment on adolescent and youth programming, UNICEF Armenia & YPL, 2016

The Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy<sup>79</sup> further develops the idea of youth social exclusion in the context of various factors that prevent young people from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility, democratic process and society at large:

- Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.
- Health problems: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions etc.
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties, early school-leavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance etc.
- Cultural differences: immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties etc.
- Economic obstacles: young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long-term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems etc.
- Social obstacles: young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or anti-social or high-risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans etc.
- Geographical obstacles: young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, etc.

Article 20 of the RA law on “Employment of the population and social protection in case of unemployment”<sup>80</sup> identifies the groups uncompetitive in labour market. Thus, the following groups of those unemployed and seeking work who have difficulties in job placement and who are unable to compete equally in the labour market are entitled to social protection ensuring additional warranties as vulnerable groups:

- 1) People with disabilities
- 2) Those who have returned from confinement institutions and the institutions applying coercive actions (compulsory measures) of medical character and have applied to the national employment service within a year of their return
- 3) The children who reached the labour age and are without parental care and the individuals who belong to the group of children left without parental care in the case of being unemployed for at least six months uninterruptedly
- 4) Those registered in the national employment service within three years after getting demobilized from the compulsory term of military service in the case of being unemployed for at least six months uninterruptedly
- 5) Those unemployed for at least three years
- 6) The refugees
- 7) Individuals registered in the office of drug-addicted persons who are in remission
- 8) Victims of trafficking.

<sup>79</sup>The Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2014

<sup>80</sup>[www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am)

<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=2420>

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

By matching the current statistics on the number of young people with disabilities, young people unemployed for at least three years, current number of young people among repatriated Syrian Armenians, as well as the number of young victims of trafficking with the classification of people with fewer opportunities presented above, it is obvious that young people of those groups fall almost under all above-mentioned categories stated by the Law.

It is important to state that the definition of vulnerable groups described earlier is limited and does not extend vulnerability beyond those who do not have access to the labor market or education. Vulnerability should include social or demographic factors that results in inequality throughout society. This could include, but should not be limited to, ethnicity, gender, religion, political affiliation, age, mental and/or physical disability, or sexual orientation. In Armenia, there is no anti-discrimination legislation to protect minorities or vulnerable groups, which makes the social inclusion of those groups even harder<sup>81</sup>.

Discrimination against vulnerable youth groups in Armenia, especially ethnic minorities and women and girls, and the relative social acceptance of this, greatly hinders the inclusivity of the current Armenian youth policy.<sup>81</sup> Opportunities for education, work, and recreation for people with psychosocial, mental, and physical disabilities remain limited due to the absence of technical support matching their special needs.<sup>81</sup>

This implies that vulnerable youth groups do not enjoy the same rights as other youth groups, and do not share the same social visibility and social space. This is further perpetrated by the fact that at the moment there are no enough programs that promote social inclusion of the youth in general and the social inclusion of the vulnerable youth groups in particular addressed by the Government of Armenia.

The Armenian National Youth Policy is not gender sensitive, though there are certain improvements in the current draft of the National Youth Policy Strategy for 2018-2022. Generally, the state does not use gender budgeting approaches, which does not allow addressing specific needs of men and women throughout all groups of society and particularly youth. The gender perspective is to a certain extent considered at the level of implementation of the National Youth Policy, which requires to keep a balance between female and male participants of all projects. The balance is not always kept, and once again the specific needs of young men and women are not considered, while gender inequality is a significant issue in Armenia. The rate of female unemployment (41.7%) is with ten percentage points higher than that of males (31.3%). In terms of higher education, the number of female students and graduates exceeds males, but this is not visible in the labour market because of further limitations and social perceptions on women's role. In rural areas, young women are more likely to face traditional perceptions on the patriarchal family structure, the role<sup>82</sup> of women, their career choices and their responsibility framework at home. The rate of gender-based violence is high, with 61% of women being subjected to controlling behaviour, 25% to psychological violence/abuse and 9.5% to physical and/or sexual violence<sup>83</sup>. In this context, young single mothers and mothers in/after maternity leave are of specific interest for the given study.

<sup>81</sup>Farrow Alex, Cristina Bacalso and Ani Hao (2016) "A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area." Youth Policy Labs for UNICEF Armenia – Final report

<sup>82</sup>Կանանց և տղամարդկանց տնտեսական գործունեությունը Հայաստանում, 2016  
[http://ysu.am/files/CGLS\\_OXFAM\\_RESEARCH\\_2016.pdf](http://ysu.am/files/CGLS_OXFAM_RESEARCH_2016.pdf)

<sup>83</sup>Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women (2008-2009), cited in UNICEF, Country Programme Document Armenia, 2015,  
[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2015-PL7-Armenia\\_CPD-ODS-EN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2015-PL7-Armenia_CPD-ODS-EN.pdf)

17,9% of young people with disabilities experience discrimination in labour market and in 11,1% of the cases young people with disabilities face skepticism towards their ability to work, states the research by Institute of Youth Studies<sup>84</sup>. Violence against women and girls with disabilities often goes unnoticed because of the challenges such as the limitation over and inaccessibility of sexual and reproductive health, as well as psychological and legal services<sup>85</sup>. The survey results among 378 young people with disability showed that only 21% of them were employed. The survey revealed that only 4% of this 21% young people with disabilities learned about career opportunities via web, 48% found a job with the help of friends and family members. Young people with disabilities are also deprived of opportunities of non-formal education, training, vocational training and so on. Only 67% of the interviewed young people with disabilities had school education, 13% had vocational training and 20% had higher education<sup>86</sup>. Young women and girls with disabilities are even more vulnerable as they are subjected to violence at their homes, schools, institutions and in general in the community. They are often not included in the preventive projects; don't have access to support centers and legal support services, access to reproductive health<sup>87</sup> because of stereotypes over their sexuality, physical and communication challenges and lack of accessible information resources<sup>88</sup>.

## The Burden of Double Discrimination

As the findings of this study reveal, certain groups are easily perceived as those with fewer opportunities among youth, while others are not. Many participants of the study classify groups with fewer opportunities as follows - young people with disabilities, national, religious and sexual minorities, whereas young single mothers and young men discharged from the army are not often seen as at risk of social exclusion. It is worth mentioning that poor social conditions and poverty were highlighted as the main factor of social exclusion irrespective of which group young people might belong.

Surprisingly enough, even if single young mothers and/or young mothers during/after maternity leave were not perceived as a group with fewer opportunities among the participants of the study, many participants noted out the young women whose husbands were seasonal labour migrants as potentially at risk of social exclusion. The perception behind this, as elaborated in further focus groups discussions, is the fact that the "head" of the family is far from the family, leaving the wife alone but at the same time with very limited independence. This fact is of particular interest as it comes to reinforce the existing gender-bias in the Armenian society where the well-being and security of women are mostly associated with the presence of men in their life.

Analysis of the FGD reveals that there is also a wide-spread misunderstanding over the term "social inclusion", which is perceived merely as the opportunities to socialize and access to leisure. This is evident from the statements like "women experience less problem with social inclusion as they have better socializing skills and are easy-going" or like "men bear stronger social pressure to behave in a certain way".

<sup>84</sup><http://disabilityinfo.am/15244/>

<sup>85</sup><http://disabilityinfo.am/9535/>

<sup>86</sup>[http://www.life-disability.am/Research\\_Analyses\\_arm.html](http://www.life-disability.am/Research_Analyses_arm.html)

<sup>87</sup>INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY OF REPRODUCTIVE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN ARMENIA, 2014

<sup>88</sup>[http://www.ysu.am/files/Research%20report%20Inclusive%20Medical%20Services%20for%20Women%20with%20Disabilities%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.ysu.am/files/Research%20report%20Inclusive%20Medical%20Services%20for%20Women%20with%20Disabilities%20(English).pdf)

<sup>88</sup>ՀԱՆՄԱՆԴԱՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ՈՒՆԵՅՈՂ ԱՆՁԱՆՑՁԲԱՂՎԱԾՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ. ԿԱՐԻՔՆԵՐ ԵՎ ԽՈՂԸՆԴՈՏՆԵՐ, 2013  
[http://www.life-disability.am/Docs/Report\\_PWD\\_Employment\\_Armenia\\_Arm.pdf](http://www.life-disability.am/Docs/Report_PWD_Employment_Armenia_Arm.pdf)

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

### National minorities and/or repatriated young people

Armenia is known as a homogeneous country with a majority of Christian Armenians. The ethnic composition of Armenia's population is 93.3 percent Armenian; 1.5 percent Russian; 1.7 percent Kurdish; and 3.5 percent Assyrian, Greek, and other<sup>89</sup>.

Although Armenia has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), Minority Rights Charter for Regional or Minority languages, the ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, UN declarations on religious intolerance and many other important legal instruments, ethnic and religious minorities have registered several challenges, which include but are not limited to language barriers, access to education in native language, access to places of worship, religious education, as well as amendments in the Law on Alternative Service etc. Some of these problems are of legal nature while others are the consequences of social and economic conditions in Armenia, including physical conditions and staffing levels in schools. The existing challenges were highlighted in various international reports such as the First Report of the Committee of Experts in respect of Armenia, ECRI's first report and Recommendation RecChL (2006) 2 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Armenia.

Pursuant to its international and national obligations, the Republic of Armenia has undertaken several steps regarding the above-mentioned issues. International recommendations on passing a law which would provide a framework for an overall vision and strategy on how to deal with national minorities related issues were taken into account and the Republic of Armenia Law on the RA Citizens of Non-Armenian Ethnicity and Ethnic Minorities was ready for adoption by the National Assembly since August 2005<sup>90</sup>, but was never adopted. In recent years extensive measures have been undertaken within the framework of preservation and development of education and culture of national minorities, in particular, a Program for development of education of the national minorities and its timeframe has been elaborated by Ministry of Education, pursuant to which every year textbooks are published to ensure the study of the language, literature and culture of the national minorities<sup>91</sup>. These endeavours aim at the preservation of traditions of the national minorities, the study of the evolution of their culture, the intensification of cooperation with relevant territorial and international institutions ensuring the broadest possible involvement of communities, representation and participation of ethnic and religious minorities in local and national governance and so on<sup>92</sup>.

We must state that there is no hostility vis-à-vis ethnic minorities and non-nationals, also a little or almost no evidence of anti-Muslim feeling, which is mainly the result of a very mono-ethnic composition of the country. Existing national minorities in Armenia mostly enjoy the same rights as the ethnic Armenians under the RA Constitution, but there are still huge issues concerning the realization of their rights to education in their language and of the right to culture.

<sup>89</sup>Country profile, Armenia , Countries and their Cultures  
<http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Armenia.html#b>

<sup>90</sup>ECRI CONCLUSIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF ARMENIA SUBJECT TO INTERIM FOLLOW-UP, 2013  
<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Armenia/ARM-IFU-IV-2014-003-ENG.pdf>

<sup>91</sup>National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, 2015

[http://www.un.am/up/file/UPR%202%20Cycle\\_National%20Report\\_eng.pdf](http://www.un.am/up/file/UPR%202%20Cycle_National%20Report_eng.pdf)

<sup>92</sup>Ibid



*When national minorities are few, we are interested in them: they seem exotic, so we are tolerant, but when they become more in numbers, we see a threat and aren't tolerant any more. (FGD participant, Yerevan)*

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011 more than 250,000 Syrians have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands of people have left Syria seeking security in other countries. While Syrian refugee crisis hits the world, Armenia, unbeknown to many, has been welcoming refugees flying from war and persecution. Around 22,000<sup>93</sup> Syrian citizens, primarily of ethnic Armenian background, have arrived in Armenia, since the start of the conflict, which is 0.6% of the total population. As a result, the Armenian government is working to address the urgent humanitarian needs by offering a wide range of emergency assistance and integration projects.

The government is offering several protection options including simplified naturalization (more than 10,000 persons have acquired Armenian citizenship), accelerated asylum-procedures and facilitated short, mid and long-term residence permits. To name a few more efforts undertaken, the government offers free health insurance as well as scholarships, has put into place a simplified naturalization and accelerated asylum procedure and has facilitated residence permits.

The findings of this study reveal that according to general perceptions on the national minorities, refugees and returnees (repatriated people, mostly Syrian-Armenian) this group faces specific challenges in Armenia regarding social inclusion. Socio-cultural factors such as differences in cultural and political settings, norms and values highly affect their integration and inclusion into the Armenian society:

*Today's young people are stuck between Europe and Asia with respective "to do-s" and "not to do-s" and impossibility to comply fully with any of them. (FGD participant, Yerevan)*

Language competence is another huge barrier to equal opportunities for education and labour market. Most of the FGD participants state that young people from national minorities in Armenia face mostly adaptation problems and there are no other specific challenges for the group.

The picture is quite different when it comes to the specific groups of returnees-repatriated Syrian-Armenian. Most of the study participants perceived them as economically stable, thus ignoring other potential factors of social exclusion. Irrespective of this, there was a prevailing consensus over the fact that Syrian-Armenians might face employment challenges because of stereotypical perceptions and generalizations:

*I don't consider Syrian-Armenians as vulnerable: they are rich. (FGD participant, Yerevan)*

This means that the general public perceptions over certain issues affect the social inclusion factor not only at policy level, but also at behavioral and attitude level. The following citation from focus groups comes to prove this statement:

*Syrian-Armenians are known to be good in food industry, so no one would think twice in hiring them in this field, whereas we won't treat them the same way if we want a reliable accountant. (FGD participant, Yerevan)*

<sup>93</sup>[http://www.un.am/up/library/Study\\_migration\\_syrians-2015.pdf](http://www.un.am/up/library/Study_migration_syrians-2015.pdf)

In the Preface of the report:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321061407\\_2017\\_ECONOMIC\\_INTEGRATION\\_OF\\_SYRIAN\\_ARMENIANS\\_IN\\_ARMENIA\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_Report](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321061407_2017_ECONOMIC_INTEGRATION_OF_SYRIAN_ARMENIANS_IN_ARMENIA_Needs_Assessment_Report)

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

According to one of the interviewed experts the opportunities of free higher education and vocational training for Syrian-Armenians provided by the state with no requirements on behalf of the returnees (such as admission exams or any other selection criteria) results in an environment where the education is not valued and is taken for granted by Syrian-Armenians. This is explained by the fact that higher education was not always the choice for Syrian-Armenians back in Syria, where they would very often prefer vocational training for obtaining a future profession. Whereas in Armenia, they get opportunities for pursuing higher education free, which they might take with no clear vision of targeted use.

*Syrian Armenians have preference for vocational training: the concept of "obligatory higher education" viewed as a matter of "family pride" which is embedded in local Armenian's thinking, left the Syrian-Armenian untouched. I have to mention though, that the choice of professions is still gendered: women take crafts culturally and historically associated with feminine labour and vice versa.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

*When they (Syrian Armenians) come, they have privileges because they are competitive in our market: they have very good skills, let alone the knowledge. At the same time, they have problems regarding integration, way of thinking, cultural barriers and stereotypes.*  
(FGD participant, Yerevan)

Thus, though there is in general no hostile attitude vis-a-vis national minorities and/or repatriated young people in Armenia, the full social inclusion is yet to be achieved. The problems highlighted by the FGD participants and experts included language barriers, most particularly the lack of access to education in their mother tongue, as well as adaptation difficulties given the cultural and contextual difference. The findings reveal that Syrian-Armenians might face stereotypical perceptions and generalizations, which affect their engagement in labour market. The section underlines a special need for a detailed need assessment of Syrian-Armenians to arrange the efficient response at the policy level, thus ensuring best results within the available resources.

### Young People with Disabilities

*Quality and accessible education is a prerequisite of solutions to all other issues, and by "education" I mean also non-formal education and upbringing of children with high civic consciousness.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

People with disabilities face numerous obstacles in Armenia, hindering their successful civic participation, economic self-realization and equal inclusion in the community life. The study reconfirms that there are many social prejudices and stereotypes around people with disabilities mostly because of insufficient level of awareness and lack of public visibility of people with disabilities.

Young people with disabilities have challenging and sometimes painful experience of getting secondary education, as the concept of inclusiveness is still being installed into the wider education and lacks adjustments for certain categories of people with disabilities. According to FGD participants, the latter particularly refers to persons with visual impairment, who are regarded to be the most neglected group among people with disabilities. There are no supporting IT programs for them other than the AREV system and even the only school for people with visual impairments in Armenia lacks literature on the Braille system. For young people/children with visual impairments is even more severe due to absence of any specialized assistance for receiving education.

A successful graduation may not increase the employability of people with disabilities. Four out of five people with disabilities with higher education, have never had a legally registered employment other than in probation periods. The FGD participants outlined several reasons for the unfriendly environment in the labor market for people with disabilities, including lack of awareness among people with disabilities, employers' prejudices, and their reluctance to do workplace adjustments, etc.

*Accessible environment is still widely understood as existence of ramps in the streets, whereas we forget about people with visual and hearing impairments or people with disorientation issues, mentally disabled and so on.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

When it comes to geographical divide, people with disabilities in regions and rural communities face additional challenges at the guise of concentration of most service and employment providing organizations in Yerevan. It leads to a complicated dilemma: either to move to Yerevan and rent a house in the capital or reach Yerevan every day. Most choose not to work at all.

*Mobility needs of people with disabilities might differ depending on their geography: if in a rural area people with disabilities might need a good wheelchair for short distances on the bad roads of the village, in the city it is almost impossible to be mobile without adjusted public transport.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

People with disabilities also feel excluded from the public and social life of their community as well as from decision-making processes. There are no people with disabilities among the community's elderly council. According to some FGD members, local community of people with disabilities is passive and unprepared to achieve results by their own efforts. Others explain the issue referring to the lack of friendly and adjusted environment for people with disabilities.

Aside from education and employment issues people with disabilities in rural areas usually also face obstacles in organizing their leisure. Rural communities generally lack leisure options and getting to the nearby city may be a complicated task.

There is also an identified lack of awareness on state support programs for people with disabilities among people with disabilities. For example, most people are unaware of state obligations to support the employee to make the workplace accessible by providing a lump-sum of 500 000 AMD to that end. People with disabilities are included in the category of "Uncompetitive people in labor market" defined by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. There are over 14 projects that support their employment possibilities. Unfortunately, it is not widely known and used by employers.

It is important to note that, women with disabilities are considered twice vulnerable than men. FGD participants emphasized that if facing a choice between male and female candidates, the employer will most probably select the former, especially in case of a well-paid job.

*Public perception over men and women with disability is different, not bad or good, just different. For women there is one specific problem: as a woman with disability, you do not often comply with the cut-on-the-stone qualities for an "ideal" woman and wife.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Out of 195,925 people with disabilities in Armenia, 93,134 are women<sup>94</sup>. In contrast to men, women are doubly vulnerable, firstly because of their gender and then of their disability. Women with disabilities are more frequent victims of psychological, physical and sexual violence. The risk of getting isolated from the society is higher among girls. 5% of boys and 7% of girls with disabilities never leave home or do that only to visit a doctor.

For women with disability general gender bias and norms result in twofold source of discrimination, the effects of which have not been a matter of extensive research. It remains masked behind overall discrimination faced by people with disabilities irrespective of their sex.

As stated by many participants of the study, discrimination between women with disabilities and men with disabilities is of the same type as discrimination between women and men in general. According to the statistics, while most men with disabilities marry and in most cases they marry a woman without disabilities, women with disabilities either don't marry at all or marry a man with disability. This fact is a vestige of the deeply-rooted taboos over sexuality of women in general and women with disability in particular. In a patriarchal society that sets a high standard on female youth and beauty it is not easy to be a woman with disability. Sexuality is viewed quite differently in relation to men with disabilities as opposed to women with disabilities. Thus, a man's right to sexual life is readily accepted but women with disabilities are often seen as sexless and with no desire for sexual life. Women with disabilities experience specific challenges regarding their access to sexual and reproductive health rights with particular concerns for respect towards person's private life.

*Given the number of single mothers among women with disabilities, we can conclude that most men don't see a problem in having a sexual relation with women with disabilities, but they seem to be reluctant of giving this woman "the social status" of their wife.  
(Expert, Yerevan)*

At the same time, as one of the experts noted, general perceptions over gender roles might paradoxically enough end up as a privilege for women with disabilities and a double discrimination for men with disabilities. More specifically, the societal expectation for women in general to be economically independent is low, so are the expectations for women with disabilities, while men with disabilities suffer from social pressure when compared to men without disabilities.

Given the analysis presented above it is obvious that people with disabilities still face numerous obstacles that challenge their cohesive social inclusion. Along with the social prejudice, stereotypes and stigma around people with disabilities, there are also insufficient measures undertaken to ensure fulfillment of their rights to education, access to healthcare, leisure and labour market. People with disabilities in regions and rural communities face additional challenges at the guise of concentration of most available service and employment providing organizations in Yerevan or regional centers. It is important to state that there is also the gender dimension of the problem as a result of which women with disabilities face double discrimination and stigmatization.

<sup>94</sup>As of July 1, 2014.

## Young single mothers and/or mothers in/after maternity leave

*To me, men and women have equal opportunities in all fields, simply there are natural factors which drive inequality, i.e. a one-time maternity leave puts a woman a step backwards in economic participation.*  
(FGD participant, Yerevan)

As also stated above, young single mothers and mothers in/after maternity leave were not normally perceived as a group with fewer opportunities among the participants of the study. It is interesting though, that when the young single mothers and mothers in/after maternity were noted as such, the FGD participants mostly agreed with the classification and highlighted the challenges they face.

The major issue brought up by FGD participants was the financial independence of single mothers and/or mothers in/after maternity leave, as they have limited opportunities to earn money. The problem is more severe in case a woman seeks her first job after delivering a baby. In many cases mothers face problems regarding professional competence when they return to work after a long leave and it takes time for them to fully get back to work.

*I kept saying there was no gender-based discrimination, up until the point when I got married and had children. Then it was fundamental.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

The Armenian legislation has several provisions to ensure that labour rights of women are protected. Article 35 of the Armenian Constitution provides that “dismissal for reasons connected with maternity is prohibited. Every female employee during pregnancy and childbirth has the right to paid maternity leave and parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.” Article 117 of the Labour Code guarantees that contracts of employment for pregnant women and women with children in their care cannot be terminated in the following circumstances: 1) in the case of pregnant women - from the day in which the employer receives a medical certificate confirming pregnancy to the end of the month following the pregnancy leave, 2) in the case of women with children aged less than one year in their care, except for cases specified by the LC, such as bankruptcy of the employer. In accordance with Article 172 of the Labour Code, women are entitled to pre- and postnatal leave while retaining whole remuneration: 140 days (70 days of pregnancy, 70 days after the delivery); 155 days (70 days of pregnancy, 85 days after the delivery) in case of complicated delivery; 180 days (70 days of pregnancy, 110 days after the delivery) in the event of twins, triplets etc. At the request of the employee, leave for childcare is granted until the child reaches the age of three. This may also be taken by the father of the child, stepmother, stepfather, or any relative who is legal guardian of the child (Article 173 of the Labour Code)<sup>95</sup>.

Nevertheless, the cases of discrimination regarding pregnant women and women in maternity leave show that not only the existing legislation is not sufficient, but there is also a lack of implementation.

*There is a need for large-scale legislative amendments to ensure opportunities for young mothers to be included in the labour market and to maintain family and work life balance, particularly given the state interest in solving the demographic problems we face.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

<sup>95</sup>National Labour Law Profile: Republic of Armenia  
[http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS\\_158891/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS_158891/lang-en/index.htm)

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

*The maternity leave is still viewed merely as an expense borne by the state, there is no deeper understanding or at least a conceptual discussion on why we need it.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

The state is currently amending the Law on Employment, which envisages several changes regarding the employment of women in maternity leave. It intends to continue paying 18000 AMD monthly pensions to women in maternity leave up to 2 years. The amendment also suggests subsidizing the payment for baby-sitter with the amount of minimal wage 55000AMD to those mothers who will choose to return to work during the first two years of maternity leave. The mother will carry the obligation to pay the taxes related to this. The ongoing public discussion over the suggested amendment is voicing concerns over its efficiency. Though most stakeholders speak high of the state intention to improve the situation of mothers in maternity leave, yet there is a lack of consensus on what would be the added value of the amendment, given that mothers will still need to pay the taxes, which reduces the amount they will actually get from the state to less than the half of what is suggested<sup>96</sup>.

Lack of financial stability and sustainability has a two-faced impact on the decision of single mothers and/or mothers in/after maternity leave forcing them not to fully benefit from state-provided maternity leave privileges and returning to work half-the-maternity-term, at the same time increases their dependence from families and relatives both financially and for the help with the child-care.

*The primary caregiver of the newborn is the mother, as she carries the child for 9 months and is the one to breastfeed, thus the state policies should target the mothers' need for at least the first six months based on the best interest of the child.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

Many of the participants noted that mothers in/after maternity leave have less opportunities to advance in their careers particularly when they choose to take the full 2-year leave envisaged by the law. At the same time, there is also the other side of the medal in the form of public shaming and disapproval of the women who choose to be right back to work after the delivery. The existing perception of women's role as mothers is dominant and overshadows all other aspects of women's life, thus putting blame on her choices, whatever the grounds.

Prevailing gender norms legitimize the fact that because a woman is the one who gives a birth to a child, she is then naturally also the one responsible for the care and nurture of the off-spring throughout all their life. This is true for all women and girls who are socially perceived as responsible for undertaking the bulk of unpaid care work such as looking after and educating children, looking after older family members, cooking, cleaning. In rural areas though these responsibilities might also include working in the garden, collecting water, taking care of the stock and other outdoor activities. This unequal burden of unpaid care undermines women rights to decent work, to education, to health, to rest and leisure, limits their opportunities and, therefore, hinders women from seeking employment and income, which in turn holds them back economically.

<sup>96</sup> "Nanny at the expense of the state: more questions than answers", Lia Khojoyan, Yerevan, 2017  
<http://womennet.am/baby-siter/>

As reconfirmed by the participants of the study, in the patriarchal societies, where distribution of power directly affects the distribution of labour, women's unpaid work subsidizes the cost of care that sustains families, supports economies and often fills in for the lack of social services. Yet, it is rarely recognized as “work”. Young mothers form the category that falls in paradigm of unpaid care and domestic work, thus becoming more vulnerable in the socio-economic context.

Some of the experts spoke of the importance of the state intervention to first work towards the change of the discriminatory discourse that affects equal opportunities of women, and particularly working mothers, and second to adjust the legal gaps and policies to comply with the needs of working mothers. As an example of one of the most vivid examples of unequal opportunities, one of the experts highlighted the absence of the public free of charge kindergartens available for full day. The problem is even more intense in the regions, where there are no free of charge kindergartens even for half-day.

*It is really beyond understanding, how can the Government fix 9am -6 pm as working hours, but have kindergartens open from 10am to 5 pm, or less.*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

Thus, mothers in/after maternity leave and young single mothers face challenges regarding their involvement in labour market. This group lacks equal opportunities both because of legislative gaps and discriminatory practices. There is a need for supportive measures for mothers after maternity leave to enter/re-enter labour market, which should be addressed both by policy reforms and bringing change into practice.

## Social Inclusion Issues among Discharged Young Men

As Armenia is among the countries with compulsory military service, young male citizens of Armenia, aged from 18 to 27 years old, have to spend two years, serving in the military forces. Most of the Armenian young people undertake military service at the age of 18, when they are usually just after graduation from high-schools or in the 1st year of academic course. After demobilization, usually at the age of 20 they have the opportunity of resuming their higher education courses or enter the labour market. Many young people, especially from rural communities with unfavorable climate conditions for agriculture choose the option to migrate for seasonal work, which depends on the community and family culture and alternative employment possibilities/perspectives.

*“Still as a child, our boys are taken to the army, and are supposed to come back transformed into the manhood, where they are left with no guidance at all.”*  
(Expert, Yerevan)

Besides the issues, common for the youth or the wider public as a whole in Armenia, those discharged also face specific challenges on their path towards civic and economic self-realization and social inclusion. The concerns and problems of those demobilized were a subject of FGD discussion, taken place in Armavir. According to the discharged members of the FGD one of the main issues particularly intrinsic to the group is the problem of re-adaptation to civic realities and re-integration to community social processes, by restoring the ties severed by two years of absence.

## 5. Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

The psychological stress experienced during the military service has also an impact on demobilized person's outlook and feelings: FGD participants describe the post-service changes in character as "complicated", "intolerant", noting that the changes are mostly temporal and diminish at due course.

They also detected a rising interest towards economic participation among the demobilized young people, conditioned by the change of self-perception: completion of military service is regarded as an automatic entry into adulthood, where young men are expected to support their economic self-sustainability. This leads to significant problems in the labor market as the employers usually require working experience and completed higher education ("a diploma"), while the applicants from this group generally have incomplete higher education and lack of work experience. Those planning to resume their academic education interrupted by the military service, face an additional issue: most job announcements require full-time enrollment, incompatible with the schedule of regular academic education. Therefore, a number of discharged young people prefer switching their regular academic education into distance learning. Others, who drop their academic education due to the lack of finances or interest, usually find employment in the low-qualification sector of labor market, including seasonal labor migration. Besides, the FGD participants complained of corrupted labor market in their communities, mentioning that local employment criteria were mainly based on nepotism and bribing, rather than the applicant's professional qualification.

The highlighted issues have a more negative impact on demobilized villagers as they are multiplied with common problems intrinsic to rural areas, such as undeveloped or worn-out infrastructures, lower level of economic development, unsatisfactory system of public transportation, lack of options for both employment and leisure etc.

To conclude, the main issues particularly intrinsic to the discharged young men are re-adaptation to civic realities and re-integration to community social processes, as well as difficulties in combining education and work. At the same time there is identified lack of services that discharged men can access right after coming back to ensure their psychological and physical health integrity.

### Conclusions for Social Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities Section

Social inclusion of young people in Armenia is still one of the most important youth challenges. As the findings of this study reveal, the concept of "social inclusion" is widely misperceived merely as opportunities to socialize and access to leisure without any linkage to, ethnicity, gender, religion, political affiliation, mental and/or physical disability, or sexual orientation and obstacle associated with them.

Another interesting finding was the fact that while certain groups are easily perceived as those with fewer opportunities among youth, some other groups are not even mentioned as vulnerable or with fewer opportunities. The groups most easily identified as vulnerable were young people with disabilities, national, religious and sexual minorities, whereas young single mothers and young men discharged from the army are not often seen as at risk of social exclusion. It is worth mentioning that poor social conditions and poverty were mentioned as underlying cause for social exclusion irrespective of all other factors. An important group with fewer opportunities in youth domain – NEET is not even recognized, statistics is not gathered, hence not addressed at all levels of government.



The analysis of social inclusion factors of all four groups targeted through this Report revealed specific findings regarding gender and geography, while there were lack of relevant data and input to analyze the interdependency between social exclusion and age division among youth (16-19, 20-24, 25-30).

Along with the social prejudice, stereotypes and stigma, people with disabilities also face insufficient measures undertaken to ensure fulfillment of their rights to education, access to healthcare, leisure and labour market. People with disabilities in regions and rural communities face additional challenges at the guise of concentration of most available service and employment providing organizations in Yerevan or regional centers.

When it comes to social inclusion of national minorities and/or repatriated young people in Armenia, the problems identified include but are not limited to language barrier, most particularly the lack of access to education in their mother tongue, as well as adaptation difficulties given the cultural and contextual difference. It is indeed very interesting that there is very specific approach when it comes to Syrian-Armenians, a group which is not perceived as vulnerable among other national minority and repatriated groups because of generalized opinion about their high financial status.

In case of the discharged young men re-adaptation to civic realities and re-integration to community social processes, as well as difficulties in combining education and work were seen as the main concerns.

All in all, social inclusion of young people in Armenia lacks comprehensive and thorough understanding of the concept of inclusion itself. The lack of agreed upon and widely accepted concept of inclusion is visible not only at personal, societal level but also at national level in policy cycle. The recommendations listed below are targeted to respond to challenges identified above and provide general guidance towards enhanced social inclusion.

## Recommendations

---

Based on the set of afore critical findings, this Report puts forth the below recommendations with a view of addressing the causes of inequalities and narrowing the divide in the participation patterns of various groups of young people. These recommendations are developed to address the needs/gaps and inequalities in the youth sector, and include noteworthy justifications on why their implementation is possible. Nevertheless, the implementation of each of these recommendations requires detailed assessment and planning using a multi-stakeholder approach and further research where necessary. Wider range of stakeholders should be engaged to develop actions from these recommendations, especially the stakeholders responsible or simply in capacity for addressing the identified needs. The implementation of these recommendations in its specific area of intervention will support ongoing country efforts in the effective policy-making and generate additional sectorial synergies worth exploring.

- **Incorporate the principles of social justice and social inclusion into the base of public policy development.** Public policies in all sectors and levels should address existing inequalities within the population at large and young people in particular, promoting equity rather than just equality. As the findings of this study reveal, the concept of “social inclusion” is widely misperceived, taken merely as an opportunity to socialize and access to leisure without any linkage to ethnicity, gender, religion, political affiliation, mental and/or physical disability, or sexual orientation and obstacles associated with them. Thus, social inclusion should be viewed as a cross-cutting theme and within the concept of intersectionality in development as well as implementation of all relevant policies.
- **Gather and analyze disaggregated and consistent data on youth sector.** Gaps in systematic collection of data and lack of consistent research on the impact of marginalization on some of the most vulnerable groups of young people such as rural-based youth, girls, socially excluded groups and others, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) make it difficult to adequately assess the current situation and plan services and support for the development of youth. These gaps are even more obvious when it comes to marginalized young people. Statistical reporting should be sensitive towards the rapidly changing experiences of youth. It is recommended to disaggregate data by smaller age ranges for young people, e.g. with 5-year increments instead of official youth age range definition. At the same time, the collected data should be analyzed in such a manner to support youth sector decision makers in understanding the most effective and efficient measures in addressing youth issues, as well analyze cross-sectorial implications.
- **Address gaps in data and statistics at local level.** There is a substantial lack of data available at the local level on the situation of young people, especially unorganized youth (e.g. not in education, employment, training or agriculture, etc.). Decision makers at the local level should gather necessary evidence for making informed decision through research, direct participation of young people, expert opinions and other mechanisms available at the local level and avoid actions addressing only the privileged young people.

- **Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework and indicators to track progress towards youth development and assess the effectiveness of youth policy.** The framework needs to include an agreed and consistent system for multi-stakeholder participation, efficiency, inclusion of people of all ages and provide data supporting evidence-based decision making from strategic priority to activity levels. Specific indicators should, for example, focus on youth participation in decision-making processes, volunteering practices, manifestations of civic activism, gender equality, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, outreach to specific groups of young men and women, etc.
- **Support participation of youth in community life through enhancing participatory mechanisms' effectiveness, such as youth councils at schools, by community mayors and marz Governors, as well as youth-led organizations.** When it comes to youth-led grassroots projects it is suggested to look beyond official youth groups to tap also the potential of younger adolescents who already make efforts to solve problems in their communities. Other good models supporting civic participation for younger age group are school or community youth councils. It is suggested to set standards and measure the effectiveness of such councils on a regular basis and across all regions, both urban and rural. Youth initiatives and policies must be developed through genuine consultation with diverse groups of young people, and should be judged by their impact on those sub-groups that most need to benefit from them. More comprehensive mechanisms should be developed for ensuring higher level of participation from young people in decision making for those initiatives and policies.
- **Ensure higher level of participation of young people in public policy cycle and in decision-making processes at large.** Young people are a vital stakeholder group in any field and their needs are to be addressed by every sector and at all layers of society. At the same time, young people are not just the group that requires assistance and support, but they have the motivation, potential and energy to bring positive change into any sector and structure. Young people are an asset to any community and they should be involved in community mapping and municipal/state planning and monitoring efforts. Engaging young people into any sector is beneficial for assuring progressive development of that same sector and once again - assuring ownership of young people as the future leaders of our country. Further capacity building of young and other relevant stakeholders is essential for implementation of this and previous recommendation.
- **Incentivize civic participation through other sectors.** This can be done in a number of ways including but not limited to:
  - Higher Education Institutions promoting civic participation as selection criterion (e.g. American University of Armenia),
  - Higher Education Institutions offering tuition fee discounts (e.g. Slavonic University),
  - CSOs working with universities and research centers to establish internship programs,
  - Universities, research centers, businesses and other actors of the labor market providing more beneficial employability opportunities to youth engaged in civic activism, given the capacities developed due to civic participation and highly valuable for potential employees.

## Recommendations

---

- **Create civic engagement opportunities in rural areas.** Civic engagement of young people in rural areas is crucial for several of the reasons discussed in the Report. On top of individual development benefits that young people with active civic engagement will gain at the community level, civic engagement will bring a positive effect to the community development, decrease depopulation and corruption, etc. Both government and international organizations should target rural areas supporting the functioning of local CSOs, community groups and other civic engagement platforms in the rural communities. However, cost and effort-intensive this might seem, this will pay off in the long run by activating the rural areas and spreading the expertise and development more evenly.
- **Support volunteering.** Despite numerous efforts to regulate the field, the Armenian legal environment still does not provide an enabling and protective arena for volunteering promotion and there is still a need for supportive policy framework to facilitate volunteering opportunities. Effects of volunteering in different dimensions has still to be explored, from individual gains to aggregated economic value of volunteer work. In case of young people volunteering can support their individual growth, increase of employability, ease transition from education to labour market and support socialization and development of soft skills. At the same time, targeted approach is crucial to ensure volunteering of highly skilled individuals. De-facto existing volunteering programs implemented by CSOs in Armenia should be explored for best practices and possible replication and put into practice by public sector and other CSOs.
- **From community engagement to political participation.** Armenia is entering into a new system of governance replacing the semi-presidential system with parliamentary system accompanied with community consolidation process and changes in the community structure and development planning process. Additionally, the recently signed EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) creates favorable environment in terms of support to participatory mechanisms, targeted programs for young people (e.g. EU4YOUTH, Erasmus Plus Program) and provides possibility for impactful reforms and meaningful participation of young people in various sectors with the support from major stakeholder as EU. Youth is publicly recognized as an agent of change by Government and international organizations and this recognition should be leveraged into dialogue and actions. The study shows that rural-based youth have greater linkages to their communities, and young women specifically are more likely to engage in grass-roots community action through volunteering and CSOs. These strengths should be leveraged by creating a 'pipeline' and opportunities to engage those involved in community support also in decision-making processes.
- **Devise and implement mainstreamed youth development projects.** Youth development has always been a cross-cutting issue for international development programs conducted in Armenia. There are visible benefits from many programs, yet they have not yielded the expected results and huge potential of youth remains largely untapped. Most of beneficiaries are privileged young people while young people with fewer opportunities are rarely reached. Deliberate efforts should be made both by international organizations and the state so that youth becomes a real change agent. This can be reached through identifying youth as a separate constituency and developing targeted approach within development programs with specific focus on mainstreamed youth participation throughout all relevant sectors.

- **Conduct analysis of Armenian and international labour market, emphasizing labour demand and its development forecast.** The proper analysis of the market will shed a light on new emerging professions and on those that will disappear in the near future. Skills taught to young people should prepare them for the labor market of the future and not the past. Generating accurate labor market data is essential for adjusting educational programs, better planning of human resources, providing quality employment opportunities and will help youth to adjust to the needs of the ongoing professions. Labour market data should be collected, analyzed, and disseminated on a regular basis in order to better assess market needs and trends. Transversal skills should be part of the curricula or be provided by other stakeholders such as career centers, employment centers or NGOs providing similar services.
- **Enhance cooperation between educational institutions, private sectors and other stakeholders to support career guidance to children and youth from early age.** Development of highly productive professionals is only possible through cooperation between different sectors, including private, public, education and CSOs. Due to their flexibility and progressiveness civil society organizations have a specific niche in this task, to provide specific development possibilities and individual approach to their beneficiaries throughout different stages of their personal and professional development. Career orientation activities both the formal and informal ones, will tackle youth potential and will expand youth skills and capacities more rapidly. Skills training programs combined with educational upgrading can provide the opportunities for young jobseekers to increase their employability and, in the long run ensure life-long learning.
- **Cooperation between educational institutions and the private sector** is critical for designing effective educational curriculums, which will develop capacities of students required by the private sector. The private sector can be an invaluable partner in designing effective career orientation and capacity building programs.
- **Increase access to quality education** for both young men and women in terms of vocational and non-formal educational opportunities. For rural youth, especially, quality education is a big issue, which in the long run substantially affects their well-being. To reinforce reaction to rapid and constant technological, social and economic changes formal and non-formal educational systems such as distance learning, web-based education platforms, mentoring, volunteerism and other means should be an important contribution to traditional education systems.
- **Develop business skills and implement targeted programs promoting entrepreneurship for youth** among the communities to foster capacity areas related to management, administration, financial literacy, marketing, and general business knowledge. Entrepreneurship development frameworks such as *EntreComp* highlight visioning, creativity, motivation and perseverance, planning and management, and several other competencies as the base for successful entrepreneurship. Specific group of young people should be targeted here to assure maximum effectiveness, e.g. young people from upper age range.

## Recommendations

---

- **Build synergies among programs implemented by state bodies and CSOs to accelerate employment and entrepreneurship of youth in communities and to make better use of existing resources.** National youth policy identifies five line ministries and various other institutions as stakeholders in youth affairs. Increased cross-sectorial collaboration of those actors can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of youth policy-making and implementation, as well as substantially increasing targeted approach of all existing programs. Perfect examples are programs offered for “uncompetitive people in labour market” by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its affiliates, or programs offered for young entrepreneurs by Small and Medium Enterprise Development National Center. A more specific attention should be allocated to the rural communities and their specificities in terms of entrepreneurship opportunities with specific attention to cross-border communities and their needs.
- **Recognize and proactively address gender inequalities faced by young women and men.** This study shows that gender gap is deeply rooted in societal and cultural norms. By the time young women and men are of university age, the gender gaps are very large and difficult to diminish. This means that strategies to reduce gender gap in civic engagement should address girls and boys, including those who are much younger than the university age. Civic education and gender-specific instruction should start at an early stage to affect girls' motivation, perceived ability, and desire to pursue their role as change agents in the society as well as motivate boys' aspirations to be engaged in civic life. Additionally, gender mainstreaming strategies should be considered into the delivery of employment services, career counselling, and active labor market programs.
- **Include specific issues of young people of national minorities/returnees into the development of policy priorities and action plans.** It is highly recommended to include specific activities in the relevant action plans as well as allocate appropriate resources. Special efforts should be undertaken to promote coherent cultural integration of young people of national minorities/returnees by highlighting social perceptions on both sides and combination of them. Similar measures can be implemented for seasonal workers to prevent seasonal or permanent migration.
- **Support gender-sensitive approaches in the global inclusion system, programs and strategies of social-economic development.** Gender dimension of the inclusion should be taken into account in developing youth policies and development programs. Given the specific reality regarding gender equality situation in Armenia, the gender mainstreaming of national youth policies should consider the disparities between men and women and derive from this point.
- **Initiate programs aimed at promoting women employment and their economic empowerment.** As economic activity and equal access to labour market is one of the key parameters ensuring social inclusion of all groups, it is highly recommended to consider the development of manufacturing enterprises supporting women's employment, as well as installations of special programs, promoting women entrepreneurship, including business consulting services.

- **Provide social security, maternity security and childcare opportunities to the women engaged in non-formal labor.** As women's opportunities are highly challenged by unequal distribution of unpaid care-work and child care, there should be more measures at policy level to support the possibility of combining domestic and professional obligations, such as installment of baby-sitters' institute, prolonged paid maternity leave and flexible working hours for women to gradually enter/return to labor market from maternity leave.
- **Integrate special approach towards addressing the specific situation faced by people with disabilities, and young people in particular.** This could include, but not be limited to considering the gender component in state policy and programs towards forming an inclusive society to address the special needs of young women and men with disabilities; improving the quality of inclusive education with special focus on the needs of young people with visual and hearing impairments.
- **Promote access of services for young people with disabilities in rural areas.** As geography is another major factor which affects young people in general but young people with disabilities in particular, it is valid to adopt a differentiated and specific approach towards problems of young people with disabilities in rural and urban areas.
- **Develop state-funded social programs for improving psychological and physical health of discharged young men and reintegration into civilian life.** The given recommendation will eliminate the bottlenecks discharged young men face regarding re-adaptation to civic realities and re-integration to community social processes. Regardless of the programs implemented by the Government, CSOs can become a strong ally in supporting reintegration of discharged young men into the society through career guidance, volunteering opportunities, vocational education possibilities, psychological support, outdoor activities, etc.

## Conclusions

---

The Report showed that in fact there is youth divide in Armenia based on age, gender and geography and situation is even worse in case of young people with fewer opportunities.

Social-economic issues are identified as the first priority for any group of young people. It is a phenomenon for every age, gender and geography group identified. The issue is more severe for young people with fewer opportunities considering additional obstacles they are facing. The National Youth Policy identifies socio-economic issues of young people as strategic priority. The Government and many organizations implement programs for addressing these issues, but more efforts here are needed. There is a vast majority of young people who are left out of those programs and in many cases implemented programs do not have the intended impact.

As expected, the Report showed substantial difference in the needs and interests of young people throughout the whole age range observed. There are little data and research done on the age group of 25-30 years old young people. National youth policy does not distinguish in any way those differences and there is little evidence of youth organizations considering it as well. Most of the cases youth programs concentrate on the whole or some part of young people age range.

Young people with fewer opportunities face range of issues on top of the obstacles that generally all groups of young people face, and majority of them are not addressed in a coherent manner. The situation varies from a group to group substantially in terms of the needs, public perception of the issues, available support/programs, etc. In all types of groups with fewer opportunities the explored issues that those young people are facing can be addressed only through close collaboration of several branches of the government, public services, civil society organizations and private sector, and of course through participation of these young people.

Needs of young people and inequalities they are facing interrelate with many other sectors, e.g. economy, education, social, labor rights, etc. Considering limited capacities and relatively scarce resources in pure youth sector it is crucial that youth field stakeholders cooperate with other sectors for addressing needs of young people. More intense advocacy is needed to value and target young people in other disciplines and design programs for using potential of young people for their own and society's benefit.

## Acknowledgement

The authors of this Report would like to thank the facilitators who undertook focus group discussions and had valuable input to this Report.

Tatevik Abrahamyan

Sona Grigoryan

Armenuhi Hovhannisyan

Nare Khlghatyan



- Bellah, Elliott Robert N., Robert Neelly Bellah Swidler Steven M. Tipton, William M. Sullivan, Richard Madsen, Ann, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton (2007) *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California Press.
- Caucasus Barometer (2017). Public Perceptions on Political, Social, and Economic issues in the South Caucasus Countries, [http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/\\_static\\_content/barometer/2017/CB2017\\_ENG\\_presentation\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.crrc.am/hosting/file/_static_content/barometer/2017/CB2017_ENG_presentation_final_.pdf)
- Farrow Alex, Cristina Bacalso and Ani Hao(2016)“A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area.” Youth Policy Labs for UNICEF Armenia – Final report.
- Flanagan, C., and Levine, P (2010). “Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood. The Future of Children.” Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, Nakwon Jung, and Sebastián Valenzuela (2012) “Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17 (3): 319–36. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01574.x.
- Hakobyan, Lusine, Mane Tadevosyan, Alex Sardar, and Arsen Stepanyan (2010) “Armenian Civil Society: From Transition to Consolidation.” Analytical Country Report. CIVICUS Civil Society Index. Yerevan, Armenia: Counterpart International. [http://program.counterpart.org/Armenia/?page\\_id=48](http://program.counterpart.org/Armenia/?page_id=48).
- Hakobyan, Lusine, and Mane Tadevosyan (2010) “Culture of Volunteerism in Armenia. Case Study.” Case Study. CIVICUS Civil Society Index. Yerevan, Armenia: Counterpart International. <http://program.counterpart.org/Armenia/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/CSI-Case-Study-1.pdf>.
- Paturyan Yevgenya, Hakobyan Lusine, Mane Tadevosyan and Gayane Martirosyan (2014). 'CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment.' Yerevan, Armenia: Counterpart International, [https://www.civicus.org/images/Civicus-Report\\_August-2014\\_FFfinal.pdf](https://www.civicus.org/images/Civicus-Report_August-2014_FFfinal.pdf)
- Inglehart Ronald (1997) “Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies. Princeton University Press.
- Kirkpatrick David (2011) “Does Facebook Have a Foreign Policy?” *Foreign Policy*, no. 190: 55.
- Ishkanian A. (2015) “Self-determined citizens? A new wave of civic activism in Armenia», *Open Democracy / ISA RC-47: Open Movements*, 16 June. <https://opendemocracy.net/armine-ishkanian/selfdetermined-citizens-new-wave-of-civic-activism-in-armenia>
- Ivanyan A. and Anna Nikoghosyan (2014) “Integration of Gender Component into Social Science Subject” recommendations package. “Society Without Violence” NGO
- Margaryan Tatevik and Arpine Hakobyan (2014), “CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities.”
- Paturyan Yevgenya and Valentina Gevorgyan (2016), “Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society/”Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis, American University of Armenia.
- Raof, Jihan K., Halimah Badioze Zaman, Azlina Ahmad, and Ammar Al-Qaraghuli (2013) “Using Social Network Systems as a Tool for Political Change.” *International Journal of Physical Sciences* Vol. 8(21) (June): 1143–48.
- Scheufele, Dietram A., and Dhavan V. Shah (2000) “Personality Strength and Social Capital the Role of Dispositional and Informational Variables in the Production of Civic Participation” *Communication Research* 27 (2).

## References

---

- Schofer, Evan, and Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001) "The Structural Contexts of Civic Engagement: Voluntary Association Membership in Comparative Perspective." *American Sociological Review*, 806–828.
- Sherrod, Lonnie R., Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance A. Flanagan (2010) *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*. John Wiley & Sons
- United Nations Development Program, Armenia (2012), "National Youth Aspirations Research Report."
- Verba, Sidney (1967) "Democratic Participation." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 373 (1): 53–78.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E Brady (1995) *Voice and Equality. Civil Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, John, and Marc Musick (1997) "Who Cares? Toward an Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work." *American Sociological Review* 62: 694–713.
- Yang, Guobin (2003) "The Co-Evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China." *Asian Survey* 43 (May/June 2003): 405–22.
- Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. DelliCarpini (2006) *A New Engagement?: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford University Press.
- Information template "Social Inclusion of Youth in Armenia", EU, COE
- The Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2014
- Assessment Reports on Armenia's Compliance with GSP+ obligations, Yerevan, 2016
- Կանանց և տղամարդկանց տնտեսական գործունեությունը Հայաստանում, 2016  
[http://ysu.am/files/CGLS\\_OXFAM\\_RESEARCH\\_2016.pdf](http://ysu.am/files/CGLS_OXFAM_RESEARCH_2016.pdf)
- Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women (2008-2009), cited in UNICEF, Country Programme Document Armenia, 2015,  
[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2015-PL7-Armenia\\_CPD-ODS-EN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2015-PL7-Armenia_CPD-ODS-EN.pdf)
- Inclusiveness and Accessibility of Reproductive Medical Services for Women and Girls with Disabilities in Armenia, 2014  
[http://www.ysu.am/files/Research%20report%20\\_Inclusive%20Medical%20Services%20for%20Women%20with%20Disabilities%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.ysu.am/files/Research%20report%20_Inclusive%20Medical%20Services%20for%20Women%20with%20Disabilities%20(English).pdf)
- Հաշմանդամություն Ունեցող Անձանց Զբաղվածությունը Հայաստանում. Կարիքներ և Խոչընդոտներ, 2013  
[http://www.life-disability.am/Docs/Report\\_PWD\\_Employment\\_Armenia\\_Arm.pdf](http://www.life-disability.am/Docs/Report_PWD_Employment_Armenia_Arm.pdf)
- Country profile, Armenia , Countries and their Cultures  
<http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Armenia.html#b>
- ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in Respect of Armenia Subject to Interim Follow-up, 2013  
<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Armenia/ARM-IFU-IV-2014-003-ENG.pdf>
- National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, 2015 [http://www.un.am/up/file/UPR%202%20Cycle\\_National%20Report\\_eng.pdf](http://www.un.am/up/file/UPR%202%20Cycle_National%20Report_eng.pdf)
- Luna Atamian , Armenia and the Syrian Refugee Crisis, 2016  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/luna-atamian-/armenia-and-the-syrian-re\\_b\\_9361844.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/luna-atamian-/armenia-and-the-syrian-re_b_9361844.html)

National Labour Law Profile: Republic of Armenia

[http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS\\_158891/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS_158891/lang--en/index.htm)

“Nanny at the expense of the state: more questions than answers”, Lia Khojyan, Yerevan, 2017

<http://womennet.am/baby-siter/>

Awogbenle A. C., Iwuamadi C. K. (2010), Youth unemployment: Entrepreneurship development programme as an intervention mechanism, Ota, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJBM/article-full-text-pdf/841B08423424>

Australian Government (2007), Overcoming indigenous disadvantage, Economic Participation and Development,

<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/documents/chapter11.pdf>

The World Bank in Armenia (2017). Overview, Yerevan,

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview>

National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia (2016). GDP production structure by NACE 2 classification, Yerevan, <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=202>

Simones A. (2017). The Observatory of Economic Complexity, Yerevan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/arm/#Complexity\\_and\\_Income\\_Inequality](https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/arm/#Complexity_and_Income_Inequality)

National Statistics Service of the Republic of Armenia and The World Bank (2013). Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, Yerevan, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99477213.pdf>

National Statistics Service of the Republic of Armenia, The World Bank (2016). Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, Yerevan, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99498923.pdf>

World Bank Group (2017). Migration and Mobility, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, Washington DC, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28534/9781464812194.pdf>

World Bank, International Labour Organization (2017). ILOSTAT database

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

Armenian National Statistical Service (2017). Demographic Data of Armenia, <http://www.armstat.am/en/>

Armenian National Statistical Service (2017). Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, Population by age groups, disaggregated by geography, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99504343.pdf>

Eurasia Partnership Foundation (2016). Empowering Young Entrepreneurs in the regions of Armenia, Yerevan, [http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/YB\\_Entrepreneurship\\_FINAL-REPORT.pdf](http://www.epfarmeria.am/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/YB_Entrepreneurship_FINAL-REPORT.pdf)

UNDP (2017), Integrated Support to Rural Communities

[http://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction/integrated-support-to-rural-communities.html](http://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-support-to-rural-communities.html)

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2017). The economic situation in Armenia: opportunities and challenges in 2017, Yerevan, Compass Center, <http://www.fes-caucasus.org/news-list/e/the-economic-situation-in-armenia-opportunities-and-challenges-in-2017/>

European Students' Union (2013). A tuition fee hike in Armenia is out of touch with economic reality, <http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6001/A-tuition-fee-hike-in-Armenia-is-out-of-touch-with-economic-reality/>

## References

---

The World Bank (2017). The World Bank national accounts data and OECD national accounts data files  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?view=map>

Nweze T., Okolie U. C., (2014). Effective Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Secondary Schools: Issues and Roles in Students' Career Decision Making, Department of Education Foundation, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b901/bca2efd57ac6d7179334ca279ec5a3ca4205.pdf>

Investopedia., Why Financial Literacy is So Important,  
<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100615/why-financial-literacy-and-education-so-important.asp#ixzz50pZzy8Dp>

United Nations (2000)., Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/ARMENIA-English.pdf>

UNFPAArmenia, Men and Gender Equality in Armenia, Report on Sociological Survey Findings Campaign "EQUAL" (2017). Women's Agenda, In the light of the Upcoming Parliamentary Elections in Armenia,  
Oxfam (2016), Youth and Inequality [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-youth-inequality-global-120816-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-youth-inequality-global-120816-en_0.pdf)

Armenian National Statistical Service (2016), Labour Market in the Republic of Armenia, 2011-2015  
[http://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud\\_2017\\_6.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud_2017_6.pdf)

## Annex 1 - List of experts

Name	Surname	Institution represented
Lilit	Apujanyan	Small and Medium Enterprise Development National Center
Zara	Batoyan	Disability Info
Irene	Danielyan	Strong CSOs for Stronger Armenia project
Tatevik	Davtyan	Independent Expert
Oleg	Dulgaryan	Centre for Community Mobilization and Support
Marine	Galstyan	Youth Events Holding Center, Youth Studies Institute
Meline	Grigoryan	COAF
Margarita	Hakobjanyan	GIZ Armenia
Lilit	Hakobyan	COAF
Lusine	Hakobyan	Civil Society Expert
Rudolf	Harutyunyan	Teach for Armenia
David	Hayrapetyan	EU-CoE youth partnership, Youth Events implementation center
Davit	Hayrapetyan	EU-CoE youth partnership, Youth Events implementation center
Anahit	Minassian	KASA
Marina	Mkhitaryan	UNDP, Kolba Labs
Arthur	Najaryan	Youth Initiative Center (YIC)
Yevgeniya	Paturyan	TurpanjianCenter for Policy Analysis at American University of Armenia
Lusine	Saghumyan	COAF
Iren	Sargsyan	Save the Children
Anahit	Simonyan	Women Human Rights Defender
Areg	Tadevosyan	International Center for Intercultural Research, Learning and Dialogue

## Annex 2 - List of focus groups and their parameters

ID	Location of the FGD	Profile of the participants			
		Age group	Geography	Gender composition	Inclusion profile
Focus Group 1	Yerevan	Mixed	Urban	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 2	Vanadzor	Mixed	Urban	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 3	Metsamor	Mixed	Rural	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 4	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Male only	Mixed
Focus Group 5	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Female only	Mixed
Focus Group 6	Armavir	16-19 y.o.	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 7	Jermuk	20-24 y.o.	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 8	Charentsavan	25-30 y.o.	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Focus Group 9	Ijevan	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Young people with disabilities
Focus Group 10	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	NEET, Young men discharged from Army
Focus Group 11	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Single mothers, mothers in/after maternal leave
Focus Group 12	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Representatives of ethnic minorities, Refugees, Returnees
Focus Group 13	Yerevan	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Syrian Armenian returnees/refugees

### Annex 3. Questionnaire for Expert Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

1. In general, what are the issues young people face in your community.
2. Do you participate in the life of your community or in the decision making processes?
  - a. If so, please describe.
  - b. If not, what are the reasons? Have you ever faced any obstacles for your participation?
3. What are the main sources of income for young people in your community?
4. What are the challenges and possibilities for employment for young people in your community?
5. What are the challenges and possibilities for entrepreneurship for young people in your community?
6. Does and if so how education affects income generation possibilities of young people?
7. Do you think there are young people who are more vulnerable than the others? If so, please specify.
8. What do you think, what are the obstacle that young people from the following groups face?
  - a. Representatives of national minorities or refugees/returnees/repatriates,
  - b. Young people with disabilities
  - c. Young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training,
  - d. Single mothers, and/or young mothers in maternal leave,
  - e. Young men discharged from obligatory military service.
9. What are the differences between young men and women in terms of Civic Participation, Economic Participation, and Social Inclusion?
10. What are the differences between young people from rural and urban communities in terms of Civic Participation, Economic Participation, and Social Inclusion?
11. What are the differences between young people from age groups of 16-19, 20-24, 25-30 in terms of Civic Participation, Economic Participation, and Social Inclusion?
12. What recommendations do you have in order to enhance Civic Participation, Economic Participation, and Social Inclusion of young people in Armenia?