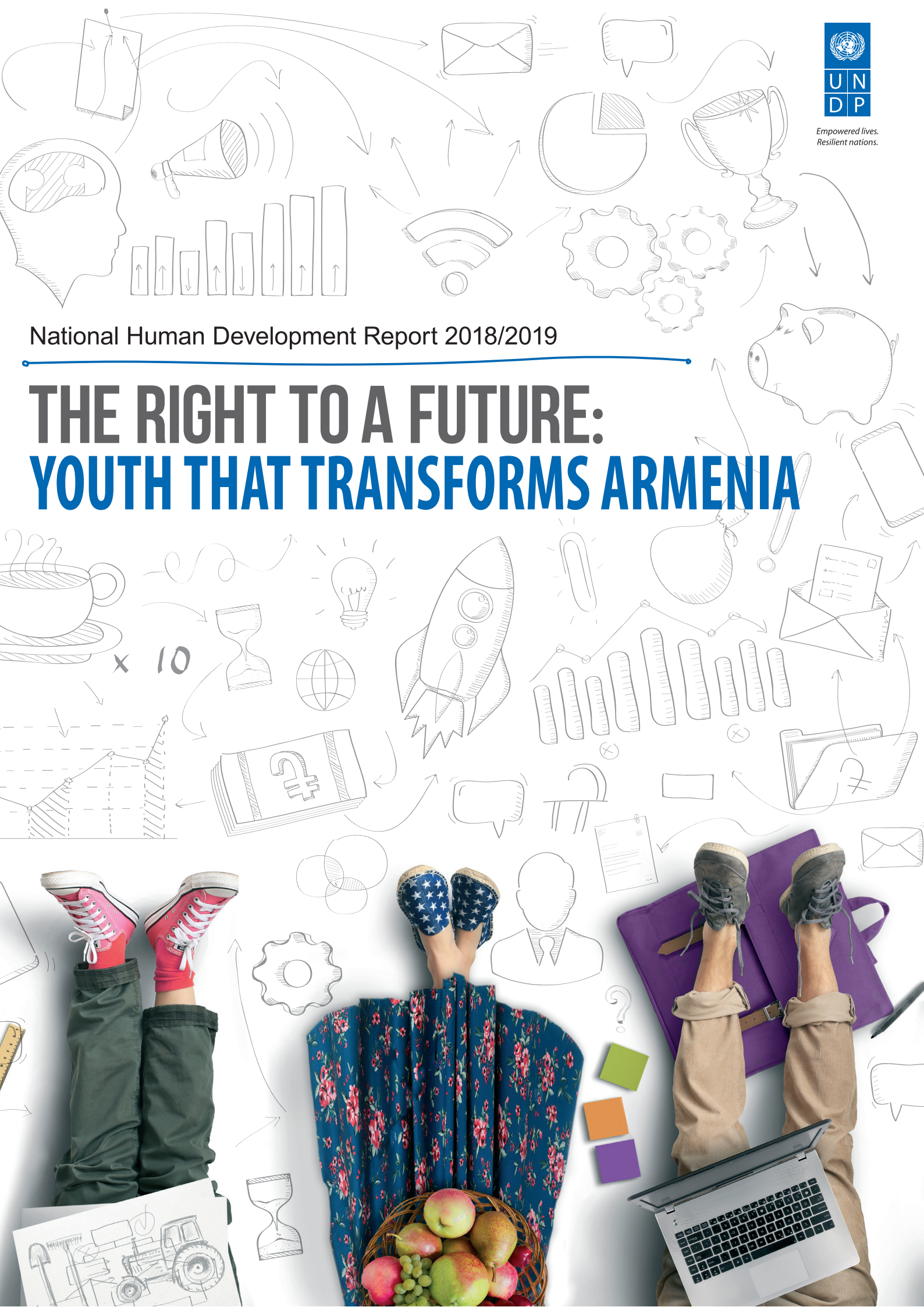


National Human Development Report 2018/2019

THE RIGHT TO A FUTURE: YOUTH THAT TRANSFORMS ARMENIA





Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

National Human Development Report 2018/2019

THE RIGHT TO A FUTURE: YOUTH THAT TRANSFORMS ARMENIA

NHDR 2018/19 TEAM

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Preface

The sustainable development of Armenia, its future for 2030 (the time line for UN's Sustainable Development Goals to which Armenia is signatory) and for 2050 (the time line for the Armenia Transformation Strategy now in the works) depends on how the energy, knowledge, skills and values of today's young people turn into action. Action is what is needed, and the government, the private sector and the civil society can do a lot to help. The report hopefully offers a glimpse into how this can be done.

Armenia's youth is as diverse as the country is and even more diverse with the amazing Diaspora youth living around the world. This diversity in lifestyles, values, outlook creates a unique opportunity but also a challenge - there is no "one size fits all" youth policy, as the report highlights, but there are many cues that the stories of the young people give as to how a flexible, government-wide youth policy might need to look like in the future, based on equal rights and opportunities.

As the global human development paradigm promoted by UNDP since the early 1990s shows, investment in education has the highest return on investments. Human development, including education as one of its key pillars, however, is often hampered by inequality. For Armenia, one of the key challenges is not just to design a new generation of education policy, curricula, materials - but to make sure the new "fit for purpose" education reaches all. From a top graduate of a top university in Yerevan to a part-time attendee of a vocational course to a primary school student in a rural school; from the booming IT start-up scene to young social care workers to young farmers living in border villages. Truly leaving no one behind.

A crucial area of focus for the report and for the follow-up to it, which we as UNDP plan, are the life skills for youth - life skills understood very broadly, including a huge potential for leadership, activism, self-organization (building on the transformative energy of the Velvet Revolution of 2018), community engagement but also more granular and core issues - such as tolerance, ability to solve conflicts, recognize and celebrate differences, work in teams, etc. Strong economy and strong society require strong life skills.

Finally, this Report itself, a partnership of several prominent researchers, has benefited from so many valuable inputs from the Government, civil society and international partners; it calls for more systemic partnerships that benefit Armenia's youth. At UNDP, we stand ready to work with the youth, individually and through civil society organizations at all levels, with the Government of Armenia and with the broad range of international partners to ensure a brighter future for the country.

Dmitry Mariyasin

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Thankful for all the support that they have received, the authors assume full responsibility for the opinions expressed in the Report.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGBU	Armenian General Benevolent Union
ANQA	The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
ARF	Armenian Revolutionary Federation
AVB	Armenian Volunteers Bank
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EU	European Union
GG	Gender Gap
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HBSC	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IHDI	Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	Prosperous Armenia Party
RA	Republic of Armenia
RPA	Republican Party of Armenia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNCO	State Non-Commercial Organization
STG	Sustainable Development Goals
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
YSI	Youth Studies Institute
YSU	Yerevan State University
U.S.	The United States
USA	The United States of America

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Executive Summary

“The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today’s younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations.”

2030 Agenda, Paragraph 53

In spite of the overall improvement in human development worldwide, humanity still faces serious challenges. A large number of people, including youth, experience various types of discrimination, high levels of poverty, and limited access to healthcare, education opportunities and decent jobs. This is also true for Armenia. In any debate on the future development of Armenia, the voice and participation of youth is of paramount importance. Youth is the future of the country, and their visions and views are essential to address challenges to come. While the Government of Armenia is designing a long-term vision for development, Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050, voices of youth can become a cornerstone of the future development path to be selected for the country.

During recent years, the Armenian youth assumed a pivotal role in a number of spheres. Young people took the lead in the non-violent Velvet Revolution in 2018 – overcoming years of political and civic apathy. Young people are re-shaping the future of Armenia’s IT sector with a new generation of emerging start-ups, initiated by both local and Diaspora Armenians. Young people are increasingly active at the grassroots level. Yet, there are numerous gaps – access to various opportunities, ability to utilise opportunities, and overall human development of Armenia’s young people remain highly uneven. This report – currently in a draft form – is an attempt to demonstrate why the above noted inequality is a major bottleneck on the country’s path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. It is an obstacle and a risk factor for Armenia’s sustainability, security and prosperity.

The sustainable development of Armenia depends on how the energy, knowledge, skills and values of today’s young people turn into action. Actions are necessary, and the Government, the private sector and the civil society can do a lot to help. Armenia’s youth is as diverse as the country is and even more diverse with the amazing Diaspora youth living around the world. This diversity in lifestyles, values and mentalities creates a unique opportunity but also poses a serious challenge: there cannot be a “one size fits all” youth policy, as the Report highlights. Instead, there are many cues that the stories of the young people give as to how a flexible, government-wide youth policy might need to look like in the future, based on equal rights and equal opportunities.

Education is key for the achievement of youth well-being. According to the global concept of human development promoted by UNDP since early 1990s, investments in education ensure the highest return on investments. Nevertheless, human development, including education as one of its key pillars, is often hampered by inequality. For Armenia, one of the key challenges is not just to design a new generation of education policy, curricula and materials, but also to make sure the new “fit for purpose” education reaches all. From a top graduate of a top university in Yerevan to a part-time attendee of a vocational course to a primary school student in a rural school, it has to be accessible for all. From employees in the booming IT start-up sector to young social care workers and young farmers living in border villages, everyone has to enjoy it. Truly leaving no one behind.

Life skills possessed by youth are a crucial area of focus for the Report and for the follow-up actions. Life skills should be perceived in rather broad sense, including the existing huge potential for leadership, activism, self-organization (building on the transformative energy of the 2018 Velvet Revolution), and community engagement. In addition, life skills have to encompass more granular and core issues, such as tolerance, ability to resolve conflicts, recognize and celebrate differences, work in teams, etc. Building an efficient economy and a strong society requires robust life skills.

That is the reason why the National Human Development Report 2018/2019 focuses on Armenia’s youth. The report covers key issues and problems pertinent to young people in the country, from youth policy to value orientation among youth, and from youth education and health care to the present and future challenges posed by the labour market.

The Report’s ultimate goal is to generate public debate and draw the attention of policy makers towards the issues described in the publication, as well as provide a set of recommendations on how to address the main challenges, ensure an inclusive and equitable development for Armenia’s future - its youth.

Finally, this Report itself, a partnership of several prominent researchers, has benefited from so many valuable inputs from the Government, civil society and international partners; it calls for more systemic partnerships

that benefit Armenia's youth. At UNDP, we stand ready to work with the youth, individually and through civil society organizations at all levels, with the Government of Armenia and with the broad range of international partners to ensure a brighter future for the country.

Chapter 1. Youth Policy Agenda

Box 1

Youth policy agenda - key recommendations

1. Youth policy needs to move from a “problem solving” perspective to a future-oriented perspective focused on youth rights and opportunities. It should also be based on an approach that equally supports the development and wellbeing of both young men and young women.
2. Youth policy is not a sectoral policy; it requires cross-sectoral solutions, with multiple state bodies involved. In fact, youth policy is the youth-related dimension of the overall Government strategy and program and of Armenia's plan to achieve the SDGs. Hence, each sectoral strategy and the nationalized SDG Agenda could benefit from the section, which analyses how it will affect young people.
3. Youth policy requires a very strong local and regional development perspective, with targeted approaches to the situation of rural youth (including the particular case of border villages) and youth living in disadvantaged urban settlements. In this context, migration and population decline are issues of key importance. Hence, youth policy, migration policy and diaspora engagement/ re-integration policy are closely interlinked.
4. Youth policy should be more than a document: it needs to form a basis for planning and implementing programs that support youth, with clear prioritization of youth-related results and activities in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and in the Government's partnerships with all international actors.
5. Finally, youth policy has to be developed with and by youth – in an inclusive co-design process. We offer this Report as a platform for such a co-design process, and commit to involve young people from all walks of life in expert and non-expert discussions to be conducted in the early months of year 2020.

This chapter covers issues related to **human development** and major challenges facing young people in the country. In particular, the Report begins with an overview of the human development indicators for Armenia and challenges facing the implementation of the principle of “*Human Development for Everyone*” among young people. The role of the Government, public policy institutions and civil society organizations in the area of human development and the problem of equal opportunities in terms of gender, territorial and social aspects are reviewed in this chapter. The principle of “Human Development for Everyone” is important especially from the viewpoint of overcoming inequalities emerging among different groups of young people based on their area of residence, gender and other characteristics. Overcoming the problems that persist in the area of human development is key for the youth since it hinges on emphasizing the importance of policy development on the basis of the principle of identification, development and realisation of the creative potential of young people. Addressing human development challenges is also an important prerequisite for the prevention of emigration of youth from Armenia. It is recommended that the concept of human development

The Report mainly considers the Armenian definition of youth as the young people of 16-30 age group (however, in some cases data for 15-29 age group are presented as the only available). This group consists of young people born in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, who are correspondingly called “Generation X” or digital migrants, “Generation Y” or digital natives, and “Generation Z” or the Facebook generation. These characteristics are also important for a complete interpretation of the concept of “youth.”

is adopted as one of the important principles for the development of policies by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

In the second section, the **definition of the term “youth”** is presented, along with an overview of international and local experience. In addition, this section covers the main approaches regulating public policy on youth in Armenia, the main relevant documents and actors. In general, the concept of “youth” is examined

from three viewpoints - a generation, a social group, and a stage of life. The combination of numerous theoretical approaches related to the definition of the term “youth” allows arriving to one general conclusion: “youth” is understood as the **shift from dependence to independence**. A group of scholars links the achievement of independence with the advancement of personal education, employment and career, while another group focuses on living separately from parents and utilizing opportunities for travel.

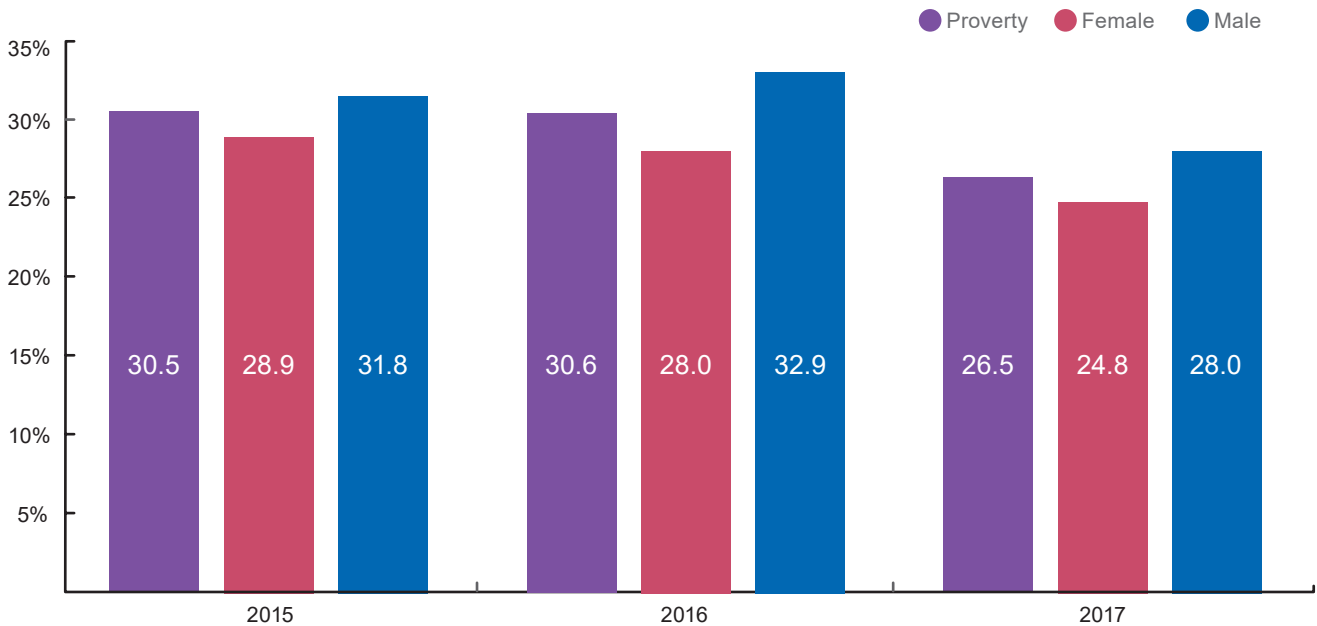
The Youth State Policy Concept of the Republic of Armenia for 2015-2025 is considered a fundamental document in the area of youth. As specified in the Government Programme (adopted in 2019), youth state policy is aimed at the creation of such environment where young people would be able to fully actualize their potential and build their own future. To date, the development of the youth state policy was based on the **needs** of young people through targeted sectoral research studies, while youth policy should not be based on needs only but also or rather on **rights**.

In general, the youth policy views young people in Armenia mainly as a problem, while in the modern approaches popular among young people, the philosophy of perceiving **youth as a resource and a potential is predominant**.

In 2019, as a result of structural changes in the Government of the Republic of Armenia, coordination of the youth area was transferred to the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS). The process of regulation of youth area in the framework of MESCS, i.e. what kind of a mission and functions the Ministry has to perform in relation to youth, what types of legal and operational bases have to be introduced, is still ongoing. Evidence-based and justified youth policy is also in the stage of elaboration.

In the framework of the state youth policy, it is necessary to develop and introduce new and effective mechanisms for interdepartmental cooperation.

Figure 1.1 Youth Poverty rate (age group of 15-29)



In this chapter, the prospects for the advancement of the youth labor concept are also presented. The Report proposes to develop new formats for youth-related programs aimed at the contemporary needs of today’s youth, **equal rights and opportunities**, as well as **expectations**. The Report also features an analysis of the demographic situation of young people in Armenia; the current demographic situation and problems affecting young people, challenges facing the state policy on youth addressing the above-mentioned problems, the main reasons of the increase in the rate of emigration among youth and possible ways of addressing the above are discussed.

¹ Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, RA Statistical Committee, 2016-2018

It is recommended to focus on three key directions of improvement of the demographic situation of young people in the country: **reduction and prevention of emigration of young people from Armenia; creation of conditions for the return and reintegration of young people who have already emigrated from Armenia; ensuring natural growth.**

Chapter 2. Youth Participation and Values from the Civil Society Perspective

Box 2.

Youth participation and values - recommendations

1. It is necessary to help young people transit from group-centred and clan values to human-centred and public values, as well as promote horizontal and humanitarian values in the youth sector, counter to authoritarian and hierarchic ones.
2. To enable this, young people in Armenia will benefit from many more collaborative spaces (both virtual and physical), projects that mix different social groups, where men and women work together, where rural and urban youth co-create, where an active and creative stance is rewarded.
3. It is necessary to create numerous self-realization possibilities for the youth in Armenia, with focus on promoting the start-up culture, in the tech sector and beyond. Social, environmental, educational start-ups could be a focus of a specially designed state support scheme.
4. Promoting civic activism and encouraging young people to form new and join existing civil society organizations should be encouraged. Civil activism – starting from school years – is a great skill and competency building experience – which makes young people better fit for the modern labor market.
5. It is essential to develop mechanisms for reducing the emigration rate of young people and create enabling conditions for immigration – with clear messaging on the value young people can bring to Armenia, with a strong focus on the sense of belonging, the contribution to community and the opportunity.

This chapter covers specificities of **value orientation** among youth, **forms of their coexistence**, and the correlation thereof with issues associated with the formation of a civil society. This chapter reviews the problem of **human-centered and group-centered, authoritarian and humanitarian, national and universal value orientations** and the impact those have on the formation of a civil society. Especially the authoritarian and group-centered value orientations play a negative role among youth, and one of the important tasks of youth-related policies is to necessarily transform these value orientations. An **integrated approach** is needed, which will be reflected in state policies on education, culture, social issues, territorial administration and local self-governance and on topics related to the public sector. The objective of dissemination of civic values among young people also has a paramount importance, and non-formal education has a key role to play in this respect.

Among the forms of **societal coexistence** that are pertinent to youth, compulsory-subordinate, conflict-based, competitive and collaborative forms are reviewed, as well as details that refer to the scope and significance of each of the coexistence forms. Among young people, it is important to overcome the conflict-based and compulsory forms in particular, and, in contrast, encouragement of competitive and collaborative forms of coexistence, which shape a more favourable environment for the fulfilment of the creative potential of young people. Teamwork is a key concept that Armenian society needs to prioritize for its youth to succeed. When people work together, it can unleash energy that boosts creativity, productivity, engagement, communication, and efficiency. People with diverse backgrounds working in teams are more creative and perform better by up to 35 percent ². The second section of this chapter covers issues related to civic, **cultural and political participation** of young people. It is recommended to reflect the needs of young people in sectoral policies and take into consideration the gender perspective.

² McKinsey & Company, “Diversity Matters”, 2015

In 2018, UNDP established “I AM the Community” youth club which unites 83 graduates (57 women and 26 men) of the “I AM the Community” community leadership camp. The objective of the club is to involve young people from the regions in processes of policy development. Members of the club were trained in the areas of local self-government in Armenia, direct democracy and gender equality through “I am the Community” camp as well as implemented small initiatives in their communities on participatory democracy and women’s engagement. The first solid recommendation package was prepared by the club members in April 2019 for amendments to the RA Law on Local Self-Government (LSG). In total 18 recommendations were proposed to the Government and National Assembly including minimum 30% gender neutral quota in LSGs.

In terms of forms of civic participation, it is important to promote **the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and civic initiatives**; in addition, the elaboration and implementation of policies referring to the issues of civic participation of young people is considered to be important. *Civic initiatives* are another format for involvement. These have been specifically youth-related since 2008. The key characteristics were the protection of public interests and the manifestation of protests against the public-sector actions of the government-supported system of oligarchy.

It is believed that some of those initiatives, especially the Mashtots Park protest and the one against the increase in public transport fare, subsequently shaped the protest models adopted by the Velvet Revolution, such as multi-centrism, peaceful and non-violent insubordination, horizontality in making decisions, transparency in involving participants, proactivity. Shaping the identity of an active, self-motivated, responsible young citizen became one of the most significant contributions of these initiatives.³

The participation of young people in the Velvet Revolution is noted and appreciated; the lessons learned are presented, and the issue of further promotion of the role of youth in civic movements and processes is emphasized. In this respect, on the one hand, is important to examine the role of young people during the revolution and lessons learned from that experience, and the impact of the revolution on transformations that occur among youth, on the other.

The replacement of mono-centrism with *multi-centrism* brought by the Velvet Revolution gave the most self-motivated young people an opportunity to launch centres for involvement in the political protests not only in Yerevan, but also in the most remote regions. *These characteristics of political involvement made it possible to transform the entire republic’s territory into a protest zone by emphasizing the importance of each of those centres.* It became possible to also involve the rural and regional youth in the political processes, which in itself was an unprecedented phenomenon in the light of the fact that those young people did not have to come to Yerevan in order to participate in the movement. The Velvet revolution also changed the age range of government representatives. The new government mostly consists of young individuals. This has resulted in significant changes in management culture. Transparency, accountability and availability have become priorities. The society-government gap has narrowed, which is an important indicator of a democratic society.

Another significant issue is the increasing role that **media** plays in young people’s lives and the perspectives of applying it as a new tool for the purpose of political and civic participation of youth. A separate section covers **volunteer work** and the issue of forming a culture that encourages volunteering. It is a new but increasingly evolving phenomenon among young people in Armenia. In this respect, it is important to enhance the level of appreciation of volunteer work in public consciousness, to expand the public discourse on this phenomenon and elaborate legislation to regulate this type of activities. The interest in volunteerism in Armenia is growing, but there are no regulations that aim at fostering and developing a culture of volunteerism. At the initiative of the National Assembly, UNDP in Armenia supports the process of the legislative framework of volunteerism development, and the new law will help in clarifying the status, rights and duties of a volunteer and volunteer organizations, clarifying powers of government and local government in working with volunteers, clarifying the content of the agreement with the volunteer etc. Moreover, the law will provide that voluntary organizations can adopt programs for the development of volunteerism, receive support from state and local authorities, inform citizens about opportunities to become volunteers, etc.

³ Ishkanian A. Self determined citizens? New forms of civic activism and citizenship in Armenia. Pp. 1221-1224.

The main recommendations of the second chapter focus on a **policy to encourage youth participation in governance and the development of mechanisms** for the implementation of such a policy. The Report recommends **making the increase in the level of involvement of young people's potential and their participation** in the areas of policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation one of the important objectives of the **activities of the new Armenian government**.

Chapter 3. Pillars of youth wellbeing: Education and health

Box 3

Pillars of youth wellbeing: Education and health – recommendations

1. The education paradigm is changing. Education must become more participatory and inclusive. Young people need to have a more active involvement in ensuring the quality of education. In the education system, young people should be viewed not only as the learning party, but also as the teaching party.
2. One of the most efficient ways to resolve the youth's educational and healthcare issues is to place emphasis on early-childhood development programmes.
3. Special attention should be paid at education for sustainable development –key values related to social cohesion, peace, caring for the environment, respect for diversity – need to be part of what children see and experience from early age.
4. Another priority is the development of healthcare education – young people need to be aware of the risks posed by unhealthy lifestyle and see healthy habits as trendy. Key focus is on healthy nutrition (at home and in school), avoiding smoking and preventing alcohol and drug abuse.
5. Promotion of principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men must be secured in all educational programs, didactical materials, career guidance of boys and girls as cross-cutting issue, with focus on personal and professional benefits.

This chapter discusses youth **education** and **health** related issues. In the years following Independence, the number of higher educational institutions as well as the number of students of higher educational institutions have radically increased while the quality of education still needs improvement. The three key challenges are elaborated in the section on education and addressing those challenges, as noted in the report, is crucial for today's youth.

The first challenge is that the educational process also happens outside the educational institutions. **Non-formal and informal** educational platforms have increasingly become the norm. Consequently, content-wise, educational policy should have a wider scope, beyond formal education. The second challenge is that in the face of crisis of ideas, **global uncertainty** has increased significantly with new trends and realities re-shaping the viable future outcomes for today's youth. However, the educational system continues to educate children for a certain world. To this effect, it becomes important to focus on development of such skills which would help the youth to be successful in the world that is full of uncertainty. Such skills include **flexibility, resilience, analytical and creative thinking** and so on. Further, several external factors are described which have an impact on education. It is particularly noted that nowadays life is becoming more and more dynamic, which leads to the development of negative attitudes among youth toward a slow-paced and long educational process.

This change also affects **communication media used in education**. Until quite recently, the education tended to focus on oral communication and printed materials while nowadays the challenge is to introduce new technologies in the educational process. Handling excessive information negatively affects the educational process as it causes attention deficit. Focused attention is central for effective management of the educational process. However, in this information age it has become extremely difficult to maintain concentration. Eventually a major challenge for the educational sector is to use **emotional learning practices**. People are emotional beings, therefore they tend to engage in emotional learning activities – this is especially true for learners of young age. In this context, a ra-

tionality-based educational process is not always effective. Research⁴ shows that when academic and emotional learning both become a part of schooling, students are more likely to remember and use what they are taught. They also incorporate into their education a sense of responsibility, caring, and concern for the well-being of others, as well as themselves. Learning thus can be said to touch both the ‘head’ and the ‘heart’ and the result is that education process is run better and students are more inspired. In this context, a rationality-based educational process is not always effective.

The **combination of learning, research and practical skills** is a preferred method to improve the quality of education for young people. Another model for improvement is to **foster proactive learning**. Exchange programs can significantly contribute to the improvement of level of education among youth. Young people should not only be learners but also educators. Thus, it is crucial to use a creative approach in the educational process and teach creativity. To this effect, the report looks at the “**Real school**” model,⁵ which is based on a secondary school curriculum. Students there build their desks and chairs, as well as create and test various technological devices. The closing section of the report highlights the current challenges adults face in Armenia, reflects on current issues in the field of non-formal and informal education as well as addresses the challenges in higher educational institutions demanding immediate solutions.

The section on youth health emphasizes **access to healthcare services**, elaborates on the issues related to a **healthy lifestyle and health education**. In terms of **access** to healthcare services, different practices are used in healthcare service delivery in urban and rural areas. Several studies also prove its validity. As such, in the framework of UNFPA program on “Strengthening sexual and reproductive health services”, in 2015 visits were made to several healthcare institutions jointly with the staff of Armenia’s Human Rights Defender’s office within “Public inquiry into enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights in Armenia.”⁶ The study showed urban-rural difference in view of healthcare service provision. As stated in the report, some services are not provided in rural areas; therefore, women have to visit the nearest town.

The report also briefly looks at the issue of a **healthy lifestyle and health education**. According to the data of the Armenian National Institute of Health, in the age group 15 and above, most common risk factors are tobacco use on a daily basis which constitutes 24 % of the overall population (50 %- male smokers, and 2,3%-female smokers), obesity and overweight -49%, physical inactivity - 17,5%, alcohol misuse - 8,2 % (male -15%). According to the “Prevention and Control of Non Communicable Diseases in Armenia- Investment case” commissioned jointly by WHO and UNDP in 2019, in 2016, 26 300 people died from NCDs while still in their prime productive years and, in 2017, NCDs cost Armenia’s economy 362.7 billion drams.

It is also important to consider the **environmental impact** on health. From the perspective of the impact of degraded ecosystems on population health (especially younger generation), Lori, Syunik and Yerevan face the biggest threats. In fact, ecological factors in Yerevan are multifaceted (the Nubarashen toxic waste dump, a source of solid organic pollutants; the city’s waste discharge locations; drainage system imperfections; active near-city and even in-city mining locations that fill the city’s air with dust; deforestation of hillsides; construction condensation in the downtown area, transport, etc.), while the key problem in Lori and Syunik lies in heavy-metal pollution of soil, water, air, food chain caused by mining industry products.

Among the main recommendations of the chapter are **strengthening of youth participation** in education, **linking teaching/learning, research and jobs**, recognizing the results of **nonformal and informal education**. The chapter prioritizes the need for conducting a **research on youth health situation**. Investment in **early childhood education and healthcare** with special focus on **health education** is suggested to be the most effective preventive measure to address the challenges.

4 Elias, Maurice J. Academic and Social-Emotional Learning. Educational Practices Series. International Bureau of Education, Geneva (Switzerland); International Academy of Education, Brussels (Belgium), 2003

5 Armenia’s Real School is currently in its test phase, implementing an intermediate vocational education programme.

6 The Report is accessible via the following link: http://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Public%20inquiry%20report_arm_0.pdf:

Chapter 4. Future: youth skills, jobs, entrepreneurship and beyond

Box 4

Youth skills, jobs, entrepreneurship and beyond - recommendations

1. The future of Armenia's Youth depends on whether it can today grasp and use the potential that new societal and technological shifts offer – globally and locally – including the impact of climate change, the new social interaction models, the advance of Artificial Intelligence, etc.
2. Armenia needs a Future Skills and Jobs agenda for Youth – focused on a 10-15 year horizon in which the labor market, the definition of professions, the role of human labor will evolve. Armenia needs to build a skills base for the future – leapfrogging, not catching up. This means making both higher and vocational education much more driven by the real needs of employers, understanding competitive niches for regions and industries and being ready to experiment. Young people should be in the lead of this movement – and the Work Armenia Programme launched by the Government provides an excellent foundation.
3. Taking into account the business sector's worldwide shift to a stronger social mission and the potential for using technology for good, the Government needs to invest into an ecosystem that promotes social impact investment, social entrepreneurship and decentralized innovation with an active pro-youth focus.
4. It is mandatory to develop and implement a special strategy that will make it possible to import the Diaspora's expert, intellectual and creative potential and use it for initiating youth-based development programmes on individual, community and national levels.
5. Finally, Young people are only as successful as their interaction with other generations is – inter-generational dialogue, active ways to work with the senior citizens, and a much bigger focus on life-long learning will be a key component of the success of Armenia's Youth.

The concluding chapter provides an analysis on three main thematic sections. It starts with an analysis of the challenges and opportunities in the area of **self-realization and self-actualization of the youth**. In particular, the first section discusses the transition to the **labour market** and **entrepreneurship**. The last decade has seen intensive developments in information and communications technologies as well as the computerization and automation of industry. These developments are leading to radical changes in the structure and logical basis of the labour market, which will particularly affect those young people that are currently in the education system and/or preparing to enter the workforce.

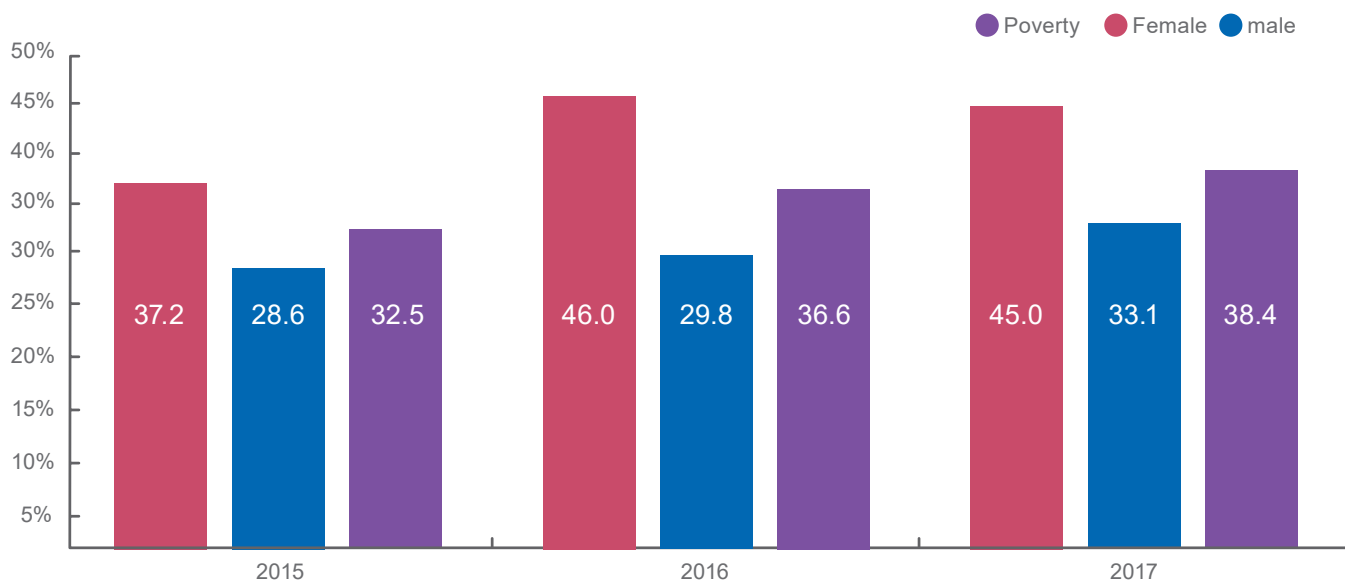
In 2008-2010, within the context of the global economic crisis, the topic of business' positive social impact began to gain prominence at a previously unprecedented pace. In those years, the business sector, national governments, and the international community all began to take systemic steps to encourage **social impact investment, social entrepreneurship** and **corporate social responsibility**. These concepts are still not gaining sufficient attention in the development of national programs and strategies. In particular, interesting opportunities are created at the crossroads of new platforms and technologies such as various crowdfunding outlets, blockchain technologies, which expand all over the world and fundamentally transform the financial market, the world of financial services, social entrepreneurship, AI-based technology and so on. By definition, young people are more prepared and open for these technologies requiring a new mentality. Yet, there will be no results if their preparedness remains at today's level and if no strategy-facilitating programmes aim at those targets.

UNDP Armenia's "Future Skills and Jobs" project suggests looking at opportunities of long-term future and equipping today's youth with skills, which will help them to utilize their full potential on the labor market of future. The methodology of skills technological foresight allows to model what kind of skills and jobs will be required in 5-10 years horizon, so that instead of catching up with the industry, the current educational system can be prepared to meet the future labor force demand.

UNDP ImpactAim is a unique platform supporting impact investment ecosystem development in Armenia - helping channel private sector action towards the SDGs. The Platform brings together multiple stakeholders, including investors, tech community, academia, the Government and Donor Organizations, to develop solutions for development challenges with sustainable and scalable business model behind.

Comprised of three pillars – the Accelerator, Impact Finance and Impact Measurement & Management, the platform uses a comprehensive approach to leverage collective intelligence and expertise and produce solutions for systemic change.

Figure 2.7 Youth Unemployment rate (15-24 age)



Young women are facing problems in their personal, family and social lives, as well as in the areas of education and the labour market. Economic activity rate is much higher among men than women: 70.7% of the male and 52.8% of the female population aged 15 to 75 are employed or seeking a job. In 2017 gender gap (GG) in activity rates of women and men is 25.3 percent. According to the official statistics, employed women, including young women, frequently occupy low-paid or low-level positions within the labour market. Youth initiatives and state programs must pay particular attention and make sure that the programs aiming to meet their everyday needs must be based on the principles of **human rights** and a **gender-transformative approach**, which must also be included in the strategies and programs relevant to this sector. These programs must emphasize a clear connection between prosperity and non-violence, non-discrimination and civic activeness, thus also demonstrating the advantages of gender equality in the personal and professional development of young men and women.

The second section contains an analysis of the resources and opportunities available in the country that would allow a more **inclusive application of youth potential**.

The main purpose of this section is to analyse the available resources and opportunities that have so far either been used ineffectively or not utilized by young people, their immediate surroundings and the global environment, as well as those present in youth support policies and programs. The revolutionary process of 2018 as well as several other examples clearly demonstrate that such resources exist and making these resources work could lead to radical changes in our society.

⁷ Labour Market in the Republic of Armenia, RA Statistical committee, 2016-2018

So far, the youth policy and programme sector did not cover all types of young people in Armenia. The main programmes were aimed at the so-called “organized” youth (those who, for one reason or another, were involved in student, social or political organizations), as well as those young people who communicated with them, yet their number was not great, either. Meanwhile, it is evident what a huge social, political, civic, cultural and economic potential is concealed in the youth segment that has remained unaffected. There are also **multiple groups with whom working has traditionally been considered impossible or difficult**, for one reason or another. These include the considerable segment of young people who do fixed-term military service in the national army. Another group consists of young mothers who are mostly left out of numerous social life areas during pregnancy and several postnatal years. One more group consists of young people who are regularly involved in labour migration processes, particularly those living in the regions.

The analysis shows, however, that a large part of these resources is **unfortunately still not visible** during the process of policy and program development or is applied to only a minimal extent of the available potential.

The situation with **Armenia-Diaspora relations** needs considerable improvements as well. The classic mistake that is often made is treating the Diaspora as a charity and investment source, whereas the Diaspora’s expert, intellectual and creative potential could play a far more important role in Armenia’s development. Joint ventures (and social enterprises) between young people of Armenia and the Diaspora could produce serious economic and social results. Another resource to consider would be the Diaspora’s intercultural potential, which could play a great role in the cooperation processes of Armenia in international arena, intercultural dialogues and global integration.

The final section of the 4th chapter analyses **the range of challenges** that Armenian youth face currently due to rapid changes in all the systems (political, cultural, economic, etc.), that might cause serious damage if not addressed properly, but carry also a huge development potential for the country if youth policies and programs would take them into consideration.

One of the most important issues that needs to be taken into the consideration is the **issue of narratives that guide young people in their navigation through the life and shape policies and programs forming their vectors of development**. The past few decades have been outlining certain declared priorities in the youth policy and programme sector, such as, for instance, a “patriotic upbringing”, “healthy lifestyle”, “youth participation” (which in similar fashion are outlined in almost every other post-Soviet states). But research shows that the content component and methodical basis of these are not equivalent at all, and even the same policy implementers sometimes find it unclear as to what the idea is and how it is supposed to be implemented.

One of the solutions might be the creation of **independent strategic thinking and planning platforms, since** youth research and program development are considered important, as is the development and application of long-term strategic milestones (over a period of at least 25-50 years). This section also discusses raising the level of responsibility of youth in Armenia when it comes to addressing global issues, and the need for developing the required skills and motivation to facilitate their participation in these efforts.

For example, finding solutions to such global issues as the climate change, pollution of oceans or other environmental hazards, the planet’s social polarization and other same-scale problems can be impossible on a local or national level.

The final set of challenges explored are the ones related to the **rapid growth of information and communication technologies** in the past few decades that has placed youth in a situation which is characterized by unique possibilities and challenges that need to be analyzed and integrated into planning, implementing and evaluating processes of public policies, programmes and strategies. This issue is especially important due to the fact that Armenia’s strategic documents on youth policy (the RA Youth State Policy Concept, the RA Youth State Policy Strategy and other sector-related documents) hardly address this sector, despite its high-level importance and system-shaping impact.

This chapter also presents a series of Armenian **success stories – which are provided below**, and the experience of these individuals and communities has proven that solutions for certain problems have already been found and proved to be realistic.

Introduction

The role of young people has increased significantly in the modern world. A considerable portion of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the 169 targets associated with the SDGs, as adopted in 2015 is directly related to young people. It is no coincidence that 15-year-old Swede schoolgirl Greta Thunberg began an unprecedented youth movement on Goal 13 of the SDGs – climate action. More than 100 thousand young people from around the world have joined this movement and, under the slogan “Fridays for Future” have undertaken various initiatives on Fridays, demanding that meaningful action be taken to resolve the Climate Crisis.

While young people used to predominantly be students and newcomers to the labour force in the past, today they are the leaders and participants of civic initiatives and movements. They are actively involved in politics, occupying high-level positions in the state, private, and social sectors. Young people in Armenia today have great opportunities for self-realization in all areas. Many of them study in the best schools and universities of the world, participate in international programs, and are involved in various platforms for non-formal education. With the advancement of technology, young people mature much more quickly, and they have greater opportunities for developing their knowledge and skills, which makes them a vital force in society.

The culture of civic movements and initiatives has developed in Armenia thanks particularly to young people. The youth played a critical role during the Velvet Revolution that took place in Armenia in 2018.

Nevertheless, young people in Armenia have several problems. The quality of education and healthcare services continues to remain low. Young people living in rural areas in particular are deprived of the opportunity to receive quality services. Most young people migrate from villages and small towns due to a lack of employment opportunities. A decrease in the number of young people can be seen in Armenian villages and small towns, which is a threat to the development potential of those places.

In some groups of young people, there continues to be a dominance of unacceptable value systems. In addition, because the values of peer groups are often more influential than educational programs, many young people fail when it comes to education, ending up as the bearers of a passive, consumer culture.

Considering the fact that many low-skilled jobs will be automatized as technology keeps developing, this passive and indifferent attitude by young people can affect their quality of life negatively.

Effective intergenerational communication and collaboration can have a great impact on improving the state of young people. In a world that is developing dynamically, there are often incompatibilities between the value systems and worldviews held by different generations. A reasonable solution to these differences can facilitate Armenia’s development, because the existence of varying views is one of the most important prerequisites for growth.

Report methodology

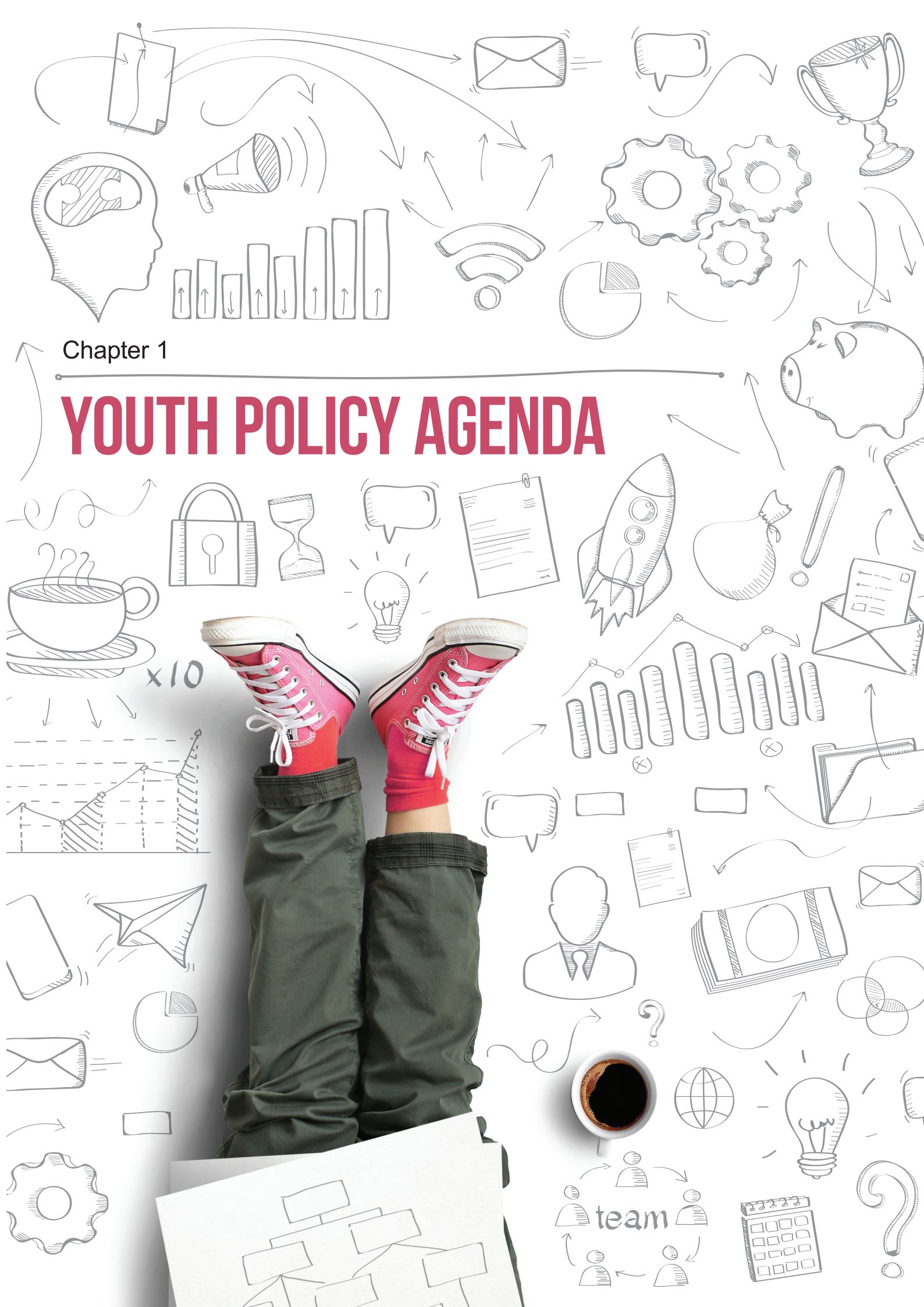
The report was developed in a participatory manner. Apart from the analysis based on a desk review of existing information available on youth (surveys, researches, reports, etc.), discussions and focus groups were organized with young people, as well as the representatives of youth organizations and international organizations. Expert interviews were also conducted with specialists in the field. Separate discussions were held with state bodies responsible for the youth sector. The authors of the report also went to the regions. Discussions in the regions were held with representatives of youth organizations, and successful programs were observed. A discussion was also organized with representatives of UN bodies in Armenia. A total of eight focus group discussions were held with approximately 60 young people⁸ and youth professionals. About 25 expert interviews have been conducted. Overall, 55% of people in focus group discussions and expert interviews are women and 45% are men.

The data used in the report was mainly provided by the National Statistics Committee and other state agencies.

⁸ This report refers to “youth” as young people of 16-30 age

Chapter 1

YOUTH POLICY AGENDA



1.1 Youth-related human development issues

Human development for every individual

Setting the *expansion of human opportunities and freedoms* as the primary objective is the principal idea behind the concept of human development. This means that development must result in healthy and long life span of human beings, as well as formation and ongoing expansion of an environment that conduces to creativity.⁹

The major issue of discovering, developing and realizing one's own potential has been at the core of principal challenges faced by the youth. The Velvet Revolution has demonstrated what incredible results can be achieved with the provision of favourable conditions for the realization of youth potential. It is no coincidence that during his online press conference on Facebook on 23 September 2019, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres described the Armenian Velvet Revolution as an incredible democratic event of peaceful handover of power implemented by the youth.¹⁰

Previously, the Government did not consider the issue of human development as a priority. This resulted in a large percentage of youth facing a rather serious state of apathy. According to a 2016 poll, 43.6% of the surveyed youth did not believe they could lead to any changes in the existing situation.¹¹ Fortunately, the Velvet Revolution raised young people's confidence in their own role. According to the UNDP Global Human Development Report 2016, human development is considered to be of key importance not only at the national, but also at the individual level.¹² This approach suggests that, *apart from the mere provision of economic growth, the goal of the Government programme should be to direct that growth toward the individual development and welfare of each citizen of Armenia. In this respect, it is very promising to see that the new RA Government highlights the importance of inclusive growth of the economy.*

The role and immediate objectives of civil society institutions

From the human development perspective, generating a favourable environment for the development and realization of youth potential is the primary task of civil society organizations. To carry that out, it is methodologically important to adopt the Velvet Revolution's main principle. Namely, young persons should not be viewed as an object, but rather as the subject of the implemented programmes.

Targeting and involving the so-called "disorganized" youth is another important issue. Actually, the unprecedented case of discovering and incorporating the youth's potential served as the decisive factor that ensured the success of the Velvet Revolution.

Promotion of public discourses and practices aimed at the formation of a *system of civic values* shall be one of the key roles to be played by civil society organizations. In this respect, apart from communicating knowledge, it is also essential to create exemplary precedents.

In human development, *formation of a set of human-centred values is fundamental*. The achievement of this objective is related to the study of liberal arts and social sciences, which can become one of the targets for CSO-implemented lifelong education and adult education programmes, alongside the general education system. According to the 2018 Statistical Update of Human Development Indices and Indicators for Armenia, there are substantial inequalities related to human development in Armenia. According to the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, Armenia is classified as one of the countries with midrange inequality.¹³ The 2017 female HDI value for Armenia was 0.740 in contrast with 0.764 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.969, placing the country into Group 2.¹⁴ In 2017, Armenia had a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.262, ranking it 55th out of 160 countries.¹⁵

⁹ For detailed information on the human development index data, see: Human Development Indices and Indicators: Statistical update. Armenia. Available: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/ARM.pdf

¹⁰ UN Secretary General Calls Armenian Revolution "A Fantastic Example". Available at: <https://www.civilnet.am/news/2018/09/24/UN-Secretary-General-Calls-Armenian-Revolution-%E2%80%9CA-Fantastic-Example%E2%80%9D/345445>. 23 September, 2018

¹¹ Mkrtchyan A., Vermishyan H., Balasanyan H., Independence Generation: Research on Youth, Yerevan, YSU Publishing, 2016, p. 60.

¹² Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone. New York: UNDP 2016. Pp. 1-10.

¹³ See more detailed information on this in Annex II: Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update, pp. 3-4

¹⁴ Ibid 5

¹⁵ Ibid 5

Inequalities are prevalent in many aspects of life, such as property, across provinces, village/town, education, healthcare, etc. The localized adoption of the human development for everyone principle is of major importance.

The issue of youth involvement in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015 were also adopted by Armenia as a guidance for the country's development. These goals are scheduled to be implemented by 2030. Plans are underway to integrate the SDGs into Armenia's development strategies and programmes, as well as to elaborate an action plan. Although the SDG nationalization process in Armenia is yet to be completed, it is well underway, and the RA Government has been treating it as an issue of immediate priority.¹⁶ Successful implementation of the SDGs will largely depend upon their integration into strategic, short-term and mid-term development programmes.¹⁷ It is important to view the youth's specific role in the process of implementation and nationalization of SDGs as a great potential for innovation.

1.2 Youth policy in Armenia

1.2.1 Definition of “youth” in national youth policy

The popularity of the very notion of “youth” began to grow from the 18th century. There exist various youth-related perceptions and definitions that are different from how young people see themselves.¹⁸ In the 20th century, adolescents and young people became more visible as a specific group due to a number of processes including educational reforms, regulations of work and employment conditions, reorganization of the juvenile justice system, and recognition of entertainment as a specific type of youth activities and experience. International experience indicates that today age is a prevailing factor in defining the term “youth.” For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines “youth” as representatives of the 15-24 age group. The European Union often uses the 15-29 age classification when referring to youth. The 16-30 age group consists of young people born in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, who are correspondingly called “Generation X” or digital migrants, “Generation Y” or digital natives, and “Generation Z” or the Facebook generation. These characteristics are also important for a complete interpretation of the concept of youth.

A combination of various theoretical approaches allows for the following generalization in relation to the concept of youth: youth is viewed as the **transition from dependence to independence**.¹⁹ Some theorists link gaining independence to the expansion of education, employment opportunities and careers, while others relate it to travel opportunities and living separately from one's parents.

In the Armenian reality, the RA State Youth Policy concept paper defines “youth” as follows:

*Young person: a 16-30 (inclusive) year-old citizen of the Republic of Armenia, as well as 16-30 (inclusive) year-old foreign citizens residing in Armenia and having residence permits (residency status), persons with no citizenship and those with refugee status in the Republic of Armenia (in case of appropriate grounds established by the law).*²⁰

There is a certain discrepancy in the definitions of “young people” and “children.” According to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which Armenia also ratified, defines persons in the 0-18 age group as children. Hence, those in the 16-18 age group are viewed both as children and young people, which causes contradictions and discrepancies during data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation, as well as when setting target audiences for state policies. Generally, a unified definition of youth age is important for youth-related statistical data collection. In their official publications, however, the RA Statistical Committee presents youth-related data based on the following age categories: 16-19, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34, while research pa-

¹⁶ SDG implementation: Voluntary national review. Armenia. Yerevan: UNDP 2018, p. 5.

¹⁷ As above

¹⁸ Mannheim K., (1952) The Problem of Generations, in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1st ed. 1927).

¹⁹ Cieslik M., Simpson D., Key Concepts in Youth Studies, Sage Publications Ltd, 2013.

²⁰ Republic of Armenia Youth State Policy Concept Paper, Protocol Decision No.54 of the RA Government (approved on 25 December 2014).

1.2.3 Key approaches to and priorities of youth policy

There is a gap between the RA state policy and everyday realities of young people in Armenia. The following question is constantly relevant: to what extent does a young person get involved in the development and implementation of the state youth policy today? To what extent does a young person relate to or benefit from the youth policy? Previously, as well as now, opinions were divided. One group thinks the state youth policy is developed and implemented with the involvement of a very limited group of active, well-informed, urban young people with university education. The other group believes that the youth policy attempts to reach out to all of the youth groups including rural youth, young persons with disability, economically inactive youth, and disorganised youth, among others. Being more informed about the current processes related to the youth policy, active young people regularly get involved, while uninformed young people are continuously left out of those processes.

The level of young people's interest in civic processes and political life in Armenia has currently risen. After the Velvet Revolution, no large-scale research studies have been conducted among youth yet. Nevertheless, discussions with the sector representatives and interviews with young people conducted within the scope of this report preparation have demonstrated that young women and men wish to be informed and take part in decision-making processes affecting them. Moreover, they are ready to take action for that purpose.

In the past, we knew that if an issue voiced by us is not addressed, we are unable to do anything; whereas now it feels like we have this invisible badge (i.e. a special permit) to go all the way forward till we find a solution!

A quote from a group discussion of young activists, Vanadzor, May 2018

Until recently, the development of the state youth policy was based on young people's **needs** identified through sector-specific research studies. According to the results of the monitoring and evaluation of 2013-2017 Strategy of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia conducted by Youth Studies Institute demonstrated that not all the needs and rights of young people were addressed by the Strategy. However, if we view the process of development of the youth-oriented state policy within the framework of the human development concept, then the youth policy must be based not on or not only on needs but also on **rights**. According to the human development concept, the development of a given society is the expansion of substantive rights and freedoms of the members of the society.²¹

Within this context, young people in Armenia mostly do not live in freedom, which points to the necessity of a rights-based youth policy.²² From the viewpoint of human development, it is important to ensure the enjoyment of these freedoms and a policy that is aimed at youth, as a factor contributing to the development of human capital. Sector-oriented research studies indicate that Armenia's youth policy does not embrace international concepts related to human rights, nor does it incorporate regional directives aimed at creating a future that is based on human rights. None of the 2013-2017 Strategy's five key priorities and respective action plans is focused on the fulfilment of any specific human rights framework or on securing the rights of vulnerable youth groups.²³

2013-2017 Youth Strategy's five key priorities are as follows:²⁴

- Priority 1.** Promotion of youth participation in political, economic and cultural life
- Priority 2.** Youth employment and socio-economic issues
- Priority 3.** Promotion of healthy lifestyle among the youth
- Priority 4.** Development of youth spiritual and cultural values and militaristic-patriotic upbringing
- Priority 5.** Sustainability of education and recognition of non-formal education

State support should be targeted specifically toward young people who are not included. The inclusion of these groups is hampered by stereotypical perceptions and lack of specific and targeted interventions.²⁵

Overall, the youth policy in Armenia sees young people mostly as a problem, whereas youth-focused contem-

²¹ Development as Freedom, Sen, A., Published by Anchor, 2000.

²² http://publishing.yasu.am/files/Metsahasakneri_krtutyun.pdf, p. 114.

²³ A needs assessment and development of strategic directions for UNICEF Armenia engagement in the youth area Alex Farrow, Cristina Bacalso & Ani Hao, 2016.

²⁴ <http://www.erit.am/media/2016/06/1982.pdf>.

²⁵ RA Youth State Policy's 2013-2017 strategy monitoring and evaluation report, Youth Studies Institute, Yerevan, 2018

porary approaches are based on the premise of treating the youth as a resource and as a potential.

The youth-related part of the 2019 Government Programme²⁶ is presented rather succinctly. It is also worth mentioning that the development of that part of the Programme has not been conducted through a participatory process. The Programme only emphasizes the enhancement of young people's social, political, civic, socio-economic and cultural involvement as one of the Programme objectives.



Box 1.1

Hranush Shahnazaryan

32 years old, Personal Development Trainer

I started working with youth in 2005. I was studying at Yerevan Brusov University, in the Department of French Language and Pedagogy. I had a great love for the French language and culture. Through my studies, I became interested in other cultures as well, especially in how people in other cultures lived their everyday lives.

One day, I found an announcement for a course related to European youth programmes to be conducted in Tsakhkadzor. The course description immediately sparked an interest in me because I wanted to learn more about topics that were not taught at my University. I applied immediately. I remember how excited I was when, during the course, I found out that I could travel and study at the same time – it was as if a new world had opened up for me. The only thing that was lacking was a good knowledge of English. I worked hard and substantially improved my English over a few months. When I finished the English class, my first international project soon followed. I left for France to take part in a course on democracy. It was an indescribable feeling to be in the country whose language and culture I had studied for so long. The training was also fantastic. Since I love diversity and learning from other cultures, one of the most enriching experiences was to see people looking at the same issues from so many different perspectives. I decided that I would specialize in intercultural communications once I returned home from France. When I returned to Armenia, I joined one of the most active organizations engaged in the study of intercultural communication - Loesje Armenia. I was in the centre of everything that interested me. Later, many other international and local educational programmes were launched in Armenia and other European countries. I then went to Berlin for a year as part of the European Volunteering Program. After Berlin, I moved to Budapest for another year to work in another youth organization. Those two years had the biggest impact on my life. Living on my own, I learned a lot about myself and, of course, about other cultures. The next move was to Strasbourg, where I was the first person from Armenia to be elected as a member of the Council of Europe Youth Advisory Council. For two years, as part of the Council, I had an equal voice in the development and approval of youth policies for all member states. It was there that I gained tremendous knowledge and experience on youth policies and programmes while working with the best experts. During that period, I conducted many training classes on intercultural communication and human rights.

During my school years, I was also interested in studying psychology and self-development. Now, as a life coach, I lead many local and international self-development projects on an individual and group level. I can write about this topic for hours.

I believe that life is beautiful with its complications and when we know ourselves, we can create our lives in a more magnificent and impactful way. It is thanks to this conviction that Loesje now has more programmes focused on self-development. Loesje is a branch of the International Youth NGO founded in Armenia in 2012. We currently run international and local educational programmes, as well as the Self-Development Summer School. This year, more than a hundred European youth, and just as many Armenian young people have participated in our programmes.

²⁶ <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3133.pdf>

1.2.4 Key players in the youth sector

Since 2007, the RA Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs has been the authorised body coordinating the state youth policy. Before that, the sector was coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs. Within the framework of the 2019 RA Government structural reforms, youth sector coordination has been transferred to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Nevertheless, there has not been any certainty regarding the sector coordination within the structure of the Ministry: this refers to the mission of the Ministry, functions to be performed, legal and operational grounds to be established.

There is no clarity in terms of evidence-based youth policy, either. Until 2019, research and surveys conducted by the Youth Studies Institute served as the basis for youth policy development. On 10 January 2019, however, with a Government decree the Youth Events Holding Center state non-commercial organization (SNCO) was dissolved, terminating the Youth Studies Institute that operated within the structure of the SNCO. Actually, the dissolution of the Institute has put evidence-based youth policymaking in Armenia under threat, since no equivalent institution or mechanism was established since then.

Overall, no broad and participatory discussions or debates have taken place as to what the youth policy in Armenia is supposed to be like. The professional community perceived the occurred changes as an “open window” and anticipated serious expert discussions concerning the sector. A limited number of professional discussions set forth a few scenarios that need to be widely and publicly discussed until the Government comes up with a decision on the regulation of the youth sector. Sector representatives emphasize the importance of the sector regulation at a ministry level – something that, to a certain extent, could have both a symbolic and a functional significance. The existence of a sector-regulating authority has a symbolic meaning, since it implies that the Government considers the sector a primary concern and priority. The functional meaning implies that the sector-regulating state authority is needed for the development of a youth-related vision, a long-term strategy, scenarios to address challenges, and an evidence-based and inclusive youth policy.

Generally, all over the world, there is an ongoing discourse on the issue of specifying a state institution to be responsible for youth policy.

Table 1.1 Youth sector regulation in different countries²⁷

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs	Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	Czech Republic, Slovakia
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Moldova
Ministry of Social Affairs	Liechtenstein
Ministry of Children and Equality	Norway
Department of youth affairs as part of the following ministries	
Ministry of Education	Belarus
Ministry of Education and Science	Sweden, Latvia
Ministry of Social Security and Labour	Lithuania
Ministry of Education and Culture	Finland
Ministry of Healthcare, Welfare and Sport, Ministry of Justice and Security	Netherlands
Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy	Croatia

²⁷ Insights into youth policy governance, Council of Europe and European Commission, November, 2018, page 11

Table 1.1 shows a variety of state authorities regulating the youth sector in the world today, depending on what priorities, strategic directions, needs, and rights are outlined as important in a given country during that specific period. In this respect, entrusting youth sector regulation in Armenia to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport entails both advantages and risks. For years, there has been a serious discrepancy between the youth policy and the education policy, despite the fact that both policies tackle largely the same group. In addition, a gap also exists between formal and informal education. On the other hand, an opportunity emerges to address those gaps, but only if risks are eliminated or properly managed. Otherwise, youth-related issues may become underrated in contrast to education-related issues and get lost in the whirlpool of numerous problems to be tackled by the education policy.

Cross-sectoral cooperation is rather weak in the youth sector, and a fragmented approach is predominant. For instance, in past, there was cooperation between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs within the framework of programmes aimed at supporting soldiers. Among other examples, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have signed a memorandum concerning the registry of cases of violence against children; the Ministry of Diaspora and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs have continuously cooperated through projects aimed at Diaspora children and youth. However, there was no systematic approach in the cross-sectoral cooperation in past. It needs to be noted that there is an ongoing cooperation across ministries, which is implemented in accordance with a procedure established by the RA Government and is aimed at the provision of social assistance; nevertheless, this cooperation does not specifically target the youth.²⁸

The Youth Council adjunct to the RA Prime Minister used to serve as the mechanism for youth-related cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as for collaboration between NGOs and state authorities. The last meeting of the Youth Council took place on 19 December 2012. Up to date, the Council has served as an unprecedented platform for discussing youth-related strategic issues and making decisions, thus being a model mechanism for cross-sectoral cooperation and NGOs - State joint coordination. The Government ensured that representatives from all the ministries (at the level of deputy ministers) participated in the Council meetings, which enabled the Council to act as a cross-sectoral representative authority in making youth-related decisions.

There have been positive trends towards cross-sectoral (inter-ministerial) cooperation, alongside the formation of the new government. Ministries of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Labour and Social Affairs, and Healthcare directly and actively participate in practical discussions on the development of an inclusive education system. The process of development of cross-sectoral youth policy has not been moving forward at full speed, which makes it difficult to present the overall picture as fully as possible.

International donor organizations also play an active role in the youth sector, either by directly implementing projects, or by providing youth NGOs with grants.

From the financial sustainability perspective, youth NGOs are rather vulnerable, despite all the existing funding options: through the State (including an online system of grants) and various international open announcements. Besides this, sector representatives constantly express their concerns about the NGO sector's dependence on the international donor community.²⁹

NGOs also play a major role in the youth sector. Currently, Armenia has about 400 active youth NGOs, 19% of which deal with youth issues, 15% tackle human rights problems, and so on.

²⁸ The RA Government's decision on regulating cross-sectoral social cooperation, <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=112629>. [20.08.2018].

²⁹ Mapping of youth organizations and evaluation of effectivity of state-funded youth grant programmes, Youth Studies Institute, Yerevan, 2014.

Box 1.2**The overview of youth policy regulation in Armenia**

Before the structural reforms in the government, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs coordinated the youth sector in Armenia. The Ministry was responsible for youth policy development, implementation regulations, and cooperation. The Ministry authorized Youth Event Holding Centre SNCO to function as the only institution implementing youth-related programmes. The Youth Studies Institute also existed as part of the SNCO; it carried out youth-related professional studies that served as the basis for youth policymaking. The RA government decree dated 10 January 2019 disbanded the Youth Events Holding Centre SNCO. The disbandment initiative had been launched back in October 2018, with the only reason given for it was based on state funding. The cost of maintaining this unit was around 27 million AMD annually. Discussions on the disbandment voiced the concern that the youth sector and the youth, in general, were being neglected; youth sector representatives saw the dissolution of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs as confirmation of that.

When the Ministry was dissolved, all the previously accumulated knowledge and experiences, financial investments, and efforts were lost. For five years, the Youth Studies Institute was founded and developed because of the efforts and investments of state, social, and international organizations. Its disbandment led to the irretrievable loss of those endeavours.

Before Youth Events Holding Centre SNCO was formed in 2011, the Youth Events Organization Centre SNCO had been disbanded in 2009; the establishment of the latter had also taken years of efforts.

The youth policy sector has had a sad tradition of fractional, short-term approaches, as well as of the loss of human, financial, and institutional endeavours.

It is also important to mention that sector representatives expected the new government to focus more on the youth. They expected more youth focus because of the unprecedented youth involvement in the velvet revolution and the number of young officials in the new government. However, sadly, the government's lack of action has seemed to confirm that the youth sector is not a major direction, nor is it a priority.

1.2.5 Overview of youth studies

The development of the youth policy in Armenia is based on sector-specific research. Since the adoption of 2013-2017 Youth Strategy in Armenia, youth-related studies have been carried out and have served as the basis for developing the state policy for the sector development.³¹ In 2016-2017, the 2013-2017 Youth Strategy monitoring and evaluation served as the basis for the development of the draft 2018-2022 Strategy of the State Youth Policy.

From 2013 to April 2019, the Youth Studies Institute was operational; the statutory goal of the Institute exactly was to carry out youth-related studies in support of evidence-based youth policy development. An advisory body, the Council, which consisted of representatives of state bodies and the NGO sector, as well as representatives of the local research community, coordinated the Institute.

³¹ Report: Aspirations and Expectations of Armenian Youth, UNDP, 2012.

Box 1.3**Youth Studies Institute: a mechanism for evidence-based youth policy**

In 2013, the collaboration between UNDP and the RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs resulted in the formation of the Youth Studies Institute. The research conducted by the Institute became the basis for the development of several youth policy documents.

- In 2013-2018, the Youth Studies Institute conducted the following research studies:
- The issues of youth employment in the Republic of Armenia
- Study of labour market demand: the prospects for institutionalization of cooperation among employers, young persons and educational institutions
- Mapping of youth organizations and evaluation of the effectiveness of state-funded youth grant programmes
- Research on youth work and youth worker: Current state of youth work and perspectives of its development.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the 2013-2017 Strategy of RA State Youth Policy
- Youth potential and development prospects in the creative economy
- The potential for and development perspectives of youth employment in a creative economy

1.2.6 Youth programmes, organizations and youth labour

As has been mentioned above, around 400 youth NGOs operate in Armenia, 19% of which deal with youth issues, while 15% tackle human rights problems, and so on.

Within their sectors, the organizations carry out activities related to education, advocacy, awareness raising, offer social support and humanitarian aid, as well as provide scientific, research and professional services.

Frequently used practical tools include workshops, seminars, discussion meetings and conferences. Numerous organizations (47% of the surveyed entities) offer advisory services in different areas. In addition, cultural and sports events were also frequently mentioned.³² There are fewer organizations that offer information services or engage in research and analytical activities.

Box 1.4**Gyumri Youth Situation Analysis: An example of local youth policy**

In 2014, Gyumri's Youth Initiatives Centre NGO, along with the Gyumri Youth Council informal expert association, launched the Gyumri Youth Policy Development programme. As a result, Armenia saw the first comprehensive and in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis of the condition of the youth in the community. In 2015, the Armenian and English printable and online versions of the research report were published (<http://yic.am/geiv-zekuyc/>).

In 2016, for the first time in Armenia, three documents were produced based on the research results, conclusions, and proposals, regulate the sector at the community level.

These reports, the 2017-2026 Gyumri Community Youth Policy concept paper, 2017-2021 strategy, and action projects were sent to the local self-government body. They were included in the Gyumri Community 5-year Development Programme for 2017-2021.

The research report became the basis for creating and operating a new type of community establishment in 2017. For the first time in Armenia, The House of the Youth centre was opened and operated based on the open youth labour model.

Youth Initiatives Centre NGO, Gyumri

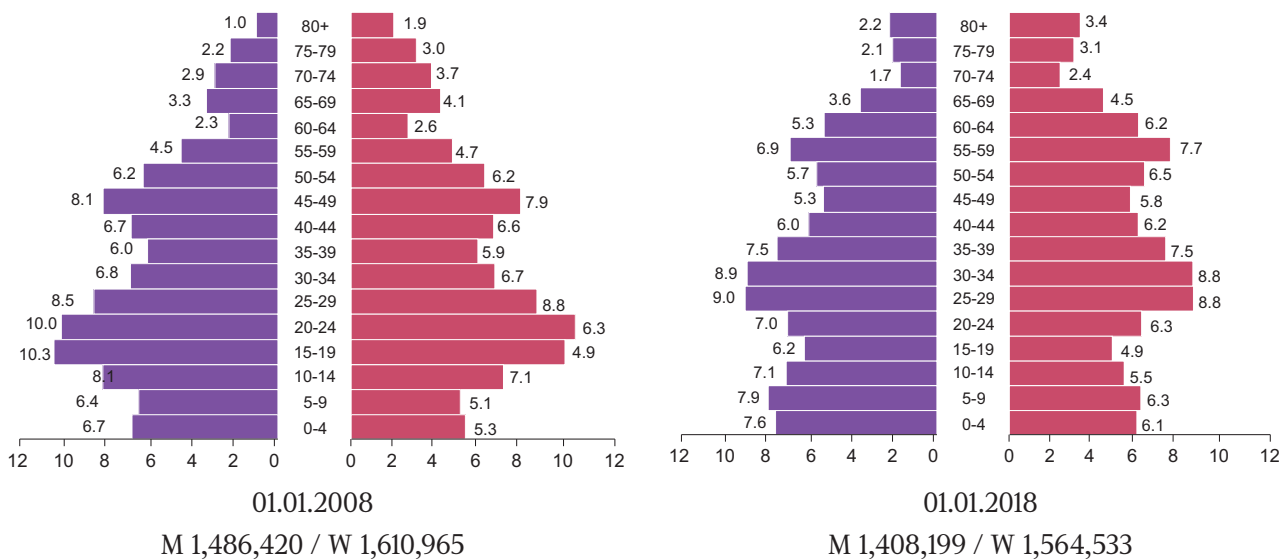
³² Mapping of youth organizations and evaluation of the effectiveness of state-funded youth grant programmes

As noted above, nowadays various institutions are engaged in youth-related activities in Armenia; there are relevant institutions focusing on youth policy development and implementation; financial resources are available; professional studies on youth-related issues are conducted on a regular basis. Yet, the quality of life among youth is far from being satisfactory: unemployment rate is about 30%, and there are migration tendencies, marginalization, and financial dependence identified among youth.³³ Positive changes aimed at the youth development require a policy based on youth rights, as well as coordination of efforts focused on the expansion of opportunities for the youth to act freely.

1.3. Demographic situation and challenges faced by youth

Figure 1.3 below shows the recent changes in demographic situation over the last decade. Between 2008 and 2018, the total population declined from around 3,097,000 to 2,973,000.³⁴ Figure 1.3 also indicates how the ratio of young girls and boys has decreased over the same period. Especially, it is evident that the number of persons aged 15-24 (both boys and girls) has declined significantly.

Figure 1.3. Age and sex pyramids of resident population for 2008 and 2018 (to total, %)



³³ Labour market in the Republic of Armenia, 2018, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/trud_18_6.pdf
³⁴ Women and Men in Armenia, 2018, p.14, https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2018.pdf

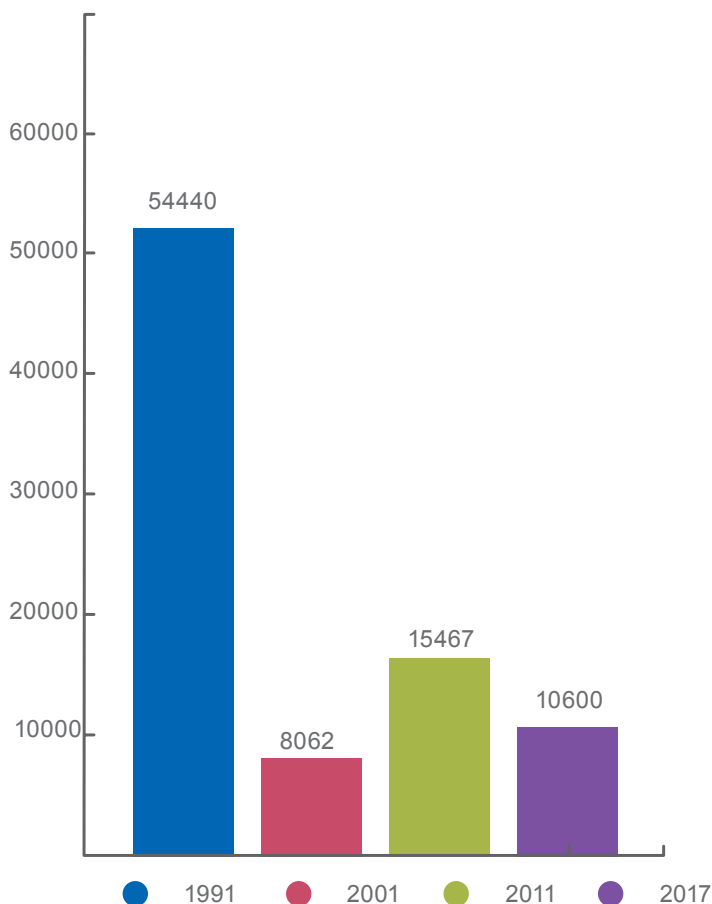
Figure 1.4 Natural increase (people)

Figure 1.4 shows that over the 25 years of independence, the rate of natural increase declined by 4.35 times. The lowest rates were registered at the beginning of the 2000s. Those who were born in that period are now starting their youth. Thus, there will soon be a comparative reduction in the number of young people, as opposed to the middle-aged and elderly population.

One of the disadvantages of these demographic processes is the risk that the coming years may see the 60+ segment of the population exceed the 20% threshold; this implies that Armenia will become an “ageing” society.

Currently, the demographic situation remains extremely worrying. In comparison to 2012, the number of births in 2016 has declined by 4.6%. Along with that, the number of deaths has increased by 2%, and the population growth has declined by 6%. Births and population growth continued to decline in 2017, too. Within a year, the number of births declined by 2,900 persons, and the natural increase decreased by 1,800 persons.³⁵ Some demographers are concerned that such a situation may eventually result in the number of deaths exceeding the number of births by 2025, which means that Armenia will see a natural decline in its population.³⁶ Compared to 2014, in 2018 the number of people over the age of 60 increased by 2.1%, and the population aged 15-34 decreased by 3.0%.³⁷ Thus, the number of young people in Armenia is declining, the number of the elderly is growing, and this is going to create a great social burden for the youth age group.

According to statistical data, the number of boys born in Armenia is a significantly higher than the number of newborn girls. Sex selective abortion is considered the main reason for this phenomenon. In 2017, the sex ratio at birth was 1.10.³⁸ The number of sex selective abortions is also very high. The indicator was very high in 2013 when 1,400 female foetus pregnancies were terminated.³⁹ This issue has been the subject of a serious

³⁵ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, Yerevan, 2018, p. 31; <https://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99511628.pdf>

³⁶ Markosyan A., Demographic Processes among the Population of the Republic of Armenia in 1985-2016; <http://aiisa.am/ouexperts/publication/329>

³⁷ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, Yerevan, 2018, p. 26; <https://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99511628.pdf>

³⁸ Women and Men in Armenia, 2018, p. 25; https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2018.pdf.

³⁹ Gilmore Ch. Z., Sex imbalances at birth in Armenia. Demographic evidence and analysis, Yerevan, 2018, p. 6; https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Sex_Imbalance_report_Eng_final-with%20cover-final.pdf

public discourse; in 2016, it resulted in an amendment to the respective law that prohibited abortion after the 12th week of pregnancy.⁴⁰ This is the period when it is possible to determine the sex of the foetus.

Apart from this factor causing a decline in population growth, emigration is another serious issue. Over the past few years, the emigrating population has become younger. Although the age group of 35-55 is still the dominant age group among seasonal labour migrants and long-term migrants, the number of young people in this population group has been increasing.⁴¹

According to the latest research details on the migration sector, from 2016 to 2017, the number of emigrant young people within the 18-34 age group has increased by 3.5%. The inclination to migrate has also expanded among this age group. The number of emigrants within the most active age group of 35-55 years has increased by 3.6%.⁴² As one can see, the figures of the increase in the youth age group are approaching those of the average active employment age group. This is quite worrying, as it once again confirms the notion that the phenomenon of emigration in Armenia is growing younger. Migration seems to be transmitted from the middle-aged generation to the youth and has become a self-reproducing phenomenon. Even back in 2014, according to the qualitative research data, migration had the likelihood of becoming a “contagious” phenomenon passed down from generation to generation, on both the family and the community levels.

It should be noted also that men prevail in the structure of migrants. The female to male ratio is 29% to 71%.⁴³

The former authorities’ indifference toward the key issues affecting youth somewhat intensified the young persons’ intention to emigrate from Armenia and realize their potential in other countries. The biggest issue, frequently mentioned by young persons inclined to emigrate, is the lack of favourable conditions in Armenia for their self-fulfilment. Nowadays, even though the new government highlights the necessity of reforms, there are still no substantial changes in the situation.

Development of a state demographic and migration policy could help overcome the presented key issue related to demographics.

From the demographic perspective, the authorities are trying to offer incentives to those who plan to have their second or third child; there are also favourable programmes in support of young people seeking to purchase apartments. Nevertheless, these have not created any positive demographic trends. Moreover, 2017 saw the lowest birth rate (per 1,000 residents) for the past 5 years.⁴⁴

In terms of the solution to key demographic issues, it is important to fundamentally change the perception of the role of young people.

The policy of viewing the youth as an object must be rejected and replaced by a favourable environment to enable young people to actively engage in the resolution of existing demographic issues. This implies that youth-related policy has to be really participatory and should be developed and executed by the youth themselves. The most important issue is to ensure exactly the involvement of youth in the process of creating an environment for their development and self-fulfilment.

According to a UNFPA research, the war and migration have given rise to a demographic crisis. The decrease in the number of men has led to an increase in their symbolic value. At the same time, changes in socio-economic conditions have resulted in changes in gender stereotypes.⁴⁵ In localities where the labour migration among male population is high, women’s participation in local economic activities has increased. Women are more often involved in commerce, agriculture and jobs in other areas.

All these changes and the new challenges affect girls and boys, young women and young men in different ways.

⁴⁰ The Republic of Armenia Law on Reproductive Health and Rights to Reproduction; <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=75284>

⁴¹ Yeganyan R., RA Emigration Three-Year Monitoring (2015-2017), Yerevan, 2017, p. 56.

⁴² Ibid., p. 56-57.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁴ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, Yerevan, 2018, p. 23; <https://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99511628.pdf>

⁴⁵ Men and gender equality in Armenia, Report on sociological survey findings UNFPA, Yerevan 2016, p.175-176 https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf,

Box 1.5

The youth migration story of Arpenik community

In Arpenik community of Shirak region, 70% of the employment-age male population go to the Russian Federation as migrant workers. They stay on average for seven to eight months. The elderly men of the community usually joke that springtime evokes the migratory bird instinct in local migrants. Migration is also widespread among the 17-30-year-old youth. Nearly all the young people of that age leave their village in spring and return in late autumn. In every family with a member of this age, the 17-18-year-old son joins his father and emigrates. This emigration together passes the tradition of labour migration from father to son. As a result, only women and a few men capable of labour remain in the village. Emigrants are not usually interested in the economic, civic, and political life of their community; they only take part in celebratory occasions.

Conclusions and recommendations

- In the definition of “youth,” it is necessary to adopt a unified approach in terms of age group classifications that would also allow monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals relevant to youth.
- According to the human development concept, the process of youth-oriented state policy development must be based not on or not only on the young people’s needs, but also on their rights.
- It is necessary to develop new formats for youth programmes focused on young persons’ equal rights and opportunities, current needs and expectations.
- Positive changes aimed at youth development require a policy that is based on the youth rights and gender transformative approach,⁴⁶ as well as coordination of efforts focused on the expansion of opportunities for the youth to act freely.
- It is essential to introduce properly functioning mechanisms for the development of an evidence-based and participatory youth policy, while preserving and applying the previous experience.
- It is necessary to develop and introduce new and effective mechanisms for cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation within the context of the state youth policy.
- The elaboration and implementation of youth-related human development policies must become a priority issue for state policy.
- The existing inequalities in the area of human development should be overcome, and a human-development-for-everyone formula must be applied.
- The youth must be seen as a key player in the implementation of the SDGs.
- The youth must be transformed from the object of youth policy development and implementation to its key subject.
- The human development concept must play a pivotal role in resolving the key demographic issue, meanwhile emphasizing the formation of a youth-centred environment across Armenia, to help them explore the wide spectrum of opportunities and freedoms for the fulfilment of their creative potential.
- Shape a system-oriented mentality in young people as well as an ability to develop system-wide strategies.
- Create and make available broad opportunities for young people engaged in management and other areas to help them realize their potential for innovation.

⁴⁶ A gender-transformative approach means that an intervention hinges on principles of promoting gender equality (equal rights in the management of resources and decision-making) and women’s empowerment.

2.1 Youth and civic involvement

2.1.1 Youth values and the civil society

According to opinions expressed in expert interviews, the youth in Armenia can be divided into two main segments from the perspective of fundamental values: *group-centred* and *human-centred*.⁴⁷

In the environment of youth who possess group-centred values, emphasis is put on being part of a group. In this scenario, the fundamental factors include a common place of origin, common area of residence, consanguinity, ethnic similarities and other factors that are not related to a person's individual characteristics.

In case of *human-centred values*, the primary factor for mobilization and cooperation is based on individual values stemming from a person's creative capabilities. In this case, the uniting factor is not a group affiliation. Instead, it is represented by ideas, style, taste, political and civic views, professional and individual interests and so on.

As a rule, the group-centred value system tends to be chiefly influenced by dogmatic or conservative approaches. Emphasis is put on following the traditions, conventional concepts and unwritten habitual norms. Everything in life is believed to have one true form, and the group representatives have an obligation to safeguard it. For instance, conservative youth consider cases of young men wearing earrings or having long hair to be unacceptable, wrong and inappropriate for the image of "an Armenian man"; in such cases, the group representatives are ready to exercise psychological and physical violence toward the person who does not seem to meet the criteria of a "proper Armenian man." Similarly, these persons possess only one perception of the "true" manner concerning any phenomenon or behavioural norm, the violation of which is viewed as blasphemy and condemned.

According to circles having a group-shared identity, "national" values also hinge on the popularity of group-centred values.

Ethnic characteristics, rather than civic ones mainly characterize the value system possessed by this segment of the youth.

"When arguing with young people who hold nationalistic views, we stress that in our view, not only the ethnicity of a person is important, but also the fact of being a good citizen. However, they disagree. When someone who is not Armenian fights for the protection of Armenia's nature or preservation of the city's public spaces, such a person, regardless of their nationality, becomes a bigger patriot in my eyes. I've got a friend who is a civic activist; he's not Armenian, but, in my opinion, he's a bigger patriot than those who speak of national ideas and values but have tolerated oligarchs and socially unjust policies exercised by former authorities toward society, as well as the overexploitation of Armenia's mines and destruction of the nature."

Excerpt from an interview with a 29-year-old girl

Another youth segment comprises those who possess civic value system.⁴⁸ For these persons, human rights and the freedom of individual choices are of utmost importance.

Despite the fact that young people who represent the human-centred and civic value systems are still a minority, it is noteworthy that their influence keeps growing. In this respect, the transformational changes that took place during the Velvet Revolution are particularly apparent. These changes have not been properly studied yet, but expert interviews and research studies suggest the possibility of some civic value changes among representatives of the conservative youth. Tendencies to understand individual qualities and tolerate alternative thinking have become particularly noticeable. In this regard, *one of the most important chal-*

⁴⁷ Hofstede G., "Dimensions of National Cultures in Fifty Countries and Three Regions," in *Explications in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, J. B. Derogowski, S. Dziurawiec, and R.C. Annis, eds. Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1983, pp. 335-355. Triandis H. C., *Individualism.Collectivism and Personality*. Journal of Personality, 2001, 69 (6): 907-24.

⁴⁸ On civic values, see Harvard D.E. (eds.), *Civic values, civic practices*. Washington, DC: Bringing Theory to Practice. 2013.

lenges is the expansion of the scope of “nationalistic” values and complementing these values with civic and state-oriented ones, as well as adding of “civic patriotism” components to perceptions of conventional patriotism.

Authoritarian and humanitarian values. According to expert interviews, another apparent youth-related attribute is that groups with *hierarchic* or *authoritarian* values are more influential and popular among young people compared to those who hold *horizontal* or *humanitarian* ones. Overcoming this is one of the most serious challenges for building a democracy and civil society.

One should note that during the election period of the former authorities, it was the youth who played a supporting role for the previous authoritarian political system at the levels of districts or city blocks. Fortunately, after the Velvet Revolution, during the Yerevan City Council elections and then during the Parliamentary elections held on 9 December 2018, such an influence by the youth has almost been prevented, which should be considered a very important and positive change.

The notion of people’s equality and freedom is fundamental for those who possess a *humanitarian value system* and represent a smaller number of youth. It must be noted that despite their limited number, they certainly play an important role in terms of political and civic activism. Exactly these young people representing this specific value system became the leading force of the Velvet Revolution and frontline activists in the fight against the ruling authoritarian system. Interestingly, that situation resulted in quite a large segment of group-centred young people following the guidance of youth leaders, getting involved and sympathizing with the notions of civic activism and rule of law.

After the revolution, this group of young people took on public administration positions. This might ensure favourable conditions for in-depth value reforms amongst the youth.



Box 2.1

Gor Ordyan

28 years old, Postgraduate student in YSU Chair of Cultural Studies

During my life, my understanding of “value” changed in significant ways through conversations with my university professors. One of them advised me to read works by Erich Fromm. Reading his works was a turning point for me. As I read about the types of humanistic and authoritarian individuals, I gradually began to realize how such value systems are in daily conflict in our lives. I had the same clash inside me. I realized that I should rely on myself more and not on my acquaintances. I value my family and my surroundings. But I have come to understand one important thing – you should not allow your personality to relate to a sense of group belonging, even if belonging to that group is something very important to you. It is a serious struggle both inside your own self and with your environment.

I have gone on a path of serious transformation in my personality. I was once more concerned about the norms of neighbourhood and the surrounding environment than human-centredness. After that turning point in my life, I realized that an essential goal is to discover and develop your own creativity. To be self-assertive in life, you should not assert yourself on account of subordinating or using others, but through personal fulfilment. When you begin to criticize yourself and your surroundings, you find many new opportunities that can guide you in life. For me, personally, even in the most complicated personal and family situations, this approach always helped me find a way out. And I found solutions for a creative approach to the problem and through discovering possibilities for new steps.

In Armenia, the youth is divided into two groups, The majority lives by their group values and is conservative in their lifestyle. But creative individuals that represent the minority are change generators. Despite being a minority, they are also influential. Although the first group demonstrates serious resistance, in some cases turning to harsh pressure methods, the ones who are individuals are more influential and set new trends. Specifically, after the Velvet Revolution, these possibilities seem to have increased.

National and universal values. Young people characterized by hierarchic and conservative value systems often contrast national values with universal ones. Many consider anything Armenian to be right and anything universal to be antinational and, hence, wrong. According to this model, the definition of “national” values is quite narrow, and whatever does not comply with their perception of “national” is considered wrong and unacceptable. Thus, this leads to the formula of “we are right, the rest of the world is wrong.” In a way, this phenomenon is a result of an inertia from Soviet times; back then, “internationalism” was being presented as opposed to “bourgeois cosmopolitanism.” Today, these groups of youth still consider being cosmopolitan (i.e. a world citizen) as something negative and dangerous for the “national” identity. The prevalence of such an approach among certain youth groups is not beneficial from the perspective of integrating with the progressive world and current development processes worldwide. Overcoming this inward-looking, in essence closed value system, which is known as “we are right, and the rest of the world is wrong” is an important challenge. A breakthrough in this field would be one of the most essential post-revolutionary ventures. In this respect, active cooperation between the Diaspora youth and Armenia’s youth, alongside involvement in international youth programmes, might play a positive role. That would especially help the conservative youth familiarize themselves with alternative viewpoints and overcome fears about progress, reforms and cooperation with the advanced world.

Gender-related aspect of the national mentality. The gender equality issue has remained one of the most significant challenges in Armenia. The principle of equality between women and men is widely reflected throughout the legislation of the Republic of Armenia. While the legal framework for gender equality and women’s rights is relatively strong, its practical implementation, given the prevalence of traditional patriarchal stereotypes, needs strengthening. Thus, the situation in the field of gender equality and protection of women’s rights in Armenia is controversial. On the one hand, women and men have equal rights, and women are recognized as important actors in socio-economic development. On the other hand, women face many obstacles in terms of economic opportunities and active participation in political and public life.

According to the discourse prevailing in Armenia, doing housework is considered a woman’s duty. Women remain significantly underrepresented in public decision-making, while discriminatory gender stereotypes in family and in the society continue to hinder equality (D. Mijatović, 2018)⁴⁹ and undermine women’s social status and their educational and professional careers (CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6).⁵⁰ Political underrepresentation of women, including young women, and lack of their economic empowerment compounded by persisting gender-based vertical and horizontal discrimination in the labour market, as well as the existing gender imbalance in a number of other spheres are serious problems. The root causes of these problems have yet to be eliminated.⁵¹

The results of a UNFPA study clearly indicate that patriarchal and “traditional” rigid social norms and perceptions regarding masculinity, femininity, gender equality, sexuality, relations with family members, division of household tasks as well as acceptance of violence against women, intimate partner violence and peer violence are still quite prevalent in the Armenian society.⁵² In a broader context of the clash of social norms and values, it is not surprising that not all men and women are gender sensitive or fair in terms of gender equality. Gender stereotypes are a common occurrence. At the same time, young women and men in the 15-24 age group, especially capital city residents with higher education, are less susceptible to those stereotypes, in contrast to older respondents.⁵³ Public awareness campaigns should take into consideration the above noted aspects to overcome stereotypical interpretation of masculinity and femininity and eliminate the negative impact that they entail.

2.1.2 Youth social coexistence

Based on various definitions of coexistence forms formulated by social scientists, four forms of coexistence in case of Armenian youth can be specified: 1) compulsory-subordinate, 2) conflictual, 3) competitive, 4)

⁴⁹ Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Dunja Mijatović following her visit to Armenia in September 2018.

⁵⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Armenia, 2016. CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6.

⁵¹ Men and Gender Equality in Armenia. Report on sociological survey findings. UNFPA, Yerevan, 2016, pp.15-16. https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf

⁵² Ibid., p.18:

⁵³ Ibid., p.243

collaborative. All of these are widespread to a certain degree; nevertheless, expert opinions point out to the dominance of the first two forms, albeit not very significantly.

Groups that have hierarchic relations with each other form the *compulsory-subordinate* form of coexistence.⁵⁴ Since 1991, Armenia has seen the formation of influential families or clans that have implanted compulsory-subordinate coexistence practices in the society. The network they had built was a hierarchic pyramid, where high-ranking officials in Armenia and their family clans formed the top segment. The rest of the pyramid consisted of various oligarchic clans in accordance with their respective levels of influence.

Within the context of this form of coexistence, local youth gangs and cliques played a specific role. At the community level, these groups were the main perpetrators of electoral fraud and the legitimizers of the concrete value system. The latter was the bedrock of support for the authoritarian power that was hinging on the principle of a clan-based pyramid.

The Velvet Revolution struck a heavy blow on this form of coexistence and prevented district youth cliques from delivering any illegal services to any clan-based force during the latest Yerevan City Council elections as well as in the course of the Parliamentary elections held in 2018.

The *conflictual* type of coexistence often accompanies the compulsory-subordinate form. Actually, from the perspective of social relations and fabric, conflicts with the greatest negative impact take place among informal district and street groups of young men. It is important to note that the prevalence of norms with a criminal origin in certain youth circles is a serious obstacle for the resolution of conflicts through a negotiation process.

The compulsory-subordinate and conflictual forms of coexistence demonstrate an absolutely intolerant attitude towards the *competitive* and *collaborative* forms, the latter being typical of the youth with a progressive mentality, who emphasize individualism and humanitarian values as priorities.

Competitive coexistence, being built on the principle of competing on equal terms, is more characteristic of the youth grouped within the framework of civil society organizations. The same can be said about the *collaborative form of coexistence*.

The compulsory-subordinate and conflictual coexistence forms reject and display intolerant attitudes towards young people who appear to be more or less different from accepted group norms in terms of their individual lifestyle and behaviour. The latter often are marginalized and become subject to various forms of violence, the softest of these being verbal and psychological abuse. Cases of physical violence are also widespread. This is particularly predominant in male circles.

In these coexistence environments, belonging to a sexual minority is severely condemned. Such young people are forced to hide their sexual identity or flee the country. Otherwise, they face severe physical violence that can result in life-threatening physical injuries. It is worth mentioning that hate speech against religious, sexual and other minorities is often endorsed by the elites of some political parties.

Violence against women is another problem in Armenia. Violence against women and intimate partners remains an unresolved and contentious issue and reflects inadequacy of efforts in developing a democratic gender culture with non-violence, non-discrimination, gender equality and equity as its core principles.⁵⁵

The 2018 Velvet Revolution instigated certain apparent changes. First, the top segment of the compulsory-subordinate and conflictual coexistence pyramid has been transformed, and the influence of local semi-criminal kingpins on political processes has almost been abolished. Secondly, the new government and personally Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan have repeatedly emphasized the priority of the “human being” as a fundamental value. Thirdly, the new government has tried to publicize the motto of “love and solidarity” formulated in the course of the Velvet Revolution, and make it an intrinsic practice in social coexistence. Of course, that form of coexistence is hardly characteristic of the Armenian society at this point, but it is nevertheless important that these values are accentuated at least in the public discourse.

⁵⁴ Almond G. and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 3-42.

⁵⁵ Men and Gender Equality in Armenia, UNFPA, Yerevan, 2016, p.20: https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf.

2.1.3 The youth and community life

In Armenia, communities as self-organized civil society structures are rather weak and need to be further developed. Kinship-based and district-orientated lifestyles are mostly typical of rural and provincial communities. Kinship-based clans play quite an influential role in the life of such communities. During elections, these often become a decisive factor. In these clans, young people are subordinated to older or higher-ranking men and obey the decisions of the latter when facing important issues. In rural and urban communities in provinces, young women are entirely subordinated to men, who play decisive roles in small families and larger clans.⁵⁶ To some extent, civil society organizations (CSOs) have managed to ease this situation. Occasionally, CSO-influenced young people get a chance to change their traditional mindsets and view things from the perspective of civic values. This phenomenon was of significant importance during the Velvet Revolution in terms of boosting young people's involvement. Despite the aforementioned positive role, our focus group surveys indicated that civil society institutions in provinces face serious issues when clashing with patriarchal traditions. The latter especially restrain and obstruct young girls' and women's participation in various community programmes.



Box 2.2

Zaven Tadevosyan

18 years old, IT student

I have loved rock music since I was a child. Inspired by rock musicians, I wanted to have long hair. But this caused a lot of problems in both my neighbourhood and other places. People would insult me by using offensive words and would even start fights with me. But at no point did I want to

surrender and give up the idea of having long hair. I considered it to be important as it distinguished me and emphasized my uniqueness. I always wanted to be different from the accepted standards and styles, but this is not easy to do in Armenia. Not only does everyone notice your difference, but they will also express their negative opinions towards you.

The main reason for this is that many people think that there is a specific way of doing things correctly; they perceive anything different from the norm negatively. For example, society says there is a correct way for young men to dress and style their hair; a proper way to talk and communicate with young ladies, and a right way to choose a partner - a correct way to do everything. If you do not follow these standards, you may not only be insulted, but you could also get into serious conflicts and fights. This is especially true in the neighbourhood environments. In the centre of Yerevan, this may be expressed in a milder form than in the suburbs. Typically, youth with such an attitude will gather 10-20 of their friends and get into a fight with you. This is an accepted approach. It is a sign of good friendship and commitment. This intolerance is not only towards boys but girls as well. I once stopped a group of boys from beating up a girl who had unusual greenish-blue coloured hair and a nose ring. It was very difficult to stop them from beating up the girl.

It is interesting, though that, after the Velvet Revolution, I have personally noticed a significant change in the overall attitude towards me. People do not stare at my long hair anymore like they used to. They have become more tolerant. It seems to me that the reason for this is that during the revolution, many different groups of young people struggled together on the streets and got to know each other better. Many realized that different people could also have common goals for building their country, society, and future. It has made the environment more unified and tolerant. We have started to feel more and more like true citizens in Armenia.

⁵⁶ Mkrtchyan A., Vermishyan H., Balasanyan H., Independence Generation, p. 78.

In community life, a significant role is played by non-formal or “shadow” district gangs, also referred to as “brotherhoods.” They establish themselves on criminal norms and practices borrowed from the value system of thug groups. When a conflict arises, the “brotherhood” members swiftly gather and beat up an outsider who has clashed with any of their representatives. This phenomenon has an utterly destructive influence on the youth. This is especially true for young male circles, on which such norms and actions are imposed by those with stronger influence. These destructive practices often hamper the spreading and free application of more creative approaches among young people in their relationships. Fighting against and overcoming the widespread thug life norms and traditions in young people’s lives can play a pivotal role in making the community life more civic-oriented. From this viewpoint, it may be important to take preventive legislative steps against dissemination and propaganda of criminal norms and practices in public life.

2.2 Youth in socio-political and cultural processes

The youth’s involvement in civic, cultural and public life manifests itself in various formats.

Involvement through CSOs is one of the most popular formats in the civic sector.⁵⁷ This format for involvement refers to the issues related to the youth’s informal and non-formal education, participation in community life, social entrepreneurship, inclusion of persons with disabilities, assistance to vulnerable social groups, media literacy, and civic education. Such programmes are implemented not only in the CSO format, but also through community-based active civic groups. From a civic perspective, these programmes have contributed to the shaping of knowledgeable, proactive, informed and responsible individuals and groups among youth. This has played an important role in raising the youth’s civic activism levels, something that was a decisive factor during the Velvet Revolution as well.

In 2018, UNDP programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment established a youth club titled “I AM the Community.” Currently the club unites 83 graduates (57 women and 26 men) of the “I AM the Community” youth leadership camp. The objective of the club is to engage young people from provinces in processes of policy development. Members of the club were trained in the areas of local self-government in Armenia, direct democracy and gender equality through “I AM the Community” model as well as implemented small-scale initiatives on participatory democracy and women’s engagement in their respective communities. In April 2019, the club members prepared the first solid package of recommendations on amendments to the RA Law on Local Self-Government (LSG). In total, 18 recommendations were proposed to the Government and National Assembly, including a minimum 30% gender-neutral quota in LSGs.

Civic initiatives are another important format for youth engagement. These initiatives have become especially youth-dominated since 2008. The key characteristics were the protection of public interests and resistance to actions challenging the public good undertaken by the oligarchic system that enjoyed support by the authorities. It is believed that some of those initiatives, especially Mashtots Park protests and demonstrations against an increase in public transport fare, shaped the protest models subsequently adopted by the Velvet Revolution, such as geographically dispersed but simultaneous rallies, peaceful and non-violent resistance acts, horizontal decision making processes, transparency in involving new participants, proactivity and ingenuity. Shaping the identity of an active, self-motivated, responsible young citizen became one of the most significant contributions of these initiatives.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Paturyan J. Y., and Gevorgyan V. (2016). *Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society*. Yerevan: American University of Armenia. p. 16.

⁵⁸ Ishkanian A. Self-determined citizens? New Forms of Civic Activism and Citizenship in Armenia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, Volume 67, 2015, Issue 8, pp. 1221-1224.



Box 2.3

Lena Nazaryan

35 years old

Member of Civil Contract party, Vice Speaker of the National Assembly

Before moving into political activities, I participated in various civic initiatives over the years. The Teghut Environmental Movement, the struggles for Mash-tots Park and against the fare hike for Yerevan public transportation were very important to me. Significant changes took place during these initiatives. First of all, stereotypes that kept people in fear and subordination were broken. During the initiatives, many young people were set free from their fear of the authorities. This played a crucial role in shaping a civil position. Freedom from fear also provides relief from the stereotype of subordination to authorities, helping to get rid of the feeling of hierarchical inequality and to a place where it becomes possible to speak from the stance of one's own rights.

Another significant contribution to civic initiatives was the beginning of grassroots organizations and non-violent practices. In the fight against forces representing authoritarian powers, it is very important to reject and not to copy the methods used by the government. It helps to demonstrate the difference of your identity from those who violate the rights of others. And when, during this struggle, people see practices different from those dictated by the government, it turns into a source of new strength.

It raises the importance of a protesting person. Fighting, for me, is to take a step, not to be indifferent, to participate in the solution of questions relevant to me. It is what took place during the Velvet Revolution and what caused the people to achieve victory. In civil initiatives, at some point in time, I realized that to make large-scale changes from the social point of view, it was necessary to enter the political battlefield. It played significant importance in my decision to join the Civil Contract Party. The Velvet Revolution, being political in its aims, was of civil nature based on participatory principles. It was open to everyone equally. It was creative and open to new initiatives, which was one of the primary reasons for the widespread youth involvement.

2.2.1 Youth and politics

Before the Velvet Revolution, youth's involvement in political life was mainly manifested through youth branches of various parties, which assigned a secondary status to the youth, as opposed to elder members. In politics, as well as in real life, young people were given secondary roles, while the elder members had the final say.⁵⁹ The youth branch of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) is the most vivid example of the above. This institution was mainly focused on recruiting young and dexterous persons with leadership skills around RPA and thus mitigating the RPA's legitimacy deficit. The RPA youth branch was assigned quite massive means and resources for resolving the issues it faced.

On the one hand, this RPA-endorsed youth-related approach has actually formed inner-circle and privileged youth groups; on the other hand, it has resulted in youth that was alienated from the authorities in various ways. Apart from RPA, youth sections of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) party and the Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP) were also well known. These, however, did not receive support from governmental institutions, nor did they have that much influence on young people pursuing political careers.

Before the Velvet Revolution, politically alienated and "disorganized" persons constituted the majority of youth. Some young people from this segment would get involved in political processes on a short-term basis, during elections, to take part in illegal activities such as arranging electoral fraud and bribes.

⁵⁹ Mkrtchyan A., Vermishyan H., Balasanyan H., Independence Generation, page 60-63.

Young persons' involvement was also manifested through political forces representing the opposition. This had two main patterns: affiliation with the opposition political parties or simply involvement in political protest events.

As opposed to the RPA youth section with a format inherited from the Soviet Komsomol, young people in opposition parties were among the major driving forces, rather than secondary role players.

Street art has been one of the unique forms of the youth's political involvement.⁶⁰ ArtLab is the most well-known creative group representing street art. Their main activity is aimed at fighting against authoritarianism through various forms of art expression and publicizing this idea at various public premises.

Small-group intellectual debates have been another form of youth involvement. Despite the lack of a direct political context, these activities were political in essence; the debates aimed at spreading democratic ideas and culture of horizontal relationships, counter to the authoritarian and hierarchic ideology, and the latter was their distinguishing feature.

Political protest campaigns have been the most inclusive form of youth engagement. The specificity of this form of involvement was that these were open to all volunteers and carried a substantial potential for changes. The Velvet Revolution became a typical manifestation of that; it succeeded thanks to the involvement of young people, whose number grew from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands.



Box 2.4

Mary Ghazaryan

23 years old, student-art critic

I must honestly say that until the events of April 2018, I never really followed all the events that led to the formation of Nikol Pashinyan as an opposition figure. I followed the movement from a distance. However, when the student protests began, I was among those protesting in the streets. We closed the roads with friends and declared strikes. It was initially done for solidarity with one another and for our dignity. I had no deep conviction or aspiration to achieve any significant change. This position allowed me to view the development of the movement from a different angle, one that was in the domain of images and digital culture. The entire internet was flooded with media coverage. Thanks to the abundance of those photographs and videos, it was possible to see how the streets were gradually filled with many different people, with different destinies.

At some point, following the explosions on Baghramyan Avenue, I felt responsible for the people that were struggling, who had already grown dear to me. And from that moment on, I began to record all I saw on the web without realizing that it would turn into a programme in the form of the exhibition called "Velvet Revolution: Between the Image and Reality." It would have been impossible to organize the exhibition had my friends not participated in the protest. This exhibition was a continuation of the mutual support and participation we experienced during the revolution. Our goal for the exhibition was to show the revolutionary movement through the many images depicted on social media networks.

Often, photos offer observers perspectives that would have been impossible to perceive then and there. These are condensed forms of emotions able to inspire and unite, affect and enrapture. You could say that the photographers were also activists to the same extent, just as activists were also artists, and the revolution itself was an image co-created by the revolutionaries and artists. In this way, the exhibition was not just an artistic event. It was a new way of participating in politics, not only for myself as an artist, but also for the visitors, as they appeared in the images of the revolution, a political space constructed through art.

⁶⁰ Raspopina S. 2016. Street illegal: meets the activists galvanizing political protest in Armenia. Available at: <http://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/6557/artak-gevorgyan-street-art-yerevan-armenia>.

2.2.2 Youth and the Velvet Revolution

The Velvet Revolution turned out to be the first movement, the leaders and key actors of which were mostly young people. As a form of political involvement, it had a few characteristic features. First of all, by nature, it proved to be clearly *horizontal* by giving everyone a chance to take part in the political process and independently choose the form and extent of their involvement. Because of that characteristic, it was opposite to the previous patriarchal and hierarchic formats of party-affiliated engagement, wherein party leaders would choose the extent and form for young people's participation in political processes.

The replacement of mono-centrism with *multi-centrism* (geographically dispersed but simultaneous acts) was another distinguishing feature. These two key features gave the comparatively more self-motivated young people an opportunity to launch hubs for involvement in the political protests not only in Yerevan, but also in the most remote provinces. These characteristics of political involvement made it possible to transform the entire Republic's territory into a protest zone by emphasizing the importance of each of those hubs. It became possible to also engage rural and regional youth in the political processes, which in itself was an unprecedented phenomenon in light of the fact that those young people did not have to come to Yerevan in order to participate in the movement.

Another distinguishing feature is related to the change in the form of coexistence. During the Velvet Revolution, almost no manifestations of compulsory-subordinate or conflictual coexistence were spotted. **This was mostly due to the Revolution's policy of refraining from violence.**

This mode of involvement may continue and become an exemplary one for the youth's ongoing participation in discussing problems and making decisions related to the life in communities or the entire country.

After the Parliamentary elections on 9 December 2018, the number of women in the National Assembly has almost doubled reaching 32 from 18, thus making 25% of the seats. In the ruling faction alone, their number reached 23. The age of female MPs has also changed dramatically: the 27-35 age group is predominant.⁶¹ Many of them have previously been involved in civic activism, which testifies to the introduction of new civic culture in the Parliament.

The Velvet Revolution also changed the age range of Government representatives. The new Government mostly consists of young individuals. This has resulted in significant changes in the management culture. Transparency, accountability and availability have become priorities. The society - Government gap and distancing has narrowed, which is an important indicator of a democratic society. Despite the only one female Minister in the new Government, the number of Deputy Ministers is quite large: there are 11 female Deputy Ministers in the Armenian Government.⁶²

2.2.3 Youth and Media

Expert surveys indicate that radio and television are more relevant as sources of information for the older generations these days. Young people prefer the Internet. In Armenia, as far as civic and political types of involvement are concerned, priority is given to Facebook social network.

Social networks mostly carry out two significant functions: a) communication and b) mobilization. The first one breaks communication hierarchies and establishes horizontal links. This leads to debates and discussions, which would be difficult to organize and carry out in a physical setting. This also gives more freedom for self-expression and allows voices to be heard. Another important fact is that this creates possibilities for publicizing the actions and activities of "closed" government groups and circles and make those actions

⁶¹ <http://parliament.am/deputies.php?lang=eng>.

⁶² <https://www.gov.am/am/structure/>

transparent, meanwhile boosting critical thinking among youth. Finally, social networks shape diversity of opinions and reinforce the right to alternative lifestyles by somewhat increasing the level of public tolerance.

From the perspective of mobilization, Facebook facilitates the formation of online collaborative spaces based on opinions, interests and ideas, counter to the subordinate and conflictual forms of coexistence. According to expert opinions, the real-life establishment and success of the horizontal and network mobilization culture during the Velvet Revolution was influenced by the online prototype of the same culture formed on social networks.

2.3 Volunteerism in Armenia

Even though a state policy on promotion of volunteerism is still being developed,⁶³ some of the local and international organizations have spontaneously contributed to developing the culture of volunteering since independence. Today, there are entities in Armenia that send volunteers, accept volunteers, or mobilize them (e.g. Armenian Volunteers Bank, European Voluntary Service, U.S. Peace Corps, Armenian Red Cross Society, etc.). Along with formal volunteering, there also exists a culture of informal volunteering: from self-organizing volunteers in emergency situations (the search for a lost child with autism in June 2018; large-scale clean-up work all over the city during the Revolution, in April-May 2018; other) to individually initiated and coordinated volunteer work.

The Armenian Volunteers Bank was launched in 2013. It aims at promoting the formation and development of a culture of volunteering, shape a fully-fledged mentality both among employers and young people, create an interlink between them through a database on volunteers, and so on. It was registered as an NGO in 2016. The AVB currently operates in 3 areas: provision of volunteers, event coordination and professional practice.

The list of young Armenians' major motives for engaging in volunteer work are as follows: obtaining knowledge, developing skills, gaining work and career experience, psychological factors, social and self-preservation reasons (making new friends, being informed of community progress, volunteering for pleasure, reducing negative feelings, changing leisure activities) and opportunities to develop a sense of civic responsibility.⁶⁴ According to a youth-focused research entitled "The Independence Generation,"⁶⁵ when doing work on a voluntary basis, male respondents are more involved in helping their peers with studying, implementing civic activities, and organizing sports events in their local community, while female respondents are more involved with organizing educational and cultural events, and in NGO activities. The same research shows that the motivation among 57.3% of the Armenian youth for doing volunteer work is to put their professional knowledge into practice, while 30.2% are motivated by an intention to meet potential employers. This points out to issues inside the education sector, specifically the fact that young people are not given opportunities to apply their professional knowledge throughout the period of their studies or that they do not consider the given opportunities to be sufficient. It turns out that young people in Armenia see volunteering primarily as an opportunity for transition from education to the labour market.

Such an attitude towards volunteering is in fact confirmed and endorsed by institutions that engage volunteers: job announcements emphasize volunteer experience as a requirement for getting a job, thus neglecting a significant functional aspect of volunteer work – ensuring personal growth and creating public good through volunteering. The 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report indicates that volunteering can play a major role in strengthening community resilience. Volunteerism is a universal social behaviour that builds on people's desire to engage with change rather than to passively experience various development processes.⁶⁶ According to the results of the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) Caucasus Barometer 2017 survey, 46% of the Armenian population believes that a good citizen must do volunteer work without expecting any compensation, just for the sake of meeting community needs.

⁶³ In 2017, for the second time, The RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs developed and distributed a legislative proposal on "Volunteer activities and volunteer work", which is currently being reviewed and discussed.

⁶⁴ Gevorgyan V., Galstyan M., (2016) Why Volunteering? Understanding Armenia's Experience, Voluntary Sector Review, vol. 7 no 3, 325-32.

⁶⁵ Independence Generation: Youth Study 2016-Armenia, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Yerevan, 2016.

⁶⁶ 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report, The Thread That Binds: Volunteerism and Community Resilience

In comparison with the 2015 results, that number has decreased by 16%.⁶⁷ Although there has been no quantitative information since the 2018 Velvet Revolution, preliminary observations suggest that people's willingness to do volunteer work for meeting community needs has suddenly increased. In Armenia, initiatives that contribute to strengthening community development and durability are both individual and group-based by nature. Based on a community need or an opportunity, youth groups get self-organized and offer their own ways to deal with the existing problems: from supplying books for libraries to resolving environmental issues.

Bright Border

Bright Border is a volunteer initiative that organizes charity events to fundraise for LED-lamp installation in the border residential areas of Armenia and Artsakh. Their objective is to inform residents about options to economize through affordable and energy-saving technologies. Moreover, they do so for the residents of border areas by actually creating possibilities for saving energy on a long-term basis and fixing domestic issues. The initiative's motto is as follows: "Give light and hope to the people who really need it. Don't forget that even the smallest investment can cause a big change in the life of those in need."



Box 2.5

Marine Khachikyan

26 years old, teacher

Marine has been teaching Armenian language and literature for 8 years at the Koti community secondary school in the Tavush region. Alongside her job, she teaches the children in the community needlework on a volunteer basis. "During the training, many talented and gifted children have been identified, whose further successes will be the best gift and appreciation I can get for my work."

Apart from contributing to community development, volunteering in Armenia is also a way to strengthen connections with the Diaspora. There are a number of organizations and programmes with the same objective of strengthening foreign-based Armenian young people's connection with Armenia and creating more possibilities for them to repatriate and channel their potential toward Armenia's development (e.g. Birthright Armenia, DA-Conexion and so on).

Hence, to avoid wasting the accumulated volunteering potential in Armenia, government agencies, along with local and international organizations, need to focus their efforts on the following objectives:

- Creating legislation for the volunteering sector, since volunteer-hiring institutions do not have specifically defined procedures, and that implies certain risks.
- Raising awareness about volunteering by targeting not only youth, but also elder adults, since the latter influence the decisions made by young persons.
- Promoting the idea of volunteering as a functional phenomenon that creates value, as opposed to volunteering solely for the sake of gaining work experience.

⁶⁷ Caucasus Barometer time-series dataset Armenia 2011-2017, IMPGCVW: Important for a good citizen - do volunteer work? <https://www.caucasusbarometer.org/am/cb-am/IMPGCVW/>.

Conclusions and recommendations

- It is necessary to transit from group-centred and clan-oriented values to *human-centred* and *public* values.
- It is essential to promote *horizontal* and *humanitarian* values among youth, counter to authoritarian and hierarchic ones.
- Nationalistic values popular among young people should be made more civic-oriented.
- It is necessary to overcome the value system that relies on inequality and establish a value system that appreciates equality as something very essential for the youth.
- The importance of the value of freedom and the right to freedom should be increased.
- The tolerance of youth towards persons who differ and toward diversity should be expanded.
- Equal opportunities for human development must be created, regardless of the place of residence, social status, property, nationality and any other affiliations.
- Equal opportunities and favourable conditions for young women and men from all social classes, provinces and places of residence must be created to help them discover, develop and apply their individual skills.
- Young persons' needs must be mainstreamed into all sectoral policies, taking into consideration the gender perspective.
- Public awareness campaigns should be organised with a focus on the prevention of gender-based discrimination, domestic violence and sexual harassment.
- It is imperative to increase women's participation in policy development and governance in various sectors.
- It is essential to overcome quasi-criminal practices widespread among youth groups and promote civic and humanistic values.
- Preventive legislative measures must be developed and implemented against dissemination and propaganda of criminal norms and practices in public life.
- Young people's positive attitudes towards progress and universal values must be facilitated.
- It is necessary to create numerous possibilities for self-realization of youth in Armenia, making young people the target of youth policy.
- The role of youth in policy-making processes must be increased, transforming the youth from a policy object into a policy-making agent.
- It is essential to develop mechanisms for reducing the emigration rate among young people and create enabling conditions for immigration.
- It is necessary to deepen the volunteering culture among youth and improve the respective legislation on volunteering, since institutions hiring volunteers do not have specifically defined procedures, and that can be risky.
- The level of public awareness on volunteering must be raised by targeting not only youth, but also adults, since the latter tend to influence the decisions made by young people.
- A discourse on volunteering as a value-creating phenomenon must be promoted, as opposed to volunteering solely for the sake of gaining work experience.

3.1 Youth education

In the modern world, education systems face three major issues.

Issue 1: Reconceptualization of formal education and embracement of non-formal and informal education modalities. Previously, the education process was confined within educational institutions and would take place by means of formal processes. Nowadays, education has also spread out of educational institutions. The possibilities of non-formal and informal education have multiplied. In this context, items on the current agenda include reconceptualization of formal education and acceptance of achievements of **non-formal education** and **informal education**.

Box 3.1

Article 3 of the RA Law on Education defines formal, non-formal and informal types of education

Formal education – a specific level or entirety of general education programmes and professional education programmes, delivered by a corresponding educational institution (institutions) and leading to a qualification degree or a diploma associated with that specific level.

Non-formal education (studies) – an additional programme or an entirety of additional educational programmes implemented by a corresponding educational institution (institutions) or an organization (organizations) having the legislative right to perform that function; neither of these, however, results in obtaining a qualification degree or study achievements being officially recognized, except for the cases specified by RA laws.

Informal education – the learning process and acquired knowledge as a result of an individual's everyday family life, off-work time, leisure time, work-related and other activities; as a rule, these are not intentional or planned as target-based learning, nor are these arranged and managed in terms of time or resources; and, finally, they do not lead to official recognition of learning results, except for the cases specified by RA laws.

Issue 2: Reconceptualization of educational content and organization methods. Today, the world is characterized by an increase in uncertainty, while education systems have usually operated in conditions of certainty. The predominance of uncertainty is treated as an agenda item when it comes to the reconceptualization of educational content and organizational methods.

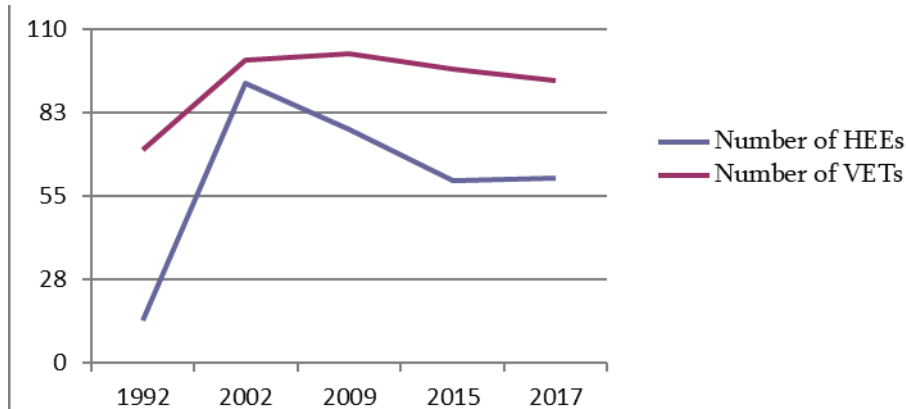
Issue 3: Businesses, services, technologies, and healthcare are growing more personalized and adjusted to specific individual needs. However, education continues attempting to adjust individuals to its own requirements. To a certain extent, this phenomenon tends to alienate learners from education.

Education opportunities for young people in Armenia have significantly multiplied for the past few years. Since independence, the number of higher education institutions has grown, alongside the number of specialties taught. There are also foreign higher education institutions functioning on the basis of interstate agreements. There are high schools offering International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Admission to higher education institutions has become easier, possibilities of studying in foreign schools and universities abroad have increased, and the number of students has grown. Moreover, the duration of studies has extended. The 10-year school education system is now transformed into a 12-year programme, and 12-year education has been made mandatory for everyone since 2017. Therefore, in a nutshell, it can really be said that education opportunities for young people in Armenia have multiplied. Education has grown more diverse. The first 15 years of independence saw the number of higher education institutions grow, along with the number of vocational education institutions and the numbers of their students. This was due to the fact that higher education used to be free of charge in the past, while places were limited. The introduction of paid education made having a large number of students beneficial for higher education institutions. In addition, private educational

institutions emerged. However, the number of students has been decreasing since 2009, which may be caused by falling birth rates and emigration.

According to the RA Statistical Committee, Armenia had 14 higher education institutions back in 1992, while 92 - in 2002, but this dropped to 61 in 2017. The number of vocational education institutions has also grown since independence. However, both the increase and the decrease have been significantly smaller in scale in this sector.

Figure 3.1. The numbers of higher education institutions (HEIs) and vocational education and training (VETs) institutions, by year



The number of students in higher education institutions has doubled since independence. In 1992, Armenia had 57,000 students, whereas in 2009 that number increased to 114,000. Yet, there has been a significant decrease in the number of students since then. According to the 2017 data, the number of students in Armenia was around 78,000. The number of VET students has slightly grown, but, overall, VETs currently have as many students as back in 1992, i.e. around 23,000.

Figure 3.2. The number of students at HEIs and VET institutions, by year

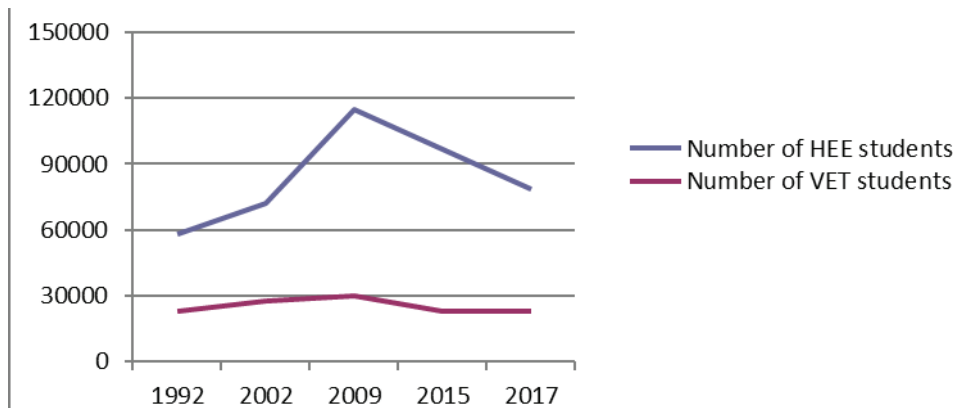


Table 3.1. The number of students at HEIs and VET institutions, by sex and year⁶⁸

Year	Students in HEIs	Of whom, female	Students in VET	Of whom, female
2002	72283	39095 (54.1%)	29417	19861 (67.5 %)
2009	114629	61273(53.5%)	29986	18918 (63.1%)
2015	96502	53601(55.5%)	24300	13217 (54.4%)
2018	80477	43390 (53.9%)	23228	12269 (52.8%)

⁶⁸ Data for 1992 are not available.

However, this multiplication of opportunities does not ensure an improvement in education quality. According to statistics and research, Armenia does not rank very high in terms of education quality. The Global Talent Competitiveness Index has various education-related scores. Here are some of the education-related details.

Table 3.2 Global Talent Competitiveness Index Report, 2019⁶⁹

Parameter	Armenia's position in the rating of 119 countries
Formal education enrolment	89
Vocational enrolment	64
Tertiary enrolment	50
Tertiary education expenditure	101
University ranking	78

Table 3.2 shows Armenia's intermediate position based on the parameter of enrolment in the higher education and vocational education sectors. The country has lower positions in the ranking list of universities. In addition, as far as formal education quality and higher education expenses are concerned, Armenia is ranked towards the end.

Despite the fact that the legislative framework of the Republic of Armenia ensures equal opportunities for education, however, at different levels of education there are dropouts among learners. In the field of secondary vocational education, women among learners who have left studies or dropped out comprise 25.6%, while this indicator with regard to higher education institutions equals 26%. At the same time, it has to be stated that school drop-outs are more common among boys that have graduated from the ninth grade and are from socially disadvantaged and large families.⁷⁰

According to official statistics, in 2017/2018 academic year, male students constituted 100% in Vocational Educational Institutions in the fields of forest resources reproduction and recycling, energy, means of transport, radio-electronic equipment and communication, machine-building equipment and technologies. In 2017/2018 academic year, male students in higher educational institutions studying in Bachelor's degree programs in Agricultural sciences constituted 100%.⁷¹

Table 3.3 Gender Parity Index in Vocational and Professional Education, 2010 and 2017⁷²

	2010	2017
Preliminary (vocational) education	0.36	0.48
Secondary (middle) vocational education	1.63	1.31
First stage of higher education	1.16	1.20
Second stage of higher education	2.15	1.98

⁶⁹ The Global Talent Competitiveness Index, <https://gtcistudy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/GTCI-2019-Report.pdf>.

⁷⁰ CEDAW/C/ARM/5-6, 13 April, 2015. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention. Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013, Armenia http://www.un.am/up/file/State%20Parties%20Report_CEDAW%205-6%20cycle.pdf

⁷¹ Women and Men in Armenia, 2018, NSC: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/gender_2018.pdf

⁷² Ibid. p. 53.

3.1.1 Old and new paradigms of education

Technological reforms of the past decades have made the necessity of developing a new paradigm in education inevitable. Human history has always spotlighted the lack of uniformity between education and technological development. In their book *The Race between Education and Technology*, Goldin and Katz note that education used to be ahead of technology at the beginning of the 20th century, whereas the second half of the century saw technology outrun education.⁷³ Evidently, today we have a new reality shaped as a result of unprecedented technological progress, and this calls for fundamental changes in the education system as well. There is a discrepancy between the currently required knowledge and skills, and those that students obtain through education. More on this topic can be found in the following chapter of this report. Universities and their management systems can no longer meet today's requirements. Existing educational institutions do not contribute to finding effective solutions to new issues, whereas the available solutions are outdated. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the general education system has not yet found reasonable ways to apply the newest technologies. Apparently, most of the things we know are no longer relevant for the new generation. While we still do not know what exactly is required.⁷⁴

According to Pak Tee Ng,⁷⁵ there are two fundamental ideas at the basis of the currently operational paradigm. Firstly, the current paradigm is based on knowledge transfer stemming from the following approach: teachers are the main carriers of knowledge, while printed educational books are the main sources of knowledge. This approach based on the shortage of knowledge sources has become outdated, since knowledge transfer sources have now become more available and diverse through technology. Secondly, the current paradigm of education defines certain unifying criteria and classifies students according to levels that meet those criteria. The same content is taught to everyone. Those who master the material move forward gradually leaving the rest behind. This model used to be targeted at the industrial society, wherein education served for selecting a small group of people who would be dealing with scientific, pedagogical, administrative tasks, while the rest would have to work at factories or in customer service. These days, the situation is changing, and this has to do with the new industrial revolution.

The founder and chairman of Davos World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, believes that humanity has currently plunged into the period of the fourth industrial revolution.⁷⁶ While new information technologies became popular in our everyday life during the third industrial revolution, the fourth industrial revolution will result in an automatization of multiple human-operated processes. According to the Learning Generation report,⁷⁷ automatization is going to make over 2 billion jobs redundant in the next 20 years. Mostly, these will be jobs requiring intermediate or low-level skills.

Therefore, if education stays based on the logic of the model that is constructed on student weaknesses,⁷⁸ then this will not only increase poverty and imbalanced development but also reveal a category of people whom Yuval Noah Harari would call “useless,”⁷⁹ implying the incompatibility of their knowledge and skills in the light of current-day requirements. Thus, the new paradigm of education suggests viewing students' strengths as the basis, so that they can develop their creative abilities and become competitive in the labour market.

3.1.2 Modern context of education

To raise the education level of the youth, it is very important to understand how exactly the life of young people has changed. As the 20th-century philosopher Paul Feyerabend would put it, “education comprises a teacher, a learner and a situation where those two meet.” We often ignore the “situation” when developing education policies. Here are some of the specific characteristics of the modern-day situation.

⁷³ Katz, Lawrence F. *The Race between Education and Technology* (Kindle Location 256). Harvard University Press - A. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁴ Schleicher, A. *Technology Reform Full of Good Ideas, Poorly Executed*, <https://www.teachermagazine.com.au/article/technology-reform-full-of-good-ideas-poorly-executed>, October 10, 2016.

⁷⁵ Ng, Pak Tee. *Learning from Singapore: The Power of Paradoxes* (Routledge Leading Change Series) (p. 97). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁶ Schwab, K. 2016. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org/about/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-by-klaus-schwab>,

⁷⁷ http://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf

⁷⁸ The weaknesses model suggests ignoring weak students.

⁷⁹ Harari, Y.N. 2015. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Harper.

The perception of time is changing

As life keeps rapidly changing and becoming more dynamic, time runs faster for young people. Slower processes bore young people. This situation results in discrepancy between the slow-paced education content and fast-paced worldviews of the youth. This asynchronous process alienates young people from the education system, and the 12-year school education along with six years for higher education seems too prolonged.

Communication culture is changing

While communication culture was previously based on verbal speech and, subsequently, on printed literature, today it hinges on audio-visual means and resources. Nonetheless, nowadays educational content is still based on absorbing information from printed textbooks, something that does not match children's extracurricular activities, where audio-visual resources prevail. This is not about totally ignoring printed books, but rather using more diverse communication tools in the education sector.

The focus of attention is changing

Attention plays a key role in education. It is also important in economic life. The modern economy is often referred to as the *attention economy*. Attention has an economic meaning in terms of your money being taken by those activities that capture your attention. Today's educational content requires students' in-depth attention. To grasp textbook material, students have to continuously focus on it. Whereas a child's daily life does not offer sufficient time to concentrate on just one kind of material. Mobile phones, social networks, the Internet, and television all keep students busy and dependent on a full-time basis. This results in students developing hyper-attention, that is, the ability to simultaneously focus on several things. Superficial knowledge becomes predominant, wiping away the deep knowledge necessary for proper education.

Emotionality becomes commercial

The traditional education system tends to suppress young people's emotions, keeping the latter away from the educational process. The educational content emphasizes the importance of students' rationality. The problem here is that students are emotional beings and their emotional development is important. Nevertheless, because emotions are ignored in the education process, they become conquered by the mass culture and various industries. If we take a closer look at various TV-series, computer games, social networks, we will see that those are nothing but activities built on the emotionality of children and young people. Thus, the youth's emotionality once ignored by the education becomes capital in other aspects of life. Moreover, since young people find emotionality-based activities more captivating and interesting than rationality-based ones, they tend to alienate themselves from school, college, or university. The registered low level of attendance at Armenia's high schools, colleges and universities is an evidence of the described phenomenon.

Moreover, emotionality-based manipulations do not let a young person perceive the world in its entirety. For a young person, the perception of the world shrinks and becomes confined to what he/she feels and personally experiences, which leads to egocentrism, unfounded self-confidence and indifference towards fundamental notions.

3.1.3 Importance of early childhood education

According to a UNICEF research, for every dollar spent on improving early child development, returns for any given economy can be on average 4 to 5 times the amount invested, and in some cases, much higher.⁸⁰ In that respect, money spent for the early development of children is not merely an expenditure but rather an investment. High quality early childhood education has an important role in preventing youth-related problems. Unfortunately, the post-independence years in Armenia saw the number of preschool institutions decrease, along with children's attendance. According to the RA Statistical Committee data, only 30.9% of children attended preschool institutions in 2017. The urban-rural divergence is still significant. In urban communities, 36.6% attend kindergartens, while in rural communities this figure is only about 20.6%.⁸¹ Preschool educational content is another major issue. There have been no complete studies on the quality of preschool

⁸⁰ https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_40748.html.

⁸¹ Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia in 2017, <http://armstat.am/am/?nid=82&id=2059>.

education. It is a well-known fact that preschool institutions offer strictly academic and outdated programmes. The low rate of children's enrolment in preschool institutions affects the primary school phase. There are vast differences between preparation levels among children in the first grade. Some kids start school after having studied the first-grade programme in advance, while some are not ready for school education at all. Such a situation places children in an unequal initial environment from the very beginning, which later results in significant differences. Pupils at primary and secondary schools in Armenia display low results.

This has been confirmed by the results recorded by Armenian schoolchildren in 2015 TIMSS international assessment. The assessment takes place in the fourth and eighth grades at school, in the field of Mathematics and Science. The assessment presents schoolchildren's results according to three cognitive areas: Knowing, Applying, and Reasoning skills. According to the results published on the Assessment and Testing Centre's website,⁸² Armenian schoolchildren have demonstrated the worst results in the tasks related to the Reasoning ability. Actually, Armenia is one of the countries with the widest gap between scores on Knowing and Reasoning.

Table 3.4 Armenian schoolchildren's results per cognitive domains (TIMSS, 2015)

GRADE	MATHEMATICS			SCIENCE		
	Knowing	Applying	Reasoning	Knowing	Applying	Reasoning
4th	494	475	458	445	440	435
8th	478	467	458	468	457	449

In accordance with TIMSS data, girls demonstrate better results than boys do.

Table 3.5 Results demonstrated by Armenian schoolchildren, by gender (TIMSS, 2015)

GRADE	MATHEMATICS		SCIENCE	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
4th	482	480	451	437
8th	475	469	470	452

The situation worsens in high schools, colleges, universities in terms of attendance issues. There are also problems related to the contribution of education to professional orientation. In Armenia, only towns and cities (and 2-3 villages) have high schools, which reduces rural residents' chances to be part of profession-oriented mainstream education. Besides, even high schools do not embrace all the available areas and subareas.

Despite a certain progress in the education sector, various research studies have raised issues related to gender stereotypes. In particular, persistence of patriarchal stereotypes can be found in textbooks and didactical materials. In addition, there are manifestations of gender-based discrimination concerning professions. For example, it is considered that girls are stronger in studying social sciences and liberal arts, while boys have more advanced life skills.⁸³ The above mentioned problems must be taken into consideration in the design of educational materials, professional orientation for boys and girls, implementation of educational programs, and ensuring their sustainability.

⁸² http://www.atc.am/level1_.php?id_2=163&id=34&cat_1.

⁸³ CEDAW/C/ARM/5-6, 13 April 2015. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention. Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013, Armenia, http://www.un.am/up/file/State%20Parties%20Report_CEDAW%205-6%20cycle.pdf.

3.1.4 Pillars of the future of education in Armenia

Research on current experiences in Armenia indicates that numerous effective programmes and initiatives are being implemented in the country. The promotion and institutionalization of these programmes will make it possible to shape a high quality education system. Below are several such programmes.

Combining study-research-practice skills in the education sector

One of the key issues in education is what and how to teach. In this respect, education in Armenia remains a channel of transferring a predominantly theoretical content. Higher education institutions still require lectures to be fully dictated and written in copybooks. The element of research is not yet fully integrated into the higher education sector. Moreover, there are no interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary forms of research. In this respect, UNDP's Integrated Rural Tourism Development project,⁸⁴ implemented in a number of Armenian provinces, seems to be very interesting. In the framework of the project, a working group has been formed in higher educational institutions operating in provinces: the group involves students from faculties of economics, history, tourism, finance and other professions. The team has an expert advisor, and professors are also involved. Within the framework of this project, students carry out research on communities in the given provinces. They conduct surveys with community residents and make professional observations. All of the results become the basis for creating tourism development products. This project is an interesting application of the education – research – practice combination. The project's transdisciplinary approach makes it possible to do scientific work that is not only based on theoretical theses but also stems from direct communication with community residents. Promotion of this approach in the educational sector will give young students an opportunity to participate in research work and shape practical skills throughout their study years.

Ensuring education proactivity

A proactive working style is not encouraged within Armenia's education system. Students are predominantly seen as passive participants of the educational process, required to respond to the tasks assigned to them. As modern technologies encourage participatory approaches, young students get especially interested in activities that require proactivity and undertaking initiatives. In this respect, Kolba Lab's⁸⁵ education-related start-up competition is quite exemplary. The competition gives an opportunity to various groups of people working in the education sector to come up with innovative ideas. As a rule, the education sector is driven by the approach of inputting ideas developed by higher authorities. This results in people becoming performers and responders, as opposed to initiators. Thanks to Kolba Lab's programme, numerous young and elder specialists presented nearly 70 proposals. Strengthening the process of putting forward initiatives is important, since the modern world endorses participatory approaches. Contemporary social entrepreneur Bill Drayton writes: "Development in prehistoric societies was so slow that the try-and-fail principle was sufficient for leading a society. With faster changes, a small segment of society took on the authority to make decisions. Today, when changes are even faster and social life is much more complex, it is no longer possible to be led forward by the decisions of small groups. Today, the planet needs a more flexible, creative, fast-paced and decentralized form of management."⁸⁶

Young persons as the teaching party

The traditional mentality behind the education system suggests that education comprises of two parties: teaching instructors and learning students. Moreover, these roles are not subject to changes. As a result of such a stereotypical perception of the educational process, students seldom get a chance to find themselves in the role of the teaching party. A few years ago, a Harvard University professor, Eric Mazur, received an award for giving his students an opportunity to teach one another. Seeing students as the teaching party not only boosts the development of their sense of responsibility but also contributes to better learning. Teaching is the best way to learn. The Armenian representation of UNFPA has had an interesting experience in this respect. In this organization, young people teach about SDGs to their peers, within the framework of the Y-peer programme. KASA Foundation has had a similar experience, wherein dozens of young people acted as club leaders, teaching human rights and foreign languages to their peers, discussing books with them, and so on.

⁸⁴ http://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-rural-tourism-development--.html.

⁸⁵ <http://www.kolba.am/en/>

⁸⁶ Drayton, William, *The Citizen Sector: Becoming as Entrepreneurial and Competitive as Business*. California Management Review, 2002, 44(3), p. 132.

Participatory approach to the quality of education

In Armenia's educational institutions, students' participatory mechanisms do not fully function yet. Although students have 25% presence within the higher education board of trustees, that involvement is merely a formality. As a rule, students vote in the manner dictated by the authorities at the top. Representation on the board of trustees and in student councils is not being used to raise questions about the quality of education. In this respect, an important role was played by the Restart initiative, which raised education-related questions and had actively participated in advancing of the Velvet Revolution.

One of the reasons why students are normally passive is their dependence on instructors in receiving grades; hence, it is not common that they display a demanding attitude towards the quality of education. Another factor causing such an attitude is that students do not have the slightest idea of what the quality of education actually is. In this regard, remarkable work is being done by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA). This Center is responsible for the accreditation process for higher education institutions in Armenia. Apart from local and international experts, this process also involves students, who are given a status of student experts. This gives students the possibility to directly participate in the accreditation process of higher education institutions. In 2017, Armenia also saw the formation of the national union of student experts, which brought together all the student experts in Armenia.



Box 3.2

Davit Petrosyan

25 years old, Member of the Restart student-civic initiative

In spring 2012, I began studying Political Science at the Faculty of International Relations at Yerevan State University. In 2013, I was drafted to the army. I served in two military units of the Republic of Artsakh, in Askeran and Martuni until 2015. After returning to civilian life, I tried to engage in various programmes and civic initiatives quickly. In 2016, I participated in the local elections as an observer from the Citizen Observer initiative. During the 2017 parliamentary elections, I worked as a coordinator with nearly 75 observers.

At the beginning of 2016, together with my friends, we started the “We want a discount!” initiative at YSU. The aim was to repeal the Rector's decision to cancel performance-based tuition discounts for students. The three-week struggle produced results, and the office of the Rector adopted a new policy that restored the discounts.

In autumn 2017, the RA Ministry of Defence submitted a draft law to the National Assembly, which significantly reduced the drafting deferment period. At that time, we started the “There WILL be deferment” initiative. During the movement, we had meetings with various high-ranking officials, held debates and discussions in different formats, went on strikes and hunger strikes. Negotiations with the government did not produce results, but due to the concession made in the government decision at that time, about 140 students received a deferment after the Revolution.

After “There WILL be deferment”, we started the Restart Student-Civic Initiative. This initiative aimed to reform the education system and universities with goals such as academic freedom, quality of education, transparent and effective management, dignified conditions for lecturers and students, autonomous higher education institutions, and student self-governance. The number of people joining Restart is gradually expanding, and they are continuing to resolve many problems.

In March 2018, I got involved in the *Merzhir Serzhin* (Reject Serzh) civic initiative. The goal was to force the resignation of then-President Serzh Sargsyan. On April 16, we initiated a strike at YSU, which soon spread to other universities. Student activism contributed to turning *Merzhir Serzhin* and the My Step political initiative into the Velvet Revolution.

Now I am still working at Restart, trying to target unresolved problems in the field of education.

Creative education

The essence of education in Armenia is theoretical. Students are normally expected to reproduce others' thoughts. Participants in the education process hardly produce any of their own results. However, the essence of people's motivation lies in creating something. In this regard, Yerevan-based *Real School* is currently in its test phase, implementing an intermediate vocational education programme. Learners at this establishment get directly involved in building their desks and chairs. They periodically participate in various experiments and acquire fundamental knowledge. In addition, a lot of attention is paid to technological education: students learn to create and test various devices.

3.1.5 Shortcomings in the education sector

The role of adults in educating youth

In Armenia, adults' perceptions of young people are not quite clear and are not always objective; adults are inclined to underestimate young people's potential. Adults often fail to take on a proper responsibility to develop the youth's potential. In this respect, young people are negatively affected by the fact that adults show little interest in self-development. Aristotle considered imitation to be an important human characteristic. Therefore, the majority of children and young people merely imitate adults, without learning anything. In Armenia, very few adults read books in public transport, parks, and family circles. Most adults, including teachers and instructors, reluctantly participate in additional training courses, unless those take place abroad. In families, all conversations are mostly about money, loans, emigration, TV shows, the difficult situation in the country, etc., which is why children hardly see any examples of adult learning. Armenia's learning environment is not sufficiently developed, and adults are responsible for that.

Most adults in Armenia believe that school, college and university are to be followed by work, marriage, having children, then having grandchildren and death. Whereas, the world has long emphasized the importance of the need to learn and study throughout one's entire lifetime, the so-called principle of lifelong learning. People are supposed to study not only when they are pupils, students or course participants. People are supposed to study continuously and be their own teachers. Today, emphasis is placed on the fact that people will have to frequently change their specialities and jobs along their lifespan.

In Armenia, the fact that adults do not study not only directly affects the situation when it comes to education, but also has a negative impact on the quality of our lives in general.

First, lack of studying affects human health negatively. Scientists have proven that individuals who constantly learn are better protected from a number of brain-related diseases. In one such piece of research, scientists observed two groups of people for about 20 years. Members of one group constantly studied – they read books, learned foreign languages, did mental exercises, took part in workshops. Members of the other group were not involved in any learning process. On reaching the age of 70, most of those who had not studied had manifested signs of brain-related diseases, such as dementia, Alzheimer's disease, etc. Unfortunately, in Armenia, very little emphasis is put on the usefulness of studying from the perspective of better health.

Another negative consequence of lack of learning is the fact that a society of non-learners cannot develop. When adults do not study, their brains quickly deteriorate. And since adults have the decision-making role in the society, the quality of political, managerial, economic decisions rapidly declines, negatively affecting the society's overall wellbeing. Many people in Armenia cease studying once they have received a certain status, position or degree. Some believe they already know everything. Others simply do not have time to study. Moreover, these very people make decisions regarding the most crucial issues.

International research results indicate that adults' education status in Armenia is not satisfactory. For instance, out of 125 countries, Armenia ranked at the 115th position in the 2019 Global Talent Competitiveness Index based on the lifelong education parameter. Armenia was the 108th based on the availability of high-quality specialists, and the 96th in terms of employees' professional development. Overall, according to that Report, human potential development rates in Armenia are very low: in that regard, we are at the 106th position out of 119 countries.

Non-formal and informal education in Armenia

Throughout the years after independence, numerous non-formal educational programmes have been implemented in Armenia. The participants of these programmes have predominantly been young people. Non-formal educational programmes are improved on an annual basis. In their earlier stage, these programmes were limited to a workshop format, whereas now they have a more systematized structure. For instance, the UN's Women in Local Democracy project in Armenia does not limit itself to the training courses format but launches multiple community initiatives that result in young people getting actively involved in their communities' lives, and that includes participating in local government elections and winning them. Similarly, World Vision Armenia has launched youth clubs in numerous communities of the country; their activities lead to the formation of start-ups and production, all of which have a serious impact on the professional orientation and welfare of young people residing in provinces. Training courses organized by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation have enabled young people to form an alumni union, the members of which meet on a regular basis to discuss possibilities of participating in serious political processes.

Informal education has also become popular. Young people acquire a lot of knowledge and skills through the opportunities offered by the Internet. However, there are serious issues in the non-formal and informal education sectors. There is no accreditation system for recognizing the results of those types of education. There is a lack of collaboration among groups and institutions, which promote non-formal and informal education. Even though the 2013-2017 Strategy and Action Plan for Additional and Ongoing Education adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science tackled these issues, there had not been any noticeable progress.

The environment of the educational institutions

High schools, colleges and universities in Armenia mainly serve as locations for taking classes and exams. Educational institutions have serious shortcomings in cultural and social programmes. When classes finish, most students leave the premises. Very few of them use libraries, reading rooms, halls, and lecture rooms located at their educational institution. Libraries close at the end of the working day, whereas they are open until very late hours in many educational institutions worldwide. Proving an environment for communication and exchange is supposed to be one of the major functions performed by educational institutions. Extracurricular activities can often give students more than the actual classes do. And even if there is any kind of internal communication inside the educational institutions, there is none between them. There is no option for inter-mobility, which could give students a possibility to take certain classes at other educational institutions.

Hence, the reformation of social realities will lead to an inevitable necessity for education system reform. Educational institutions are not just locations for taking classes and exams. They are supposed to serve as self-expression, communication and cultural platforms for the youth. In fact, Armenia has seen many success stories that could be widely applied in the education system. Nevertheless, most of the achievements have been registered in the non-formal and informal education sectors, and there has been no positive shift in the process of recognition of their results.

3.2 Youth health

Health is one of the most fundamental pillars in the development of a modern society. Children's health issues are especially important, since health-related problems at an early age can negatively affect a person's maturation and result in long-term negative consequences. Armenia is experiencing a deficiency in the health-related studies sector. Numerous important issues, such as psychological health or healthy lifestyle, have not been specifically researched.

A survey data on self-evaluation of health has shown that men, including young men, are more satisfied with their health than women. At the same time, responses to the questions could be connected with gender views and stereotypes, according to which, complaining does not befit men; they should be strong and tough. This type of attitude leads to many problems: men more rarely seek diagnostics, thus missing the possibility of starting to treat illnesses at their earlier stages, rarely admit depression and tell about stressful life. According to researchers, the understanding of what it means to be a "real man" that exists in society leads to a

situation when men view seeking medical assistance as admission of their own weakness. In addition, gender role conflicts negatively correlate with self-respect, intimacy, and satisfaction with marriage and positively correlate with anxiety. Men experience stress not only when they consider themselves unable to meet the requirements of their male role (for example, to make a successful career or to provide for the family), but also when the situation requires that they show a “non-male” behaviour (for example, to stay at home and take medical procedures).⁸⁷ All these aspects must be taken into account when organizing education on healthy lifestyle for youth.

From the youth health perspective, the following issues are of great importance: availability of and access to healthcare services, rates of applying to healthcare institutions, healthy lifestyle and healthcare education.

3.2.1 Access to health care services and institutions

There is currently a problem related to the physical availability and affordability of healthcare services. The majority of health care institutions specialized both in outpatient treatment and in inpatient treatment are located in Yerevan and, with a partial volume of service, in a several provinces. Therefore, a number of studies show a difference between the levels of availability of healthcare services in urban and rural residential areas. For instance, a number of RA medical institutions were visited within the framework of the Research on Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Armenia in collaboration with the RA Human Rights Defender’s office, as well as the 2015 UNFPA Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health Services programme.⁸⁸ The research indicated an imbalance between healthcare services in villages and cities/towns – some services were not available in villages; so, women had to travel to the nearest city.

According to the 2013-2014 research results of Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC), the use of preventive healthcare services by the adolescents is quite low. Around 43% of rural residents and 16% of urban residents have never visited their paediatrician or family doctor: 9% of 17-year-old Yerevan residents and 21% of the same age rural residents have never visited a dentist. In terms of rates of the use of preventive healthcare services, the difference between girls and boys is insignificant.

In their discussions, university students would normally say they did not remember the last time they had been to doctor. Those who go to see a doctor do so because of already existing health complaints. Preventive healthcare visits are not a common practice for young people. Educational institutions also disregard this issue. Students are not aware of healthcare services at their educational institutions. Some students mention that their blood pressure would sometimes be checked before physical training classes, but this was not a regular practice. The situation is also alarming at schools and other educational institutions, where medical check-ups are just a formality.

Hence, there are serious problems related to the availability and use of healthcare services in Armenia. The most predominant approach is still reflected in the belief that doctors are there for emergency cases. The integration of the internationally accepted friendly healthcare model is important for Armenia.

3.2.2 Healthy lifestyle and healthcare education

According to the Armenian National Institute of Health, the most widespread risk factors within the 15+ age group of the Republic’s population are as follows: daily use of cigarettes – 24% of the entire population (male – 50%, female – 2.3%), overweight and obesity – 49%, lack of physical activity – 17.5%, excessive use of alcohol – 8.2% (15% prevalence among male population).

According to the RA Government’s Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle strategic plan,⁸⁹ current lifestyle and behaviours result in over 25% of the overall burden of diseases. The main risk factors increasing the likelihood of developing diseases (cardiovascular diseases, tumours, external causes of death, respiratory and digestive system diseases) that will cause higher rates of death, illnesses and disabilities are all associated with lifestyle

⁸⁷ https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf, p.190.

⁸⁸ Available here: http://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Public%20inquiry%20report_arm_0.pdf:

⁸⁹ https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/arc_voroshum/2104/11/50-4_1ardz.pdf

and harmful behavioural habits. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is one of the most significant healthcare liabilities, and many pivotal and multi-level actions are required in that aspect.

Use of cigarettes and alcohol

Sociodemographic research on the use of cigarettes has clearly shown that smoking rates rapidly spike during the transition from the 15-19 to the 20-29 age group. As far as age is concerned, the peak smoking phase for men is associated with the age period of 30-39 years, after which it starts to decline.

In 2012, 23% of the population's 15+ age group smoked cigarettes on a daily basis, while in 2016 this percentage grew to 26.2%. In fact, the number of men smoking daily has increased from 48.7% to 53.4%, and the number of women smoking daily – from 1.3% to 2.3%. The number of irregular smokers has also grown.⁹⁰

According to an HBSC study, 20% of the surveyed 17-year-olds admitted to occasional smoking, and 11% to regular smoking. Around 26% of boys smoke on a regular basis, while 8% of girls have tried smoking, but only 2% smoke on a regular basis.

According to Friedrich Ebert's Independence Generation report, consumers who spend money on cigarettes in Armenia are mostly male (94.7%). 14.8% of the surveyed individuals admitted to daily smoking, while 3.5% of the respondents mentioned occasional smoking. A similar picture can be seen in relation to alcohol use – 11.2% admitted to regular use, while 46.6% mentioned occasional use.

The problem of smoking remains alarming. Even though various programmes have been implemented and healthy-lifestyle classes were integrated into schools, the large number of smoking adults still has its widespread impact on the youth.

Based on quantitative data, 36.9% of the surveyed young people find the use of alcohol unacceptable, 45.9% believe it is necessary for communication purposes, and 17.1% consider it acceptable. According to HBSC data, 30% of 17+ year olds take one portion⁹¹ of alcohol per week, and about 21% take 3 portions per week. In terms of frequent usage of alcohol, Armenia is statistically at a position that is higher than the international average rate.

Sexual life experiences

In the context of youth lifestyle, it is also important to focus on the specifics of their sexual life. Thus, 32.6% of young people surveyed within the framework of the Independence Generation research stated that they had not had any sexual relations, 35.4% had had it with one partner, and 23.1% with more than one partner (8.9% of the surveyed refused to answer). Equal division into those with sexual experience and those without was seen in the 20-21 age group. That age is the threshold, after which the number of those with sexual experience starts to grow, while the number of those without such experience declines.

Overall, gender-based categorization of the use of contraceptives suggests the following picture: 37.7% of the surveyed youth use contraceptives (condoms, pills, etc.); 18.5% of respondents do so on a regular basis; 7.6% of the surveyed were not aware of contraceptives, and 54.7% admitted to never using them. Moreover, contraceptives are mostly used by men. In terms of young people's positions regarding sexual desires, it is a popular belief that refraining from sexual desires is a matter of self-dignity for both genders – 43.3% of the surveyed believe so, and 27.1% emphasize that it is a matter of dignity especially for girls. Only 29.5% are against refraining from sexual desires – 14.6% see it as harmful for one's health, 6.7% consider it to be a form of psychological pressure, and 8.2% believe that refraining from sexual desires is an outdated notion.

The study conducted by UN Population Fund (UNFPA) indicates a controversial attitude of young people towards sexuality, sexual and reproductive health. On the one hand, regardless of how well-meaning women are and of whatever arguments and reasons they may advance, well over 80% of the surveyed respondents effectively deny women the right of control over their own bodies and sexuality and force them to conform to the norms and standards imposed by the resurgent patriarchal mentality.⁹² On the other hand, on the whole, younger respondents (at 18-24 age) are less susceptible to stereotypes regarding sexuality than older respondents. In contrast to male respondents, the proportion of the youngest female respondents agreeing

⁹⁰ Armenia's Demographic and Health Research. 2015-2016.

⁹¹ One portion is equivalent to 250ml of beer, 100ml of wine/champagne, 60ml of liquor, and 30ml of vodka/cognac/whisky.

⁹² https://armenia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MEN%20AND%20GENDER%20EQUALITY_Final_0.pdf, p. 26.

with the statements that reproduce stereotypes is the smallest.⁹³ However, it became clear that further public awareness campaigns and educational programs should be based on strong connection between sexual reproductive health and gender transformative approach, well-being and non-violence and non-discrimination.

Nutrition

Reducing extra consumption of sugar-rich beverages and processed fast food is viewed as a priority, since these products increase obesity problems in children. Even now, such food is still sold at numerous universities and vocational education institutions, despite being banned by law in these spaces. The problem of school nutrition has continuously been studied by the RA Human Rights Defender's Office, but no systematic solution has been found yet. Conversations with children in local communities visiting the Human Rights Defender's team in 2016-2017 revealed that their school cafeterias still sell sugar-rich fizzy drinks, crisps and other kinds of banned food. Although the RA Ministry of Education and Science, in collaboration with the UN World Food Programme, has been implementing the School Nutrition programme (which ensures that schoolchildren in grades 1-4 are given hot meals at school), the problem is still system-related and remains alarming in case of high-school students.

With a 2016 Decree, the RA Minister of Health approved a health-promoting policy related to the introduction of principles of healthy school nutrition and physical activity. The following material has been produced and published: "Healthy Nutrition for the School-aged" for educators, "Health of the Under-aged" and "Care for Your Child's Health" for the mothers of school-aged children. *Healthy lifestyle* is a mandatory subject taught in schools, but it appears to be just a formality and never produces real results. In high schools, colleges and universities, physical training classes are still viewed as unimportant. Educational institutions emphasize the importance of academic activities, while the healthcare component is treated as something secondary. Meanwhile, the modern world has been harbouring the "absolute education" model, which highlights the importance of healthcare and social components.



Box 3.3

Nerses Khachatryan

22 years old, COAF programme participant

During my school years, I participated in healthy lifestyle seminars and a club promoted by the Children of Armenia Fund. I can definitely say that the knowledge and skills I gained in the group have helped me a lot in my life.

In 2015, I began my service in the army and returned in summer 2017. While in the army, I served in Askeran as a medical instructor. In general, it is quite rare that someone with non-medical education can become a medical instructor. However, I was interviewed and tested for the position. During the interview, I had to explain how to stop bleeding. I was so confident in my knowledge that the interviewing doctor thought that I was a medical university student. So, thanks to the knowledge I gained in the Fund's healthy lifestyle seminars and club, I passed the exam and became a medical instructor. My sister studied at the medical university, and I used to borrow her pharmacology textbooks to read in my free time. Soon I was considered to be one of the best medical instructors in the military unit. Once a soldier from our regiment was wounded, and I had to provide medical help. I recalled what I learned in the healthy lifestyle group and quickly put a tourniquet on his leg. Some days later, that soldier said that my tourniquet saved his life.

When it was time to transfer during my service, regiment leaders would argue because they wanted me as their medical instructor. For me, my work was important and educational. I was happy that I was able to help my friends. I realize that all these experiences and opportunities would have been impossible without the Children of Armenia Fund's healthy lifestyle education.

⁹³ Ibid., p.214.

3.3 Environmental impact on health

Numerous and multifaceted studies have led the international scientific community, along with the World Health Organization, to the following conclusion. The health of the population depends on the following factors:

1. Environment (up to 20%);
2. Socioeconomic (up to 50%);
3. Genetic (up to 20%);
4. State of healthcare services (up to 10%).

These patterns are characteristic for “standard” situations. Nevertheless, when the state of one of the factors seriously deteriorates, its significance/influence noticeably grows.

Throughout the past decades, much emphasis has been placed on the understanding and description of the impact of climate change, increased disaster risks, environmental pollution, and degraded ecosystems on people’s health. Processes are being carried out with the aim of studying and preventing these phenomena, as well as reducing their consequences. A special attention is paid to children as an important and highly vulnerable group. Similar work has also been done with the support of UNICEF in Armenia. For Sustainable Human Development association has brought together 23 independent experts to collect, discuss, analyse and summarize the relevant international experience in the above-mentioned area, alongside the results of studies carried out in Armenia, relevant statistical data. Based on the above, the tam has developed recommendations targeted at the improvement of the situation.

For the past few decades, Armenia has seen a noticeable increase in temperature, the tendency for decline in precipitation levels has remained the same, while an 11.9% decrease in river flows is anticipated by 2030. Modern-day climate change tendencies can also have a negative impact on the volume and quality of water in Lake Sevan.

The lack of safe water may result in spread of intestinal infectious diseases, including outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

In Armenia, just like the rest of the world, the number of natural disasters, extent of economic damage and the number of human losses have significantly increased.

Heat waves have especially been evident in Yerevan, Meghri, and Ararat; their negative impact on human health has been documented in Yerevan.

Climate change may affect agriculture most significantly. The problem grows more serious as the desertification process continues in the regions of Aragatsotn, Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor, and as water levels drop because of the overuse of the Ararat Valley artesian water resources. Hence, the food safety issue becomes a matter of concern.

The calculated coefficient of correlation between ecosystem degradation data (climate change, vulnerability towards natural and man-made disasters, pollution of the environment, including air, water, soil, and plants, loss of biodiversity, density of tailings dams, desertification) and certain healthcare data (tumours, births with congenital anomalies, blood diseases and diseases of blood cell forming organs, number of children with disabilities), as well as demographic data (the general coefficient of natural growth of population) has equalled 0.58. This implies a significantly high probability of impact.

From the perspective of the impact of degraded ecosystems on population health (especially children’s health), Lori, Syunik and Yerevan face the biggest threats. In fact, environmental factors in Yerevan are multifaceted (Nubarashen toxic waste dump, a source of solid organic pollutants; the city’s waste discharge locations; drainage system imperfections; active near-city and even in-city mining locations that fill the city air with dust; deforestation of hillsides; construction condensation in the downtown area, vehicles, etc.), while the key problem in Lori and Syunik lies in heavy-metal pollution (Mo, Cu, Pb, Zn, Hg, Cd, Ni, Cr, As) of soil, water,

air, and food chain caused by mining industry products.

It is worth mentioning that high environmental risk levels in Lori have also been confirmed after a research by a well-known Czech scientific research company Arnike, with the participation of Armenian NGOs such as the Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE) and Ecolur.

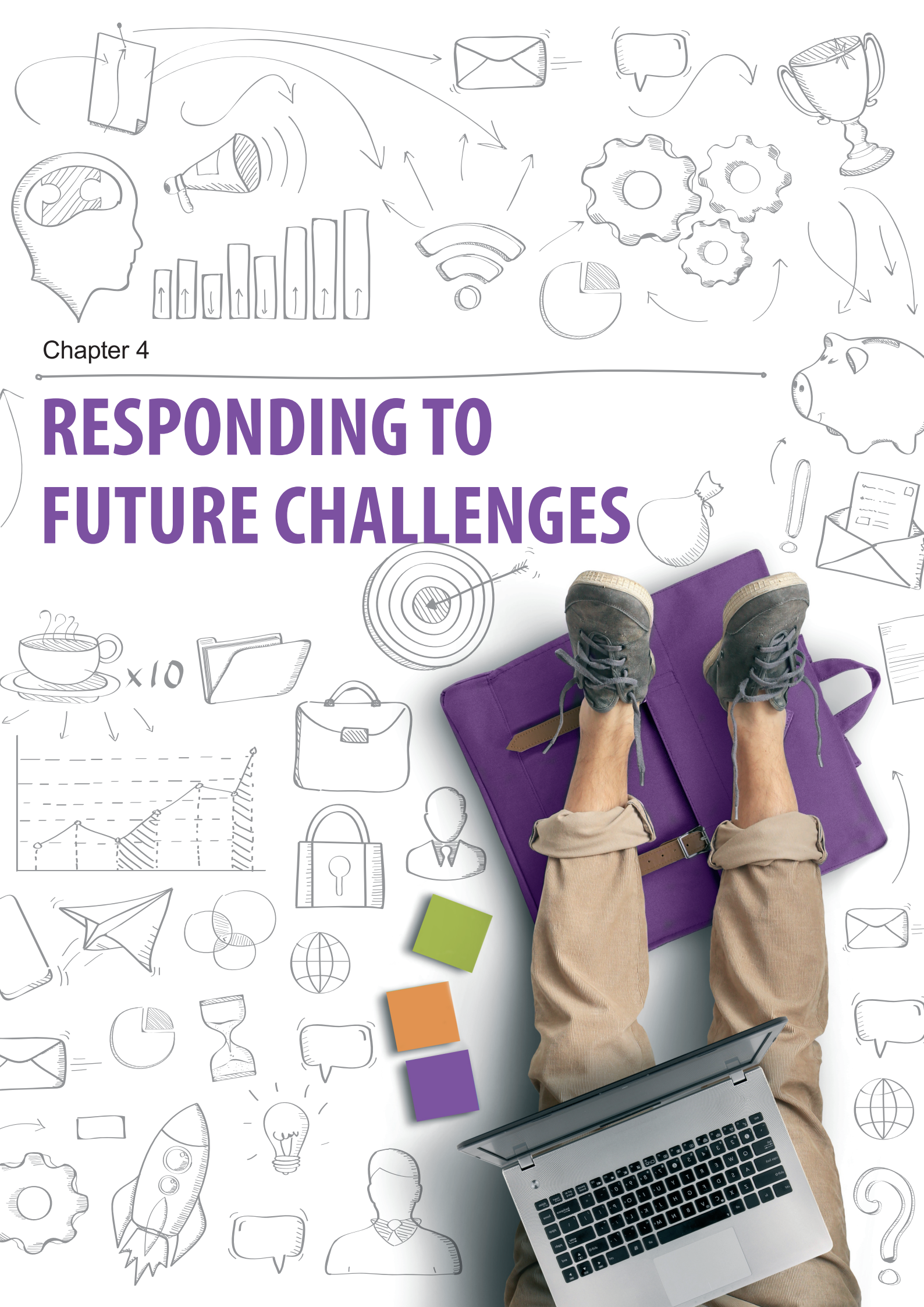
If we aim at having a healthy generation, then our lifestyle must comply with the following motto: “Patriotism has also an ecological flavour.”

Conclusions and recommendations

- The education paradigm is changing. Education must become more participatory and inclusive. Young people need to have a more active involvement in ensuring the quality of education. In the education system, young people should be viewed not only as the learning party, but also as the teaching party.
- Today, educational institutions mostly serve as locations for taking classes and exams. Collaboration between various educational institutions and a multifunctional use of study locations are among underdeveloped areas.
- Recognition of non-formal and informal education results remains non-systematized. Multiple initiatives are launched in this sector, but none of them is properly systematized.
- There are a number of educational programmes, which combine education, research and practice. Such programmes need to be promoted on in a systematic manner.
- One of the most efficient ways to resolve youth’s educational and healthcare issues is to place emphasis on early childhood development programmes.
- Healthcare issues faced by young persons are disregarded. It is necessary to carry out a comprehensive research of healthcare problems affecting youth.
- The rates of applying to healthcare institutions are very low. It is a priority to make high quality healthcare services available for and accessible to young people living in provinces and especially in rural communities.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation between the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Healthcare, and the Urban Development Committee, and other Ministries and state institutions with an objective to display more complex approaches and fully consider environmental factors in resolving the emerged key issues.
- Multiple pilot projects have been implemented with support from various international organizations operating in the Republic of Armenia, with objectives such as mitigation and adaptation to climate change, prevention of ecosystem degradation, green economy development. It is necessary to spread the positive outcomes of these initiatives across the country.
- Nationalization and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have started in Armenia within the framework of the UN-led global plan known as “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” It is necessary to optimally raise the whole population’s (and specifically young people’s) awareness of SDGs and ensure their involvement in these processes.
- Special attention should be paid to education for sustainable development, as well as the development of healthcare education.
- Public awareness campaigns and educational programs should be focused on specific gender needs of young women and men, meanwhile creating linkages between healthy lifestyle, reproductive health, people’s wellbeing, and freedom from violence and discrimination.
- Promotion of the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men must be secured in all educational programs, didactical materials, professional orientation of boys and girls as crosscutting issues, with a focus on personal and professional benefits.

Chapter 4

RESPONDING TO FUTURE CHALLENGES



4.1 Employment in education and the labour market

4.1.1 Transitions or planned reforms?

The primary issue, so often voiced on all public platforms and confirmed through numerous studies in the RA, is the broken link between the education system and the labour market.^{94, 95} It seems that when a young person responds “Potentially unemployed” to the question “What do you do?”, this implies that they are currently a student. The situation with youth poverty and unemployment is presented in the figures below.

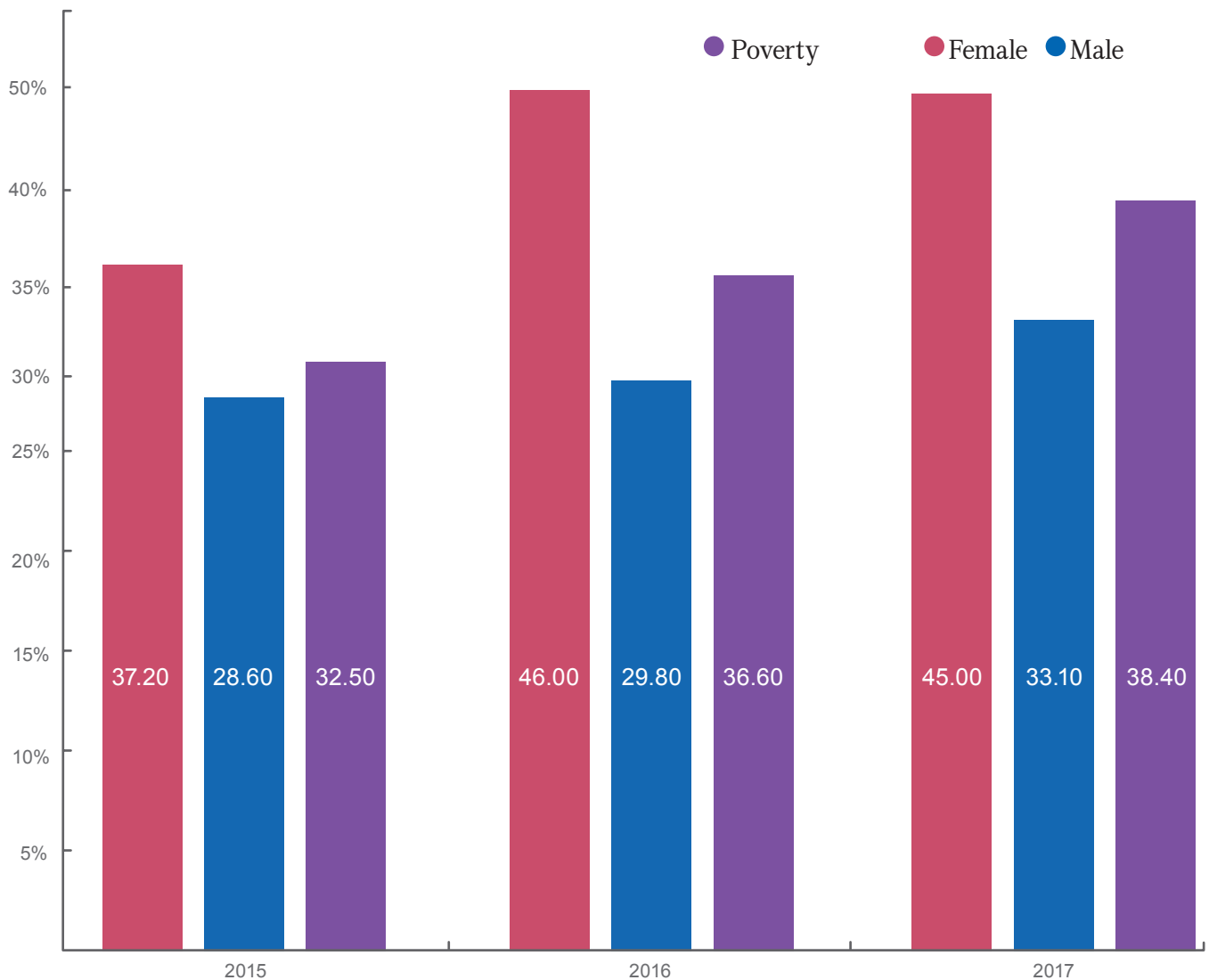
Figure 4.1⁹⁶ Poverty among youth (15-29 years old)



⁹⁴ Research on labour market demand: institutionalization prospects for the employer-young person-educational institution cooperation. Youth Events Holding Centre, 2014

⁹⁵ Key issues related to the RA youth's employment. Analysis of sociological studies / Yerevan, Youth Events Holding Centre, 2013/13

⁹⁶ Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, RA Statistical Committee, 2016-2018

Figure 4.2⁹⁷ Unemployment rates among youth (15-24 years old)

Institutional reforms are the key and the main solution out of this situation. However, the low levels of our institutional and collective thinking development (combined with the high levels of inactivity) lead to a state in which we speak of institutional reforms only post factum, once the situation has reached *a point of no return*.

To effectively tackle this issue, it is mandatory to study the fundamental changes in the education system and the labour market on a global scale, along with their potential development dynamics. It is worth mentioning that insufficient research material on the youth's education and employment is associated with statistical and quantitative studies of the current situation, based on the comparative analysis of situations throughout the republic's past turbulent decades.

Yet, this does not give us a full picture of the reality, since *short-term fragile-balance* situations get constantly disarranged by grave challenges: socioeconomic reforms after gaining independence, the 2008-2010 global economy crisis and, finally, the Velvet Revolution process that began in 2018. The existing research material hardly tackles global reforms in the education and labour market sectors. Yet this should be taken into consideration, as the upcoming years may reveal an absolutely different landscape and functional-structural picture for the labour market and the education system.

At the same time, the gender aspects of the labour market should be taken into consideration. According to official statistics, women dominated in all working-age population groups, except for 15-19 years old⁹⁸. Moreover, the gender unequal distribution is particularly aggravated at the 30 years old and higher age groups

⁹⁷ Labour Market in the Republic of Armenia, RA Statistical committee, 2016-2018

⁹⁸ <https://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2079>

(55/58 vs 45/41 etc.)⁹⁹. At the same time, in 2017, 47%¹⁰⁰ of women aged 15-75 had no job and did not look for a job, mainly being engaged in household's unpaid activity. Proportion of women and men was 48%:52% to the total of the 15-24 age group in the population out of labour force. In 2017 the difference of 1.6 times between inactivity rates of women and men is equivalent to 37.8 percent gender gap (GG) in inactivity rate. The GG is especially high in the 25 to 49 age groups (57.4%-65.6%), mainly due to engagement of women in family responsibilities (pregnancy, childbirth, child care, household workload, etc.). In contrast, among youth of 15-24 age groups 6.7% GG in inactivity rate is due to the massive involvement of youth in education, regardless of sex¹⁰¹.

Economic activity rate is much higher among men than women. Around 70.7% of the male and 52.8% of the female population aged 15 to 75 are employed or seeking a job. In 2017, gender gap (GG) in activity rates of women and men is 25.3 percent. GG is especially high in the 25 to 34 age groups (40%), mainly due to engagement of women in family responsibilities (pregnancy, childbirth, child care, etc.)¹⁰².

Underlying gender causes and implications of the mentioned issues need to be studied in-depth to ensure most gender targeted and evidence-based interventions to maximize its benefit equitably for young women and young men and avoid gender-negative effects of otherwise gender-blind interventions.¹⁰³

Strategic reforms can only be implemented by means of profound analysis of contemporary methods. Besides, it should be noted that modern ICTs offer broader opportunities for large-scale studies and extensive data analysis (especially big data technologies and analytical methods based on machine intelligence) that should necessarily be applied for the complex analysis of situations and subsequent strategy development.

Overall, it is important to mention that research and strategy development in both education and labour-market sectors must be implemented in close cooperation with the private sector, since the latter is the beneficiary that is primarily interested in the speedy solution to the aforementioned issues. It is the private sector that has the complex information on modern developments in the economic field and is ready to invest in the reforms aimed at those sectors.

4.1.2 System-formation factors

One of the priority issues that needs to be taken into account when thinking of a new education system and a new type of labour market is the fact that education-providing organizations (that are supposed to simplify the process of youth admission to the labour market), education-service consumers and all adjacent establishments are still based on the remnants of *industrial-period or Soviet-time mechanisms*. This phenomenon of information society structure has become one of the most important factors regulating social life, and disregarding its consequences can lead to quite a negative outcome. Meanwhile, inter-sector policy documents related to the youth and youth policy demonstrate a rather occasional and non-systematic approach to this issue.¹⁰⁴

One of the most important issues relates to the field of motivators that guide young people and their parents when it comes to choosing a type of education and services. Choices are also influenced by young people's expectations when integrating into the labour market and their ideas about the factors that are going to be the indicators of their welfare and general satisfaction.

The phenomenon of human happiness and welfare was a subject of scientific research even back in the 1960s. However, it has been studied even more thoroughly during the past decade, when various international and national development programmes faced grave challenges in different parts of the world.

⁹⁹ <https://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2079>, p. 63

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit., p.64.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2079>, p.66

¹⁰² <https://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=81&id=2079>, p. 69.

¹⁰³ Gender Equality Strategy UNDP Armenia Country Office 2016-2020

¹⁰⁴ RA Youth State Policy Concept Paper, 2014

High-school focus group students were asked what they needed for their happiness. One of the students said the answer, in his case, was extremely easy: “A suitcase filled with money.” Surely, this approach did not appear from nowhere; it was shaped by the sociocultural setting (mass media, various information sources, etc.), in which the youth’s worldviews are shaped.

In this respect, the welfare model based on GDP growth is quite outdated and it is now extremely important to build the youth’s education and labour market sectors according to the newest research data. The research results produced by the Youth Studies Institute show¹⁰⁵ that most of young people in the RA measure their welfare by their salaries or their social status; this is something promoted by the stereotypes in their socio-cultural environment and the key messages from the information sector. Whereas there are scientific studies (for instance, the 75-year-long Harvard study of adult development¹⁰⁶) proving that material resources play a secondary or even a tertiary role in ensuring personal welfare and satisfaction. More emphasis must be placed on harmonious relations with the environment, which consist of a few factors (socially good relations – not with a large quantity but deep and positive – as well as the presence of reliable people around, and so on).

The motivators’ sector as a system-constructing factor is also manifest in the formation of the educational services market. Often, when choosing an educational institution or a profession for their children, parents are not guided by their children’s preferences or strengths, but by a brief list of high-status specialities that does not match the labour market’s demand whatsoever. Similarly, when making their service-list, educational institutions are not guided by the objective picture of the labour market or the necessary awareness index, but by consumers’ unfounded expectations. Consequently, the education system cannot and does not even attempt to give the youth *any direction* on their way to the labour market.

This situation has to change. Work must be done in regard to the modernization of the state strategy, educational institutions and support mechanisms, as well as the formation of a new public consensus. This work must be combined with complex processes inside the mass media sector, so that changes can affect the awareness level of larger segments of the society and their attitudes towards these issues.

4.1.3 Development hypothesis

The next issue that needs to be tackled within the context of redefining the education and the labour market is the problem of the main hypothesis that accompanies development processes in the country. In other words, *what is the human-related and country-targeted vision confirmed by the social consensus, which must shape the logic and directions for development and reform processes in societies?*

The main hypothesis regarding the education system has been inherited from the industrial period and it states that education prepares the youth for “entering life”, i.e. the labour market. From this perspective, education is seen as a preparation phase, not an actual part of “life”. Many young people spend 1/4 (approx. 18-20 years) of their lives in this stage and often fail to receive the promised reward, the good job, which was supposed to ensure their welfare.

Inside the industrial society, the linear model of an individual career (pupil - student - lab assistant - junior scientific worker - senior scientific worker - academician - death) is facing significant changes, since more and more reforms are happening in the career and activity sectors - something that would have been seen as material for anecdotes in the past (stock broker Gauguin travels to Tahiti and dedicates himself to art). It is necessary to discuss the possibility of non-linear development models and mechanisms for their efficient implementation.

The next issue that needs to be discussed is the education system’s working area and its expected outcome. In the industrial society’s education system, most processes are aimed at the development of individuals’ intellectual abilities and skills that may turn out to be useful in the labour market. Nowadays, many education-sector theorists highlight the importance of combining work in the intellectual sphere with the

¹⁰⁵ Key issues related to the RA youth’s employment. Analysis of sociological studies / Yerevan, Youth Events Holding Centre, 2013

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/>

development of so-called “emotional literacy” or “emotional intelligence”. In this scenario, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the basic literacy concerning the emotional sphere, alongside the ways to work with it, informational and emotional hygiene, aesthetic upbringing and, overall, the fundamental issue of being a harmoniously developed human being. The latter sees “being human” not as an abstract notion assigned by default through a birth certificate, but as a work process aimed at fully realizing human potential and becoming optimally useful to humanity.

In this context, it is essential to also speak about those basic skills that cannot be disregarded in the process of achieving serious success related to education and work, up to the point of risking the loss of opportunities to be involved in those sectors. Those are as follows: attention, concentration, memory, reflection, empathy and basic skills to manage one’s personal mental and sensory fields. Although these seem to have been included in the educational programmes, there has still been a large increase of issues worldwide caused by their lack in the past decade. In the information consumerist society, with its utterly polluted energy-information field, these skills, on the one hand, are under attack, while on the other hand, their presence and power make it possible to keep the main life priorities and strategy development issues under personal control.

4.1.4 Labour market transformations

The past decade’s intensive developments in the sectors of informative communication technologies, industry computerization and automatization have led to even quicker changes in the employment situation picture. Apparently, from the long-term perspective, these are going to have a big impact on both education and the labour market. Even back in 2013, a US-based piece of research by Frey and Osborne¹⁰⁷ showed that 47% of jobs and specialities in the USA are going to be automated or eliminated within the next two decades. Hence, most students currently study specialities that will no longer exist in the near future.

Although the pictures of the developed world and the developing world are different in this regard, and there will also be differences in terms of the transformation rate, yet these processes will inevitably take place in Armenia in any case. Similarly, changes in strategies and programmes related to education and the labour market need to be made right now, to avoid ending up with the post factum approach to problem solving discussed in the previous section.

For example, a young taxi driver has a number of apps in his phone (or phones) to check different services and resolve rather serious optimization issues by deciding which of the services will be more beneficial to work with at that particular time and in that particular location. The daily income of a driver who has not adopted such an approach and works with only one service will be 2-3 times smaller than that of the above-mentioned driver.

While automatization and computerization were only associated with mechanical types of work just a decade ago, the past five years have shown that the growing success of artificial intelligence means that jobs requiring flexibility and judgment will be replaced by a work style based on complex thinking. There is literature that discusses¹⁰⁸ the perspective that defunct specialities and jobs, once replaced by technology, will be counterbalanced with a new type of job that we currently have no specific idea about. This means the collapse of the labour market can be avoided. However, even if this hypothesis turns out to be true, serious research is still required for studying development approaches and possible scenarios. Concurrently, work must be done for modernizing educational programmes and changing public perceptions. Only in such a case will we have a youth sector equipped with up-to-date knowledge, skills and approaches within the next few decades; that kind of youth will be able to rapidly adjust to newly-shaped realities.

In this respect, it is extremely important not to be limited to little or big changes on the list of specialties, but to review the entire field of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is essential to realize that changes will also reach the already existing employee-employer relations, management tools and methods, motivator areas and a number of previously unshakeable pillars related to workplaces and work coordination.

¹⁰⁷ The Future of Employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerization? Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, September 17, 2013

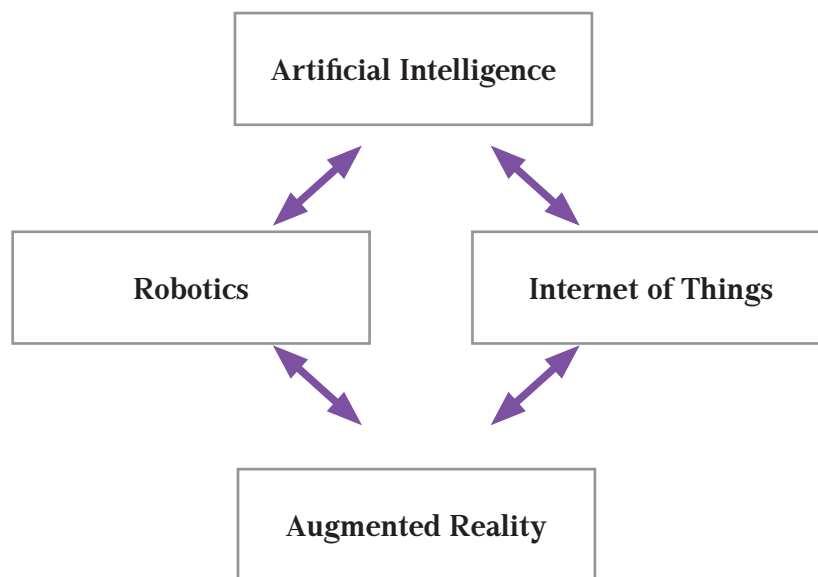
¹⁰⁸ Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future, International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2017

For instance, challenges are faced by the long-term logic behind employee-employer relations, which used to mean that one employer could affect a person's whole-life work experience.¹⁰⁹ Nowadays, some employers are already losing their monopoly over their employees.

The same pattern can be seen for numerous self-employed (freelance) young workers who no longer work according to the “my office and my desk” model.

Overall, if Generation X110 was focused on consuming, having and satisfying personal needs, then Generation Y representatives already intend to prioritize learning, communication and using, as opposed to gaining ownership of things guided by the personal-property principle. They prefer to have a chance to use and rent – something that in its own turn will have a big impact on labour-market and business-management schemes (application of sharing-based business models, premises for co-working, and so on).

However, this field's biggest changes will be influenced by the four key sectors described in an International Labour Organisation report: these are going to fundamentally change the labour market picture within the next decade (Appendix A). The sectors are as follows: Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Internet of things and Augmented reality¹¹¹.



In this rapidly changing situation, it is impossible to underestimate the role of upgraded systems for professional orientation. Not only will this kind of system have to consider the state of a problematic sector (i.e. have a reactive nature) but also embrace analytical material about possible transformation scenarios, stem from a general vision for the country's development, take on both issue-resolving and future-building roles.

When speaking of systems of labour-market development planning and professional orientation, the discourse normally outlined for Armenia and the rest of the world involves keeping the right balance between developing technological and non-technological trends in the process of strategy initiation.

In today's business circles, the IT sector's list of success stories is fairly long, and technological enterprises continue to rapidly develop and achieve success. In Armenia, we have the Yecup smart thermos project by a team of young engineers; its Indiegogo¹¹² campaign raised over US\$ 400,000. Another enterprise, PicsArt Studios, received over US\$ 45 million in investments.¹¹³

Surely, the role of technological start-ups in an information society is hard to underestimate, but we also need

¹⁰⁹ Jeannet-Milanovic, A.; O'Higgins, N.; Rosin, A. 2017. "Contractual arrangements for young workers," in N. O'Higgins (ed.): Rising to the youth employment challenge: New evidence on key policy issues, pp. 113–162.

¹¹⁰ "Millennials and the Sharing Economy: European Perspectives", 2017, Giulia Ranzini, Gemma Newlands, Guido Anselmi, Alberta Andreotti, Thomas Eichhorn, Michael Etter, Christian Hoffmann, Sebastian Jürss, and Christoph Lutz, Report from the EU H2020 Research Project Ps2Share: Participation, Privacy, and Power in the Sharing Economy

¹¹¹ Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a better working future, International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2017

¹¹² <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/yecup-365-your-all-season-smart-mug>

¹¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PicsArt_Photo_Studio

to understand that such organizations' potential to generate jobs is strictly specific and not large enough. For instance, Instagram, which was bought by Facebook for one billion dollars in 2012, had only 13 employees and 9 investors at that time.¹¹⁴ From this perspective, the impact of a few small community-based social enterprises on the process of social reforms can be much greater than that of any of the aforementioned technological start-ups.

4.1.5 Business socialization

During the 2008-2010 global economic crisis, the topic of the business sector's positive social mission started to become unprecedentedly popular. This sector had previously been discussed, but on a fragmental and speciality-related levels. During the crisis, the business sector, along with the international community and state governments, began to take systematic steps towards promoting social impact investment.

Since 2015, the UNDP has been carrying out a project aimed at formation of a social impact investment institute that will lead to establishing a foundation coordinating social impact investments, along with its social impact planning and measuring structure. An incubation and acceleration programme for social impact start-ups has already been launched. Specifically, an innovative mechanism is being put into practice in order to boost cow milk production for Shirak region farming economies; the funding for this mechanism, too, will be based on the principle of measurable social impact.

Concurrently, the social entrepreneurship sector has become an inseparable part of the economic and social development agenda. A more systematic approach has been demonstrated in the sector of corporate social responsibility. And, all in all, businesses have started to favour structures that have more social missions.

Social impact investments give both big and small investors a possibility to be a part of positive social transformation processes. This is very important from the human perspective, since humanity is facing such global challenges as, for example, climate change. The youth can see that the situation is becoming more critical, and if no measures are taken, catastrophic consequences will be inevitable, i.e. the probability of their generation facing that catastrophe is greater than ever before. Social impact investments are an ideal tool for implementing systematized large-scale programmes in that field. In the RA, of course, the development of the social investment institute is still in its embryonic phase. Yet, considering the potential of the Diaspora and especially the Diaspora's young business segment, a lot of attention must be paid to this sector.

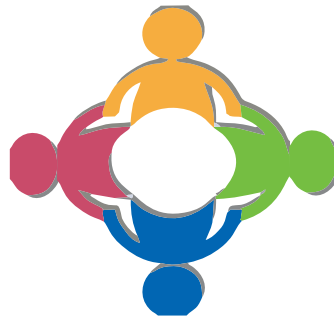
In particular, interesting opportunities are created at the crossroads of new platforms and technologies such as various crowdfunding outlets, blockchain technologies, which expand all over the world and fundamentally transform the financial market, the world of financial services, social entrepreneurship, AI-based technology and so on. By definition, young people are more prepared and open for these technologies requiring a new mentality. Yet, there will be no results if their preparedness remains at today's level and if no strategy-facilitating programmes aim at those targets.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-employees-and-investors-2012-4>

Definitions



“Social impact investments” are investment schemes supporting businesses that prioritize not the business ideas with a low-risk and quick-income nature which do not invest in solution of social issues but those with services and products with positive social impact.



“Social entrepreneurship” is an entrepreneurial activity that puts the solution of a social problem at the core of its business model, and which dedicates most of its profit to positive social transformation and solution of social challenges.



By saying corporate social responsibility we mean the functions of a business enterprise that express the company's responsible approach towards their immediate community or more global issues, when the company allocates a certain portion of its profits to the solution of economic, social, environmental, or other problems with public interest.

4.1.6 Youth economic empowerment

It is problematic that young people see their workplace as somewhere where they go to sell their competencies. From this perspective, the term “labour market” itself comprises a past-society atavistic implication (namely, a place where work is sold or bought). In modern society, people need to understand where they are, and whether their talents, desires and skills optimally match the process of meeting their individual development needs (personal, economic, network-related, mindset-related, etc.) or community/social needs. So seeing businesses searching for their social missions is not unusual. People, especially young people, no longer want to waste time on meaningless stuff. The issue of *meaning* itself must be a priority. What is the meaning of my work to me? And what is its meaning to others?

Now, it is worth looking at ways and results of youth economic empowerment on the basis of a few concrete examples from Armenian reality. Obviously, this analysis is far from complete. It is important to highlight that the key target of youth economic empowerment is the youth themselves. And examples from various regions of Armenia show that the process of ensuring a positive shift in local communities holds great potential.

The impact of such programmes and support mechanisms is manifested first of all through the creation of jobs and temporary employment opportunities, especially in regions where work-away jobs are commonplace.



Box 4.1

Artush Khachatryan

35 years old, Community mobilization and economic development

Artush Khachatryan, is the head of Gegharkunik province-based Mountain Goods social enterprise. He established his business with the support of the European Union, within the framework of the Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship programme. “I consider one of the most important achievements of my social enterprise is the fact that one of my young friends decided not to emigrate for seasonal work. This is because we provided employment during the first year,” Mountain Goods provides employment to 65 families in the community. In the eyes of these families, these programmes are especially good, as they unite family members of different generations and sexes in production or other economic processes, demonstrating how solidarity can be encouraged in the economic sector.

A new kind of impact will be discussed based on the examples of social entrepreneur Hripsime Petrosyan’s Female Tractor Driver (Krashen village, Shirak region) and Gohar Mnatsakanyan’s Bohem Studio-Teahouse (Sevan, Gegharkunik region). Both are located in RA regions where gender-related stereotypes are quite a serious issue, and both of them directly defy those.



Box 4.2

Gohar Mnatsakanyan

34 years old, Women economic empowerment and Gender stereotypes

Bohem Art Studio Teahouse was founded by Gohar Mnatsakanyan. It is supported by the European Union within the framework of the Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship programme.

The program, has already been successfully implemented. The goal is to establish a centre for creative thinking and art in Sevan. When the project effectiveness monitoring team tired Gohar with their endless

questions, she said, “Do you know what our biggest social impact is? It is that every day the people in Sevan see that a girl with long hair can run a café and stay there all day.”



Box 4.3

Hripsime Petrosyan

33 years old, Female tractor driver from Krashen village

In the framework of a programme implemented by the KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation with the support of the Dutch Embassy, Hripsime Petrosyan decided to address the question that some professions are traditionally considered “feminine” or “masculine”. Within the project framework, she bought a tractor, learned to drive it, and carried out agricultural work, including work that had not been done in their village in recent years. The program is still active, and the Female Tractor Driver example has brought change, not only in this community but also in other regions of Armenia. Hripsime also set up a chicken farm. She has given the tractor and the farm to her parents. She is now focusing on learning new skills and developing more projects.

It should be stated that various incubation and acceleration processes have been spreading in the past decade, and these boosts the entrepreneurship capacities of diverse target groups in the RA and support from a variety of business ventures. Studying these processes reveals that their key participants are young people. And this is natural, since young people are society’s dynamic and vigorous segment that is ready to initiate and implement new programmes. The past few years saw the mobilization of a sufficient base of trainers and educational resources, which give the local and international key players in this field an opportunity to launch various events for facilitating business education and initiatives.



Box 4.4

Robert Ghukasyan

39 years old, Entrepreneur, Kalavan

As part of the new approaches in 2017, it is important to mention the elections in Chambarak community. Though there was a “relevant” candidate for the RPA, the elections took a different turn. Several young businessmen from the region, together with their friends, decided that these elections must differ from the previous ones. Two of them, Artush

and Robert, were awarded gold medals for their important contribution to community development by the former President of the country. These awards, combined with professional work in the field of media, as well as existence of truly excellent community-based businesses, which provided them with popularity in the community, resulted in the defeat of the RPA candidate and election of a new dynamic young candidate- Vazgen Adamyan- nominated by the mentioned team. There is an interesting link between economic empowerment and political-civic participation of young people, something that should also be taken into account when assessing the potential for these processes.

One of the major problems in this field is that there are programmes that have not been systematized but are nonetheless implemented by different institutions, which often work with the same people inside the same communities. This sometimes results in a decrease of interest and waste of resources. A coalition of

national and international key players, alongside programme systematization, will greatly contribute to raising the effectiveness of youth economic empowerment programmes. The above-mentioned examples support the thesis that principal policies and programmes are supposed to be concentrated not on the creation of more jobs *for* young people, but on the preparation and support of such young people who will create a lot of jobs *themselves*...

4.2 Unused resources and opportunities

4.2.1 Intergenerational dialogue

In young people's lives, an important role is assigned to the phase of getting a chance to think and act independently. When a young person passes into a period of responsibility for themselves in their life, it becomes necessary in some ways to cut the "energy and information umbilical cord", which has coordinated nourishment and management functions. This is mainly reflected through parent-child conflict in various formats.

This process is normal and regular, still the major part of the planet's population has a very low level of knowledge about this aspect and its patterns, or about the management of such processes. For this very reason, when issues arise in this sector, parent-child relations in some western cultures get interrupted at a certain age. Upon reaching a certain age, young people are off to enjoy their freedom, and the entire responsibility regarding the rest of their lives lays on them alone.

Another noteworthy phenomenon is that cases of disappointment in the guidelines existing in the outside world today and experiences of a lack of support or perhaps even misguidance from one's elders lead to a feeling of self-sufficiency where young people end up doubting everything that comes as advice from the older generation. Defence mechanisms function uninterruptedly and everywhere. This is also manifested through certain anti-hierarchic impulses towards any authority or opportunity. Meanwhile, the answers to many questions could have been received with the support of the older generation.

This situation has become especially widespread during the past few years, upon entering the information age, when the package of factors from our previous society expanded due to the newly-shaped digital gap between the different generations. Operations that need to be carried out in the IT sector are natural and easy to the new generation, while the same issues result in great complications when faced by the older generation.

All of these factors can be viewed as cracks and problems, but a look from another perspective might help one discern an immense resource. Older generations have been accumulating a great deal of knowledge and wisdom in every situation of their lives, and, at a relation-breaking point, those reserves simply find themselves in a virtual trash bin and eventually get expelled from the global civilization's field of operations. On the other hand, in the communication technologies sector, the youth's high-level skills often lack a foundation of profound knowledge, and this may eventually lead either to a chaotic long-lasting navigation in the informational ocean or to a number of shallow "projects" with no serious systemic impact.

One of the most essential issues lies in the knowledge monopoly model, which is still prevalent in the generations that lived in the previous society. This often results in the regular use of the hierarchic knowledge-transfer model known as "top down", wherein the elderly pass knowledge down to the youth. Today, when the knowledge field is no longer absolutely monopolistic, this transfer model is no longer legitimate; thus, it would be right to develop such systems, in which two, three and even four different generations would be able to *exchange* their experiences with one another and implement joint "projects" together. This way, everybody will be able to contribute with their strengths, and different generations' accumulated resources will be used for a joint venture. Moreover, there will be no monopoly-holding party in terms of developing agendas and scenarios; the agenda and priorities for the society's progress will be generated on the basis of an inter-generational consensus and joint interest.

4.2.2 Youth diversity

The early 1990s saw the renewal of the RA youth policy sector; new principles, policies, structures and programmes were developed in support of state work with the youth. At first view, it may seem to be a rather long period of time, almost a quarter-century. However, when analysing that period, we must not forget that the youth policy was being shaped alongside rather heavy processes of establishing a newly independent state, and that neither the youth policy nor youth-related programmes were ever on the list of the state's priorities. The youth policy and programme sector did not cover all types of young people in the RA. The main programmes were aimed at the so-called "organized" youth (those who, for one reason or another, were involved in student, social or political organizations), as well as those young people who communicated with them, yet their number was not great, either.

Therefore, the above-mentioned group constituted a very small part of the RA's entire youth sector. Without a precisely specified inclusion component, any of such youth policies and programmes packages will be inclined to reproduce the same situation. Hence, it would not be right to expect automatic expansion of those policies and programmes.

Meanwhile, it is evident what a colossal social, political, civic, cultural and economic potential is concealed in the youth segment that has remained unaffected. There are also multiple groups with whom working has traditionally been considered impossible or difficult, for one reason or another. These include the considerable segment of young people who do fixed-term military service in the national army. Another group consists of young mothers who are mostly left out of numerous social life areas during pregnancy and several postnatal years. One more group consists of the young people who are regularly involved in labour migration processes, particularly those living in the regions.

**Box 4.5****Nazeli Tovmasyan**

25 years old, YES Armenia programme

I am Nazeli Tovmasyan, an economist by profession. I graduated from the Management Department of the French University in Armenia. I continued my studies at the College of Europe in Belgium, earning a Master's degree in European Economic Integration and Business.

After returning home, I learned about the projects of the European Union's Young Experts Programme (YES Armenia). I immediately became interested in the programme. It was challenging, but at the same time inspiring to know that I could make a small contribution to the development of state policy. This work also contributes to the development of our country. Honestly, working in the state system did not seem attractive at first compared to working in the private sector. Even though I had many doubts, I decided to explore the public sector through my own experiences. Despite receiving attractive long-term offers from the private sector, I chose this exciting one-year experience in public services. I had the opportunity to be involved in the activities of the Ministry of Education and Science. I worked as a coordinator of the project, Development of a New Model of Public School Management System.

The Young Experts Programme was a unique experience for me, as it allowed me to explore the public sector. I was able to take a fresh look at the process of public policy development and implementation of new ideas. The trainings and seminars organized within the framework of the Young Experts Programme contributed to both the development of programmes and to our own professional development as experts. The plan is already in its final stage. Some provisions of the improved state school governance system, developed together with the Ministry's experienced specialists, are already in the process of being implemented. The idea that my contribution to the design and implementation of educational reform will contribute to the creation of a better education system in Armenia motivated me to work more diligently. Each one of us on the team is incredibly enthusiastic, and we are excited about the work we have accomplished in the state institutions. The experience I gained in the public sector, interactions with different stakeholders, and multi-faceted work enabled me to develop new skills that will help me to be more competitive in the next stages of my career.

I think the state system definitely needs the insight and fresh ideas of the youth. I hope that, in the future, young professionals will be involved in the work of the state system and contribute to the most critical development processes in our country.

Current policies and programmes hardly include those subcultural groups of the youth that have their own self-organization modes and are not even aware that by definition our country has programmes and support schemes aimed at *all* young people. The involvement levels of the region-based and rural youth in the state youth policy and programme sector is particularly low. Some international organizations work in this sector; but they also have a limited number of "their beneficiaries", which in turn are a very small percentage of region-based young people.

All in all, the main bulk of youth policies, programmes and work tools is not modified for working with diverse groups of young people. Therefore, new mechanisms, inclusive methods and work tools need to be developed. Only then will it become possible to implement gradual work focused on including the resources of the youth's most diverse groups.

4.2.3. Navigation systems

A great deal can be said about various global and local factors affecting young people's lives, the mechanisms of interaction with them, their problems and potential, and other private sectors. But all the work-related solutions mostly depend on the worldview model, the value system, the orientation/navigation system and the development scenario that are acceptable and desirable from the perspective of young people themselves. In other words, what is the operational system in the youth's consciousness that affects their tactic and long-term decisions, how is that system shaped, and what are the impact factors?

The first issue that needs to be discussed in this context is whether mechanisms are to be developed and applied for contributing to the formation of the youth's specific value system, orientation guidelines and priorities. In post-Soviet Armenia (as well as in all the post-Soviet republics), after the Soviet Union's over-ideological system and the rather difficult process of the Union's collapse, defence mechanisms were born in response to ideologies and ideological work. It was widely believed that people's value system was their private matter and that policies and state programmes had nothing to do with it. Perhaps this kind of approach appeared to be relevant and legitimate for the formation of a liberal-democratic society and the establishment of a newly independent republic, yet the issue here is absolutely beyond the models of "black and white" or "to have or not to have".

For example, let us have a look at two powerful advertisement flows with quite an impressive status in the information sector. Those are advertisement flows from betting services and various credit loan services. Without any in-depth analysis of what losses young people face as a result of being caught in advertisement traps, let us merely observe what sort of attitudes and values the aforementioned flows promote. The betting-service advertising system promotes the mentality of "do nothing, win a lot". The loan-service advertising system promotes the mentality of "having what you can't afford". Both systems (the credit one with its robbing interest rates and the betting one with its accurately calculated algorithms), in the long run, do not result in benefits, and are not fair as such. Their principal harm is the promotion of the aforementioned orientation marks, whether young people will use the service or not. Another example is the promotion of overconsumption, when multitudes of young people enter the iPhone 3-iPhone 4-iPhone X-iPhone 785 pointless race, reducing their funds and chances to assert themselves through self-improvement to zero.

The current-day information sector is overloaded with energy-information flows from various motivators. Numerous players continuously work in this sector, while the list of informational guidance and manipulation work tools is daily enriched with new theoretical and methodical additions. Therefore, the fact of being unaffected by this sector does not mean allowing young people to independently shape their navigational system all by themselves; it means abandoning them inside the sectors of business, political manipulations and global geopolitical influences. In this regard, factors boosting consumer society values are especially powerful. This normally has its consequences.

Another important factor in this sector is the issue of role models and heroes. It is essential to understand what kind of mutations the youth's value system was exposed to back in the Soviet period (the consequences of which are still manifest through older generations), and what the state of their value system is currently like. What guides the youth's current and future development scenarios and priorities?

Having Kirk Kerkorian and Monte Melkonian side by side as Armenian national heroes can cause rather serious damage and ambivalence in young people's consciousness, since those two persons were quite different in terms of their biographies and value systems, and it is rather difficult for a young person (or a person of any age) to find a reconciling solution in order to fill that crack between the values. So it is important to understand who are supposed to be the role models and heroes in modern-day Armenia and how we are supposed to go about that process. Alternatively, someday, we too might perhaps find ourselves in a country where the youth's heroes list would consist of an illiterate oligarch, a "mobster", a football player, a porn star, or superheroes such as Superman or Spiderman.

The next issue that is important to discuss within the context of goal-setting systems is the issue of life goal-setting timeframes, along with the width of the spectrum of possibilities that regulate the youth's

goal-setting processes. The majority of young people find it hard to set goals and develop programmes beyond a one-year timeline. Normally, goal-setting is done for very short time periods, and, in this respect, the young generation has a number of advantages over previous generations. *Their results based on the applied extra effort within short deadlines are almost unachievable for older-generation representatives.*

Yet, issues that can be considered and set for long-term prospects are qualitatively different from the short-term “sprinter-speed” ones. In particular, the global issues that our planet is currently facing, such as climate change, growing social gaps, various ecological problems and many more, are impossible to resolve without broad horizons and long-term planning. From that perspective, it is of extreme importance to help young people acquire abilities to develop and implement processes with a 25-50-100-150-year prospect, in other words, processes that will envisage the succession of a few generations. This is also related to the ability to take on personal responsibility for large-scale and long-term processes.

Focus group work with 16-25-year-olds in various regions of Armenia pointed to one of the most essential issues: the fact that young people find it difficult to see their future in Armenia. This somewhat changed along with the change of power in 2018 and is still greatly important for the proper operation of the youth’s navigational system.

To sum up, it must be said that the presence of accurate guidelines and global worldviews makes it possible to implement efficient growth and development processes among the youth. The reverse is also true – it leads a disabled and manipulatively shaped system to a senseless waste of resources and a pessimistic vision of the future. Generally, young people are supposed to understand the meaning of all the processes of which they are a part. There is a need for a general mental activity system, the components of which are not in conflict with one another, but are all part of a common goal.

Consequently, the youth policy and programme sector needs specific attention addressed to the impact analysis of the information sector, effective worldview models, the development and implementation of strategies for the formation of the value sector and priority system.

4.2.4 The Armenian Diaspora

When planning a development process or designing youth sector policies and programmes, it would not be right to disregard the very important role of the Armenian Diaspora. This issue should be observed from the following perspectives: most of Armenian young people currently reside outside of Armenia, and the Diaspora contains a powerful expert and economic potential.

The classic mistake that is often made is treating the Diaspora as a charity and investment source, whereas the Diaspora’s expert, intellectual and creative potential could play a far more important role in Armenia’s development. Joint ventures (and social enterprises) between young people of Armenia and the Diaspora could produce serious economic and social results.

In this regard, the following programmes look very interesting: AGBU’s Bridge for CSOs, which aims to involve Diaspora experts in Armenia’s various local programmes; and the Potential programme by the Ministry of Diaspora, which promoted the formation of Diaspora Armenians’ start-ups in the RA and Artsakh.

Another resource to consider would be the Diaspora’s intercultural potential, which could play a great role in the processes of the RA’s international collaborations, intercultural dialogues and global integration. Throughout their lives, Diaspora Armenians (especially young ones) have had a chance to gain knowledge about their host cultures and skills to communicate with them, and they can put that potential into the mediation and promotion of the RA youth involvement in the above-mentioned processes.

In the past few years, the Ministry of Diaspora and a number of institutions started implementing quite interesting programmes aimed at inviting Diaspora Armenians over to Armenia offering them a chance to get to know the country (“A Step towards Home”, Birthright Armenia, etc.). However, it is important to specifically define the functional objective of these processes, their efficiency rates, as well as to ensure the synergy and systematic results for various institutions’ programmes.

**Box 4.3****Nanée Malek-Stanians**

“The countries I lived in have become an inseparable part of me”

29 years old, Working with refugees, France

Birthplace: France

Current Place of Residence: France

The years that I lived in England, Belgium, Turkey, and Armenia had been the most fascinating and the best years of my life. Today I wouldn't be the same person if I hadn't gone through that exact path. I wouldn't have the same mind-set and approach towards people, the world, and life, as I have now,” says Nanée Malek-Stanians. She is 29 years old and was born and raised in France, in a family of Iranian-Armenians.

Nanée studied at the University of Sorbonne, with a focus on learning English and Spanish as foreign languages. Later, she changed her specialization and earned a Bachelor's degree in European Studies. She then entered a Master's Programme at the University of Bath in England in 2010-2011, where she studied international affairs and political science. She continued the second year of the Master's Programme in Paris.

The idea of working in various countries and exploring new cultures took Nanée to Armenia in 2012, where she completed an internship program at the EU Delegation to Armenia. Later she was admitted to the headquarters of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels, as a bluebook trainee for the Eastern Partnership and Regional Cooperation Unit.

Nanée moved to Istanbul in 2013. She worked at the Hrant Dink Foundation, a well-known organization in Turkey, where she coordinated projects being implemented between Armenian and Turkish journalists.

She once again moved to Armenia in 2014 and lived there for two years. She first worked in projects being implemented at the UN Migration Agency, and then later worked at the Cultural Action and Cooperation Service at the Embassy of France in Armenia.

“I have never felt like a foreigner in Armenia or Turkey. People were so warm and friendly with me and could interact with me so easily that I have never felt like I was in a foreign country. The countries I lived in have become an inseparable part of me. I was also able to adjust to life in Brussels easily, but I felt no emotional connection with the city,” Nanée says.

After long trips, student programmes, internships, and various jobs, she returned to France in 2016. She works as a Refugee Status Determination Officer at the French Office of Protection for Refugees and Stateless Persons.

“Every day, we carry out interviews with various people and determine whether or not they can receive refugee status. My previous experience in working and living in various countries helps me with this job. I think you can't consider being a refugee as a good or a bad thing. Nobody decides to be a refugee. Nobody leaves his or her country willingly. It's not a pleasure, but rather a difficult decision and situation for these people,” Nanée explains.

She works mainly with refugees coming from African countries.

“These people go through huge difficulties, especially during their migration journeys. I think the whole world should be cautious towards this sensitive topic, as it seems the refugee issue is something we will have to deal with for quite a long time. The world needs benevolence and care, and especially these people need more of it,” Nanée reflects.

4.3 Challenges in the modern era

4.3.1 Stories that we tell ourselves

What is the world like in our mind? What are that world's conceptual continents? Where is that world's axis? What is the location of our local world on that big world's map? In the 19th century, we seemed to have found the main scenario for our meta-narrative, but that belief was drowned by the 20th and 21st centuries with their ups and downs, worldwide crises and global threats. The post-modernistic world has parallel-reality characteristics: part of the world lives in industrial society modes, another part is still taking the first steps into the information society system, and yet another part has already stepped into the post-modern period.

The word of the year in the Oxford dictionary of 2016 was “post-truth”, which described a period, wherein the notion of truth recedes into the background... A question arises as to what narratives or meta-narratives must guide the youth. What is the meaning that the youth must see in the world that surrounds them? Or perhaps, in the vein of post-modernism, such narratives are no longer needed or possible, and the only feasible way is contained in the 2017 Oxford dictionary word of the year, “youthquake” ...

This issue is also relevant from the youth policy perspective, as the past few decades have been outlining certain declared priorities in the youth policy and programme sector, such as, for instance, a “militaristic-patriotic upbringing”, “healthy lifestyle”, “youth participation” (which in similar fashion are outlined in almost every other post-Soviet republics). But research shows¹¹⁵ that the content component and methodical basis of these are not equivalent at all, and even the same policy implementers sometimes find it unclear as to what the idea is and how it is supposed to be implemented.

This issue is rather hard and complicated, yet it is impossible to work on a logical development strategy while the country's active establishments and force units are guided by an absolutely incoherent mosaic, wherein proportions are affected by mixed ideas of industrialism, modernism and post-modernism.

4.3.2 Strategic thinking platforms

The next challenge that is directly associated with the previous one is the complete absence of platforms for coordinating strategic thinking and resources in the youth policy and programme sector.

During the research, many state departments were asked the same question, whether mechanisms or platforms existed for discussing distant goals set in the sector (apart from rarely implemented standards of mid-term programmes) and for understanding the vision that needs to be applied when working with the youth. In most cases, the answer was either negative or regarding some formal mechanisms that could simulate the processes.

It will not be true to say that there are no possibilities for resolving youth issues today, yet the policies and mechanisms for their application need some serious improvement. This sector has already had good new examples, which can become the basis for resolving the above-mentioned problematic situation. For instance, the EU-supported Commitment to Constructive Dialogue programme gives competition-based opportunities to CSOs to improve public policies, viewing youth CSO involvement as a particular advantage.¹¹⁶

Overall, it must be said that a great deal of profound work has to be done, first of all, in terms of creating platforms to ensure a move from ongoing political ups and downs to relatively independent strategic thinking and planning; and, secondly, in terms of developing and applying long-term strategic guidelines (at least with the prospect of 25-50 years). Such platforms will be able to constantly ensure an efficiency analysis for youth sector programmes and coordination of various programmes implemented by different actors. This will help avoid repeating negative processes and running out of resources.

¹¹⁵ https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3083443/EECA_Synthetic_Report_Finalx.pdf/3bf1dbc1-da5d-4db6-830d-69165c0e68b1

¹¹⁶ <http://ccd.armla.am/en>

4.3.3 Global challenges

The past few decades have demonstrated Armenia's high degree of integration into global systems, something that used to be strictly limited during the 70-year Soviet Union period. Possibilities for the youth's international mobility, education and employment opportunities, along with sources of information on the world's different parts and processes are all incomparably more abundant than back in the 1990s. Information technologies were the factor that brought fundamental changes into the sector by expanding the accessibility of information, providing powerful and inexpensive tools for global communication, as well as a set of tools for online cooperation. Surely, all of this gives a world of possibilities to the youth who can master the above-mentioned resources and discern the network of current opportunities in the global sector.

On the other hand, the transparency and visibility of the global sector leads to raising the visibility of our own society's issues and problems. This, in its turn, will result in raising responsibility for such issues, along with motivation to find solutions through international collaborations. It is obvious that finding solutions to such global issues as the climate change, worldwide pollution of oceans or other environmental settings, the planet's social polarization and other same-scale problems can be impossible on a local or national level.

The youth's involvement in international collaboration processes and their work with international organizations and platforms requires a certain degree of knowledge along with specific skills and abilities, which cannot appear out of nowhere without building and implementing relevant educational and development programmes. Successful coordination of such programmes will raise the degree of the youth's responsibility and motivation when participating in the processes of resolving global issues; it will give them access to the field of global educational, employment, cultural and other resources. This will greatly contribute to their self-development and self-fulfilment.

4.3.4 Challenges in an information society

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies in the past few decades has placed the youth in a situation which is characterized by unique possibilities and challenges that need to be analysed and integrated into the processes of planning, implementing and evaluating public policies, programmes and strategies.

Previous subchapters mentioned various factors of information society and their impact. However, special attention needs to be paid to this phenomenon, which fundamentally changes the youth's daily life dynamics and all activities they are involved in, along with programmes and mechanisms aimed at their development. This issue is especially important due to the fact that the RA youth policy strategic documents (the RA State Youth Policy Concept, the RA State Youth Policy Strategy and other adjacent sector documents) hardly address this sector, despite its high-level importance and system-shaping impact.

When speaking of the information society's impact on the youth, emphasis must be placed on the extremely low level of young people's knowledge concerning the culture of working with information and informational ecology principles, as well as the lack of basic informational security skills. In this regard, great attention must be paid to the fact that the set of manipulative tools and methods in the information sector has seriously developed within the past decades. Numerous studies have been carried out concerning processes of human consciousness, attention and decision making, which give various establishments in business, political and spiritual-cultural sectors a possibility to plan and implement utterly effective informational-manipulative operations aimed at affecting the youth's (and other generations') choices, decisions, priorities and values in general.

Modern young people who spend a huge amount of time in the digital realm are constantly within the scope of such manipulators' activities, and even conflicting forces fight for winning their attention and shifting their motivations. When combined with the youth's low-level information culture, this leads to a rather dangerous domain that needs to be seriously studied and relevant preventive mechanisms must be provided. In other countries, the patterns and dangers of the youth's activities in the digital domain, alongside positive and

negative tendencies in their development, have been studied quite well. In Armenia, such studies hardly take place. This complicates the process of making relevant strategic decisions aimed at improving the situation.

There is another factor related to this sector – the modes of the youth’s absorption of information along with rapid qualitative changes throughout the past decade associated with processing that information. The ability to work with a great amount of information has started to deteriorate everywhere. Capacities for working with text material have also decreased – preference is given to video and other visual material (photo, graphics, animation, etc.). Unfortunately, this attitude is only taken into account by the key players in the sector (a reactive approach). Business organizations, education system, mass media and the rest of the institutions all adjust their strategies to that. By definition, it is assumed that the process is irreversible and almost nothing is being done to tackle this issue. Also, this is problematic, since only the tiniest part of the rich inheritance of our civilizations can be presented and received through social media-appropriate brief messages or 10-minute videos.

On the other hand, the abundance of information flows and the overloaded state of the information sector create various parallel “realities”, when a young person or youth groups can “construct” an alternative reality with all its parameters and patterns, and spend most (or the rest) of their lives in that “reality tunnel”. And this becomes more and more possible alongside the development of technological solutions for virtual and augmented reality. In the near future, we may even end up having virtual continents for “Martians” or “Elves” without any point of interaction between them. These phenomena also call for scientific studies and development of relevant programme solutions.

Summing up, it must be noted that these problems have hardly been studied in Armenia; while the youth sector strategies and policies either do not tackle the information society phenomena or tackle them on a reactive basis only, without any specific visions, strategic prospects for resolving these issues or any preventive and transformational mechanisms and programmes.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Together with interested representatives and other beneficiaries from the private sector, it is necessary to implement programmes for studying development approaches and modern-day transformation processes in the labour market and education systems (including IT possibilities such as Big Data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc.), and then, on the basis of those, generate programmes for applicable strategic reforms.
- Serious reforms must be carried out in the professional orientation system: these should not only take into account the problematic state of the sector (i.e. be reactive), but also be based on the analysed material regarding the probable transformation scenarios for the labour market of the next few decades, as well as on a general vision regarding the country’s development.
- Education and employment sectors’ development programmes must include large-scale work aimed at raising social awareness about this sector. Studies must be conducted to analyse the area of principal motivators for young people, parents, educational institutions and the private sector; plus, work must be done for modernizing and harmonizing these.
- Taking into consideration that young women and men experience several challenges in personal, family and public life, in education, in transition to labour market, special attention should be given to connection of their everyday needs and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Due to the persistence of strong stereotypes or even certain resurgence of patriarchal mentality, the new awareness raising strategies and educational programs should be based on strong connection between well-being and non-violence and non-discrimination and citizen activism, providing clear benefits of gender equality for young women and men’ personal and professional development.
- Youth initiatives, based on HRBA and gender transformative approach, should be mainstreamed into all national strategic documents; similarly, the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination should be mainstreamed into all public policies and programs related to youth issues.
- In the context of redefining education and the labour market, it is mandatory to clarify the principal hypothesis that accompanies development processes in the country. In other words, what is the vision

established by the human-and-country-related social consensus that must serve as the basis for the directions and logic behind system development and reform processes?

- In the education system, it is necessary to introduce and strengthen programmes for developing basic abilities (attention, concentration, memory, reflection, empathy, minimal abilities to control the personal mental and emotional field, etc.), disregarding which makes it impossible to achieve any significant success in the education or employment sector.
- Taking into account the business sector's worldwide socialization and focus on social missions, mechanisms must be created and developed for directing social impact investments, social entrepreneurship and the private sector's corporate social responsibility at the youth sector.
- The modern reality still harbours the embedded model of knowledge transfer from the older generation to the younger. This model must be replaced by such systems, in which two, three and even four different generations will be able to share their experiences with one another and implement joint "projects". As a result of that, social activity agenda and priorities will be based on cross-generational consensus and shared.
- Youth policies and programmes, along with youth work tools, must be adjusted to work with various youth groups and applied to those youth groups that are traditionally left out of the scope of youth policies and state programmes.
- It is of extreme importance to help young people acquire abilities to develop and implement processes with 25-50-100-150-year perspectives, in other words, processes that will envisage a succession of a few generations. This is also related to the ability to take on personal responsibility for large-scale and long-term processes.
- Specific programmes need to be implemented for developing accurate value orientation guidelines and global perception models for the youth. These will help young people understand the meaning of all the local and global processes of which they are a part.
- It is mandatory to develop and implement a special strategy that will make it possible to import the Diaspora's expert, intellectual and creative potential and use it for initiating youth-based development programmes on individual, community and national levels.
- The content component and methodical basis of certain youth policy sector priorities (for instance, "patriotic upbringing", "healthy lifestyle", "youth involvement"), declared since the 1990s, need to be clarified, and sector-related work efficiency measurement guidelines need to be set.
- It is necessary to contribute to the formation of platforms for independent strategic thinking and planning in the sector of youth studies and programmes, as well as developing and applying long-term strategic guidelines (at least with the prospect of 25-50 years).
- It is essential to raise the RA youth's responsibility level for getting involved and resolving global issues, and increase their abilities and motivation required for those processes.
- Profound research is needed with regard to youth-sector transformations related to the information-society phenomenon in Armenia. The resulting data must serve as a basis for generating a vision concerning discovered issues in the strategy and policy sector, as well as strategic perspectives, along with prevention, transformation, development mechanisms and programmes.

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ANNEX I: Four technologies that will define the future

“Artificial Intelligence”

This is related to machines’ capability to simulate the human intellect. Machines’ capability to learn is AI’s main characteristic: analysing large amounts of data and resolving issues, with no need to find samples for their accurate processing and planning (e.g. Google’s DeepMind). Artificial intelligence examples include “smart personal assistants” like Apple’s Siri, self-driving cars and Tesla’s unique autopilot. Amazon’s shopping-prediction software is another one on the list.

“Robotics”

Robots are machines that are programmed to perform tasks in the environment of minimal human involvement. They function with high accuracy and are capable of dealing with issues that threaten people. They can replace humans or operate alongside workers. Their new generation is lighter, faster and more adjustable, equipped with vision, strength and other sensors, which expand the scope of their issue-resolving capacities, as close to humans as possible. Robots are traditionally associated with industrial activities, but, as a matter of fact, they progressively get integrated into agriculture and customer services (e.g. surgery or logistics). They can also be appropriate in housekeeping and private life: from self-controlled vacuum cleaners to match-making interactive robots.

“Internet of things”

These are interlinked devices that are connected to a network and can communicate with other devices and people. This type of technology rapidly develops, and nowadays we can see its examples in private houses, industrial environments and services. For instance, the “Nest” home thermostat uses a mobile app to notify its users about any problems in the house’s heating or cooling systems. Companies such as Phillips and VitalConnect produce biosensors that can be worn by ambulatory patients to help doctors monitor their health wirelessly and remotely. In agriculture, sensors make it possible to perform live monitoring of such essentials as soil temperature and moisture, thus improving overall productivity.

“3D Printing”

3D-printing creates three-dimensional objects from digital files by adding material together, layer by layer. This technology was developed in the 1980s, but since its cost declined, it became more affordable through a wide variety of computer software programmes. For instance, leading sports-footwear brands such as Adidas, have announced mass production of 3D-printed shoes. Recently, scientists created 3D-printed artificial skin, which will be used for patient-targeted research or experiments with chemical and pharmaceutical substances in cosmetic products. 3D-printed templates are nowadays used in construction: in London, for instance, these are used to extend concrete blocks in new Tube tunnels.

ANNEX II: Human development indices and indicators: 2018 statistical update

Country coverage and the methodology of the 2018 Statistical Update

The 2018 Statistical Update presents the 2017 HDI (values and ranks) for 189 countries and UN-recognized territories, along with the IHDI for 151 countries, the GDI for 164 countries, and the GII for 160 countries. It is misleading to compare values and rankings with those of previously published reports, because of revisions and updates of the underlying data and adjustments to goalposts. Readers are advised to assess progress in HDI values by referring to Table 2 ('Human Development Index trends') in the 2018 Human Development Statistical Update. Table 2 is based on consistent indicators, methodology and time-series data and, thus, shows real changes in values and ranks over time, reflecting the actual progress countries have made. Small changes in values should be interpreted with caution as they may not be statistically significant due to sampling variation. Generally speaking, changes at the level of the third decimal place in any of the composite indices are considered insignificant.

Unless otherwise specified in the source, tables use data available to HDRO as of 15 July 2018. All indices and indicators, along with technical notes on the calculation of composite indices, and additional source information are available online at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

Human Development Index (HDI)

The HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. A long and healthy life is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge level is measured by mean years of education among the adult population, which is the average number of years of education received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and older; and access to learning and knowledge by expected years of schooling for children of school-entry age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entry age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life. Standard of living is measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2011 international dollars converted using purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion rates.

To ensure as much cross-country comparability as possible, the HDI is based primarily on international data from the United Nations Population Division (the life expectancy data), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (the mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling data) and the World Bank (the GNI per capita data). As stated in the introduction, the HDI values and ranks in this Statistical Update are not comparable to those in past reports because of a number of revisions to the component indicators. To allow for assessment of progress in HDIs, the 2018 Statistical Update includes recalculated HDIs from 1990 to 2017 using consistent series of data.

Armenia's HDI value and rank

Armenia's HDI value for 2017 is 0.755— which put the country in the high human development category — positioning it at 83 out of 189 countries and territories. The rank is shared with Thailand. Between 1990 and 2017, Armenia's HDI value increased from 0.631 to 0.755, an increase of 19.7 percent. Table A reviews Armenia's progress in each of the HDI indicators. Between 1990 and 2017, Armenia's life expectancy at birth increased by 6.9 years, mean years of schooling increased by 1.6 years and expected years of schooling increased by 2.3 years. Armenia's GNI per capita increased by about 159.9 percent between 1990 and 2017.

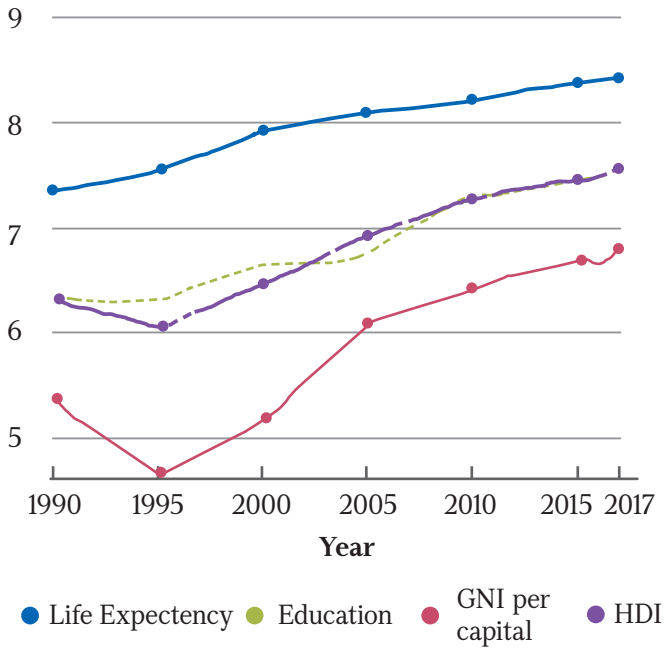
Table A: Armenia's HDI trends based on consistent time series data and new goalposts

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI value
1990	67.9	10.7	10.1	3,518	0.631
1995	68.9	10.2	10.4	2,169	0.605
2000	71.4	11.1	10.8	3,006	0.647

2005	72.6	11.2	10.9	5,594	0.693
2010	73.3	13.0	11.1	7,038	0.728
2015	74.4	13.0	11.6	8,517	0.748
2016	74.6	13.0	11.7	8,350	0.749
2017	74.8	13.0	11.7	9,144	0.755

Figure 1 below shows the contribution of each component index to Armenia’s HDI since 1990.

Figure 1: Trends in Armenia’s HDI component indices 1990-2017



Assessing progress relative to other countries

The human development progress, as measured by the HDI, can usefully be compared to other countries. For instance, during the period between 1990 and 2017 Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan experienced different degrees of progress toward increasing their HDIs (see figure 2).

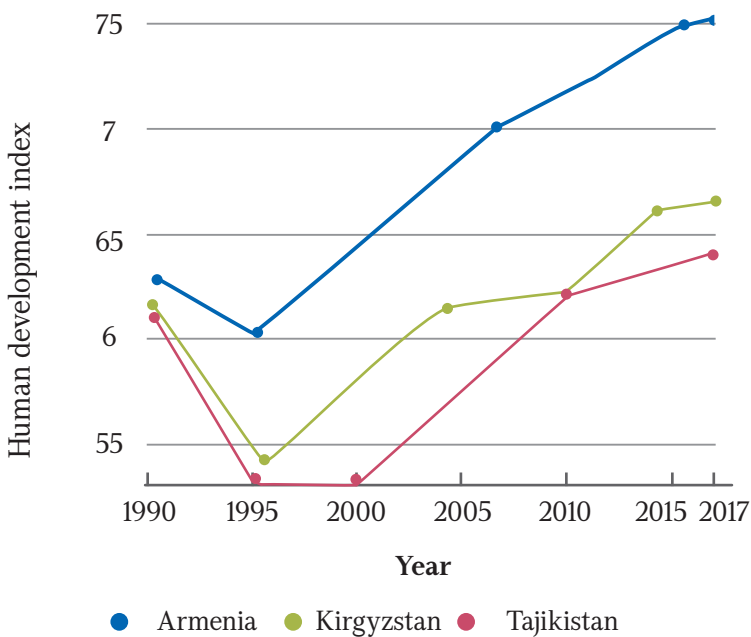


Figure 2: HDI trends for Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, 1990-2017

Armenia's 2017 HDI of 0.755 is below the average of 0.757 for countries in the high human development group and below the average of 0.771 for countries in Europe and Central Asia. From Europe and Central Asia, countries which are close to Armenia in 2017 HDI rank and to some extent in population size are Azerbaijan and Georgia, which have HDIs ranked 80 and 70 respectively (see table B).

Table B: Armenia's HDI and component indicators for 2017 relative to selected countries and groups

	HDI value	HDI rank	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP US\$)
Armenia	0.755	83	74.8	13.0	11.7	9,144
Azerbaijan	0.757	80	72.1	12.7	10.7	15,600
Georgia	0.780	70	73.4	15.0	12.8	9,186
Europe and Central Asia	0.771	—	73.4	14.1	10.3	15,331
High HDI	0.757	—	76.0	14.1	8.2	14,999

Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)

The HDI is an average measure of basic human development achievements in a country. Like all averages, the HDI masks inequality in the distribution of human development across the population at the country level. The 2010 HDR introduced the IHDI, which takes into account inequality in all three dimensions of the HDI by 'discounting' each dimension's average value according to its level of inequality. The IHDI is basically the HDI discounted for inequalities. The 'loss' in human development due to inequality is given by the difference between the HDI and the IHDI, and can be expressed as a percentage. As the inequality in a country increases, the loss in human development also increases. We also present the coefficient of human inequality as a direct measure of inequality which is an unweighted average of inequalities in three dimensions. The IHDI is calculated for 151 countries.

Armenia's HDI for 2017 is 0.755. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.680, a loss of 10.0 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. Azerbaijan and Georgia show losses due to inequality of 10.0 percent and 12.6 percent respectively. The average loss due to inequality for high HDI countries is 16.0 percent and for Europe and Central Asia it is 11.7 percent. The Human inequality coefficient for Armenia is equal to 9.8 percent.

Table C: Armenia's IHDI for 2017 relative to selected countries and groups

	IHDI value	Overall loss (%)	Human inequality coefficient (%)	Inequality in life expectancy at birth (%)	Inequality in education (%)	Inequality in income (%)
Armenia	0.680	10.0	9.8	9.0	2.9	17.4
Azerbaijan	0.681	10.0	9.9	17.0	3.8	8.9
Georgia	0.682	12.6	12.0	8.1	2.2	25.7
Europe and Central Asia	0.681	11.7	11.6	10.9	7.2	16.7
High HDI	0.636	16.0	15.7	9.2	13.1	24.8

Gender Development Index (GDI)

In the 2014 HDR, HDRO introduced a new measure, the GDI, based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita). Country groups are based on absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI. This means that the grouping takes into consideration inequality in favour of men or women equally.

The GDI is calculated for 164 countries. The 2017 female HDI value for Armenia is 0.740 in contrast with 0.764 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.969, placing it into Group 2. In comparison, GDI values for Azerbaijan and Georgia are 0.949 and 0.975 respectively (see Table D).

Table D: Armenia's GDI for 2017 relative to selected countries and group

	Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		GNI per capita		HDI values		F-M ratio
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	GDI value
Armenia	77.8	71.4	13.4	12.6	11.7	11.7	6,358	12,281	0.740	0.764	0.969
Azerbaijan	75.2	69.1	12.6	12.7	10.5	11.0	10,089	21,152	0.734	0.773	0.949
Georgia	77.6	69.2	15.3	14.8	12.8	12.8	6,177	12,481	0.766	0.786	0.975
Europe and Central Asia	77.0	69.7	13.9	14.2	9.9	10.6	10,413	20,529	0.751	0.785	0.956
High HDI	78.2	74.0	14.3	13.9	8.0	8.6	10,945	18,948	0.740	0.773	0.957

Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The 2010 HDR introduced the GII, which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men. The GII can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions.

Armenia has a GII value of 0.262, ranking it 55 out of 160 countries in the 2017 index. In Armenia, 18.1 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 96.9 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 97.6 percent of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 25 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 23.2 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market is 51.4 percent compared to 70.6 for men.

In comparison, Azerbaijan and Georgia are ranked at 71 and 78 respectively on this index.

Table E: Armenia's GII for 2017 relative to selected countries and groups

	GII value	GII Rank	Ma- ternal mortality ratio	Adoles- cent birth rate	Female seats in parlia- ment (%)	Population with at least some secondary educa- tion (%)		Labour force participation rate (%)	
						Female	Male	Female	Male
Armenia	0.262	55	25	23.2	18.1	96.9	97.6	51.4	70.6
Azerbaijan	0.318	71	25	53.5	16.8	93.8	97.5	62.9	69.5
Georgia	0.350	78	36	45.9	16.0	95.1	96.0	57.9	78.8
Europe and Central Asia	0.270	—	24	25.5	20.7	78.4	85.9	45.5	70.3
High HDI	0.289	—	38	26.6	22.3	69.5	75.7	55.0	75.5

Maternal mortality ratio is expressed in number of deaths per 100,000 live births and adolescent birth rate is expressed in number of births per 1,000 women ages 15-19.

Dashboards 1-5

Countries are grouped partially by their performance in each indicator into three groups of approximately equal size (terciles), thus, there is the top third, the middle third and the bottom third. The intention is not to suggest the thresholds or target values for these indicators but to allow a crude assessment of country's performance relative to others. Three-colour coding visualizes a partial grouping of countries by indicator. It can be seen as a simple visualization tool as it helps the users to immediately picture the country's performance. A country that is in the top group performs better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers); a country that is in the middle group performs better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers); and a country that is in the bottom third performs worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Three-color coding visualizes a partial grouping of countries by indicator.

Dashboard 1: Quality of human development

This dashboard contains a selection of 13 indicators associated with the quality of health, education and standard of living. The indicators on quality of health are lost health expectancy, number of physicians, and number of hospital beds. The indicators on quality of education are pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools; primary school teachers trained to teach; proportion of schools with access to the internet; and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores in mathematics, reading and science. The indicators on quality of standard of living are the proportion of employed people engaged in vulnerable employment, the proportion of rural population with access to electricity, the proportion of population using improved drinking water sources and proportion of population using improved sanitation facilities.

A country that is in the top third group on all indicators can be considered a country with the highest quality of human development. The dashboard shows that not all countries in the very high human development group have the highest quality of human development and that many countries in the low human development group are in the bottom third of all quality indicators in the table.

Table F provides the number of indicators in which Armenia performs: better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers); better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers); and worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Figures for Azerbaijan and Georgia are also shown in the table for comparison.

Table F: Summary of Armenia’s performance on the Quality of human development indicators relative to selected countries

	Quality of health (3 indicators)			Quality of education (6 indicators)			Quality of standard of living (4 indicators)			Overall (13 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators												
Armenia	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	6	2	0	5
Azerbaijan	3	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	2	3	3
Georgia	2	1	0	3	0	3	1	2	1	6	3	4	0

Dashboard 2: Life-course gender gap

This dashboard contains a selection of 12 key indicators that display gender gaps in choices and opportunities over the life course – childhood and youth, adulthood and older age. The indicators refer to education, labour market and work, political representation, time use and social protection. Three indicators are presented only for women and the rest are given in the form of female-to-male ratio. Countries are grouped partially by their performance in each indicator into three groups of approximately equal size (*terciles*). Sex ratio at birth is an exception - countries are grouped into two groups: the natural group (countries with a value of 1.04-1.07, inclusive) and the gender-biased group (countries with all other values). Deviations from the natural sex ratio at birth have implications for population replacement levels, suggest possible future social and economic problems and may indicate gender bias.

Table G provides the number of indicators in which Armenia performs: better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers), better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers), and worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Figures for Azerbaijan and Georgia are also shown in the table for comparison.

Table G: Summary of Armenia’s performance on the Life-course gender gap dashboard relative to selected countries

	Childhood and youth (5 indicators)			Adulthood (6 indicators)			Older age (1 indicator)			Overall (12 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators												
Armenia	1	2	2	1	3	2	0	1	0	2	6	4	0
Azerbaijan	3	1	0	1	3	2	0	0	1	4	4	3	1
Georgia	3	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	5	3	1	3

Dashboard 3: Women’s empowerment

This dashboard contains a selection of 13 woman-specific empowerment indicators that allows empowerment to be compared across three dimensions – reproductive health and family planning, violence against girls and women and socioeconomic empowerment. Three-color coding visualizes a partial grouping of countries by indicator. Most countries have at least one indicator in each tercile, which implies that women’s empowerment is unequal across indicators and countries.

Table H provides the number of indicators in which Armenia performs: better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers), better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers), and worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Figures for Azerbaijan and Georgia are also shown in the table for comparison.

Table H: Summary of Armenia's performance on the Women's empowerment dashboard relative to selected countries

	Reproductive health and family planning (6 indicators)			Violence against girls and women (3 indicators)			Socioeconomic empowerment (4 indicators)			Overall (13 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators												
Armenia	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	7	3	1	2
Azerbaijan	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	0	1	6	1	2	4
Georgia	3	3	0	3	0	0	2	1	0	8	4	0	1

Dashboard 4: Environmental sustainability

This dashboard contains a selection of nine indicators that cover environmental sustainability and environmental threats. The environmental sustainability indicators present levels of or changes in energy consumption, carbon-dioxide emissions, change in forest area and fresh water withdrawals. The environmental threats indicators are mortality rates attributed to household and ambient air pollution and to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene services, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List Index value, which measures change in aggregate extinction risk across groups of species. The percentage of total land area under forest is not coloured because it is meant to provide context for the indicator on change in forest area.

Table I provides the number of indicators in which Armenia performs: better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers), better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers), and worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Figures for Azerbaijan and Georgia are also presented in the table for comparison.

Table I: Summary of Armenia's performance on the Environmental Sustainability dashboard relative to selected countries

	Environmental sustainability (6 indicators)			Environmental threats (3 indicators)			Overall (9 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators									
Armenia	0	5	1	1	2	0	1	7	1	0
Azerbaijan	1	2	3	0	3	0	1	5	3	0
Georgia	1	4	1	1	2	0	2	6	1	0

Dashboard 5: Socioeconomic sustainability

This dashboard contains a selection of 10 indicators that cover economic and social sustainability. The economic sustainability indicators are adjusted net savings, total debt service, gross capital formation, skilled labour force, diversity of exports and expenditure on research and development. The social sustainability indicators are the ratio of the sum of education and health expenditure to military expenditure, changes in inequality of HDI distribution, and changes in gender and income inequality. Military expenditure is not coloured because it is meant to provide context for the indicator on education and health expenditure and it is not directly considered as an indicator of socioeconomic sustainability.

Table J provides the number of indicators in which Armenia performs: better than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the top third performers), better than at least one third but worse than at least one third (i.e., it is among the medium third performers), and worse than at least two thirds of countries (i.e., it is among the bottom third performers). Figures for Azerbaijan and Georgia are also shown in the table for comparison.

Table J: Summary of Armenia's performance on the Socio-economic sustainability dashboard relative to selected countries

	Economic sustainability (6 indicators)			Social sustainability (4 indicators)			Overall (10 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators									
Armenia	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	4	4	0
Azerbaijan	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	5	0
Georgia	3	2	1	1	1	2	4	3	3	0

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