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BRIDGE for CSOs

bringing real impact with diaspora and global engagement

ARMENIAN CSOS' PROFESSIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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The assessment was conducted in the framework of the **BRIDGE for CSOs** programme, implemented by **Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)** with **Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF)** and financed by the **European Union (EU)**.

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List of Abbreviations

AGBU	Armenian General Benevolent Union
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EBRD	European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
EPF	Eurasia Partnership Foundation
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RA	Republic of Armenia
SE	Social Enterprise
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

The presented assessment was conducted in April-May 2017, by **Civic Development and Partnership Foundation** in the framework of the **BRIDGE for CSOs** programme, implemented by **Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)** with **Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF)** and financed by the **European Union (EU)**. The programme is aimed at strengthening the capacity of Armenian civil society to effectively contribute to the decision making process in Armenia.

The purpose of the assessment was to gain a better understanding of Armenian CSOs' needs and gaps in terms of professional and sector-related (vertical) skills and competences and to collect baseline data for the **BRIDGE for CSOs** programme. The key interest of the assessment is to understand the specific gaps of CSOs as content drivers, and identify their specific thematic needs for development. The assessment was carried out through desk review, online survey, expert interviews and expert consultations.

Lessons from previous programmes

A number of capacity development programmes have been implemented for Armenian CSOs in recent years. Findings showed that most of those programmes were initiated and/or funded by international donor organisations, and they mainly addressed general organisational development capacities. Many programmes addressed public policy participation needs, and a few programmes covered specific professional sectors such as youth, culture, environment, and social entrepreneurship. The effectiveness of capacity-building projects is difficult to assess; however, according to previous research and expert assessments, projects that include trainings, as well as coaching and follow-up assistance, are more effective.

CSO scope of activities

Many CSOs that completed the online survey had difficulties in selecting their primary field of activity (most of them indicated four or more main areas of activity when registering in the programme database). This trend confirms findings from other studies and experts that CSOs tend to engage in a large number of broad activities and do not focus on a particular area of expertise that would allow them to specialise their skillset. It can be assumed that having broad interests allows them to diversify their funding sources and ensure sustainability, while regional and community-based CSOs also compensate for a lack of alternate local actors in the sector.

CSO learning trends

The CSO representatives reported that an average of 74% of their staff had professional formal or non-formal education in the primary areas of activities. Work experience, self-education, and interaction with other professionals serve as additional and more widespread sources for CSO staff professional development. About 92% of CSOs indicated willingness to participate in professional development of specific topics, and 90% of CSOs stated they would like to participate in an educational programme on non-profit management, which shows that CSOs are open to learn further.

Assessment of available knowledge

According to sector studies, CSOs generally highly assess the quality of their services, though other stakeholders note several problems related to the lack of professionals in specific narrow areas, lack of creativity, and low level of self-awareness. Financial difficulties of CSOs lead to heavy staff workload, and professional growth is hindered by lack of funding and time for professional development.

Most surveyed CSOs are mainly or fully satisfied with their professional knowledge, with an average self-assessment score of 3.6 (where 1 means not satisfied at all, and 5 – fully satisfied). The data analysis reveals no significant connection between the level of self-assessment and the proportion of the staff with professional training. This may imply that in assessing their knowledge, CSOs take into consideration factors other than formal or non-formal education in the field.

According to experts, in general, CSOs have difficulties in engaging experienced professionals, and many CSO specialists build their knowledge and skills on the job and through training programmes available in the area. At the same time, there are highly qualified organisations identified by experts in each sector; thus, peer-to-peer education potential is available in all sectors and this might be considered when designing capacity-development interventions.

Thematic capacity development needs

Education and Research

Experts note that CSOs should be more active in the areas of professional orientation, vocational education, civic education, and digital technology: these are the areas where they are most needed and/or have perspective for growth. State funding of education sector, knowledge on relevant legal acts, programmes, and curricula, interactive learning, monitoring and evaluation, big data analysis, qualitative analysis, and digital technologies are among the prospective capacity-building topics mentioned by survey participants.

Youth

Youth CSOs need to expand their work to involve marginalized groups, and put more effort to facilitate youth participation, particularly in community decision-making. State youth policy, youth employment and professional orientation, volunteer management, entrepreneurship, inclusive education, youth work, as well as consulting, mentoring and coaching skills are among the topics mentioned for this sector.

Sport

According to the assessment experts, CSOs working in sport need to develop their skills and qualifications in instructing children and adults, designing educational programmes, and raising public awareness. Sport tourism is one of the promising directions for CSO development. Development of sport specialists in handball, golf, and triathlon is mentioned by CSOs among the capacity building topics.

Arts, Culture and Humanities

Lack of art management specialists and professional associations is highlighted by experts among sector gaps. International events and festivals are not sufficiently supported by state and covered by media, though they serve as important tools for art CSOs in terms of experience exchange, joint projects, and art

popularisation. In addition, protection of cultural heritage, soliciting art patrons, and inclusion of children with disabilities in art are mentioned among the capacity development topics by CSOs.

Environment

Experts note that CSOs have to do more work in public education and awareness-raising in environmental issues, as well as have more impactful participation on policy level, particularly through providing expert evaluations of projects potentially harming environment. Relevant skills and knowledge are indicated as topics for capacity-building, along with specific subjects such as biodiversity, water management, atmosphere, climate change, alternative energy, organic agriculture, ecotourism and else.

Health

The assessment found out that CSOs need more coordination and closer work with healthcare institutions; promotion of pediatricists, doctor training in regions, participation in public health policy, quality control, and accreditation are potential areas that CSOs can cover. Apart from capacity building in these areas, specific professional topics for regional specialists, international clinical practice guidelines, child and adolescent nutrition, case management, medical ethics are among the recommended capacity-building topics.

Social Services and Infrastructure

There is a lack of quality education providing practical knowledge in social services, as well as specialised services in regions (such as speech therapy, ergo-therapy). Among the potential development directions for CSOs identified by experts are: usage of digital technologies in social service provision, working for elderly, prevention works, social workers' training. Respectively, digital technologies, case management, gerontology, supporting technologies for people with special needs, as well as inclusion, supervision, parental education and psychology for special needs are among the desired topics for development.

Humanitarian Aid

Among the gaps revealed, experts mention lack of emergency management skills, including planning and risk assessment, lack of palliative services, and underdeveloped culture of philanthropy. The topics indicated by CSOs and experts include case management, dealing with confidentiality, emergency response, intercultural skills, as well as general organisational development topics such as board management, reporting and transparency, volunteer engagement, etc.

Social Entrepreneurship

This is a relatively new area of CSO work; CSOs lack knowledge of market and application of business tools to become mature social enterprises. Formulation of ideas in business concepts, community mobilisation and involvement in entrepreneurship activities are mentioned among the topics for development along with crowdfunding, financial and business knowledge, and quality control.

Economic Development

CSOs working in this sector are recommended to provide user-friendly public information on economic indicators, alternative views in policy-making, certification services outsourced by state. The topics

indicated for this area are business communication and management, IT tools, customs, taxation, renewable energy and energy audit.

Government and Civil Society

CSOs working in this sector have a large scope of work; the issues not sufficiently covered by these CSOs include legal expertise in child protection, access to justice, public health, social, economic, and labour rights, as well as policy monitoring. Among the needed topics for development, experts and CSOs mention evidence-based advocacy, legal knowledge, monitoring, evaluation and analytical skills, strategic litigation, public procurement, gender policy, and else.

Cross-cutting topics

Apart from the specific needs, there are several common topics and gaps identified by previous research, experts, and CSOs in a number of sectors. Policy impact is a challenge faced by CSOs in almost all sectors; correspondingly, legal knowledge and advocacy are among the most needed skills across all spheres of activities. Public awareness-raising is another gap often mentioned by experts; thus, corresponding tools and techniques, along with educational programme design and implementation skills, will be helpful to CSOs working in various fields. Usage of information technologies and entrepreneurship skills are other potential areas of capacity-building assistance. Networks and sectorial platforms are appreciated across all sectors as means for CSOs to mobilise their resources and exchange accumulated expertise and experience.

Preferable capacity-building formats

One of the assessment questions was to identify the preferable formats for effective capacity-building interventions. Most CSOs that participated in the survey prefer experience exchange events followed by group trainings and coaching, while less than half voted for online trainings. Experts agree that experience exchange events with professionals in relevant fields are highly demanded for CSOs. In particular, international experiences that introduce innovation and fresh perspectives to the sector are very important. At the same time, practical assistance in establishing mechanisms, tools, and linkages in relevant areas can be effective interventions with the potential to contribute long-lasting impact on CSO development.

Based on the assessment findings, the report provides a number of recommendations for BRIDGE for CSOs programme to take into consideration for more targeted and effective activities.

Introduction

The presented assessment has been conducted in the framework of the **BRIDGE for CSOs** programme, implemented by **Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)** with **Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF)** and financed by the **European Union (EU)**. This three-year programme, launched in December 2016, targets civil society organisations registered and operating in Armenia, Armenian universities, young professionals from Diaspora who would like to strengthen the capacity of Armenian organisations. The objective of the programme is to strengthen the capacity of Armenian civil society to effectively contribute to decision making process in Armenia. The programme offers tailored trainings, pro-bono consultations, NGO Management Certificate programme, subgrant scheme, online experience exchange platform, and other components aiming to effectively engage Diaspora expertise in strengthening CSOs' activities.

To better document CSO needs and tailor the programme activities accordingly, **Civic Development and Partnership Foundation** assessed CSO professional capacity development needs in April-May 2017. The main objective of the assessment is to gain a better understanding of Armenian CSOs' needs and gaps in terms of professional and sector-related (vertical) skills and competences, as well as the tools, mechanisms and channels, required to make their daily operations and work with their beneficiaries more effective. Apart from that, the assessment looked at the impact of accomplished and ongoing capacity building efforts in strengthening professional/technical expertise among CSOs, and provided baseline data for CSO Bridge programme internal use. The assessment also serves as a way of engaging beneficiaries in programme design to make it tailor made to meet the needs of beneficiaries.

The report will serve as a tool for **BRIDGE for CSOs** as it will inform the design of thematic training topics and other components of the programme, including pro bono consultations and NGO Management Certificate programme. In addition, the report can help other civil society actors to better understand current situation and needs related to Armenian CSOs' professional capacities, and more effectively design the topics and format of further capacity-building events in specific sectors of activities.

I. Methodology

Research Methods

The assessment was carried out through qualitative and quantitative methods, including desk review, online survey, expert interviews and expert consultations.

1) Desk review of studies related to CSO capacities was conducted in the framework of the assessment to highlight findings and recommendations relevant to CSO professional needs. The list of the studies and documents reviewed in the framework of the assessment is presented in Annex 1. Many of these studies have covered organisational development needs of CSO sector in general. At the same time, there are some findings relevant to this assessment in terms of specific information related to the quality of services provided by CSOs, and professional skills and competences of their staff.

¹In this context, 'vertical' means addressing specific area-related skills and capacities, as opposed to 'horizontal' concept covering organisational development areas relevant to any organisation regardless their thematic area.

2) Online survey was conducted to provide baseline data for the programme internal monitoring and evaluation purposes, as well as collect the opinions and preferences of CSOs in regard to topics and formats of professional capacity-building activities. The survey invitation was sent out to more than 250 CSOs registered in the BRIDGE for CSOs programme database and the response was provided by 163 CSOs representing various sectors and regions of Armenia.

The following issues were covered by the survey (the survey questionnaire is presented in Annex 2):

- Availability of sector-specific professional and/or informal education,
- Availability of sector-specific practical knowledge and capacity,
- Experience of engagement in capacity building programmes,
- Sector-specific professional education needs,
- Preferences in capacity building formats.

The survey was conducted through www.freeonlinesurveys.com platform.

Eleven areas of CSO activities were covered through the survey, including education and research, health, social services and infrastructure, humanitarian aid, youth, sport, culture and art, social entrepreneurship, government and civil society, environment, and economic development. These categories were established based on OECD general code list and within the framework of BRIDGE for CSOs programme scope. Each CSO selected its primary area of activities as per the abovementioned categories, and provided responses on the experience and needs related to the selected area.

3) Expert interviews were conducted to seek professional opinions on the current state of Armenian CSO's professional and sector-related capacities, their needs and gaps, as well as recommendations for development efforts; as well as to discuss the impact of accomplished and ongoing capacity building efforts in strengthening professional expertise among CSOs (the expert interview guide is presented in Annex 3).

In total, 11 expert interviews were conducted among the representatives of state, local and international organisations, covering 11 sectors of activities as specified for the survey (the list of interviewed experts is presented in Annex 4). The main criteria for expert selection were their experience in the relevant area and knowledge of the Armenian CSO sector, as well as work experience in multiple sectors (e.g. state, international, local organisations), where possible, to provide a multi-perspective vision on the issues discussed.

4) Upon the summary of the information collected through the fieldwork and desk review, three expert consultations were held in a focus group format with advanced specialists in respective sectors to conduct data interpretation, validate the results of the survey, and collect additional recommendations for the report (the list of consultation participants is presented in Annex 5). The target audience for these

² The BRIDGE for CSOs database was collected through online registration of CSOs. The invitation to register was disseminated through open call in social networks; presentations at various events; emails to CSOs identified in databases of partner organisations (i.e. EPF) and programmes (such as Strong CSOs for Stronger Armenia) and through Internet search.

consultations were well-known professionals representing CSOs and/or CSO constituencies in relevant areas, which provided their feedback on whether the capacity development areas identified through the fieldwork and desk research are relevant in terms of the priorities of the specific sector and constituency needs.

Data Analysis

The online survey data was processed through quantitative methods, using MS-Excel software. The open-ended answers were coded.

The data from expert interviews and consultations was processed through qualitative methods, using coding and categorisation.

Limitations

The main limitation of expert interviews is that each of the areas is covered by one expert only and generally reflects her/his personal opinion. Thus, the expert interview information was complemented with desk review and CSO survey outcomes and validated through expert consultations.

The limitations of the online survey are mainly related to the sampling issues. In general, as the actual number of active CSOs in Armenia is not precisely known, and there is no complete and valid database with information on CSOs specified by types, geographical distribution and other indicators available, it is practically not possible to present valid data on the needs of the general population of more than 5,000 CSOs. As many as possible CSOs were reached to register in the programme database and to participate in the survey; however, the CSOs that participated in the survey do not represent the general population of Armenian CSOs. Thus, the data presented in this report is relevant only to the number of CSOs participated in the survey.

II. Main Findings and Analysis

The major findings from the studies, expert interviews and consultations presented below provide a general understanding of professional capacities, needs and gaps of Armenian CSOs.

CSOs capacity-building projects in Armenia

There have been a number of capacity development projects for Armenian CSOs, mostly initiated and/or funded by international donor organisations. The list of the projects identified throughout the assessment is presented in Annex 6.

The major USAID-funded projects covering recent 15 years include NGO Strengthening Programme of USAID (2001-2004) by World Learning, followed by Civic Advocacy Support Programme (2006-2009) focusing on advocacy projects, and then Civil Society and Local Government Support (CSLSG) project which promoted community development and policy analysis initiatives, again giving priority to advocacy

¹In this context, 'vertical' means addressing specific area-related skills and capacities, as opposed to 'horizontal' concept covering organisational development areas relevant to any organisation regardless their thematic area.

initiatives and CSO collaboration with government. Another programme supported by USAID was Livelihood Improvement through Fostered Employment for People with Disabilities (2012-2016), which supported establishment of social enterprises with involvement of people with disabilities.

European Union has also provided considerable attention to programmes related to CSO participation in public policy. In particular, Strengthening Non-State Actors' Capacities to promote reform and increase public accountability (Civil Society: Dialogue for Progress, 2013-2016) programme was implemented in Eastern Partnership countries to build CSO capacities in this area. Support to Democratic Governance in Armenia (2014-2015) was aimed at strengthening capacities in policy reform participation, as well as in running social enterprises.

As to thematic projects, Youth in Action (2008-2013) and Eastern Partnership Culture Programme (2011-2014) funded by EU, Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE) small grant project by OSCE Yerevan Office (2009-2016) have been identified throughout the assessment as targeting vertical professional knowledge and capacities of CSOs.

Current CSO capacity development initiatives include a number of projects, many of them still targeting policy participation and advocacy capacity, for example USAID-funded Civic Engagement in Local Governance project (2014-2019) covering CSO-state dialogue and participation primarily on local level, and Engaged Citizenry for Responsible Governance project (2014-2019) supporting anticorruption initiatives by mobilising citizens and promoting access to relevant information. Other USAID-supported projects, such as Civil Society Organizations Development (2014-2019) and Intermediary Service Organizations for Civil Society Development (2016-2017), aim at developing general organisational development capacities of Armenian CSOs.

Apart from BRIDGE for CSOs, there are two current large EU-funded projects targeting CSO capacity development. Strong Civil Society Organisations for Stronger Armenia (2015-2018) covers general capacities of Armenian CSOs so that the latter become more responsive to citizens' needs and proactively support country's development, while Commitment to Constructive Dialogue (2016-2018) project focuses on the capacity of CSOs to engage in policy reform.

Besides, several EU-funded projects target specific thematic areas, including social entrepreneurship addressed by Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship (CODE-SE, 2015-2017) project, culture addressed by EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme (2015-2018) funded by EU and led by British Council, while the issue of energy efficiency is addressed by Civil society Local Energy Efficiency Network (CLEEN) project (2015-2018). Many EU-funded projects target youth, such as EU4Youth project (2017-2020) fostering the active participation of young people in society and their employability, and Erasmus+ (2014-2020) supporting education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond, and engaging primarily young people.

Apart from specific projects, several organisations working in Armenia provide ongoing assistance to CSOs working in the framework of their mission. Open Society Foundations-Armenia provides assistance

to CSOs working in areas of women's rights protection and gender equality, law and criminal justice, human rights and protection of vulnerable groups in general. UNHCR Armenia organises monthly experience exchange meetings, workshops, coaching, as well as outgoing experience exchange programmes for partner CSOs engaged in humanitarian aid provision. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programmeme, started in Armenia since 2008, provides funding to NGOs for environmental projects and includes capacity development of national CSOs for their effective engagement in environmental governance. Youth Event Holding Center of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs organises periodical trainings for CSOs working with youth since 2011, as well as annual youth worker trainings since 2016.

To sum up, most of the large CSO capacity-building projects have addressed organisational capacities of CSOs, including management, planning, fundraising, etc. Many projects targeted CSO participation in policy-making, and some covered specific professional sectors such as youth, culture, environment, and social entrepreneurship, while CSO's professional expertise in health, sports, economic development, social services are less covered by capacity-building initiatives.

Experts find it difficult to assess the effectiveness of capacity-building projects, as their success often depends on the CSO motivation to further apply the knowledge and skills gained. There is a concern about the effectiveness of training in itself, as many CSOs may perfectly gain the knowledge, but have difficulties in applying it in the practice. According to previous research and expert assessments, projects that include trainings, as well as coaching and follow-up assistance, are more effective.

CSOs capacity-building projects in Armenia

As noted, 163 CSOs have participated in the online survey conducted in the framework of the assessment. The following priority areas of activities were selected by respondent CSOs:

CSOs operating in areas such as Youth, Government and Civil Society, Education and Research are significantly overweighting those covering primarily Sport, Health, Humanitarian Aid, Economic Development, and others. One of the reasons for this might be the corresponding disproportionate allocation of general population of CSOs operating in the above-mentioned areas. However, it might be also possible that the CSOs in latter areas are more difficult to reach, as they are less active in social networks and/or do not participate in various donor programmes and thus, are not available in existing CSO databases.

Few CSOs have narrow professional scope of activities; as a rule, they avoid narrow specialisation because, various projects are important for them, while if they limit themselves with a narrow area, it would constrain them from participation in other projects.

Environment expert, representative of state structure

It should be noted that CSOs had difficulties in selecting their primary field of activity, as many of them have contacted AGBU for indicating more than one field of activity, which was technically not possible. Along with the data available in the database of CSOs registered for the programmeme , this

³ Though this area was not indicated in the response options, the number of CSOs giving this response in the "other" field was quite high and thus it was identified as another area of activities. It is possible that more CSOs would prefer this option in case it was available in the response options.

phenomenon reinforces the findings from other studies. For example, the “Armenia EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017” (2014) states that the development of CSOs in Armenia was mainly determined by the donor’s policy and strategic priorities: the areas and type of activities of CSOs are shaped not only by local needs but to a large extent by the policy priorities of international donors. According to this document, the majority of CSOs work in more than one sector, mostly to fit the donor’s agendas and priorities in order to get funding. As highlighted in “CSO Comprehensive Market Research” (2015), it is however important that CSOs specialise in specific narrow areas of work for more professional and effective service delivery.

Table 1: Main area of activities (please indicate only ONE primary area)

Primary Area of CSO Activities	N	%
Government and civil society (including human rights, public policy, civil society development, etc.)	36	22.1
Education and research	27	16.6
Youth	26	16.0
Art, culture and humanities	12	7.4
Social services and infrastructure	10	6.1
Social entrepreneurship	10	6.1
Environment	9	5.5
Local government and community development ³	8	4.9
Health	6	3.7
Economic development	5	3.1
Sport	4	2.5
Humanitarian aid	2	1.2
Other	8	4.9
Total	163	100

CSOs tend to be most successful when they implement projects in particular sectors where they have built up considerable experience and expertise. On the contrary, they are less successful in undertaking broadly ranging and highly diversified interventions.

“Capacity Building Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia”, 2016

The “Capacity Building Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia” (2016) confirms the notion that CSOs prefer to involve in multiple areas of activities: 77% of surveyed CSOs indicate that they work in four or more areas. Expert consultation participants also noted that CSOs tend to engage in a large number of broad activities and do not focus on particular professional area, which would allow them to strengthen their skills and experience in specific issues.

Apart from seeking donor funding opportunities, the multi-sector programming helps community-based CSOs address various community needs that are not covered by other CSOs. However, because of limited staff members, this multi-specialisation usually means that the same staff is involved in different tasks and projects rather than CSOs have a number of qualified professionals covering various areas. Thus, there is a general trend of covering different areas of expertise without in-depth professional knowledge (e.g. formal education or profound training) in all these areas, but through applying a general skillset.

CSO learning trends

According to the survey data, about 74% of CSO staff and experts have professional formal and/or non-formal education in the primary area of activities. Apart from formal and/or non-formal education, most of the CSOs have benefited from other sources of professional expertise, including self-education, work experience, and interaction with field specialists.

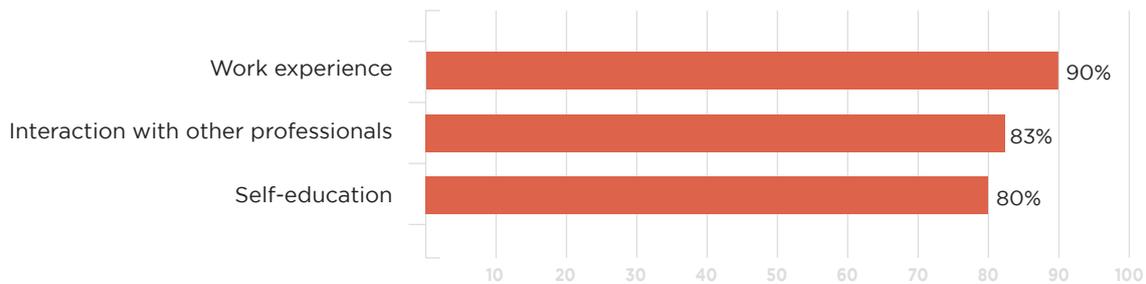


Figure 1: Apart from professional formal or non-formal education, what other means contributed to the development of professional knowledge of organisation? (% , multiple responses allowed)

Thus, alternative sources of acquiring knowledge have more significant place in the professional development of CSO staff as compared with formal or non-formal education and trainings. At the same time, 111 CSOs or 68% of survey participants have participated in various capacity-building programmes, including 85 CSOs or 76% of them having passed professional training/consulting in the primary area of their activities. According to the data of “CSO Comprehensive Market Research” (2015), most of CSOs involved in the survey (63 cases out of 101) have been consulted by an external expert. The primary consulting topics are related to programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as fundraising and educational programmes. Thus, most CSOs participated in this and other surveys have benefited from capacity development programmes.

Often the potential of a CSO relies on an individual capacity and is not long-term. Usually, most CSOs do not develop their institutional capacities, so strong cadres come, each having a piece of different knowledge; they combine their knowledge and do the work. And then one can see that this person has gone and the CSO is not active in this field anymore.

**Government and Civil Society Expert,
international organisation representative**

⁴ In the BRIDGE for CSOs project database, which included 264 CSOs (as of 05.06.2017), about 10% of CSOs indicated one main area of activities, 30% - 2 or 3 areas, and over 60% of CSOs selected 4 or more areas as main sectors of their activities.

As noted by experts, high rate of CSO staff turnover hinders the sustainability of the knowledge gained, as few organisations have mechanisms for institutionalising staff knowledge and capacity. This might be one of the reasons that CSOs are eager to participate in more capacity building programmes. About 92% of CSOs participated in online survey indicated willingness to participate in professional development in specific topics, and 90% of CSOs stated they would like to participate in an educational programme on non-profit management, which shows that CSOs are open to learn further.

Assessment of available knowledge

The self-assessment of CSO staff in “Capacity Building Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia” (2016) shows that 70% of survey respondents find that their staff members generally accomplish their duties at high and very high levels, while only about 4% replied that staff lacks skills in their respective areas. At the same time, according to expert interviews conducted within the same study, majority of Armenian CSOs lack professional staff (experts in specific areas), which is partly due to lack of financial resources, but also because of a high turnover and/or lack of engagement of professionals as volunteers. “The Risks and Opportunities for the NGO Sector in Armenia” (2011) highlights the concern of NGOs about the lack of funding and inadequacy of human resources for providing sufficient professional expertise. This research also reflects the views of donor community about lack of creative ideas and innovation by Armenian CSOs. The study “Armenian Civil Society after Twenty Years of Transition: Still Post-Communist?” (2014) reflects on NGO leaders, noting that for most of the interviewees, becoming NGO leader is linked with their profession, as professional knowledge and the experience in the field, combined with motivation and concern, often inspire people to establish an NGO. This could mean that many NGO leaders are specialised in the relevant field rather than management. According to the study, the background in a given field is of crucial importance in the course of organising NGO activities.

NGOs recognize their capacities to be largely limited by the incompatibility of the implemented work and the existing resources. Lack of funding limits their capacity to engage and invest in new staff. As a result they are overloaded and do not have enough time for professional development. Several mentioned the problem of engaging and maintaining the qualified youth in the situation of financial instability. Another difficulty is the risk of engaging new people as they might not be devoted to the NGO.

“Risks and Opportunities for the NGO Sector in Armenia”, 2011

The experts involved in this assessment also often note that there is a lack of professionals in CSOs working in specific sectors; at the same time, they indicate several highly qualified organisations that have professional expertise in the field. It could be concluded that there is a good potential of peer-to-peer education available in all sectors, which might be considered in designing capacity-development interventions.

To identify the self-perception of CSO professional capacities through the online survey, a question was asked on the level of respondents' satisfaction with

CSO professional knowledge. As it is visible from the table below, most respondents – about 62% – are mainly or fully satisfied with their professional knowledge, while about 29% find it partly satisfactory, and 9% – not at all or mainly not satisfactory. These findings reflect the data from desk review presented above.

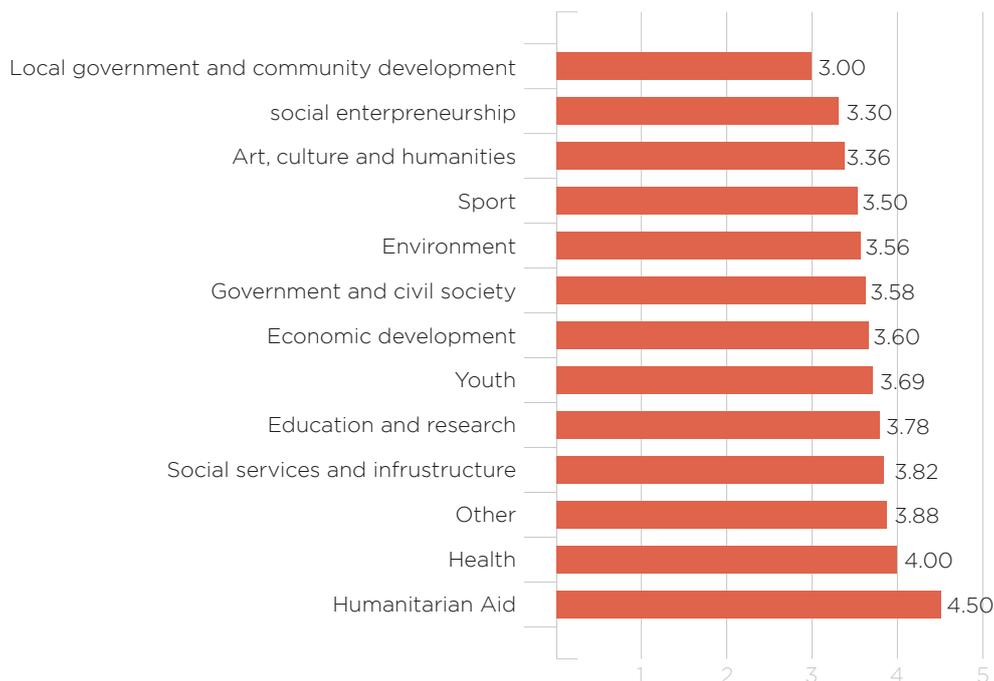
Level	% of CSOs with the corresponding level of satisfaction	Average % of trained staff
Not satisfactory at all/ Mainly not satisfactory	9	77
Partly satisfactory	26	64
Mainly or fully satisfactory	62	78

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of the self-assessment of the professional knowledge of CSO's staff and experts as satisfactory for implementation of organisation's goals (%) with average percentage of trained staff

No significant relationship was noted between the percentage of staff with professional training and the level of self-assessment of CSOs: among those who provided low scores of self-assessment, the number of staff and experts with professional training background was even higher than average. This may suggest that in assessing their expertise, CSOs take into consideration factors other than formal or non-formal education in the field, e.g. work experience and self-education, often mentioned by majority of CSOs as alternative sources of knowledge as described above.

To review the level of self-assessment of CSOs from various areas, the average score was calculated for CSOs of each category.

Figure 2: The level of satisfaction with CSO professional knowledge, average assessment by primary area of activities (average score, 1-not satisfactory at all, 5- fully satisfactory)



The figure above indicates that the highest self-assessment average is for humanitarian aid and health CSOs, while CSOs working in local government and community development, as well as social entrepreneurship area are relatively more self-critical. As noted above, CSOs working in community development, usually address a range of thematic areas, without having specialised professionals in each area: this might be one of the explanations to their lower self-assessment score. As to social entrepreneurship, this is a newly developing sector in Armenia, and it is not surprising that CSOs working in this area recognise their need to further develop their knowledge.

Further analysis presents the sector-specific gaps and development opportunities indicated by experts, which can inform capacity building interventions in each sector.

Thematic capacity development needs

The summary of main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations will be presented in accordance with the thematic sectors of CSO activities. It should be mentioned that many CSOs participated in the survey highlighted their needs in organisational development (horizontal) capacity building; among them, fundraising, PR, management, project development and management, entrepreneurship skills are the most frequently mentioned topics. Similarly, experts noted several challenges in the sector that need to be addressed for ensuring professional service delivery, including the trend of “one-man-show organisations”, following donor agenda rather than beneficiary needs, too broad areas of activities, as well as lack of skills in project management, PR and communication, good governance and transparency. However, since this assessment covers specific professional capacity needs, these issues and topics were not included in the analysis below, unless specifically linked with the area discussed.

Education and Research

The scope of organisations working in this field is diverse, covering CSOs working in non-formal education, social and scientific research organisations, and a few organisations working in secondary education. Experts note that CSOs established by international organisations significantly surpass locally founded CSOs in their capacities. Some experts note that special formal education is not necessary for educational CSO staff, but they need to have sufficient experience in the area.

The main findings from expert interviews and consultations show several gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. Particularly, experts agree that CSOs have difficulties in engaging in the education policy

Professional orientation is a major problem in Armenia. Many studies are implemented, many CSOs are engaged in this, but it is still a significant gap in education sector as no one can cover it.

**Expert consultation participant,
local CSO representative**

making, which is mostly not because of lack of capacities, but because the relevant government agencies are closed to CSO participation. Consistent and professional work by CSOs is needed on national policy level, which, according to experts, is far from being perfect, as the national education policy/priorities often do not address the real needs of constituencies. CSOs engaged in the research do not communicate their products on policy level, and in general have limited involvement in monitoring and evaluation of state programmes. On the other hand, CSOs lack strategic thinking,

which would make them stronger in dialogue with the government. As to specific gaps in CSO services, studies and experts highlight the lack of professional orientation services, which CSOs might and should address both on policy level and through providing relevant services and expertise. Another need in the sector not sufficiently covered by CSOs is the weak image of vocational and technical education and relevant occupations, which are, however, highly demanded in the market; thus, CSOs can have an important role in promoting vocational education among youth.

On the other hand, experts reflected on several assets and opportunities of the sector. For example, the government is relatively more open to collaboration in the area of supplementary education-related

⁵ Please note that only two CSOs working primarily in Humanitarian Aid were involved in the survey.

guides and textbook development due to internationally reinforced agenda. CSOs can also utilise their competence in civic education area, as schools lack professional teachers in civic education, as well as provide services in digital technology training for teachers, and participate in teacher training in general.

Youth

According to expert assessments, there are a number of CSOs in Armenia experienced in the field of youth work, volunteering and youth engagement. Current services by youth CSOs include mainly capacity building and trainings in civic participation, democracy, gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, and other topics not covered in school curricula. Though experts note that generally there is no need for special formal education for working with youth, they find informal trainings necessary for quality services.

The main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations show several gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. First, there is a lack of CSO knowledge on state programmemes and strategies on youth. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs provides competitive CSO grant opportunities for them to get involved in the implementation of state youth policy; however, given the small budget and scope of projects it is difficult to expect significant input of CSOs in policy implementation. The information available on the opportunities presented for the sector through national state-administered platforms is limited to a handful of CSOs; there is no platform for sharing information on international opportunities.

In general, there is a lack of dialogue between stakeholders in the field to have shared information and better coordination;

thus, increased CSO coordination and synergy in youth activities is needed. The youth participation in decision-making is limited, particularly on community level. Youth CSOs working on local level are often not able to enter into effective dialogue with local governments, which is both due to lack of capacities and lack of local government transparency, as well as the low level of participation culture in general. There are many activities conducted by youth CSOs on the level of one-time actions, demonstrations, and events, but there is a lack of systematic work with national and local government to include youth voices in decision-making processes.

Among other capacity-related gaps, experts mention that youth CSOs need to build youth engagement capacity to provide tangible youth participation in all stages of programmememing, instead of involvement of youth as beneficiaries or event participants. There is a lack of professional specialists in youth work, and few organisations work in the area of youth employment and professional orientation. As in case of other sectors, experts mention that few CSOs demonstrate strategic approach to their work, while most are donor priority-based.

Experts have a number of considerations related to the assets and opportunities for CSOs working in the youth sector. One of the main achievements of youth CSOs is making change in youth capacity and involvement on the local and individual level. Youth are comparatively stronger in language and

There is a lack of collaboration: organisations working with the same target group do not tend to synchronise their efforts, which would enlarge the efficiency, so collaboration is lacking in youth sector. A lot of duplications are taking place; this is also true for international organisations: they implement several projects on same things targeting the same groups of people.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

communication skills, which is an asset to the youth CSO sector. A number of capacity development programmes for youth CSOs, including online opportunities, are available; at the same time, development of leader's capacity is mentioned as a must. Among suggested directions of work, experts and other studies identify that CSOs should consider engaging marginalised groups, instead of the same core group of active youth that are involved in several projects.

Sport

Few CSOs, engaged primarily in sport, have participated in the online survey. According to the information of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, over 50 sport federations and sport NGOs work in the field, with many of them receiving state funding for administrative expenses, children instruction, and professional training.

The main findings from expert interviews and consultations highlight several gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. Special certification is needed for training children and youth; however, a lot of federations and clubs are established, providing paid training that may harm children's health if instructed by non-professionals. Among hindering factors are outdated or non-existent sport infrastructures in regional communities; besides, there is a lack of sport infrastructures for children and persons with disabilities. Among specific issues related to professional gaps, it was noted that there is a lack of professionals in sports, that are not developed in Armenia.

As to assets and opportunities, experts find that most of CSO staff has professional education; rehabilitative adaptive physical culture specialists are another asset to the sector. There is a high potential to develop sport tourism and extreme sport tourism in Armenia; relevant country environment and professional resources are available, and efforts shall be concentrated on organisation of marketing and PR activities. Another possible direction of work is sport popularisation, particularly through disseminating information on existing initiatives and event, mainly targeting the youth.

In any case, awareness-raising is the key problem: potential is available, people are available - professional trainers in various sports, those more or less professionalised in sport management, but we do not have marketing and PR. Armenia as a sport tourism, extreme tourism destination, is not known [...] We need to promote sport tourism brand.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

Art, Culture, and Humanities

This sector is quite diverse and includes CSOs working in arts, music, literature, filming, festival organisation, cultural studies, etc. The activities of cultural CSOs include education, research, exhibitions, and assistance to artistic initiatives. Some associations have been established since Soviet times and they still enjoy some limited state support (e.g. Unions of Artists, Writers, Composers). Diverse opinions by experts show that CSOs in art and culture are different in their level of development, and their professional work quality is as much important as their commitment to the mission and responsiveness to needs.

The main findings from expert interviews and consultations show a number of gaps in the sector relevant to

When we gather together, we discuss our needs, and there are a lot: we need to go out, participate in similar events, communicate with other professionals, bring new ideas. We are stagnating, trailing behind world trends, we do not know others. It would be good to have more intense exchange events. [...] The culture develops, but we stand behind. We do not know, for example, how to use duduk in new technologies.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

often compete for limited resources. Among the specific professional capacity gaps, lack of art managers in Armenia is highlighted by expert consultation participants, along with lack of professional associations for specific professions (e.g. publishers, literature critics). Though there are qualified professionals in various arts, they do not often involve in or establish CSOs.

On the other hand, this sector has significant assets and variety of opportunities as revealed by experts. One of the experts notes that CSOs working in culture and art take every opportunity for knowledge acquisition, attend trainings,

invite lecturers, they are knowledge generators and sharers. Some CSOs working in the same area are very supportive to each other and create platforms for joint work. An Armenian Festival Association has been founded recently by CSOs as an umbrella organisation to provide a platform for joint fundraising, PR, marketing, and management of festivals. Apart from festivals, experts highly value international events that contribute not only to knowledge exchange but also formation of environment for further activities and joint initiatives. It is noted, that these events have strategic importance to Armenia and should be promoted on government level.

Environment

According to the expert interviewed through the assessment, there is an absolutely shaped civic sector in environment, which includes professional service providers and whistle-blowers. There are a number of high-level professionals in CSOs, involved in international convention-related work and processes, and some CSOs have membership in international prestigious associations, thus bringing innovation and experience to the country. On the other hand, public council with the Ministry of Nature Protection serves as an in-country platform for CSO-state dialogue, where member CSOs have an opportunity to speak out about problems, propose solutions, and participate in policy implementation. However, other experts think that, though there are many problems in the sector, CSOs are not able to tackle them or advocate effectively on the policy level.

CSO work. CSOs have limited participation in state policy on culture, which, as experts claim, is practically non-existent. State funding is provided discretionary to the same group of organisations; there is no significant state support to innovative events and ideas, international and regional festivals. In addition, there is a lack of broadcast media coverage of festivals and other international events. In general, culture activities are not given priority in Armenia, and the relevant needs are often neglected on the national level. Particularly, the current needs in cultural education and knowledge are not addressed by the higher education institutions. Besides, there is a lack of funding programmes in the sector, and CSOs

It is difficult to mention any knowledge gap, as these CSOs are knowledge generators, creating the knowledge and sharing it. They are very open in this regard and continuously use any opportunity to acquire the knowledge. I mean, they participate in trainings, attend lectures, and invite speakers.

Arts and Culture Expert, local CSO representative

The main findings from desk review, expert interview and consultations show several gaps in the sector that hinder CSO work. There is a general perception of environmentalists as whistle-blowers, e.g., in cases of tree cutting for instance, though environmentalists also provide expertise and should be perceived as

I think that protection of nature or environmental protection is a lifestyle, and I think that a good manager with relevant attitude can manage this sector, while each department within the sector should have staff with sufficient in-depth professional knowledge.

Environment expert, representative of state structure

professionals. On the other hand, there is a lack of specialised professionals in the sector, as Armenian educational system does not provide environmental degrees. According to studies, there are few active region-based environmental CSOs; few CSOs have narrow professional niche, as they prefer to have larger scope of work to participate in more grant programmes. In general, due to the low prioritisation of environmental issues by public, environmental CSOs face difficulties in fundraising for their activities.

Main considerations on the assets and opportunities of environmental CSOs are as follows: Public education and awareness-raising are particularly important in the environmental sector, thus CSOs could engage in delivery of educational programmes particularly for children and youth. One of the areas that environmental CSOs could be more persistent and active is mining and its possible consequences: though there are similar activities carried out by CSOs, there is a need for more consistent work and professional expert evaluations for mining projects. Another specific area of work is taking active role in schoolchildren's professional orientation to promote the profession of environmentalist. As to specific knowledge and capacity development opportunities, legal knowledge in the field is considered important by experts, as it will provide basis to implement not just one-time actions but systematic advocacy campaigns to make a tangible change in environment.

Art, Culture, and Humanities

The CSOs involved in health sector are classified into two groups: specialised health professionals' CSOs (associations) and CSOs targeting public health, often in parallel to other policy issues (e.g. related to social services, education, community development, state policy monitoring). Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS issues, and child nutrition are among areas most targeted by CSOs due to donor support and state policy priorities. International CSOs working in health remain the leading actors in the health policy field, often supporting local CSOs in advocacy and development, like the Diaspora organisation, Armenian Medical International Committee, organising periodical events for Armenian health professionals.

The main findings from expert interviews and consultations show the following gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. There is a lack of coordinated work by CSOs; apart from Mother and Child Health Alliance, which serves as a platform for CSOs working in mother and child health, no other platform exists. Trainings for the sector are fragmental, and most of them are related to mother and

child health, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, disability, public health budget monitoring. At the same time, there is a lack of doctor training in regions: the available training programmes are mostly project-based and not systematic, and have limited geographic scope. No online learning platforms in Armenian are available

We need to meet more often – meet and continue the dialogue between policy makers and CSOs: the topics can be defined for each specific policy area. For example, in mother and child health, we already have it – we have this format, working scheme. This format was quite a good one.

Health expert

for specific specialties, though online learning is on the way of development due to UNICEF programmes. Integrated social services have been introduced by state to address health problems in a complex with social needs; however, this system is not properly functioning yet.

There is a range of assets and opportunities for this sector identified through the assessment. Memberships in international networks strongly contribute to CSO capacity building both in organisational and professional aspect. Local networks are also beneficial and facilitate information exchange and advocacy in the health policy. However, CSOs need to work more closely with healthcare institutions, as well as extend their involvement in several areas including public health, primary healthcare, secondary healthcare, anticorruption. Services in quality control and accreditation of healthcare specialists can become potential directions of CSO outsourcing, along with promoting paediatrics, as according to experts, the problem related to the lack of paediatricians needs urgent attention. International clinical practice guidelines are available in paid platforms providing up-to-date information, which CSOs could acquire and share with relevant specialists and healthcare institutions.

Social Services and Infrastructure

In the area of social services and infrastructure, there are a few specialised CSOs working in alternative childcare, social work and social pedagogy; several CSOs are involved in prevention of violence against women and protection of women rights, many work with disabled people and have professionals in need assessment and inclusive education. A number of CSOs provide services outsourced by state. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has established a Social Assistance Network open to all CSOs working in the field, and though this platform has not been very active yet, it is considered by experts as a good potential for networking and effort coordination in the sector. International organisations also provide support for activities and development of sectorial CSOs.

The main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations show a number of gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. CSOs provide fragmented application of social work and psychology tools because of lack of sufficient resources and specialists. Though universities provide professional resources in this sector, the quality of education is not sufficient for graduates to involve in CSOs as professional staff; trainings, self-education, and years of practice are needed to have high-quality professionals. Besides, there are few specialised professionals in regions: e.g. speech therapists, ergo therapists, psychologists. Experts note that the state certification process for outsourcing social services from CSOs contains a number of shortcomings, e.g. there are no provisions related to standards of service delivery, in contrast to numerous administrative and infrastructure requirements. Though there are several professional networks and platforms in the sector, there is still a lack of strategic partnership of CSOs and state, which would synchronise efforts towards a joint vision.

There are a number of considerations on the assets and opportunities of the sector. Several CSO networks provide experience exchange possibilities; however, more platforms and mechanisms are needed for sharing the experience on local (community and regional) level. Through joining their efforts, CSOs can assist in the elaboration of service standard requirements to be included in certification, particularly standards of child welfare in provision of services for children. In general, CSOs need to engage in early

Application of digital technologies is on a very-very poor level in Armenia, though, as you know, Armenia is on advanced level in terms of technology use. [...] There are many tools for following human needs, systematising cases, producing artificial intellect solutions – a great, huge scientific and mathematical basis that should be used today in social services. And we can find really advanced specialists who do this in other countries, and bring that people here through this project.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

prevention of problems rather than reacting to the existing issues; they can join their efforts in advocating such systems to be set on state level. As to specific services, leisure organisation for youth and elderly people, social protection of children, parental education, identification and development of children with developmental problems are mentioned as services that can be covered by CSOs. Experts mention that several CSOs have knowledge, skills, and tools for working with elderly; however, there is a need for better dissemination of the accumulated experience and larger engagement of CSOs in this area. Similarly, several CSOs are professional in dealing with disability issues and have elaborated professional approaches, guidelines, and tools in working with people and particularly children with disabilities; thus better coordination and multiplication

of these approaches on country level is needed. CSO can also have a niche in providing social work trainings especially taking into account the new legal provision on compulsory social worker staff in local administrations. Advocacy of outsourcing community social services and development of peer-to-peer services in communities can be a key to social problems' solutions on community level.

Tools such as needs assessment, case management are applied by many CSOs, but there is still a need for more professional and comprehensive application of these tools, as well as integration of new technologies. Use of digital technologies in social services and supporting technologies for people with special needs are potential areas of development in the field.

Humanitarian Aid

Very few CSOs have indicated humanitarian aid as a primary area of activities in CSOs' online survey, which supposedly means that CSOs usually combine humanitarian aid with provision of social services. At the same time, experts note that there are several CSOs, which are highly professionalised in the field due to extensive experience and developed organisational capacities.

I think that humanitarian aid requires strategic approach – where and how to provide aid, it is an issue of targeting. Specifically, humanitarian CSOs should know very well how to respond to urgent issues, and provide targeted aid.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

The findings from expert interviews and consultations show the following gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. There is a lack of high-level professionals because of low salary level in the sector. Few CSOs are specialised in working with people with health problems (e.g. palliative care), which is partly due to the lack of professionals in this area. Culture of philanthropy is yet in the becoming stage in Armenia; though people are willing to donate money for those in need, they are not ready to donate for CSOs' administrative and professional needs. There is a lack of capacity in logistic management, which is

Urgent response is provided when there is a good planning, risk assessment, research, knowing what to do in each case, having lists in advance, that is, a response strategy for emergency situations should be in place.

Expert consultation participant, local CSO representative

especially important in this area, particularly in emergency situations.

The opportunities that might be utilised by CSOs in the field are mainly related to coordination of efforts to achieve strategic vision and targeted approach. For example, establishment of consortia will help to mobilise CSOs in participating in relevant state policy-making and will facilitate fundraising efforts. CSOs working in this

sector should pay more attention to transparency and board management issues. Taking into account emergency humanitarian needs, CSOs need to develop preparedness for emergency situation, including planning for emergency and risk assessment done beforehand. Additionally, there is a need for professional psychological consultation for CSO staff working with vulnerable groups in this area.

Social Entrepreneurship

Experts note that very few CSOs in Armenia can be considered as mature social enterprises, while most are in an early stage of development. According to the Analysis of Social Enterprises and their Ecosystem in Armenia (2017), many social enterprises have been established by CSOs in the framework of donor-funded programmes, and instead of reflecting the entrepreneurial spirit of individuals, CSOs seek to provide additional income for CSOs through establishing a supplementary business entity. CSOs in Yerevan are able to make use of available resources, people, and ideas with support of several organisations and programmes, which organise topical events, provide mentoring, and attract investors. However, region-based CSOs are marginalised from knowledge base, and a local space is needed to organise experience exchange and learning in regions.

The main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations show the following gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. CSOs often lack the appropriate business skills to shift from the mentality of project-based grant funding to income generating activities on the market; without proper marketing and a viable business plan they often offer not what is demanded by the market, but whatever they are able to offer. There is a lack of trainers in the sector specialised in business training and at the same time familiar with civil society approaches, to be able to integrate the business knowledge in the CSO context. General understanding of social enterprises on national level is missing, as there are not state regulations that properly reflect the idea of SE. There is a lack of professionals in the sector, including managers, marketing specialists, sales specialists.

As SEs become an increasingly popular concept, CSOs create an SE component without proper market research, without a viable business model, and without knowledge of the market or industry.

Analysis of Social Enterprises and their Ecosystem in Armenia, 2017

The main considerations on the sector opportunities are the following. Coordination efforts would contribute to more effective partnership between investors and SEs; at the same time, as Armenian CSOs are in the starting stage of SE, coordination is not an urgent issue. CSOs need assistance in building capacities to formulate their entrepreneurship ideas as business projects and seek investment. CSOs have

The goal of business is profit making, while CSOs have a totally different goal when becoming social enterprise, they don't need to make profit, otherwise it would be a mutant, something else than CSO. If we understand the algorithm of social entrepreneurship, what makes an effective SE, [...], if this algorithm is known, we can provide training on that, not business training, as the latter would transform CSOs detracting from social mission. Keep this mission as social one, but utilise tools from other sectors.

Analysis of Social Enterprises and their Ecosystem in Armenia, 2017

to be more responsive to market needs as well as community needs and to be able to combine business tools with social mission to become an effective SE. Public awareness raising campaigns and success stories are needed to create a supportive environment. Moderate regulation is needed in the field to integrate the SE concept in the legislation and to provide some tax benefits; however, there is a concern that special regulation on SEs would rather limit the activities, thus it would be reasonable to reflect various aspects of social entrepreneurship in related legal acts.

Economic Development

This sector is relatively scarce and includes a range of CSOs from several developed associations of professionals in the field, such as Employers' Union, Traders' Union, involved in a range of activities including advocacy on national policy level, to local level CSOs providing consulting assistance to SMEs and individual businessmen. As a platform for public participation in economic development policy, SME Development Council was established by the prime minister in 2011, allowing CSOs working in the sector to raise issues and have their input in relevant state policies and legal drafts. Business Support Organisation established by EBRD provides professional assistance and expertise to sectorial CSOs and aims at promoting a structured partnership and constructive policy dialogue between the state and the private sector in Armenia.

The main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations show the following gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. In general, CSOs are not independent and refrain from providing a critical opinion on issues needing urgent intervention. Some CSOs prefer to advocate for their own business issues, while taking a neutral role in sector-wide issues. The staff of CSOs working in economic development is aware of relevant basic legislation, but might lack knowledge in specific narrow legal regulations and international norms (e.g. licensing process, copyright law, etc.). Few CSOs have narrow specialisation in the field, usually preferring to cover a number of sub-areas. Besides, there is a lack of synergy between the CSOs in this sector, as well as communication with CSOs working in other sectors, e.g. in social services and infrastructure.

As to the assets and opportunities available in the sector, experts mention that specialised professionals, particularly economists, in CSO boards can serve as an important advantage. CSOs can consider establishing certification laboratory for specific economic activities and can start advocating for outsourcing this function to CSOs. As there is a limited access to official information on detailed economic indicators, publication of economic analytical journals with up-to-date economic data and user-friendly information on current economic trends may become a demanded service provided by CSOs.

Government and Civil Society

This sector involves the largest number of CSOs participated in the online survey, as it covers a large range of areas such as human rights, democracy development, public policy, etc. Traditionally, these topics have been most covered by various donor programmes, which might be another reason of abundance of CSOs working in the sector. Many CSOs working in this field are involved in human rights protection in general or for specific groups like women, children, people with disabilities, etc.; less CSOs work in the area of labour rights, education policy, health policy, social-economic rights. Highly qualified professionals are available in the sector, whose expertise is demanded by state structures. Many CSOs are aware of state policies in their field of specialisation; some of them are involved in the joint government-CSO working groups, which serve as an effective source of information on the sector developments.

The main findings from desk review, expert interviews and consultations show the following gaps in the sector relevant to CSO work. There is a lack of health specialists providing professional expertise for CSOs working in justice and public health. Next, CSOs working in child protection have qualified social workers but insufficient legal expertise.

Legal professionals of older generation have difficulties in accepting new standards in human right protection, e.g. related to LGBT or religious minority rights. In formal education, there is a lack of courses on torture cases and prevention of torture; there is no educational material on LGBT rights, rights of religious minorities. On the contrary, there is a trend to present CSOs working in antidiscrimination and/or domestic violence as a threat to national security. In justice field, CSOs are often not able to bring change on policy level, not because of lack of capacity, but due to system corruption and absence of political will.

Main expert considerations on the assets and opportunities of the sector are as follows. CSOs are demanded in the area of access to justice; as mentioned above, this is a problematic field in the country and needs significant efforts and high-quality professionals. In general, CSOs need support in building their change-making potential, as there are many issues that they find difficult to influence in policy level. In areas such as health or social issues, state is more open and responsive: these areas are not politically conditioned and the necessity to involve CSOs is acknowledged. Coalitions help to mobilise CSO capacities and increase their effectiveness in advocacy. Additionally, usage of hotlines and social media can help CSOs work more effectively in evidence collection and advocacy initiatives.

There are CSOs that are as self-sufficient as small clinics of their field [here expert refers to legal clinics - a nonprofit law practice serving the public interest - auth.], they have so much professionalism, so much expertise accumulated, but still, it is never perfect.

**Government and Civil Society
Expert, international organisation
representative**

CSO capacity-building formats

There is a large variety of capacity-building interventions practiced by diverse capacity-building programmes in Armenia and internationally. The recommendations on CSO capacity-building formats presented further reflect specific recommendations identified through desk review and field work relevant for various professional sectors.

The “Capacity Building Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia” (2016) notes a growing need to constantly upgrade and redefine capacity-building approaches, methods and techniques. Among the variety of tools and methods for capacity building, consultancy, trainings, study visits, coaching and mentoring, peer counselling, on-the-job training, in-house training, and others are mentioned, with trainings considered as the most preferred mode of capacity building. Systematic trainings, followed by practical assignments, on-job coaching, peer exchanges, and other follow-up activities adapted to local needs are mentioned as most effective. Using local trainers' capacity and development of region-based trainers to deliver trainings in regions is considered as a good practice, though external trainers bringing an added value through external perspective, innovation, and personal experience are also valued.

According to the research, CSOs prefer traditional format of trainings to e-learning. Some of the reasons mentioned for this preference is difficulty in understanding the material, technical issues related to Internet or equipment, as well lack of immediate face-to-face contact as opposed to traditional training.

“CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities”, 2014

In “CSO Comprehensive Market Research” (2015), most CSOs indicated collective courses and coaching as preferred format for development assistance. At the same time, coaching is more often mentioned by regional organisations – 63.9% as compared to 35% of Yerevan-based CSOs. On the other hand, in CSO focus groups and expert interviews, consulting and mentoring are mentioned as the most effective capacity building formats. CSOs participated in focus groups highly valued experience exchange events, while experts also mentioned about the necessity of non-profit management education on university level. According to the recommendations of this research, group training and coaching can be combined with online instruction and information delivery, which will help CSOs address their development needs. However, necessity to consider the issues of Internet connectivity in the regions is emphasised. Consulting as an effective means of targeted CSO capacity building, peer-to-peer mentoring as a collaborative mechanism and platforms for knowledge exchange are recommended as effective formats for capacity building.

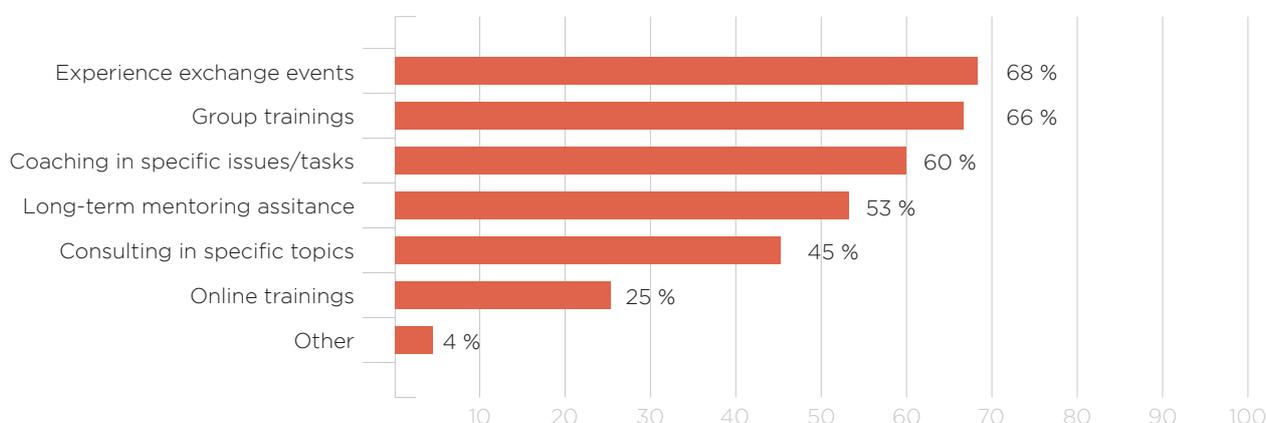
The findings from expert interviews and consultations reflect the need of peer-to-peer learning. Experience exchange events, coaching and mentorship were mentioned as effective capacity-building formats, preferred to trainings; at the same time, trainings are mentioned as necessary for specific topics and effective in case they include practical component and/or are followed by coaching and on-job practical assistance.

The CSOs that participated in the online survey conducted in the framework of this assessment were provided with several options of capacity-building formats. The survey results showed that most CSOs prefer experience exchange events followed by group trainings and coaching, while less than half voted for online trainings.

Possible reasons for comparatively less indication of online trainings can be referred to technical issues especially in case of regional CSOs, as well as preference of face-to-face contact. At the same time, high preference of experience exchange events reinforces the expert opinions and findings from other studies showing the need for networking and knowledge exchange platforms.

Recommended formats for capacity-building mentioned by the experts involved in the interviews and consultations include the following:

Figure 3: Preferred professional capacity-building formats (% , multiple responses allowed)



- Experience exchange events,
- Coaching and mentorship,
- Formation of networks and consortia for experience exchange and joint activities,
- Training courses with practical component,
- Consultancy,
- Peer-to-peer learning activities,
- Online learning and consulting platforms,
- Linkages with overseas organisations working in the same area,
- Assistance in membership in international networks and associations,
- Professional groups in social media,
- Access to guides, databases, protocols, other relevant information,
- Dissemination of success stories,
- Publication of training manuals and professional guides in various topics,
- Open lectures, master classes.

Specific suggestions by CSOs and experts involved in survey and consultations are as follows:

- Include SE component in all grants projects, so that CSOs start self-funding activities, and provide relevant assistance in implementation (both funding and mentoring),
- Provide small grants for practical capacity development as follow up to capacity building events,
- Provide accessibility of all programme processes for people with disabilities,

- Organise events and trainings in regions,
- Provide opportunity to purchase material resources within the sub-grant projects (website, equipment, PR tools),
- Provide assistance in management as an integral part and sustainability precondition of any capacity-building intervention,
- Provide distance learning opportunities for CSOs based in remote communities,
- Organise meetings and discussions with donors interested in respective fields.

As a whole, the presented preferences and recommendations reflect the BRIDGE for CSOs programme components, as well as provide additional ideas on specific tools and methods that can be utilised by the programme in addition to the planned interventions.

I think that most thing that they need is a really good mentorship programme, not training, you shouldn't gather them all together into one room and then train them in the old ways of doing it; I think they need one-to-one mentors, basically, take somebody who has done a successful job and put them into a situation where they learn from that individual.

SE Expert, representative of international organisation

According to the research, CSOs prefer traditional format of trainings to e-learning. Some of the reasons mentioned for this preference is difficulty in understanding the material, technical issues related to Internet or equipment, as well lack of immediate face-to-face contact as opposed to traditional training.

“CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities”, 2014

III. Conclusions

CSO capacity-building formats

The findings of the assessment have identified a number of opportunities and challenges for CSO professional capacity development. First of all, based on the scope of activities of surveyed CSOs, it can be concluded that BRIDGE for CSOs shall put more effort to reach CSOs operating in sport, health, art and culture, humanitarian aid, and other less covered areas, in order to ensure CSOs' awareness about the programme and involvement in programme activities. The willingness of CSOs to take advantage from new learning opportunities can serve as a green light to the programme to engage a large number of CSOs committed to learning. At the same time, it is recommended to pay attention to the institutionalisation of the knowledge within the organisation, and to develop an understanding that CSOs having professionals with specific thematic expertise are more effective as compared to CSOs working in a number of areas without engaging relevant professional staff.

A number of gaps and opportunities were identified in each thematic sector covered in the assessment. It is recommended that the capacity-building interventions address relevant knowledge and skills to help CSOs in taking advantage of available opportunities and addressing the gaps existing in each sector. The thematic topics for capacity-building identified on the basis of assessment, as well as mentioned by the survey participant CSOs are included in Annex 7. At the same time, several common topics and gaps were

identified in a number of sectors, based on previous research, expert opinions, and CSO responses; these topics are presented below.

Cross-cutting topics

As proved by desk review and expert consultations, policy level impact is a challenge faced by CSOs in almost all sectors. Consequently, legal knowledge and advocacy skills are among the most needed capacity development topics across all spheres of activities. Apart from capacity, this challenge is also a matter of attitude by CSOs. Though it was mentioned that state is often closed to CSO participation in specific areas, the studies and experts note that CSOs should be more persistent in addressing this challenge and having their input in decision-making processes.

Despite the significant funding received and willingness to be engaged in the process, CSOs in Armenia remained with limited ability to influence public policy and opinion.

“The Armenia EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017”

We have to think how to develop CSO capacity to push, to change this inaction, not just do a project and publish a research that no one takes care for, but to make the state take responsibility for admitting and changing things. I want us to go forward, to make CSOs more dynamic.

Expert consultation participant, state representative

Further, studies, experts, and CSOs across all sectors identified that capacity-building programmes should empower them with tools to improve networking in their sector as well as provide assistance in identifying available local and international networks. Most of the assessment experts highlight the necessity of joint platforms and coordination in the specific field which could contribute to peer-to-peer capacity building opportunities and in general enhanced effectiveness of CSO work. Besides, networks and sectorial platforms help CSOs to mobilise their resources for successful advocacy and fundraising.

Usage of informational technologies is another area where it is necessary and feasible to provide capacity-building assistance. Possible assistance topics include big data analysis, online educational programmes, online platforms for networking and information sharing, supporting technologies for people with special needs, and other sector-specific tools. It is recommended to address this need not only through trainings and exchange experience events but also through linking CSOs with specific platforms and technological solutions where possible.

CSOs from a variety of sectors identified entrepreneurship as another topic for capacity-building. Considering the recent legislative changes that enable public organisations to engage in entrepreneurial activities, it can be assumed that the recent interest in entrepreneurship is stimulated by new potentials for financial diversification. On the other hand, there is a resistance towards initiating entrepreneurial activities conditioned by lack of business skills and associated risks as perceived by CSOs. However, capacity building in this area is important not only for sustainability, but also for engaging beneficiaries and addressing their social and economic needs, thus it is important to embed the recognition of social enterprise as a beneficiary engagement tool in capacity building interventions targeting social entrepreneurship.

Experts discussed public awareness-raising as a gap in activities of CSOs working in several areas. Though several studies show that awareness-raising is among most popular types of CSO activities, it is often not consistent and systematic. The CSO Sustainability Index 2015 states that few CSOs apply strategic approaches to their outreach efforts. Particularly, experts involved in the assessment discussed the need for more consistent work in public education on environmental issues and risks, healthy lifestyle, rights of vulnerable groups, etc. It is recommended to build education programme design and implementation skills, as well as provide necessary tools and methodologies, in order that CSOs are able to organise effective educational programmes for target groups and general public within various fields.

The participants of qualitative research find that there is a lack of awareness-raising and education in specific areas. In particular, they mention about the necessity of raising public awareness and fighting stereotypes on disability issues, promoting social and cultural values.

“CSO Comprehensive Market Research”, 2015

I think that if they are a financially stable and healthy NGO because of their social enterprise then they are not going to constantly run after whatever grant is coming and shifting their stakeholder groups, because what's happening these NGOs after they see a grant they are shifting their stakeholder group, their focus, so this is a generalization but if you have a stable financial source because of a business activity you can give your attention focused on your stakeholder group whatever that may be.

SE Expert, representative of international organisation

Way forward

Summing up, the following general recommendations are proposed to BRIDGE for CSOs programme to take into account through further CSO capacity-building activities:

1. Put effort to reach out more CSOs particularly in less covered areas such as Sport, Health, Humanitarian Aid, Economic Development, and others.
2. Promote exchange of knowledge and skills within the organisations to ensure the institutionalisation of knowledge,
3. Combine different capacity-building approaches and tools in designing capacity building programmes, more specifically, foresee practical component in trainings planned within the programme,
4. In parallel to capacity-building events, provide platforms for networking around specific thematic areas e.g. arts and culture, sports, health, and other issues based on need,
5. In capacity-building events where international experience is presented, take into account local legislation and policies where relevant,

6. Seek more expertise in information technologies and innovative tools for various areas of CSO activities,
7. Encourage organisations to publicise their activities and provide tools for information exchange,
8. Put more efforts to engage region-based and marginalised organisations,
9. Synchronise programme activities with other capacity-building projects and initiatives,
10. In planning capacity-building interventions, consider the gaps, opportunities, and topics identified for each category of CSOs.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of references

1. Analysis of Social Enterprises and their Ecosystem in Armenia, Impact Hub Yerevan, 2017.
2. Armenia EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017, 2014.
3. Armenian Civil Society after Twenty Years of Transition: Still Post-Communist?, Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis, 2014.
4. Capacity Building Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia, Strong CSOs for Stronger Armenia Programmeme, 2016.
5. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment: Armenia Country Report, Counterpart International Armenia, 2014.
6. CSO Comprehensive Market Research, CRRC Armenia, CSO DePo Programme, 2015.
7. CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Civil Society: Dialogue for Progress Programme, 2014.
8. CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia 2015, USAID, 2016.
9. Inclusion in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia, Armenia Country report, 2016.
10. Risks and Opportunities for the NGO Sector In Armenia, Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center, Boosting NGO Participatory Capacity in Armenia Project, 2011.
11. Youth NGO Mapping Research and Evaluation of State-Funded Youth Projects, Youth Studies Institute, 2014.

Annex 2: Online survey questionnaire

1. Organisation's name
2. Name and title of the person completing the questionnaire
3. The main area of activities (please select ONE priority area):
 - 1) Education and Research
 - 2) Health
 - 3) Social Services and Infrastructure
 - 4) Arts, Culture and Humanities
 - 5) Environment
 - 6) Humanitarian Aid
 - 7) Sport
 - 8) Youth
 - 9) Social Entrepreneurship
 - 10) Government and Civil Society
 - 11) Economic Development
 - 12) Other (please mention)
4. Who or which groups are your organisation's primary beneficiaries (e.g., people with disability, women, teachers, architects, villagers, civil servants, public organisations, etc.)?
5. Please mention the approximate number of beneficiaries that took advantage from your organisation's projects and services in 2016.
6. How many projects did your organisation implemented in 2016?
7. How many persons are involved in your organisation as key staff and/or experts?
8. How many persons from your staff and/or experts have professional education and/or passed training in the primary area of organisation's activities (that is selected in Question 3)?
9. Apart from professional formal or non-formal education, what other means contributed to the development of professional knowledge of organisation?
 1. Self-education
 2. Work experience
 3. Interaction with other professionals
 4. Other (please mention)_____
10. In your opinion, to what extent the professional knowledge of your staff and experts are satisfactory for implementation of organisation's goals?

- 1) Not satisfactory at all
- 2) Mainly not satisfactory
- 3) Partly satisfactory
- 4) Mainly satisfactory
- 5) Fully satisfactory

11. Has your organisation participated in any capacity-building programme?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (skip to Question 13)

12. If yes, did that project/s include professional capacity building events (training, consulting, and else) on the primary area of your organisation's activities (that is selected in Question 3)?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

13. Which narrow thematic topics in your primary area of activities would you mention as most necessary for organisation's professional development?

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

14. What is your preferred capacity-building format for professional development in your organisation's primary area of activities?

1. Group trainings
2. Online trainings
3. Consulting in specific topics
4. Practical consulting in specific issues/tasks (coaching)
5. Long-term mentorship assistance
6. Experience exchange events
7. Other (please mention) _____

15. Would you like if your organisation's managers participate in a training or educational programme on non-profit management?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Difficult to answer

16. Other comments or suggestions.

Annex 3: Expert interview guide

1. Please describe your experience in X sector. Where do you work now?
2. In your everyday work, how did/do you communicate with CSOs?
3. In your opinion, how skilful are Armenian CSOs working in the X sector? Could you please mention any CSO specialised in this sector, which can serve as a benchmark in terms of service quality? Please comment your answer.
4. Does the main staff of CSOs in X sector have relevant (formal) professional education? Is it necessary? Please explain.
5. In your opinion, to what extent the key staff of CSOs in X sector have necessary information and knowledge on the sector? Please indicate the specific knowledge that CSOs have. And what are the knowledge gaps?
6. In your opinion, to what extent CSOs are able to apply their knowledge, do they have relevant skills? Which skills are lacking?
7. Are the knowledge and skills of sectorial CSOs sufficient for addressing the needs of their beneficiaries? Please explain.
8. What professional tools and mechanisms are necessary for CSOs in X sector to apply in their work (if applicable)? Do Armenian CSOs utilise these tools and mechanisms? If yes, how? If not, why?
9. Are sectorial CSOs familiar with new professional approaches and ideas available internationally? Do they apply them? How do they acquire the relevant information and resources?
10. Are sectorial CSOs familiar with sector-related national legislation and policy? How do they communicate with relevant structures engaged in state policy?
11. Are sectorial CSOs able to bring strategic change in their field, whether on local, national or international level?
12. In your opinion, are sectorial CSOs able to analyse their activities to identify their own professional development needs? Are they able to collaborate with other professionals in their field, including other CSOs, state and Diaspora representatives, in order to address those needs? What other means of professional development do they utilise?

⁶ The 'X' indicates one of eleven sectors of CSO activities as described in the methodology part; for each expert, the relevant sector of his/her expertise was mentioned here.

13. Do you know programmes and organisations that provide (or provided) capacity building support in this sector? How would you assess the effectiveness of this support? Please explain.
14. In general, what type of assistance do CSOs need to develop their professional capacities in this sector (in terms of topics and formats)?
15. What would you recommend for this programme to take into consideration when planning CSO professional development interventions?

Annex 4: List of experts participated in interviews

1. Nvard Manasyan, Member of Expert Group on Higher Education Reforms
2. Naira Gharakhanyan, Board Member of the Mother and Child Health Alliance
3. Geghanush Gyunashyan, Head of Family, Women and Children Issues Department, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
4. Ruben Arevshatyan, President of the National Association of Art Critics
5. Tatevik Khachatryan, Hayk Abrahamyan, Civil Society Programme Officers of the Open Society Foundations-Armenia
6. Hakob Avagyan, President of SME Cooperation Association
7. Khachik Hakobyan, Deputy Minister, RA Ministry of Nature Protection
8. Nver Sargsyan, UNDP Armenia Programme Officer
9. Arsen Simonyan, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme Coordinator of the OxYGen Foundation
10. Sara Anjargolian, Impact Hub Co-Founder
11. Levon Vahradyan, Head of Mass Sports and Physical Education Policy Department, RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs

Annex 5: List of experts participated in consultations

1. Anahit Minasyan, Director of KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation
2. Alexander Shagafyan, Co-founder and Executive Director of Armenian Center for Democratic Education CIVITAS NGO
3. Karen Hovhannisyan, President of Armenian National Golf Association NGO
4. Tigran Bazarchyan, Vice President of the European Youth Parliament Armenia NGO
5. Rima Sargsyan, Dasaran Educational Center Programme Manager
6. David Hayrapetyan, Director of the Youth Events Holding Center State Non- Commercial Organisation
7. Vahagn Tukharyan, Co-founder of TriClub Yerevan
8. Lyova Vardanyan, Head of Division for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations at Sports Highest Achievements Policy Department, RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
9. Garegin Zagoyan, Founder, Garegin Zagoyan Foundation
10. Arevik Ashkharoyan, Founder, ARI Literary Foundation
11. Vazgen Galstyan, President of Jermuk Development Center NGO
12. Mary Grigoryan, Head of Tourism Policy Department, State Tourism Committee of Armenia
13. Susanna Harutyunyan, President of Confidence NGO
14. Diana Ter-Stepanyan, Chairperson of Institute of New Social Studies NGO
15. Gayane Hovakimyan, Deputy Director of the Centre for Implementation of Legal Education and Rehabilitation Programmes State Non-Commercial Organisation
16. Karine Saribekyan, Head of Mother and Child Health Protection Department, RA Ministry of Health
17. Hayk Tiratourian, Fundraising and Partnership Manager, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Armenia
18. Tamara Manukyan, President of “Havat” Deaf Children’s Mothers Union NGO
19. Jina Sargizova, Representative of the Swiss Red Cross in Armenia
20. Marina Mkhitarian, Head of Kolba Lab, UNDP
21. Armen Martirosyan, Leading Specialist of the Department of Administrative Supervision and Community Service, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
22. Susanna Harutyunyan, Head of the Organisational Development Department, Armenian Red Cross Society

23. Areg Tadevosyan, CODE-SE Programme Coordinator
24. Gevorg Poghosyan, Senior Advisor to EBRD Business Support Office
25. Ani Sargsyan, Speech Therapist, Prkutyun NGO
26. Lusine Simonyan, Director, Child Development Fund
27. Tigran Petrosyan, Advocacy Officer, “Armenian Caritas” NGO
28. Tigran Tchorokhyan, Founder of Eli.am
29. Firdus Zakaryan, Chief of Staff of the RA Ministry of Diaspora
30. Alvard Karapetyan, Social Worker, Women’s Support Center
31. Siranush Zakaryan, Head of Public Relations Department, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
32. Anahit Sahakyan, Deputy Dean of the Sociology Department, Yerevan State University
33. Zaruhi Batoyan, Coordinator of National Disability Advocacy Coalition

Annex 6: CSO capacity-building projects identified in the assessment

Completed projects:

- **The NGO Strengthening Programme of USAID** (2001-2004) implemented by World Learning for International Development/Armenia had a capacity building package for CSOs, composed of two basic components: technical and professional assistance (i.e. training and individual expert consultation) and grants, and focused specifically on region-based CSOs.
- **Civic Advocacy Support Programme** (2006-2009) funded by the USAID, included provision of Advocacy Initiative grants and capacity-building for grantee CSOs mostly on organisational development and advocacy areas.
- **Youth in Action Programmeme** (2008-2013) by European Union promoted mobility, non-formal learning, intercultural dialogue and inclusion, primarily among people aged 13-30 and supported youth workers and civil society organisations through training and networking.
- **Civil Society and Local Government Support** (CSLSG) project (2010-2014) funded by the USAID covered community development initiatives, grants for policy analysis, government-CSO collaboration, advocacy, and provided opportunities for CSO institutional capacity strengthening.
- **Livelihood Improvement through Fostered Employment** (LIFE) for People with Disabilities programme (2012-2016), funded by the USAID, supported CSOs in establishing social enterprises with involvement of people with disabilities.
- **Strengthening Non-State Actors' Capacities to promote reform and increase public accountability**, EU-funded project (“Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress”, 2013-2016) included trainings for CSOs from Yerevan and regions on topics related to organisational development, advocacy, policy influence and public policy monitoring.
- **Support to Democratic Governance in Armenia EU-funded project** (2014-2015) was aimed at strengthening the capacity of civil society with special focus on carrying out social entrepreneurship and becoming more engaged in policy reforms. CSOs representatives were engaged in workshops on CSOs organisational development, social enterprise development, and policy making and monitoring.
- **Increasing civil society participation in national policy dialogue in Armenia EU-funded project** (2014-2016) included CSO capacity-building in advocacy, public policy and budget monitoring, communication, and networking.
- **Civic Action for Security and Environment** (CASE) small grant project by OSCE Yerevan Office (2009-2016) included a component of strengthening capacity of CSOs in the field of environment and security.
- **Eastern Partnership Culture Programmeme** (2011-2014) by European Union provided technical assistance and grant funding for various projects, including those addressing needs and capacities of cultural organisations and CSOs working in arts, culture, literature.

Current projects:

- **The Civic Engagement in Local Governance** (CELoG, 2014-2019) USAID-funded project supports the joint efforts of local civil society organisations to increase civic engagement and oversight of local governance and decentralisation reform at central and local levels. The project increases monitoring and advocacy capacities of the civil society, with a special focus on community-level civil society actors.
- **The Engaged Citizenry for Responsible Governance** (2014-2019) USAID-funded project supports a locally-led civil society consortium to reduce the space for corruption by mobilizing citizens in public oversight on national and local levels and ensuring citizens' access to reliable information on corruption.
- **Civil Society Organizations Development Programme** (CSO DePo, 2014-2019) funded by USAID aims to develop the capacities of Armenian civil society organisations to become more business-oriented as well as sustainable service providers.
- **Community Development through Social Entrepreneurship** (CODE-SE, 2015-2017) EU-funded project seeks to contribute to sustainable community development and enhance the capacities of CSOs in generating income through running social entrepreneurship projects in seven regions of Armenia. In addition, the project included developing an e-learning course on Social Enterprise in Armenian.
- **Strong Civil Society Organisations for Stronger Armenia** (2015-2018) EU-funded project is aimed at increasing capacities of CSOs in Armenia as independent development actors, by making them more competent, more responsive to citizens' needs, and more proactively supporting country's development through practical, project based approaches. This programme provided capacity-building opportunities to Armenian CSOs including strategic planning, project management, and communication training, coaching, and advice.
- **EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme** (2015-2018) funded by EU and led by British Council has an objective to support the cultural and creative sectors' contribution to sustainable humanitarian, social and economic development in Eastern Partnership countries.
- **Civil society Local Energy Efficiency Network** (CLEEN) project (2015-2018) funded by EU promotes a sectorial regional partnership of CSOs focusing on energy efficiency in four Eastern Partnership countries including Armenia. In the framework of this project, specific online training modules have been developed on NGO management, energy efficiency and policy work.
- **Commitment to Constructive Dialogue** (2016-2018) EU-funded project has started simultaneously with CSO Bridge and aims to enhance the influence of CSOs on the public policy process through strengthening the ability of CSOs to build coalitions and focus on constructive and strategic policy engagement with local and central government partners.

- **Intermediary Service Organizations for Civil Society Development** (2016-2017) USAID-funded project aims to empower regional civil society organisations towards enhanced sustainability and successful partnerships, and includes capacity building interventions in organisational development area.
- **Erasmus+** (2014-2020) is an EU programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond, providing opportunities for young people to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad and to organisations to engage in development and networking activities, including strategic improvement of the professional skills of their staff, organisational capacity building, and creating transnational cooperative partnerships with organisations from other countries in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices.
- **EU4Youth project implemented in Eastern Partnership countries** (2017-2020) fosters the active participation of young people in society and their employability, by developing youth leadership and entrepreneurship through a variety of actions, including capacity building for youth organisations to become active participants in policy-development and policy making, and capacity building projects promoting entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurship among young people.
- **Open Society Foundations-Armenia** provides ongoing assistance to CSOs working in areas of women's rights protection and gender equality, law and criminal justice, human rights and protection of vulnerable groups in general.
- **UNHCR** Armenia organises monthly experience exchange meetings, workshops, coaching, as well as outgoing experience exchange programmes for partner CSOs engaged in humanitarian aid provision.
- **The Global Environment Facility** (GEF) Small Grants Programme, started in Armenia since 2008, provides funding to NGOs for environmental projects and includes capacity development of national CSOs for their effective engagement in environmental governance.
- **Youth Event Holding Center** State Non-Commercial Organisation organises periodical trainings for youth CSOs since 2011 on youth policy, policy priorities, as well as online grant system procedures since this system is established in 2013 by RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Besides, since 2016 the Center conducts annual youth worker trainings on youth policy, youth need assessment, youth training methodology and skills, spiritual, cultural and personal development of youth, international cooperation in youth sphere, distance learning, and other topics.

Annex 7: Recommended topics for sectorial capacity-building



Education and Research

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of education policy and funding sources, including state budget funding and additional funding, state educational reforms, • Knowledge of education programmes and criteria of their development, subject curricula, handbook content, • Skills in public communication, targeting messages by audience, participation in public policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using information technologies in education and research, • Legal knowledge and ability to draft legislative documents, • Interactive learning programmes, non-formal education methods, • Inclusive education and education rights of people with disabilities, • Networking of educational CSOs.



Youth

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development programmes for CSO leaders, including online opportunities, • Engaging marginalised groups instead of the same core group of already involved youth • Non-formal trainings, • Identifying opportunities for fund CSO policy research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer engagement and retention skills, • Entrepreneurial skills for youth, • Knowledge in human rights protection and inclusive education, • Youth work and consultancy skills, • Knowledge in the field of youth employment and professional orientation, • Working with marginalised groups and youth having limited possibilities, • Skills in dialogue with local governance bodies and participation in community decision-making, • Youth inclusion tools and methods, • Youth policy and policy advocacy, • Mentoring and coaching skills in working with youth.



Sport

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport tourism development, • Coaching and instructing skills in working with children, • Coaching and instructing skills for working with persons with disability, • International experience in various sports and administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of sport among youth, promotion of sport tourism, • Junior and adult teaching/ instruction, • Marketing in sport tourism, • Introduction of non-traditional sports (Triathlon, handball, etc.).



Art, Culture and Humanities

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific profile-related experience exchange, new ideas, innovations, • Literature translations, • Art management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of national cultural heritage and traditional holidays, • Event management, including new types like mobile exhibitions, • Soliciting art patrons, fundraising for culture events.



Environment

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues-based programmeme evaluations, • Understanding of policy and legal regulations, • Design and delivery of environmental education programmes for children and youth, • Promotion of biodiversity, water management, and addressing climate change adaptation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotourism development, • Environmental audit, • Organic agriculture, • Alternative energy, • Monitoring of green territories, • Green economy, • Integrated eco-system management.



Social Services and Infrastructure

Expert recommendations	Needs Identified by CSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology in case management, need assessment and other aspects of social services, • Gerontology, social pedagogy, • International experience in innovative methods, services, approaches, schemes in the social sectors, • Prenatal schools, • Supporting technologies for people with special needs, • Peer-to-peer service development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management, • Supervision in psychology, • Inclusion of children with disabilities, • Social work on the community level, • Parental education, • Social protection policy, tools and mechanisms, • Psychology for people with special needs.



Health

Expert and CSO recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health policy and public expenditure in healthcare, • Specific professional topics for regional specialists, • International protocols and their usage, • Child and adolescents health and nutrition, • Promotion of healthy childhood, • Public health education programmes, • Case management, • Ethical code in health.



Humanitarian Aid

Expert and CSO recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management for social workers, • Emergency response, • Working with refugees, • Organisational development in board management, reporting and transparency, volunteer management, fundraising and project management.



Social Entrepreneurship

Expert and CSO recommendations

- Crowdfunding as a potential tool for small-scale financing,
- Financial diversification and revenue models,
- Business skills, business planning, marketing, sales,
- Community need assessment, market assessment, community mobilization,
- Quality control,
- Organization and management of Social Enterprises,
- Tourism development and marketing.



Economic Development

Expert and CSO recommendations

- Business communication,
- Business management,
- Information technologies in the field,
- Legal knowledge of customs, taxation and other regulations,
- Renewable energy, energy audit.



Government and Civil Society

Expert and CSO recommendations

- Specific policy knowledge related to violence, discrimination, access to justice, social and economic rights, labour rights, education rights, public health,
- Knowledge on mechanisms for the adoption of legal documents, the roles and responsibilities of state institutions, and provisions for public participation,
- Developing policy papers and advocacy,
- Needs assessment, research skills and capacities,
- Public and private partnerships,
- State strategy development procedures and standards.