MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Research

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The goal of this research is to study, map and analyze peacebuilding initiatives implemented in Armenia in the last 5 years (2012-2017), reporting on their gender component and existing challenges.

The research has been carried out on the initiative of Society Without Violence NGO and The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders in the frames of the project "Local, National and Regional Strategies to Improve the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine".

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Researchers

Qnarik Mkrtchyan

Syuzanna Siradeghyan

Translator

Astghik Aslanyan

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations

APY	Armenian Progressive Youth
CSI	Civil Society Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EPNK	The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh
EU	European Union
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NK	Nagorno Karabakh
RA	Republic of Armenia
SWV	Society Without Violence
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WIB	Women in Black
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WRC	Women's Resource Center

Introduction

In the modern world establishment and maintenance of peace and security are considered to be priorities of high importance. After the Second World War the UN[1] became one of the main implementers of this mission. Starting off with only 51 members, now the UN consists of 193 member states[2]. It is a platform where 193 opinions, standpoints and interests collide. Consequently, the efficiency of the work carried out towards any phenomenon depends on universal definitions and approaches. It is necessary to mention that even an entity of this magnitude, which aims to maintain peace and security in the world, does not provide a complete and unanimously acceptable definition of the term "peace". In different resolutions and declarations adopted by the UN, peace is generally referred as absence of war. The Declaration of the Right of People to Peace, adopted by the UN General Assembly on July 24, 2016, describes peace not only from the negative perspective (absence of war or violence), but also from the positive perspective[3], pointing out the importance of the implementation of and participation to inclusive and dynamic processes in order to achieve cooperation and mutual understanding[4].

The existence of an ongoing conflict and the fear of an external enemy ordinarily overshadow problems related to education, healthcare, social insurance and other fields and weaken political dissent, thus contributing to the establishment of internal 'unity'[5]. Regarding financial expenses, during ongoing conflicts attention is mainly focused on money spent on war whereas the amount of money cut down on the performance of activities aimed at the recovery of those affected by war is not usually discussed.

Although establishment of peace and security is considered a mission of high importance, projects and initiatives aiming at the achievement of this goal, especially in militarized countries such as the Republic of Armenia[6], are not sufficiently publicized and visible. Moreover, due to high level of militarization and propaganda of military-patriotic ideas peacebuilding actors in conflicting countries are threatened not only by nationalist groups, but also by wider public. This fact constitutes another obstacle to the visibility and efficiency of aforementioned projects.

The lack of platforms in Armenia, as well as in many other countries, for people affected by armed conflicts to raise their voices is another issue. Voices and problems of people living near the border are barely heard[7].

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1 http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/maintain-international-peace-and-security/, opened on 05.11.2017

2 http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html, opened on 05.11.2007

3 http://www.activeforpeace.org/no/fred/Positive_Negative_Peace.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017
http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-notions-186_en.html, opened on 05.11.2017

4 http://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/public/docs/Declaration_RightToPeace_24062016.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

5 A. A. Stein (1976) Conflict and Cohesion, Journal of Conflict Resolution http://www.grandstrategy.net/Articles-pdf/Conflict_and_Cohesion.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

6 https://www.bicc.de/uploads/tx_bicctools/GMI_2016_e_2016_01_12.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

7 For additional information - "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014"
http://www.swv.am/attachments/article/1223/%D5%84%D4%B1%D4%BF_%D4%B1%D4%BD_1325_%D4%B2%D5%A1

Present-day armed conflicts have different and more complicated nature. More than 90% of the peaceful population, especially women and girls, is targeted during large scale armed conflicts[8]. They are subjected to terrorism, trafficking, rape, ethnic cleansing, displacement. Moreover, they are obliged to endure post-war traumas (physiological, psychological, social[9]) throughout all their lives. 80% of the world's refugees are women and children[10]. However, women are not just victims of war; in several armed conflicts women are involved as soldiers[11]. Poor media coverage of such participation of women in armed conflicts leads to the diminution of the role and value of women in the society, as a result of which women are excluded from negotiation and decision-making processes.

The stipulations on women's situation during armed conflicts in legal documents are a relatively new phenomenon. On October 31, 2000 the UN Security Council, for the first time in its history, adopted the resolution 1325, an important component of Women, Peace and Security agenda[12]. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the process of conflict resolution and peace establishment, negotiations, peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping missions as well as post-war recovery activities. The clauses of the resolution are implemented by member countries through a National Action Plan. Regardless of the fact that Armenian society bears the impact of Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the existence of which requires urgent implementation of the the UNSCR 1325, the RA Government has not yet developed a NAP directed at the implementation of the resolution.

In Armenia there are no studies on women's issues carried out on a state level. Moreover, there are few or no reports and research on the goals, impact and challenges of peacebuilding projects implemented in the country. As a result, this field is understudied, and the first steps towards academic analysis may face numerous challenges and limitations.

Problem analysis

The twenty-year-long conflict of Nagorno Karabakh has rendered relations of conflicting sides so hostile that the possibility of peaceful resolution of the conflict is very low. Consistently intensifying militarization, hate speech popularization, conflict escalation, low level of public diplomacy, patriarchal propaganda, absence of alternative viewpoints, extremist activities of nationalist groups, etc., further deteriorate the relations between the two sides of this conflict.

Since 1990s numerous peacebuilding projects and initiatives have been implemented by individual activists and the civil society in order to overcome this problem and improve the

%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B1%D6%87_%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

8 https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/44896284.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

9 THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON WOMEN, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA), http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/Download.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

10 Article 136 http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf, opened on 05.11.2017

11 file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Women-in-Conflict-1.pdf

12 http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/

situation. These projects aim to raise public awareness and to convert the portrayal of the "enemy", intending to strengthen the dialogue between the conflicting sides. However, most of the implemented projects remain insufficiently publicized. There are no research or reports that would thoroughly present peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia, estimate gender sensitivity, challenges and efficiency of these projects and the level to which they are being targeted.

Goal

The goal of this research is to study, map and analyze peacebuilding initiatives implemented in Armenia in the last 5 years (2012-present), reporting on their gender component and existing challenges. The main target group consists of field actors: Armenian civil society organizations and individuals, RA Government and international entities, including international initiatives, projects of international intergovernmental organizations and so on.

Urgency/Importance

The identification of peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia and their efficiency is very urgent: there is a need to understand main challenges of the field and the efficiency of implemented projects in order to improve the results and impact generated by peacebuilding projects and initiatives. It is also important to estimate the level of gender sensitivity of these projects and initiatives and acknowledge those social groups which target peacebuilding actors.

The existence of such research and analyses is very important and urgent in order to make the work carried out by field actors more efficient.

This document can be applied by different beneficiaries, as it contains analysis of current peacebuilding situation from different perspectives. Moreover, on the basis of the qualitative research a list of recommendations, directed and applicable to different beneficiaries, has been presented. It is also important to mention that this document, not aiming to be considered a complete reflection of the relevant field, is still one of the few works presenting peacebuilding projects, their efficiency, challenges, dynamics, etc.

Methodology

Different methodological tools have been applied in this research. Online surveys have been sent to approximately 50 actors of the field. Interviews with active field experts have been carried out, including individuals working in different sectors, representatives of organizations and initiatives, researchers, advocates for peace and anti-militarization.

In the frames of this research, the following activities have been carried out:

- Interviews with field experts and online surveys,
- Non-formal discussions with people living near the border,
- A desk review on documents and related materials disseminated via Internet.

The classification of field actors is the following:

- Individual activists and initiatives,
- NGOs,
- RA Governmental bodies,
- Regional and international organizations.

The results of the projects are presented in the following structure.

Part one

The first part of the research includes description of peacebuilding projects carried out from 2012 to present and is divided according to project implementers; initiatives, CSOs, Government and international community. This chapter is mainly descriptive. It presents initiatives carried out in the relevant field, main actors and their supporters as well as goals and objectives of peacebuilding initiatives.

Part two

The subject of the second part of this research are the results, impact, efficiency and challenges of implemented projects and initiatives. Through conducted interviews, field gaps have been analyzed along with mechanisms necessary to overcome those gaps. These mechanisms are also presented in the fourth part of the research as recommendations.

Part three

The third part of the research constitutes an analysis of gender sensitive projects and initiatives. It aims to understand what were the main goals of the inclusion of the gender component as well as the main challenges occurred as a result of that inclusion.

Part four

The last part contains recommendations directed to different beneficiaries:

- Individual activists and initiatives,
- Civil society organizations,
- RA Government,
- International actors.

Research limitations and challenges

Taking into account the fact that certain issues and situational developments in the field of peacebuilding noticeably affected this study, the research team deems it important to mention the main challenges faced in the research process.

Certain actors were not willing either to provide information or to publicize ongoing projects.

As a project mapping tool, an online survey consisted of 10 questions was applied. As already mentioned, the survey was sent to more than 50 actors who were also reminded about the survey through phone calls. In numerous cases, the actors refused to answer the questions, stating that they do not find it viable or useful. In some cases, they promised to fill out the survey, but despite numerous phone calls, no answers followed. Thus, taking into account the vulnerability of peacebuilding projects and initiatives as well as their implementers, the research team decided to include in this research descriptions of those projects and initiatives information about which was possible to access

- From primary sources via interviews and online surveys. In these cases, the actors were willing to publicize the projects and the initiatives.
- Through desk review: projects accessible online were analyzed.

This research does not reflect all the peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia. It is based on available information.

Part one: description of peacebuilding projects, 2012-2017

In order to briefly describe peacebuilding initiatives, it is necessary to understand the perspective of the research team towards the framework of this notion.

The authors consider peacebuilding all the activities aiming to advocate, highlight, establish and propagate the idea of peace among the society. This definition corresponds to the approaches of respected international organizations and academic circles: most common ones can be found following this link[13]. In this framework, all the peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia as well as their actors cannot be listed, mapped and described, as not all of them are being publicized and discussed. Moreover, there are small-scale activities carried out only within an educational institution, a community or other unit.

Nevertheless, below an attempt has been made to present, classify and give a general idea about peacebuilding initiatives implemented in Armenia from 2012 to 2017 and their main actors. According to the research materials, actors of peacebuilding initiatives implemented in Armenia can be divided to several groups:

- Individuals and initiatives,
- CSOs (NGOs, Foundations, etc.),
- International, intergovernmental organizations, embassies located in Armenia,
- State entities (local self-government bodies, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development and Government).

Individuals and initiatives

This category is the most difficult to discover and describe for several reasons. First of all, for different reasons (ideological, technical, etc.) people involved in this field operate non-formally. Secondly, most of these initiatives are not financed: a fact that gives them opportunity to be more independent, but also makes them hard to discover as they are not subjected to formal accountability.

During the interviews individuals from this sector emphasized their ideological motives towards peacebuilding and anti-militarization, "The work of non-formal groups is more honest, as they are not paid. This is a very subtle and serious matter in the frames of which I want to be independent. If you do not earn money, you are not constrained[14]."

13Approaches of J. Galtung, UN entities, university centers http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/, opened on 12.11.2017
14 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017

Army in Reality[15]

Army in Reality is one of the initiatives most known to the society. Despite having started to operate before 2012, it continues to speak up about human rights issues in the army. Members of the movement believe that voicing problems within defense system is also a part of peacebuilding. In the active phase of this project, the initiative questioned violations of the right to a fair trial of soldiers killed in peacetime as well as internal regulative relations and corruption in the army, that is to say circumstances that lead to gross violations of human rights. "[...] the initiative created a serious discourse among the society, as the army was considered to be a "sacred" space and any attempt to speak up about issues related to the army was viewed as traitorous and helpful to the enemy. That approach is, in fact, contradictory, as denying the existing problems in the army does not contribute to the enhancement of its fighting capacities[16]." Both individuals and organizations support this group.

Originally, the objectives of Army in Reality were broader, as problems within the army are related to many other fields. However, during last years, there has been a decrease, as "[...] within the group there is a problem of generation change, now many people prefer to spend their resources not on movements, but on personal development or just do not question many issues, as being raised within the system, they do not perceive certain phenomena as problematic. In this sense the youth of 1990s was more broadminded[17]."

Women in Black, Armenia[18]

Women in Black Armenian initiative is one of the youngest branches of the international movement Women in Black. The initiative has been established in Armenia in 2011 thanks to the efforts of Society Without Violence NGO.

Women in Black, Armenia is an anti-militarist, feminist, peacebuilding initiative founded by 11 young girls from different regions of Armenia. Since 2016 Women in Black, Armenia has been operating as an independent entity and has been managed by its young members[19].

The initiative mainly implements educational projects in Yerevan and in the regions, presenting the subjects of conflict resolution and women's involvement in peacebuilding processes. They organize an annual flash mob and participate in the events carried out in the frames of 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. They have organized an exhibition of peace related photos and different conferences[20].

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15 Additional information can be found on Facebook page and group https://web.facebook.com/armyinreality/, https://web.facebook.com/groups/armyinreality/

16 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017

17 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017

18 The initiative members even after NGO registration (2016), consider WIB an initiative, as, in their words, it does not have a hierarchic structure typical for organizations. Additional information can be found on their website and facebook https://womeninblackarmenia.weebly.com/, opened on 12.11.2017
https://web.facebook.com/wib.armenia, opened on 12.11.2017

19 Women in Black, Armenia https://womeninblackarmenia.weebly.com/, opened on 12.11.2017

20 Interview with field expert, 11.14.2017

UNSCR 1325 monitoring group[21]

This initiative was established in 2013 It aims to monitor the situation around the UNSCR 1325 and prepare ground for the elaboration of a National Action Plan. The group was formed by 8 organizations[22]. The main outcome of this group's work has been the creation of the following documents: "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014[23]" and "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2012[24]". The reports contain situation analysis of the reporting period related to the main clauses of the resolution, including women's involvement in the decision-making processes, the situation of women affected by conflict, etc.

Peace march 2014[25]

In August, 2014 during the conflict escalation on the border a group of citizens initiated a peace march in the center of Yerevan after which a discussion was organized in Freedom Square. The march targeted Armenian Government as well as wider public. Participants expressed their disagreement with ceasefire violations and efforts to resolve the conflict with armed forces. The response of the society was controversial. Even CSOs actively operating in the field remained passive. "[...] In a strange way the formal civil society remains passive when such efforts occur. Generally, they continue implementing their planned activities, and Army in Reality and feminist, anti-militarist groups are the ones who do all the work preparing manifests, petitions or, however dangerous it is, getting out to the streets, as it happened in August, 2014 after reciprocal shootings. We were criticized even by the formal civil society: they were saying if there are no such protests in Azerbaijan, why should we go to the streets[26]."

Anti-militarist camp, 2017

In 2017 an anti-militarist camp was organized, where representatives from conflicted areas were present. There was no information about this camp in mass or social media, probably because they did not want to attract attention of nationalist groups.

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21 "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014"
http://www.swv.am/attachments/article/1223/%D5%84%D4%B1%D4%BF_%D4%B1%D4%BD_1325_%D4%B2%D5%A1
%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B1%D6%87_%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81.pdf, opened on
12.11.2017
22 Democracy Today NGO, Peace Dialogue NGO, PINK Armenia NGO, Society Without Violence NGO, Women's
Resource Center NGO, Goris Women's Development Resource Center Foundation, Women's Rights Center Foundation,
Armenian Young Women's Association
23 "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014"
http://www.swv.am/attachments/article/1223/%D5%84%D4%B1%D4%BF_%D4%B1%D4%BD_1325_%D4%B2%D5%A1
%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B1%D6%87_%D4%B6%D5%A5%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B5%D6%81.pdf, opened on
12.11.2017
24 Information about the report http://www.swv.am/index.php/hy/our-pillars-am/women-peace-and-security-am/817-
1325, opened on 12.11.2017
25 "Azatutyun" Radio Station, Peace March, Yerevan, https://www.azatutyun.am/a/26520395.html, opened on 12.11.2017
26 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017

The participants of the camp were individuals, scientists, journalists, art critics, artists who speak up about issues related to war and peace via their personal and professional activities. According to several approaches, the establishment of peace is possible only with the advancement of feminist ideologies and involvement of feminist women. "The active engagement of NGOs will not lead to much change. We need all women to make demands in all levels and sectors. As you can see, even women holding political positions do not announce themselves feminist. Women are afraid of being targeted. We need to promote not only women, but also feminist women. Look, the level of solidarity among women is very low: if me or you or other feminist ran elections of a high position, may be some men would elect us, but not women[27]."

There are many activities expressing solidarity among citizens of conflicting countries. For example, "during the arrest of journalist Khadija Ismayilova and Yunus spouses, certain human rights defenders in RA publicly expressed their solidarity[28]."

In general, it is obvious that within the discourse of peace and war the most radical anti-war approaches are expressed by feminists, especially those who act outside of formal entities. Several days after the April 4-day war, a group of anonymous feminists published an anti-war text entitled "Our killed bodies enrich their pockets[29]". The text included statements about war being lucrative for elites and corporations, legitimating the authoritarian regime and nationalism, about peacebuilding processes being a male monopoly. "We think that war, as an expression of patriarchy, can be stopped by regional activities against oppressions and militarism, by movements following ideas of radical feminism and solidarity, by development of nonviolent civil disobedience and public critical thinking as long as we keep in our hearts and include in our agendas everyday fates of people living in Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan[30]."

Civil Society Organizations

Despite the evident and predominant critical approach of individual activists and initiatives towards NGOs, the main actors of the field are CSOs. The directions, types and forms of their work are diverse. CSOs organize different events on local, national and regional levels, including work with women and youth directly affected by war as well as other groups, capacity building and awareness raising trainings on various topics, such as conflict

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27 Interview with field expert, 18.10.2017
28 Interview, 19.10.2017
29 Anonimous feminists, "Our killed bodies enrich their pockets"
http://epress.am/2016/04/12/%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-
%D6%86%D5%A5%D5%B4%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80-
%C2%AB%D5%B4%D5%A5%D6%80-%D5%BD%D5%BA%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%AE-
%D5%B4%D5%A1%D6%80.html opened on 15.11.2017
30 Anonimous feminists, "Our killed bodies enrich their pockets"
http://epress.am/2016/04/12/%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-
%D6%86%D5%A5%D5%B4%D5%AB%D5%B6%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%B6%D5%A5%D6%80-
%C2%AB%D5%B4%D5%A5%D6%80-%D5%BD%D5%BA%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%AE-
%D5%B4%D5%A1%D6%80.html opened on 15.11.2017

transformation, negotiation skills, gender sensitivity in the frames of conflict, international humanitarian mechanisms, WPS agenda, etc., they implement research or study projects (elaboration of documents, studies, surveys, publishing of translations, training module design), work with different specialists; teachers, journalists, etc. They also organize conferences, public thematic discussions, seminars, awarding ceremonies and support cultural events (short film making, festivals, exhibitions, etc.).

In peacebuilding projects CSOs apply all the advocacy tools used by initiatives focused on other topics. The particularities of the field lead to the implementation of numerous regional projects. On the basis of materials obtained during the research process, the following directions of NGO activities have been revealed:

- Work carried out in the regions directly affected by war,
- National, regional and international events,
- Elaboration of research.

Work carried out in the regions directly affected by war

In Armenia the work with these communities commenced during the war, before the appearance of formal peacebuilding initiatives. Originally, only humanitarian work was carried out: CSOs addressed issues of missing people, captives and refugees. During the following years CSOs started to work with other affected groups.

In the last few years there has been a tendency to implement different projects in areas near the border or inhabited by refugees or susceptible to shootings and bombing. These projects can be manifested through capacity building activities as well as humanitarian aid. There is a general understanding between CSOs and donors according to which in these communities it is not mandatory to implement only peace advocacy projects: any "useful" event can be considered peacebuilding, as the work carried out in these areas must be directed to the insurance of people's security which can be achieved through, for example, awareness raising on human rights or professional skill trainings (hairdressing, entrepreneurship)[31].

For many years Helsinki Citizen's Assembly Armenian Committee has been working in the southern regions of Armenia, particularly in the region of Syunik, combining awareness raising on human rights with skill and capacity building. The primary beneficiaries of community projects are women and youth[32].

Women Resource Center NGO has also been working in the areas affected by war for many years. Their main target group are women from Nagorno Karabakh. Their main goal in the region is awareness raising on issues of women living in conflict affected areas as well as active involvement of women in the process of peaceful settlement of conflict through capacity building, awareness raising and empowerment.

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31 Interview with field expert, 16.11.2017
32 Interview with field expert, 16.11.2017

In recent years the number of projects incorporating work with refugees, who fled Azerbaijan as a result of Artsakh war, has decreased for objective reasons. New geopolitical challenges have brought new waves of refugees to Armenia; refugees from Syria and inhabitants of Talish village displaced during the April War. Projects targeting these two groups are mainly focused on humanitarian aid and the process of integration.

Since military escalations of 2013-2014, the society and state entities started to pay more attention to communities located near the border, considering the fact that in case of local escalation of conflict and war these communities will be a primary target. Alongside with increasing militarization, different peacebuilding projects started to include communities located near the border in their activities, such as events carried out on a local level as well as studies related to peacebuilding. In particular, in the survey "Conflict potential of Armenia" implemented by Center for Crisis Management in 2015 special attention was paid to communities located near the border[33]. Furthermore, in the elaboration process of "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014" focus group discussions were carried out with women living in border areas[34].

Democracy Today NGO[35] has been consistently working with women and youth living in the border villages, especially in the last 5 years. Their projects are funded by different financial sources and aim to empower women and youth to become active members of the society. One of the central subjects of these projects is advocacy of the UNSCR 1325 and awareness raising on pillars of the resolution. On a local level Democracy Today NGO also implements projects for women and youth in the frames of "The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh" (EPNK) project[36].

Civil Society Institute[37] continuously works towards the establishment and maintenance of a dialogue between Armenian and Azerbaijani communities located near the border in the frames of "Promoting community-focused responses to insecurity and conflict in border areas of Armenia and Azerbaijan" project[38]. CSI also implemented a project supporting mothers of soldiers who died in peacetime or during military action. As a result, these women formed their own organization, namely "Ceasefire: the pain of human loss". The implementers of the project consider reintegration of parents into public life one of the main results of this project: after losing their child parents did not even leave their homes whereas now they operate as an independent entity and are a part of an accomplished network[39].

The organizations successfully consolidate different directions of peacebuilding activities. That is to say, they carry out activities within the communities and in the meantime engage

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33 Source - survey, Center for Crisis Management
34 "UNSCR 1325: Civil society monitoring report 2014"
35 Official website http://www.democracytoday.am/index.cfm?objectid=B54DBA2C-3FF3-352C-2309DFA3AA4999FF, opened on 15.11.2017
36 http://www.epnk.org/
37 Official website http://www.csi.am/content/ongoing-projects, opened on 15.11.2017
38 Non- official translation of the project name, http://www.csi.am/content/ongoing-projects, opened on 15.11.2017
39 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017

representatives of the same target group into meetings of cross border dialogue with similar groups from Azerbaijan.

National, regional and international events

According to the results of the survey, more than 30 national, regional and international peacebuilding projects have been implemented by Armenian organizations in the last 5 years. Taking into account the fact that some actors were not identified, and others did not fill out the survey, the following conclusion can be made: the actual number of implemented projects is much higher.

These projects have been implemented through application of different methods: trainings, discussions, conferences, exhibitions, film/animation making and screening, award ceremonies, creation of networks and groups, intercultural dialogue and public diplomacy. Among these projects, there are general peacebuilding projects, initiatives and projects devoted to the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and, of course, events aiming to establish peace in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Below can be find a description of projects implemented by several organizations.

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office[40]

- "Build peace on your own – Civil society for a United Caucasus", 2012

A regional project in the frames of which a training was organized in Berlin for participants form 3 countries of South Caucasus and European countries.

- "Peace Education and Living Together in Youth Work: Cross the Borders", 2013

A regional project in the frames of which a meeting was organized in France with representatives from 3 countries of South Caucasus and France.

- "Active Citizens for Reconciliation Building Peace Together Through Remembrance", 2014

A regional project in the frames of which a training was organized in Georgia for participants form 3 countries of South Caucasus and European countries.

- "Education for Peace – Competences for Peace Education in the Youth Field", 2015

A project in the frames of which a training was organized in Georgia for participants form 3 countries of South Caucasus and European countries.

- "Teachers for Democratization and Peace Building in Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", 2012

A regional project for teachers from Turkey and Armenia implemented in Turkey.

- "Yavas-Gamats" summer school, 2014

A regional project for teachers from Turkey and Armenia implemented in Turkey.

- "Yavas-Gamats" summer school, 2015

A regional project for teachers and students from Turkey and Armenia implemented in Armenia.

- "Armenian-Turkish Dialogue Support: Ongoing YavasGamats process", 2015

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40 Official website http://hcav.am/ opened on 15.11.2017

A regional project for teachers and students from Turkey and Armenia implemented in Armenia

- "Training Laboratory: Designing Learning for Peace", 2017

A regional project in the frames of which trainings in Georgia and online courses have been carried out for participants from 3 countries of the South Caucasus and European countries.

- "Youth as Peacebuilders - Youth Policy for Peace", 2017

A regional project directed to the development of peacebuilding and advocacy policies.

Abovementioned projects of the organization did not have a specific inclination towards gender issues but took into account gender particularities. The target group consisted of youth, students and teachers without gender based or age based limitations.

Armenian Progressive Youth NGO (APY)

- "Shelter: Armenia, Turkey, Greece: Sharing and Learning Together", 2013[41]

An intercultural exchange project for youth from Armenia, Turkey and Greece held in Tsaghkadzor.

- "Armenia-Turkey: Live and Dance Together", 2014[42]

A regional project in the frames of which participants from Armenia and Turkey learn each other's dances for peace and dialogue.

- "Conflict vs. Connection: A Practical Training for Young Peace-Builders", 2017[43]

An international project for young peacebuilders implemented in Yerevan.

- "SCOPE: Strengthening Youth Capacity for Conflict Management and Peace-Building", 2017[44]

An international project implemented in Yerevan, Tbilisi and Belgrade which ensures experience exchange on non-violent communication, peacebuilding and conflict transformation among young activists.

The projects of Armenian Progressive Youth NGO were youth oriented and were not directed towards gender issues, but, according to the NGO representatives, during the project implementation the role of women in peacebuilding processes was discussed. The trainings were designed with a gender-sensitive approach, ensuring equal participation of women and men.

Peace Dialogue NGO[45]

- "Let's see, choose, change", 2011-2013

A regional project implemented in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.

- "Arena: community art and public theater", 2015-2017

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41 Additional information on http://world.greekreporter.com/2013/03/22/armenia-greece-turkey-under-shelter/, 15.11.2017
42 Additional information on http://www.yeu-international.org/en/publications/newsmail/news-from-mos/holding-hands-and-dancing-together-shoulder-to-shoulder-for-peace-and-dialogue, 15.11.2017
43 Additional information on https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/call-for-trainers/call/conflict-vs-connection-a-practical-training-for-young-peace-builders.296/, 15.11.2017
44 Additional information on http://www.goinpro.org/en/strengthening-youth-capacity-for-conflict-management-and-peace-building-armenia-august-2017/, 15.11.2017
45 Official website http://peacedialogue.am/

An ongoing international project aimed to empower peacebuilding and human rights' activists, organizations, independent artists, to support elaboration of local strategies for actors involved in the project, to create a network of peacebuilders and human rights' defenders from post-Soviet countries involved in conflicts.

The aforementioned projects of Peace Dialogue NGO did not have a specific inclination towards gender issues, but the new Arena project, which will be implemented in 2018, will include a gender component.

Society Without Violence NGO[46]

- "Local, National and Regional Strategies to Improve the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine", 2017-present

A UNSCR 1325 advocacy project implemented on a national level which will allow women's rights experts, state officials, journalists and other stakeholders to get informed about issues of women affected by conflict and to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.

- "Highlighting women's role in peacebuilding and conflict reconciliation in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh through media and art", 2016-2017

A regional project for (photo) journalists as a result of which photo stories about women living in Nagorno Karabakh were made.

- "Increase women's participation and security in peace-building and security operations, by creating a basis for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for the creation of National Action Plan", 2015

On a national level, round table discussions were organized in the regions.

- "Armenian and Turkish Young Women for Reconciliation and Lasting Peace through Dialogue and Art", 2013–2014

A regional Armenia-Turkey project aiming to highlight the role of Armenian and Turkish women as peacemakers and develop an atmosphere of trust and cooperation through art and dialogue.

- Women in Black Armenian initiative, 2011-2016

Numerous peacebuilding related trainings, conferences, fleshmobs were organized aiming to establish and strengthen Women in Black peacebuilding initiative in Armenia.

All the peacebuilding projects implemented by Society Without Violence had a specific inclination towards gender issues.

Women's Resource Center NGO

- "The Feminist trust and solidarity building beyond borders: Linking our stories" initiative

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46 Additional information on http://www.swv.am/index.php/hy/our-pillars-am/women-peace-and-security-am, բացված է՝ 15.11.2017

The initiative was supported by WRC from 2012 to 2014. WRC provided the initiative with financial, human and other resources. The goal of the initiative was to establish networking cooperation between Armenian and Turkish women.

- "The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh"[47] It is considered a project participant since the beginning of the project.
- "UNSCR 1325: Nagorno Karabakh civil society monitoring report 2014"

Elaboration and presentation of the report in the frames of the international report of Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.

- Since 2015 "Women, Peace and Security" club has been operating in the center aiming to raise awareness on the issues of women in the times of conflict and to spread peace culture in RA.
- "Strengthening the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Nagorno Karabakh", July 2015-February 2016

The main goal of the project was to collect information about women living in different regions of NK and to raise awareness on the UNSCR 1325 among different actors in NK.

Research elaboration and printing

In the context of public awareness raising, it is very important to carry out related research and prepare printing materials while implementing peacebuilding projects. First of all, this field is abundant with disputable issues. Secondly, a certain political agenda is being propagated while the objective information is limited or ambiguous.

Two of the experts define the need for research in the following way:

- There is a need for political and public studies in order to develop working strategies for field actors.
- The organizations' work is somehow isolated from the Government. Events are being held on a national or international level, but, in reality, their work does not reach policy makers. In this context, conducting research and further revealing the problems might be very efficient in the process of society-policy maker connection establishment.

Armenian CSOs implement surveys, conduct political studies, print methodological manuals, guidebooks, etc. Moreover, it is most common to combine different activities, such as work in a community and research elaboration. Civil Society Institute, in the frames of its projects, carries out community work, conducts research, organizes national and regional events. Main field organizations, such as Women's Resource Center, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, Democracy Today, Society Without Violence, etc., operate similarly.

Several organizations involved in peacebuilding focus more on elaboration of publications, studies, articles and other materials, then on implementation of other activities. "Region" research center is among such organizations. According to its director Laura Bagdasaryan, the tangible results of their projects are materials that can also be read retrospectively.

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47 http://www.epnk.org/sites/default/files/downloads/EPNK%20Brochure%20Armenian.pdf

Generally, through implementation of their projects, this center prefers to establish connections with Armenian and Azerbaijani experts of different fields, involving journalist, analysts from Armenia and other countries. The projects of "Region" center did not contain a gender component. "[...] I have never been guided by gender principles, but by the principle of professional skills. If someone was a professional and we found them to be interesting, we invited them to participate, their gender was always a secondary issue. Despite that, we have had both female and male participants[48]."

Numerous other organizations, with a specific focus on media, have been working towards publication of different materials and video making: Media Initiatives Center[49], Yerevan Press Club, etc.

Among research works, it is important to mention "Analyticon"[50], a monthly magazine, where issues of conflict, peacebuilding and gender equality are periodically covered.

Besides the main field organizations that consistently implement peacebuilding projects, in Armenia there are other organizations that are either partially involved in the field of peacebuilding or implement projects with certain affiliation to peacebuilding. Research centers can serve as an example[51]. These organizations generally do not apply gender-sensitive approaches.

International community

International and intergovernmental organizations, foreign embassies and consulates in Armenia as well as entities established by them have a significant role in peacebuilding efforts made in Armenia. In the current situation the implementation of peacebuilding (especially dialogue establishment) projects would not be possible without international involvement, as almost all Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogues are realized with mediation or support of international organizations.

As it was already mentioned, international community can be involved in this process both as a donor or a mediator. These types of entities have relatively neutral positions towards conflicting sides: they are expected to apply impartial approach[52]. The work carried out by these institutions can be divided to the following sectors:

- The institution is a project implementer.
- The institution acts as a donor.

In this context, the largest peacebuilding project in Armenia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan is EPNK. This EU funded project includes 5 European consortiums and their local partners in

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48 Interview with field expert, 27.11.2017

49 Additional information on http://www.mediainitiatives.am opened on 20.11.2017

50 Official website http://theanalyticon.com/

51 For example, Caucasus Institute, a big part of projects implemented by which addresses the conflict of Nagorno, official website http://c-i.am/ opened on 20.11.2017

52 Interview 27.11.2017

Armenia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan. Their activities are diverse: from local community work to national and regional projects, filmmaking, publication of research and media materials, etc.

The gender component of EPNK project is ensured by one of the 5 organizations, Swedish Kvinna till Kvinna[53] and its local partners. In general, Kvinna till Kvinna is one of the most significant supporters of women's rights in Armenia and in the region. Peacebuilding and women's involvement in it is a priority to this organization. However, the European Union remains the largest supporter of peacebuilding projects. Besides the EU, embassies or governmental bodies of different countries, such as the British Embassy, Austrian Development Cooperation, IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) supported by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, etc., have their involvement in the granting process. During the fieldwork some of the respondents also mentioned Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, Marshal fund, Open Society Foundations, Galust Gyulbenkyan Foundation, etc., among donors.

RA Government, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, Local self-government bodies

From the part of RA Government, the only significant step forward towards implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in Armenia was the Prime Minister's decree on the creation of inter-agency committee to develop a NAP, adopted in 2017. Currently, no information is available about the work carried out by this committee. But it is known that CSOs have not yet been engaged in the working process.

The law on equality between women and men adopted in 2013 and RA Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015 can also serve as a basis for the UNSCR 1325 implementation.

According to the information obtained from RA Government, since 2016 the Ministry of Defense has been implementing a project directed to protection of women's rights and ensuring of equal possibilities. The project envisages to reveal issues of women involved in the field via research, trainings and monitoring and to raise awareness among staff members. This action plan includes a stipulation on 1325 resolution, requiring organization of trainings on main clauses of the resolution for staff members of peacekeeping missions.

In general, Armenian Government does not exercise any policy towards peacebuilding as defined in this report.

During the interviews some of the experts stated that peacebuilding implies engagement of conflicting sides, but it should not be initiated by Governments, otherwise it will turn into the "Peace platform"[54] organized by Azerbaijan, where the ideology of peacebuilding is being manipulated and used as a tool to reinforce the standpoint of the authorities[55].

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53 http://thekvinnatillkvinnafoundation.org/country/armenia/, opened on 19.11.2017
54 http://arm-azpeace.com/index.php?lang=en, բացված է՝ 19.11.2017
55 Interview with field expert, 27.11.2017

Part two: the dynamics, efficiency, main actors and existing challenges of peacebuilding projects

In the frames of the qualitative research, interviews and non-formal discussions have been carried out with individual women activists, representatives of women's rights organizations and other stakeholders actively involved in peacebuilding activities. A desk review has also been conducted. The main objectives of the qualitative research are the following:

- To understand the efficiency of peacebuilding projects (being) implemented in Armenia since 2012,
- To understand the efficiency of peacebuilding projects being implemented in Armenia by women activists and women's rights NGOs since 2012,
- To define the dynamics of peacebuilding projects,
- To understand the degree of gender sensitivity of a certain project as well as challenges occurred as a result of the inclusion of the gender component,
- To reveal main challenges of peacebuilding projects in Armenia and necessary mechanisms to overcome those challenges,
- To determine the most outstanding and influential (both positively and negatively) actors in the peacebuilding processes in Armenia.

The efficiency of peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia since 2012

The goal of this subchapter is to present the results of the interviews with field experts and situational observations regarding the efficiency of peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia since 2012.

The results of the surveys and interviews as well as situational observations showed that the efficiency of peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia can be estimated on two levels: the results of implemented projects and the general impact of implemented projects on decrease of violence in the society and peace advocacy. In this context, the level of efficiency is considered very low, especially in the case of impact evaluation. The interesting fact is that the overwhelming majority of the respondents mentioned the same problems. Several issues can be distinguished.

> A considerable part of the projects is not properly publicized, in certain cases the projects have non-transparent nature which result in the lack of complete information.

During the interviews with field experts the respondents mentioned 3-4 projects, initiatives or organizations that they had heard of or had some information about. Mainly the same organizations and initiatives were mentioned. Respondents also emphasized the fact that they do not possess much information about implemented projects and do not know many sources of such information.

The lack of transparency as well as partial or no visibility in mass and social media decreases the efficiency of the project(s). As one of the respondents mentioned, there is an apparent tendency to hide information about implemented projects, conditioned either by non-transparent nature of the project or by the willingness to avoid being targeted by nationalist groups and other actors.

In this context, another reality related to peacebuilding projects was described by field representatives involved in joint projects. "Nowadays we have a problem of publicity in peacebuilding, a necessity to not hurt our (Azerbaijani) partners as a result of which often the work carried out is not being advertised. There are some cases, when Azerbaijani partners faced certain troubles because of published articles[56]."

Interviews with field experts as well as the experience of the research team in a series of regional projects (particularly EPNK) revealed that very often even the name of the project is not mentioned in media coverage, as the security of Azerbaijani partners can be seriously endangered. As a result, a bilateral agreement is usually made to eliminate or to limit media coverage on the project. This issue partially explains current passive situation, but does not reduce the criticism. "Now, if I am not mistaken, only one EU project remains (EPNK). To be honest, that project is very unclear to me, it is not publicized and I do not know much about it. Why? I am active in the field, I follow the work carried out by field actors, as it is a part of my professional interests as a researcher, at least to carry on with the subject. What kind of peacebuilding is it, if it is not publicized? Implementation of such projects is a strategic mistake[57]."

> Some groups are initiating peace-related non-formal activities, but when they try to take formal steps, civil society remains passive, a fact that raises certain questions.

This problem was mainly raised by individual activists and initiative representatives and was explained with either the passive response of NGOs towards concrete and visible actions directed to the establishment of peace or the clearly dominant position of NGOs in certain peacebuilding processes. In this case, the main issue is that NGOs, being constrained in their own actions, by asserting dominance inevitably limit the actions of other field actors. Moreover, non-formal spontaneous civil movements are often criticized by certain NGO representatives for being non-viable for a certain timeframe. This approach is more aligned with Governmental standpoint. As a result, a series of processes promoting further militarization are not met with serious counter reaction.

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56 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017
57 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017

In different situations some of the actors implementing peacebuilding projects can behave in a nationalist, militarist way that justifies or excuses violence.

It is important to state that this issue was mentioned by many respondents who referred to the standpoint or silence of certain actors during April war and activities of "Sasna Tser". The lack of feminist peace knowledge and low level of questioning of militarization was also emphasized in this context. The obtained information about ideological standpoints of actors on militarization generates trust or distrust towards implemented projects.

So, the main viewpoint is the following: if the implementer does not question militarization and upholds nationalist ideas, their projects cannot pursuit actual peacebuilding goals. The values and ideas transmitted through the implementation of projects initiated by said actors are doubted: do they really relate to peacebuilding or not? Most of the respondents were inclined to respond negatively to this question[58].

"The case of "Sasna Tsrer" showed that even peacebuilding actors agree with violent means of problem solving, when they said that what "Sasna Tsrer" did was the only way, likewise Azerbaijani people can say that the war is the only solution, and by that logic, that statement would be justified[59]." Some of the respondents, referring to violent manifestations of struggle, stated that there will be no advancement in peacebuilding, if people are disposed towards violent struggle. "There is a saying: regardless of how many times one pronounces sugar, it will never make one's mouth sweeter[60]. So, by only talking about peace, we will not work efficiently[61]."

The interests of donors as a limiting factor.

The viewpoint of individual activists on this matter is that the dependence on donors presents certain limitations for the project implementer who is obliged to follow defined rules whereas an unpaid person is less constrained and has the opportunity to act freely. During the interviews an opinion was voiced that donors generally finance projects that pursuit stability. "[...] in 2000 the "stability" projects began[62]." And the ultimate goal of these projects is not actual peace, but the sustainable maintenance of existing situation which essentially changes the significance and efficiency of the final goal. "Donors are more interested in financing secure projects, as donors themselves are often fostered by militarist institutions[63]."

It is necessary to mention that, according to many, the peacebuilding agenda, especially in the form of regional project implementation, would not be possible to promote without the support of international community not only for financial reasons, but also because international community acts as an intermediary and an important spur for implementation of joint projects.

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58 The names of the actors are not mentioned for ethical reasons.
59 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017
60 Literal translation
61 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017
62 Interview with field expert, 19.10.2017
63 Interview with field expert, 24.11.2017

Funding.

During the research process, the issue of scarce resources allocated to the field was emphasized. "Little money is spent on peacebuilding, especially if we compare it with the money spent on war[64]." Surely, this problem does not only relate to south Caucasian region, but to the whole world. This issue is highlighted by representatives of the NGO sector. Women's rights organizations and women activists also point out the small number of funded gender-sensitive projects. The limited financial resources create competitiveness among field actors which can impede the establishment of cooperation between them.

The militarized system itself entails inefficiency to these projects.

Against the background of institutionalized militarization (even in the schools groups of young "yerkrapah"[65] volunteers are formed, etc.), there is a very small number of local interventions. As mentioned by the respondents, there is a need for institutional change, as after carried out activities, even several day-long ones, participants return to the same system and continue to bear that system's values, in this case, militarist values.

There is a need for more large-scale and long-term activities that may lead to changes in political agenda within a certain community or group. "[...] There is much to do in the villages, areas near the border, but not a one-time training, it does not generate any serious impact. We have to work there for a long-term period[66]." This quotation perhaps summarizes the approach of several experts towards this matter.

Conflict escalation and new war victims.

"April changed everything and the perceptions intensified. I also had occasion to say that before April, even against the background of internal repressions in Azerbaijan, in Armenia the groups, individuals who insisted that 'those who cooperate with Azerbaijani people are national traitors are acting against Armenian interests, are selling land, giving up Karabakh, etc.' were marginal. Whereas after April the situation reversed, that is to say that nowadays those who think that the cooperation should be continued and communication channels should be maintained are marginal[67]." Parallel to these processes, April events proved that the implemented projects were inefficient, considering the apparent atmosphere of hate among conflicting sides. Moreover, even field activists started to spread hate speech[68].

One of the experts also referred to the psychological impact of killings. "How is communication between people possible now, when there are victims? Blood is a very serious trigger: it can erase all the work we have done in decades. When blood is shed, it is psychologically impossible to speak about peace. When you speak about peace in times of bloodshed, you are talking about surrender[69]."

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64 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017
65 Meaning "Defender of the land", Yerkrapah Volunteer Union is a non-governmental group that consists of 6,000 Nagorno-Karabakh War veterans
66 Interview with field expert, 24.11.2017
67 Interview with field expert, 27.11.2017
68 The names are not mentioned to ensure confidentiality.
69 Interview with field expert, 27.11.2017

The critical attitude of the respondents towards big and experienced national and international organizations of the field is frequently observed[70]. This attitude is directly connected to the political situation in the country: large donors, who also represent a union (e.g. European Union) or a country (e.g. Russia), evidently pursue their own interests of representation and dominance. In this situation the establishment of actual peace is not a priority.

During the research process and interview implementation, each question regarding the field of peacebuilding had a general character and was as not limited to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents, in the context of peacebuilding projects, mainly referred to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations which is definitely connected to the continuous conflict escalation. There are some comparative viewpoints: the situation around Armenian-Turkish relations is not so monopolized, as in this case there is a right to visit. Thus, with the support of travel grants, independent experts or individuals initiate mutual visits and gain the opportunity to observe independently and freely (not constrained by the projects).

In fact, in the case of Armenian-Turkish relations, if compared to the ones between Armenia and Azerbaijan, more people are involved. This contributes or can contribute to the formation of dissent. But in the case of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations the situation is much more monopolized, generally the same actors are involved on different levels (of peacebuilding and peacemaking) which does not allow public diplomacy to develop.

"If we take into account the number of killings, ceasefire violations, we can say that they [peacebuilding projects] are not effective[71]."

The efficiency of peacebuilding projects implemented by Women's rights NGOs and women activists in Armenia since 2012

The goal of this subchapter is to reveal the efficiency of projects implemented by women's rights organizations and women activist. To achieve this goal, interviews with actively involved field expert have been carried out.

The research showed that the level of efficiency of peacebuilding projects implemented by women's rights organizations is not sufficiently high. One of the respondents stated, "I think that in the frames of broader women's issues (gender based violence, domestic violence, etc.) the most failed efforts are the ones directed to peacebuilding […] It's definitely the weakest side[72]."

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70 The names are not mentioned to ensure confidentiality.
71 Interview with field expert, 13.10.2017
72 Interview with field expert, 24.11.2017

Several issues can be distinguished.

There is a tendency to not deem projects implemented by women serious or important

In the context of women struggle against militarism, some of the expressed opinions were directly connected to gender roles of men and women. This concerns particularly the struggle of women and men towards justice for their deceased children. In Armenia there is a group of mothers in black (not related to the international movement Women in Black), which unites mothers of soldiers killed in peacetime. It is interesting to note that mainly women are leading this struggle, there are very few men involved[73]. But the response of the society is negative: "she is a woman, mad of her grief is out on the streets" or "she is weak, could not bear the loss"[74]. The deeply rooted tendency among women and the system in general to glorify the deaths of killed soldiers was also criticized: "the culture of glorifying the death of killed soldiers keeps women in constant grief that does not convert and transform to anger… that would push them to struggle[75]."

The limited amount of money allocated to women's projects.

Some of the respondents pointed out the fact that large international organizations are often funded by large male dominated corporations. The main problem observed in this context is that these NGOs do not actually relate to women's issues and generally have a low level of gender sensitivity.

Abovementioned situation is vividly demonstrated by the fact that during the 4-day conflict escalation in April, 2016 women's rights organizations were the ones to carry out need assessment and provide support to affected women[76]. In the meantime, women's rights NGOs, who also implement gender-sensitive peacebuilding projects, receive trivial funding. "Donors are constantly talking about a gender-sensitive approach, but when it comes to actual funding, they do not finance gender-sensitive peacebuilding projects implemented by women's rights NGOs[77]." It was also mentioned that "there are very few funds that are willing to finance projects related to WPS agenda[78]."

It is interesting to mention that most of the respondents pointed out that women's rights NGOs function in more or less horizontal manner which ensures relative transparency.

The lack of feminist peacebuilding knowledge.

Many respondents voiced their concerns about the lack of feminist knowledge among women's rights NGOs. "We should understand what is the obstacle, maybe there are no good

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73 According our information, 2 men are involved
74 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017
75 Interview with field expert, 19.10.2017
76 A crowdfunding organized by Women's Resource Center in order to provide displaced women from Nagorno Karabakh with psychological help: the process is still ongoing. A crowdfunding organized by Women's Support Center directed to restoration of buildings in border villages of Nagorno Karabakh.
77 Interview with field expert, 25.11.2017
78 Interview with field expert, 23.11.2017

experts. Perhaps we do not need to implement big projects rights now, but do something, so that 10 feminists would be aware of those projects. To train feminists with a newly designed module and those people will start to create a new alternative agenda[79]." However, it is important to state that feminist approaches towards peacebuilding and criticism of militarism can vary: some activists are not sufficiently critical, whereas others are very critical.

Some entities (both media and non-profit) which were pointed out for defending women's rights were also said to favor women's involvement in military sector which further intensifies militarization.

Some of the respondents mentioned names of several NGOs. "I do not know much, I know very well Women's Resource Center NGO, but I am not familiar with their peacebuilding projects or the filial operating in Shushi[80]." They were also not familiar with the work carried out by Society Without Violence NGO, "I attended the exhibition, but it was the end of the project. If it was not for the exhibition, I would not know about the project"[81] etc. It is also important to add that some of the respondent were asked whether they had tried to learn or ask the representative of a certain NGO about their peacebuilding projects or point out the gaps of peacebuilding projects implemented by that NGO on the basis of criticism voiced by individual activists. The answer was mostly negative. Some of the NGO representatives stated that they had never witnessed a single case, where an individual activist would wonder about their peacebuilding activities.

The problem of communication among different stakeholders leads to the conclusion that the culture of efficient communication has not yet developed among peacebuilding actors. On one hand, it is connected to the low level of trust, on the other hand, to the non-transparent nature of the projects. It is important to mention that traditionally the actors work independently from one another and do not see a need for close cooperation.

There are no groups or cooperative networks of peacebuilding actors visible on national and regional levels. Several observations and field studies have shown that even women's rights organizations or activists involved in peacebuilding processes do not maintain sustainable communication and are not aware of projects implemented by the actors.

Low self-awareness of women.

"[…] women do not realize that they are number one war weapon. If every woman understood that her body is a factory that is being exploited during wars, the situation would change[82]." This is directly linked to existing gender roles in the country: the real Armenian woman should give birth to a soldier. This is the idea mostly criticized by the respondents. In war time women are used as "suppliers", and in the same time, they do not realize it, moreover, such "participation" in war is more than encouraged by the patriarchal system.

79 Interview with field expert, 23.11.2017
80 Interview with field expert, 19.10.2017
81 Interview with field expert, 19.10.2017
82 Interview with field expert, 24.10.2017

As it was already mentioned, the low efficiency level of activities implemented by women's rights organizations was linked to the lack of feminist knowledge and approaches, as stated by interviewed experts and activists. Moreover, some of the respondents mentioned witnessing how experienced actors of this field spread stereotypes about women (e.g. women are more inclined to peace, than men).

The dynamics of peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia since 2012

The results of the research revealed the low level of peacebuilding projects' dynamics. Some movement is existent in the field, but it can be described more as a negative change, rather than a positive one. The April war on one hand and escalation of the internal political situation in Azerbaijan on the other had a negative impact on the dynamics of the field. One of the respondents, referring to the inter-political situation in Azerbaijan, stated, "[...] there is a subtle line between what they really cannot do and what they do not want to do. Usually there are some things that they can do but haven't done, and now they have a solid justification for that. It is always like that in regional projects: 120% percent of the work is done by Armenians, 50% by Georgians and 20% by Azerbaijani[83]."

The conclusion about the decline of the dynamics in the field of peacebuilding has derived from the estimation of active engagement level in several processes of individuals and entities involved in the field. For example, when the paradigm of "nation-army" originated and started to take roots, very few actors publicly criticized this discourse. Even those, who question current situation in the army, speaking up about problems existing there, did not show disagreement or criticism towards the discourse[84].

One of the experts stated, "A change in dynamics started to occur by the end of 2013 (parallel with the tension and the oppressions against the civil society in Azerbaijan) before that it was alright, that is, the nature and intensity of cooperation with Azerbaijani people was the same as it was throughout the decade [...]. In 2013 they started to circulate information, mainly from official sources, according to which anyone who had any contact with Armenians would be held criminally responsible. Afterwards, their Parliament disclaimed that information. I had some phone calls wondering about whether our project was being shut down or not[85]." The impact of political developments on the efficiency of implemented field-related projects is not a secret to any actor. This fact was also acknowledged by individual activists but was not considered a solid justification, taking into account their critical approaches.

The propaganda disseminated via media constitutes another reason for the decline in peacebuilding project's effectiveness. It is not difficult to find articles, both in Armenian and Azerbaijani medias, condemning each other in various war crimes and ceasefire violation. On the other side, unfortunately, it is very hard to find a media product aiming to eradicate the negative portrayal of the "enemy" or questioning the war itself. One of the respondents

83 Interview with field expert, 22.11.2017
84 Interview with field expert, 19.10.2017 and 20.10.2017
85 Interview with field expert, 27.11.2017

pointed out this particular problem. "There is a lack of positive stories related to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations (e.g. how Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers communicate, share cigarettes or warn each other about the timing of the shootings, etc.)[86]."

The deepening atmosphere of hate also hinders peacebuilding projects and spontaneous peacebuilding initiatives. As respondents also mentioned, they have often wanted to support, for example, mothers in black, but the fear of hurting them by their involvement has kept them back.

Non-formal discussions held by people living near the border revealed the low level of trust towards peacebuilding projects which was explained by the fact that this kind of projects are directed towards the collection of certain information and the organization of short-term inefficient events. They haven't witnessed any result or change, thus do not trust these projects and do not consider them important[87].

The challenges faced by peacebuilding projects implemented in Armenia since 2012

Taking into account the results of the interviews with field experts, situational observations, desk reviews and unofficial reports, a list of challenges has been elaborated. The challenges are divided into two groups: challenges of general peacebuilding projects and challenges of peacebuilding projects implemented by women activists and women's rights organizations.

Existing challenges in the field of peacebuilding in random order

- The absence of the idea and the intention of actual peace establishment in peacebuilding projects due to the lack of knowledge among implementers, presence of militarist standpoints and donor limitations.

- The low level of trust towards projects that are being implemented.

- The lack of sufficient transparency in the field.

- The absence of efficient communication channels and mechanisms among stakeholders.

- The limitations that Azerbaijani partners face and low level of awareness on the current situation in Azerbaijan.

- The scarce number of projects implemented in Nagorno Karabakh and the little amount of allocated funds. It is very important that trilateral efforts are made, especially considering the fact that Nagorno Karabakh is the center of the conflict.

- The skepticism towards peaceful settlement of the conflict and predominance of pessimism among wider public.

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86 Interview with field expert, 20.10.2017
87 Non-formal meeting-discussion, 16.11.2017

- The increased reflection of militarist discourse in the educational system: militarist clothes, bringing up children in a militarist spirit, familiarization to the "enemy" character from early age.

- The absence of will to establish and maintain a dialogue among high rank officials as well as the society, low level of public diplomacy.

- The idea of "stability" which lies at the heart of peacebuilding projects and overshadows the establishment of actual peace.

- The war: the presence of war represents a challenge itself.

- The existence of war as a justification for not properly addressing human rights' violations.

- Peacebuilding projects are also considered to be challenges, as implementing actors do not give clear definition to the term "peace" and more often are positively inclined towards militarization and spread of hate speech.

- Sometimes the rules determined by donors: in this case, project implementers are obliged to follow project lines and have limited opportunities to act. This can also be linked to the idea of "sustainability", that is to say, the main goal of grant-based projects is not tangible positive change, but ensuring the sustainability of the situation.

- The contradictions and lack of clear answers. This concerns the cases, when people involved in the field do not have answers to certain questions. For example, is it right to implement peacebuilding initiatives during conflict escalation on the border or not?

- The lack or absence of information on developments occurring in Azerbaijan, which results in absence of efficient communication between conflicting sides.

Existing challenges related to WPS agenda[88]

- The low level of awareness on feminist peacebuilding agenda among women's rights organizations and other female actors involved in peacebuilding projects.

- The inferior role of women and low-priority of women's issues in a masculine patriarchal system.

- Unimportance of women's struggle.

- The low level of women's self-awareness about their own status during military action.

- Little amount of funds allocated to women's rights organizations.

- Dual application of international documents, for example, the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in militarist purposes.

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88 http://file.prio.no/publication_files/prio/Tryggestad%20-
%20The%20Women%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Agenda,%20GPS%20Policy%20Brief%201-2016.pdf

- The "traditional" Armenian culture which condemns protesting, especially the one initiated by women. This point was also linked to the issue of domestic violence: if a woman speaks up about violence, she is shamed and judged.

- The lack of solidarity among women: because of the patriarchal system women are more inclined to criticize each other, than to support, despite the fact that women are in a hard social-economic situation.

- The glorification of killed soldiers' deaths and "heroism". This is a dual challenge. On one side, not accepting the soldier as a hero triggers aggression from a wide part of the society, on the other side, the loss of a "hero soldier" is expressed through grief that never transforms to anger that drives to struggle.

Part three: gender sensitivity of implemented projects

In this research many references have been made related to the gender sensitivity of peacebuilding projects. The main characteristics of the field are summarized below.

From the perspective of gender sensitivity, several types of projects can be distinguished. The first type are the projects that do not comprise gender sensitive approaches. The initiators of these projects generally state that the projects are implemented by specialized professionals and for them, thus the balanced involvement of different genders is not prioritized.

Another type are the projects that, regardless of the nature of the implementing organization, ensure gender balance among participants. Among these, youth projects are more distinctive (APY NGO, Peace dialogue NGO).

A part of peacebuilding projects is implemented by women's rights organizations and non-formal initiatives, where women's involvement is ensured among participants and implementing staff members. Moreover, among implemented projects, there are events aiming to empower only women and girls, thus not involving male participants. According to another approach, men and boys should be equally informed about women's issues and thus try to find collective ways to solve the problems.

Among peacebuilding projects, women's full involvement and participation in project implementation is mainly ensured by those events that target WPS agenda, particularly the UNSCR 1325.

It is remarkable that only in 2017 did Armenian Government create a committee for a NAP development in order to implement UNSRC 1325. That is why projects directed to the implementation of 1325 carried out until now have mostly focused on advocacy. The goal was to raise awareness on main principles of the resolution and its importance among different segments of the society: youth, women, different experts, state officials. Separate activities have been carried out with journalists and representatives of state entities. Among military and law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Defense has expressed particular enthusiasm: as it was already mentioned, besides other projects, it also initiated a project ensuring women's rights and equal opportunities in the defense system.

Another project related to the UNSCR 1325 is the elaboration of the civil society monitoring report which, apart from advocacy, also provided information about current situation around main clauses of the resolution.

Now, when the development of a NAP is envisaged by the Government, it is expected that the nature of projects related to the UNSCR 1325 will bear some changes. However, the civil society will follow and actively participate in the activities directed to the implementation of the resolution and, if necessary, will speak up about existing difficulties.

It is important to mention that in Armenia the attitude of civil society towards the UNSCR 1325 and its implementation is not homogeneous. Interviews with field experts and field

related observations showed that actors who advocate for the UNSCR 1325 were criticized. One of the respondents, referring to conferences on the subject of the UNSCR 1325 organized in the frames of the NATO[89] Week in Armenia, stated, "At first I was glad. But then I started to analyze the platforms I was on, the discourses of those platforms etc... then I was not as critical, as now... why should that be organized by NATO?"[90] The criticism concerns the fact that the UNSCR 1325 is promoted by military entities. That is to say, the increase of the level of women's militarization is promoted while the increase of women's involvement in other fields, women's equal participation in the negotiation process as well as the need to develop rehabilitation projects for women affected by conflict is disregarded. In fact, many respondents, who are representatives of different sectors of the civil society, share the opinion according to which, in the current situation in Armenia the UNSCR 1325 is used for further militarization.

So a conclusion can be made that in general gender sensitive peacebuilding projects that aim to empower women and speak up about issues of Armenian women in times of conflict are mainly implemented by women's rights organizations. At the same time, advocacy of the UNSCR 1325 is not always included in the objectives of these projects.

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89 https://www.nato.int/
90 Interview with field expert, 24.11.2017

Recommendations

On the basis of the online surveys and interviews with field experts carried out in the frames of this research as well as the results of situational observations and desk reviews, a list of recommendations has been developed. The recommendations are presented below in random order and can be applied by different actors of the field.

- Development of knowledge on peacebuilding and feminist peacebuilding among state entities and CSOs,
- Elaboration of publicly accessible scientific works on WPS agenda in order to raise awareness on the agenda and develop critical thinking among wider public,
- Include information about the agenda in the educational modules directed to awareness raising and empowerment of women and organize non-formal trainings,
- Improve women's negotiation skills and encourage their political participation,
- RA Government - Engage CSOs actively involved in the field in the elaboration process of a NAP on the UNSCR 132,
- Implement long-term and large-scale activities in RA regions in order to change entrenched standpoints about conflict and create alternative peaceful approach towards conflict resolution,
- Decrease the level of militarization in educational institutions (e.g. the work of "yerkrapah" brigades, spreading of militaristic messages through posters placed in educational institutions...),
- Work with representatives (especially directors) of television, radio and other media entities in order to decrease/eliminate militarist propaganda in the media,
- Spread the idea of peace via mass and social media in order to counteract increasing militarization in the country,
- Create safe and secure platforms for women directly affected by conflict to present their current situation and issues,
- Raise the visibility of (being) implemented peacebuilding projects among other organizations and individuals involved in the field,
- Create a platform for cooperation of individual activists and CSOs in order to implement joint peacebuilding projects,
- Create a foundation constituted of stakeholders' donations which would allow individuals and CSOs to independently implement peacebuilding projects,
- Apply gender sensitive budgeting as a tool to support women affected by conflict and protect them from danger,
- Author articles and publications which will highlight the negative impact of conflict on women and will not subordinate women's issues to other issues originated as a result of the conflict,
- Further involve organizations focused on women's issues and gender equality in the field of peacebuilding projects.

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