ARMENIA YOUTH SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

October 2019

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USAID's YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) and cross-sectoral approaches in international youth development. We are leading research, evaluations, and events designed to build the evidence base and inform the global community about how to transition young people successfully into productive, healthy adults. PYD is defined by USAID as:

> Positive Youth Development (PYD) engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community-based organizations
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CSYA	Cross-sectoral youth assessment
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross domestic product
GOAM	Government of Armenia
ICT	Information and communication technology
KII	Key informant interview
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PGD	Peer group discussion
PYD	Positive youth development
SOW	Statement of work
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID/Armenia contracted Making Cents International to conduct a cross-sectoral youth assessment (CSYA) to gain a detailed understanding of the drivers that motivate youth and identifies the obstacles or constraints that undermine their contributions to Armenia's political, economic, and social well-being in a meaningful way. The assessment team conducted 22 youth discussion groups (11 female and 11 male, 170 youth in total) and 6 community leader discussion group (1 in each community, 35 community leaders total) in Yerevan, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Tavush, and Vayots Dvor in order to capture a range of youth opinions and experiences across the country. The team also conducted key informant interviews with 50 staff from key organizations that develop and implement policy, provide programming, or advocate for the rights and interests of youth. The results of the assessment follow.

FINDINGS: YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS AND DYNAMICS

Youth age bands in Armenia are largely defined by the structure of the schooling system. Cohorts can be thought of as 10-14 (corresponding to intermediate school), 15-16 (corresponding to senior secondary/high school/secondary vocational education), 17-21 (corresponding to undergraduate university and tertiary vocational education), and 22 and over. The two elder cohorts, 17-21 and 22 and over, are largely defined by whether or not they are enrolled in or have completed tertiary education. Significant gender gaps exist, and while girls and boys largely have equal access to schooling, young women's participation in the labor market and in civic and political life is much more constrained compared with young men. Youth in remote and border areas, youth with disabilities, youth with non-heterosexual sexual orientation or gender identities, and youth from poor families are particularly vulnerable and generally lack equal access to opportunities and services.

FINDINGS: YOUTH ASPIRATIONS

Youths' priorities were remarkably similar across groups and focus on quality of life – financial security for themselves and their families seemed to be the most critical value for all youth. Youth in all discussion groups prioritized meaningful professional work or entrepreneurship that earns a decent standard of living and high-quality education as top priorities.

FINDINGS: EDUCATION

Youth and adult respondents were universally critical of the quality of education, particularly the curricula and teaching methods that are too theoretical and insufficient in developing transversal skills. Education reforms are underway with the support of the World Bank (for general primary and secondary) and GIZ (for technical and vocational education). The impacts of these reforms may take many years, however, and several cohorts of youth could exit the education system before the impact of the reforms may be felt. Some students turn to nonformal learning opportunities to fill the gap in their education, but Armenia does not yet have the legal basis, methodologies, standards, or trained workforce for validating non-formal learning (European Training Foundation, 2019), which places those youth at a disadvantage in the labor market.

FINDINGS: LIVELIHOODS

Youth unemployment, informal employment, and youth not in education, employment or training are all high in Armenia. Consistent with stereotypical gender norms, more young men than young women work, and men dominate in industry, while women have a higher rate of participation in services (International Labor Organization, 2019). The shared top priority when it comes to career aspirations, for all youths, regardless of age, sex, or location, was "profitability" or "salary", which they seem to associate with professional jobs that they view as being high status, and IT and tourism were fields in which most youth were interested. There is a significant mismatch, however, between the skills employers seek and the skills that most youth have coming out of secondary or tertiary education programs. And the limited number

of formal sector positions and the fact that personal connections are often required to obtain a good job are barriers for many youths, as is the discrimination against youth and women in hiring that has been documented in recent studies (Sahakyan, 2019). One significant shift identified in the peer discussion groups was that outside of Gyumri and Yerevan, male youth aspire to start their own businesses, considering it to be autonomous, profitable, and more prestigious than paid employment working for someone else. That said, other studies had found that all youth were more interested in the security of paid employment than in entrepreneurship (Serriere, 2014).

FINDINGS: CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Armenian youth have been increasingly active in civic and political life in recent years, particularly in urban areas, and the Velvet Revolution of 2018 marked a turning point with greater participation of youths in rural and remote areas, particularly among women. Most youth engage to achieve a specific goal or goals, and in Armenia in particular, more young women may engage than young men because it provides an avenue for socialization independent of the family in parallel with the pursuit of benefits for the community.

Youth still largely believe that they can influence the direction of the country (International Republican Institute, 2019), and about half of the discussion group respondents indicated youth were interested in civic engagement. However, youth in only three discussion groups identified this as a priority, likely due to the public perception was that there has been progress over the past year on freedom of speech, media independence, individual human rights, the fight against corruption, and democracy (International Republican Institute, 2019). Despite these perceived improvements, however, it is not clear from the recent data that youths know how to make their influence felt on a day-to-day basis or that they have the political will to do so.

CONCLUSION

Armenian youth and other stakeholders identified a range of unmet needs and gaps in information and services that would enable them to contribute more meaningfully to the development of their country. Respondents identified skill critical needs to support youth livelihoods as well as performance gaps in the education system and the labor market. While some of the momentum from the revolution has ebbed, about half of the youth respondents also demonstrated a willingness to engage in civic and political activities if it will be productive. Therefore, USAID has a window of opportunity to support youth at both small- and large-scale in its upcoming CDCS and future activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

USAID/Armenia commissioned YouthPower Learning to conduct a Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment (CSYA) using a Positive Youth Development (PYD) lens to better understand the status and aspirations of Armenian youth ages 15-29 in their journey from adolescence to adulthood – a transition that includes starting a productive working life, developing healthy lifestyles, and exercising citizenship. PYD is both a philosophy and an approach to youth development that "engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems" (Hinson, et al., 2016). This approach has a proven positive impact across an array of outcomes and sectors in the United States and other high-income countries. Donors, governments, practitioners, and policymakers are increasingly looking to this approach to provide more holistic support for youth in low- and middle-income countries. The PYD framework (Figure 1) offers four domains through which the vision of healthy, productive, and engaged youth can be achieved: assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment.[1]
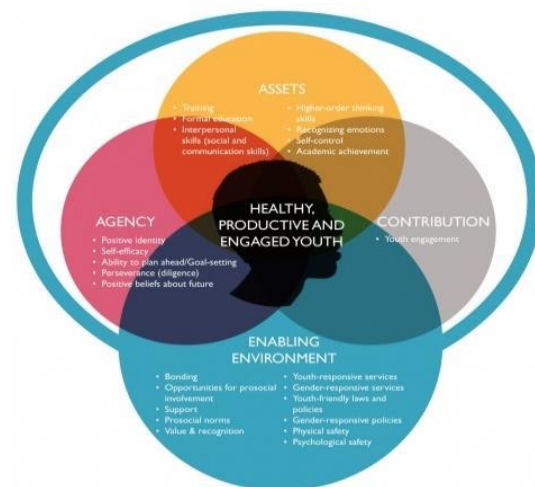
This CSYA provides a detailed understanding of the drivers that motivate youth and identifies the obstacles or constraints that undermine their contributions to Armenia's political, economic, and social well-being in a meaningful way. This study also highlights opportunities to optimally support youth and guide the Mission toward a more strategic engagement with Armenian youth as: a) beneficiaries and participants of sustainable Armenia-owned development solutions that can be brought to scale over time and, b) key actors empowered to identify and prioritize challenges and propose innovative solutions to the country's democratic development and economic growth. Results of this youth assessment will inform the Mission's 2019-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) design and the design of new projects.

II. RESEARCH AGENDA AND METHODOLOGY

Consistent with the USAID/Armenia CSYA Statement of Work (see Annex 1), the following guiding research questions served as the framework to inform the YouthPower Learning team's technical approach in conducting the CSYA. Key questions included:

1. What are youth (ages 15-29) interests and desires (life goals), disaggregated by age groups 15-19, 20-24, and 25-29?
   a. What do youth express as their priorities and ambitions?
   b. Who are the most vulnerable youth in Armenia, and what are their unique needs? (Differentiate by sex, age, region, rural/urban, other marginalization, i.e., religious, national, sexual minorities)
   c. Which youth segments have been targeted by USAID to date, and which ones align with USAID strategic priorities going forward?

2. What challenges do youth face in reaching their potential?
   a. What are the salient challenges with youth being successful in employment, self-employment, and business opportunities?

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[1] For more information, see https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development

    b. What motivators and impeding factors, both internal and external, exist for youth participation in social and political processes, including the recent peaceful transition and the resulting new political landscape?

3. What is working well to support youth in Armenia and enable them to actualize their potential civically, politically, socially, and economically? What opportunities do these bright spots (and remaining gaps) present for USAID?
       a. What promising policies, structures, programs and partnerships currently exist that could be learned from and/or scaled up?
       b. What models of USAID programming from contexts similar to Armenia might be useful to review to advance youth development in civic engagement, education, employment/economic growth?
       c. What infrastructure exists to support youth development? What works? What does not? Why?
       d. Which youth are not benefitting from these resources that could potentially benefit?
       e. What opportunities, if any, are provided by the new political context?
       f. What do people perceive as strong opportunities for promoting private-sector engagement in issues impacting youth?
       g. What do people perceive as strong opportunities for advancing self-reliance, and how do Armenian youth envision the concept of their role in building self-reliance?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND SAMPLING

The YouthPower Learning team's data collection design used four primary methodologies: (a) literature review; (b) peer group discussions (PGDs) with youth; (c) focus group discussions (FGDs) with community leaders; and (d) key informant interviews (KIIs). The assessment team visited six marzes – Yerevan, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Tavush, and Vayots Dvor – in order to capture a range of youth opinions and experiences across the country. The assessment team conducted 22 youth PGDs (11 female and 11 male), for a total of 170 youth directly consulted for this assessment. In each site visited, the team also held one Community Leader FGD to capture the perceptions and attitudes of adults toward youth in their communities, meeting a total of 35 community leaders. The YouthPower Learning team collected additional primary data through KIIs with 50 staff from key organizations that develop and implement policy, provide programming, or advocate for the rights and interests of youth, such as the Government of Armenia, USAID and other donors, international and national NGOs, and local community-based organizations (CBOs) serving youth. For more detailed information about the assessment methodology, see Annex 2. Methodology.

III. FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS AND DYNAMICS

National Context

Armenia is an upper-middle-income country with a population of just under 3 million people and a population growth of 0.2 percent in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). GDP growth for 2018 was 5.2 percent with a GNI per capita of US$4,230. The 2017 UN Human Development Index ranks Armenia 83 out of 189 countries (UNDP, 2018). As of 2017, 25.7 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2019). The net migration rate for 2018 was -5.6/1000 population (CIA, 2019). Overall, macroeconomic indicators for Armenia have improved somewhat over the past few years.

Defining Structure and Characteristics of Youth Cohorts

Youth age bands in Armenia are largely defined by the structure of the schooling system and their orientation toward the future (increasing as they age). Cohorts can be thought of as 10-14 (corresponding to intermediate school), 15-16 (corresponding to senior secondary/high school/secondary vocational education), 17-21 (corresponding to undergraduate university and tertiary vocational education), and 22 and over.

The two elder cohorts, 17-21 and 22 and over, are largely defined by whether or not they are enrolled in or have completed tertiary education. As one community leader in Gavar noted, "The youth in this area…grows old very quickly. Why? Because the moment they graduate their school, they immediately have to go to the military, and by the time they are back, they have responsibilities such as taking care of their parents, starting a family, and keeping their social-economic status at a sufficient level."

Vulnerability of Youth

Perceptions of vulnerability varied in PGDs, FGDs, and interviews. Many interview respondents in Yerevan noted that anyone "in the regions" was vulnerable. Across the board, most youth and adult respondents agreed that anyone who was extremely poor (particularly those youth who were unable to finish their education) was vulnerable. A few youth and adult respondents, however, noted that anyone with few connections or family supports would be vulnerable in the Armenian context because social networks are integral to many opportunities. Finally, most respondents also agreed that youth with disabilities were vulnerable.

Based on the data collected and the literature reviewed, the team has identified four particularly vulnerable groups of youth: (1) youth in border areas who are vulnerable to isolation and migration; (2) youth from poor families (in any type of community) who find their options constrained by immediate needs and who lack connections or family supports; (3) youth with non-heterosexual orientation or alternative gender identities; and (4) youth with disabilities (in any type of community, but especially in peri-urban/rural and remote/border communities). This is especially true of those with severe impairments, as they often lack access to education and other basic services.

In border areas, both young men and young women are affected, albeit in different ways. In remote areas, outmigration appears to be a common strategy for young men to find economic opportunities, while young women remain at home or migrate internally. While also true in large cities, the prevalence of outmigration seems to be higher in remote/border communities based on the data collected. Of the 87,000 migrants who left or were away from Armenia in 2017, 82,000 were men (94 percent). In addition, while some women do migrate, as a percentage, more of them are more highly educated than male migrants (40 percent with advanced education compared to 24.4 percent) (International Labor Organization, 2019).

Youth who grew up in poor families are more likely to drop out of school sooner than their wealthier peers, according to information from interviews and FGDs. They may also have fewer social networks and less social capital to transform into opportunities, which is critical in the Armenian context. "If you have a relative or people whom you know, it works, you can find a job. Work experience and skills don't matter," as one young woman in Gavar noted. This is consistent with the findings of earlier studies that noted the essential role played by non-formal connections (RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and UNDP Armenia, 2012). Young men and young women are similarly affected, but young men perhaps more so as fewer young women currently participate in the labor market.

Youth with disabilities also constitute a marginalized group. Several PGD participants noted that either schools or families refused to let them attend school (when they were school-aged[2]). Lacking an equal education to others, they had further difficulties in finding employment and participating in the civic and political lives of their communities. Youth with disabilities are eager to engage and to take advantage of opportunities for learning and employment.

Youth with non-heterosexual sexual orientations or alternative gender identities, and particularly transgendered individuals, may also be considered a vulnerable population. According to local experts, youth whose gender identities conform to heterosexual norms can live with minimal discrimination so long as their behavior is circumspect. Those who eschew traditional gender identities, however, face discrimination. Based on the KIIs conducted, the most discriminated against and most vulnerable are transgendered persons. They routinely have difficulty finding employment as there is no legal mechanism for changing the sex listed on one's passport, which is typically required when applying for a job in the formal sector. As a result, many transgendered individuals only find employment in the informal sector and lack employment protections and benefits of the formal sector.

Another factor that could be considered a vulnerability among youth across all categories to varying degrees is the extent to which their individual attitudes are passive (looking for someone else to solve problems they identify) rather than proactive about identifying and executing solutions to problems they see. At least one youth in every group, and several in many groups (male and female, across age groups) indicated that the government, the community, or some unspecified "they" should do something to improve their situation – provide employment, provide funding, provide more community infrastructure, etc. While this does not represent the majority of the youth in any PGD, those attitudes indicate that many youths have absorbed specific norms and narratives about the role of the individual, the role of family and community, and the role of the state that create unrealistic expectations and do not necessarily serve them well in the current economic and political environment.

Access to Computers, Internet, and Mobile Phones

Internet penetration in Armenia is fairly high – 72.4% in 2019 according to the Public Services Regulatory Commission (Internet World Stats, 2019), however it appears that many users access it through mobile phones rather than through computers. The rate of mobile cellular subscribers per 100 inhabitants was 119 as of 2017, with full 3G coverage across the country and LTE/WIMAX coverage for 90.1 percent of the population (International Telecommunications Union, 2018). In addition, there has been significant growth in mobile broadband subscriptions over the past five years, with similar growth predicted for the coming five years. Further, mobile operators have plans to roll out 4G networks, and competition in the market is increasing, which should reduce prices and make mobile broadband more accessible to more of the population (Harpur, 2019).

In PGDs, all youth indicated that they have phones or access to the internet and social media, which likely indicates that mobile phone use is higher among youth than older cohorts. Based on the group discussions, there appeared to be no differences in access among young men and young women, with the exception of some youth with disabilities for whom it was either lack of access to a device or sensory impairments that limited their access to specific content that did not support alternate forms of delivery (i.e., closed captioning or audio descriptions of visuals). Most youth reported using their devices primarily for communication and accessing social media. Some mobile providers' subscriptions permit free use of specific apps as well, and that may drive some of the choices that youth (and other users) make about what they access.

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[2] Recent reforms to expand inclusive education may have changed the experience of younger cohorts of youth with disabilities.

OVERARCHING YOUTH PRIORITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

Youth Priorities and Aspirations

Youths' priorities were remarkably similar across groups and focus on quality of life – financial security for themselves and their families seemed to be the most critical value for youth across the spectrum. Youth in all PGDs prioritized work (meaningful professional work or entrepreneurship that earns a decent standard of living) and a high-quality education as top priorities. The youngest respondent groups and youth with disabilities (male and female) specifically noted the importance of a labor market that values skills gained through informal channels (home schooling, self-taught, and volunteering) in addition to those learned in formal education institutions. All groups – PGDs and FGDs – criticized the current curricula and delivery of education as being too theoretical and insufficient in developing key soft skills. This concurrence between young men and young women represents something of a departure from earlier studies, as another recent survey identified work as being the most important life priority for young men, while family was the most important priority for young women (Serriere, 2014), which aligns with the traditional perception or perceived gender roles of male and female.

Behind work and education, entertainment[3] – fun and meaningful social activities, high quality of life, and non-formal learning – was the third most important priority for most groups, male and female, across the age spectrum. In a few groups (primarily the younger ones, both male and female), a few respondents thought that volunteering and the ability to gain experience through travel to other countries was important. A few also mentioned national security, as the current status of the conflict with Azerbaijan worries many young Armenians.

Among respondents with disabilities, quality of life was the primary focus, with jobs and family being the top two aspirations, followed by accommodation that provides equity in work opportunities and makes independent living possible for people with disabilities (public transportation access, physical infrastructure, access to education, and removal of social barriers).

In many cases, community leaders' impressions did not match the youths' responses. While community leaders in Gavar felt that young women in their community have only one goal – to get married – the young women (aged 18-19) in Gavar expressed frustration at their inability to find jobs locally and at the limited social and civic opportunities they had there. The young women did not see work or family as an either/or choice. Young women in Vayk and Koghb (rural sites in the study) expressed similar opinions. But the experience of one of the unmarried women in the older group in Gavar was that it would be very difficult given the social pressures and expectations of women. "If you are a 28-year-old girl, who has very free personal life and had many successes in personal life, it is not believable you will have a good personal life as well and will marry someday," she said.

In general, the PGD participants reported that the youth population of Armenia is currently demotivated, lacking a strong motivation to learn and develop professionally and lacking a positive orientation towards their futures, though more so in rural and remote areas than in urban areas. Correspondingly, the adult participants of FGDs in rural areas (and to a lesser extent in urban areas) highlighted the inertia of youths, their low level of initiative, accompanied by complaints, but taking no proactive measures to change their lives. It is important to mention here, however, that many youths avoid taking initiative when they fear it will put them in conflict with someone else in the community, as noted above.

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[3] In Armenian, Ժամանցային վայրեր (zhamancayin vayrer), which literally means entertainment places, however, in this context the term refers to both spaces and activities that youth can spend their free time contributing to their overall development and participation.

Youth Frustrations

Similar to findings of earlier studies (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2016; RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and UNDP Armenia, 2012), many PGD participants expressed frustration that few of them would be able to achieve their aspirations in the current climate. Frustrations centered mostly on the lack of employment or entrepreneurship opportunities in their communities and in the country at large, as well as what they viewed as the inadequate education they received. Some youth (male and female) expressed a desire to leave their communities for Yerevan, Russia, or the EU because they felt they would be unable to achieve their goals in their home communities. Indeed, internal or out-migration is one of the main ways in which youth "vote with their feet." Youth otherwise said they had few meaningful outlets to express their concerns, and about half noted that local or regional governments might be able to address them, but they did not know how to engage effectively with local or regional governments.

Community leaders and other key informants generally agreed that many youths may have difficulty finding good jobs, as there are more job seekers than openings in the formal economy, and they were equally critical of the current state of the education system and the lack of skills among youth to engage meaningfully in civic and political activities. However, some also felt that the youth fail to take advantage of the opportunities that do exist. "In my opinion they are not motivated. Everyone wants to have a good life. Everyone has aspirations. They have little opportunities, yet they cannot use the existing ones," said a community leader in Vayk. Another in Vargharshapat expressed a similar opinion, "Wishes are many and are very different, but everyone wants to live well. They want to live well but they do not want to work, they want to have a good position, but do not want to start from the beginning."

Youth, on the other hand, were frustrated that the skills and experience they gained through volunteer work or other informal channels was not taken seriously. In all but one community, respondents were able to identify local organizations or centers that provided some opportunities for youth to develop skills and social networks. Some young women in Vayk specifically mentioned volunteering to gain experience and develop their skills. While the youth report favorably on the activities, and their assessment was that their skills improved, they said that employers do not recognize experience gained through volunteer work. Further, female respondents (particularly the younger cohorts and particularly in rural areas) noted that they felt discriminated against in the search for employment because they were frequently asked if or told that they would soon marry and have to stop working.

While youth in PGDs enumerated a range of opportunities they saw in their communities (see Available Supports for Youth and Institutional and Policy Infrastructure for Supporting Youth below), they were not optimistic about the potential impact of those opportunities. It seems that they are jaded to announcements of programs and reforms that yield few results. Past disappointment plays a part, and while youth currently believe they can change things in their county (International Republican Institute, 2019), they are seeking a clear path to meaningful change – not small, incremental changes that may or may not accumulate in a significant way.

Youth Contributions and Engagement

In each PGD, youth identified one or two concrete examples of young men and women who had succeeded in their communities and are contributing in a number of different ways, from being teachers to artists to working for international NGOs. It is notable that in each case outside of Yerevan where someone mentioned a businessperson, that person had left the community for Yerevan or somewhere else. None of the respondents identified people in the community (outside of Yerevan) whose income source was derived from the community.

The very communally oriented Armenian culture, however, creates its own patterns of self-censorship or barriers to political and civic engagement. Some youth cited not engaging in civic action around specific

issues that did not affect them directly out of an abundance of caution. They did not want to risk alienating people they know (and might need to depend on in some way in the future) by publicly disagreeing with them or causing a rift in the community, particularly in smaller communities.

The CSYA team also noted specific patterns in engaging youth for this assessment. Engaging young men was more difficult than engaging young women. Part of the reason it was difficult to engage the 18-19 age group was that many were performing their military service away from their home communities, but across all groups, young men seemed to be less motivated to meet and discuss the difficulties they saw without any action being promised.

On the whole, youth with disabilities were eager to engage, and local disabled people's organizations were effective in connecting with them. Youth with non-heterosexual sexual orientation or gender identities, however, are harder to engage than others. Very few organizations are currently working with this population of youth, and for many, the draw is primarily social and helping their identity rather than instrumental in achieving change (see discussion in Exercising Citizenship).

LEARNING FOR WORK AND LIFE

Educational Attainment

In Armenian society, education is one of the critical milestones in person's life. It is highly valued by society and the family, and by youths themselves, as it was one of their top priorities in PGDs. The completion rate for intermediate school is 97.0 percent, 99.2 percent for female students and 94.7 percent for male students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). The senior secondary completion rate drops significantly to only 64.7 percent – 73.7 percent for young women and 55.6 percent for young men (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019).

As fewer young men complete senior secondary school, it is not surprising that fewer enroll in tertiary programs than young women. The gross enrollment ratios for tertiary in 2017 were 58.7 for women and 46.1 for men (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). Young men's enrollment lags at every level until doctoral programs, as shown in Table 1 below. The PGDs conducted by the team confirm this pattern, and they also clarify that many young men do not see the relevance to their lives of current academic and vocational programs. It is also critical to note that most young men serve two years of compulsory military service between the ages of 18 and 27 (beginning at age 18 except in the case of waivers for health reasons or deferral for government-sponsored studies). This interrupts tertiary education, as most students enter tertiary programs at age 17. According to some interviewees, many young men do not return to their programs at the completion of their military service, but the team was unable to find statistics on either the rate of re-entry to university or non-continuance of tertiary education among those completing their military service.

Table 1. Tertiary Enrollment by Sex in 2017

Tertiary enrollment 2017 (all ages)	Total (#)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Total (all programs)	104,838	44.9	55.1
ISCED 5 (junior specialist/vocational)	11,025	39.8	60.2
ISCED 6 (undergraduate)	81,648	46.2	53.8
ISCED 7 (specialist/masters)	10,910	40.1	59.9
ISCED 8 (doctoral)	155	49.4	50.6

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?queryid=127#, percentages author's calculations

Beyond the differences in tertiary enrollment, which appear to favor women, significant differences emerge by areas of study. Women studying in tertiary education in Armenia tend to be concentrated in what have, in recent years, typically been feminized fields – arts and humanities, education, and health and welfare programs. Much of the current opportunity in the labor market is concentrated in the three categories of study with the lowest concentration of women – engineering, manufacturing, and construction; agriculture, forestry, fishery, and veterinary programs; and information and communication technologies. Even when women study in those fields, they may not pursue jobs in those fields.

Table 2. Gendered Patterns of Tertiary Enrollment in 2017

Tertiary Program of Study	Percentage of enrollees who are female
Education	75.6
Arts and humanities	77.4
Social sciences, journalism, and information programs	57.8
Business, administration, and law	46.7
Natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics	53.9
Information and communication technologies	29.2
Engineering, manufacturing, and construction	13.5
Agriculture, forestry, fishery, and veterinary programs	21.2
Health and welfare programs	68.2
Services programs	40.6

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?queryid=127#, UIS estimates

Based on the discussions in the PGDs, it appears that women are more limited in their choices, as it is important to families (and more or less so to the young women themselves) that they study in a field deemed appropriate, such as those noted above. In fact, a recent study showed that overall, young women's personal sovereignty (ability to control their interactions with the environment and society around them) actually decreased from the youngest age band (10-14) to the eldest (22 and over), whereas young men's personal sovereignty increased (Nartova-Bochavera, Hakobjanyan, Harutyunyan, Khachatryan, & Wu, 2018). Women complained about the gendered employment stereotypes, the men less so, but as they get older, many youths (male and female) viewed those stereotypes as being less relevant to their lived experience. Most respondents across groups also indicated that gender norms were evolving. The differences between men and women, however, are amplified in the rural areas where there are fewer opportunities (see further discussion below).

In addition to the divisions by age and level of educational attainment, distinct geographic divisions become clear from the literature and the data collected – large cities (Yerevan/Gyumri/ Vanadzor), peri-urban/rural areas, and remote/border areas. Opportunities (educational, professional, and social) are (or are perceived to be) concentrated in the large cities. Smaller cities and towns are very similar in their profiles to rural areas. The most remote and border areas, however, stand out as being inaccessible with the fewest opportunities and amenities, with the solution often being internal or out-migration.

The quality gaps in the Armenian education system have been documented in a number of reports and have been identified by top Armenian officials as an important area of reform. Correspondingly, assessment participants described many challenges in the sector, with quality of the education deemed as the most challenging. Most of the assessment respondents (adults and youths) expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of education, with the main issue being its insufficiency to prepare youth for employment,

and among a small proportion of respondents, for effective citizenship. The most common challenges participants cited during the PGDs and KIIs were the lack of applied or practical learning, lack of soft skills, outdated curricula, outdated teaching methods, accessibility, and a dearth of information on educational pathways.

Applied and Practical Learning

The lack of applied and practical learning was the most common and most critical gap that participants noted. The current curricula (see below) do not support practical learning approaches, which allow students to apply and practice learned theories and skills. General, academic education remains heavily theoretical. Vocational and technical institutions do provide practical trainings, but the respondents said that quality is low and enrollment is very small, and that many approaches and the equipment used are outmoded. Educational institutions frequently lack the physical infrastructure and financing to support practical learning, for example for laboratories and workshops, hardware and software, and expendable supplies. The lack of access to the tools youth will likely use on the job hinders gaining relevant skills for a given profession.

Even many higher education institutions that incorporate practical learning components yield unsatisfactory results with regard to quality and actual learning outcomes, according to the youths. Few youths reported having opportunities to complete internships, and many KII respondents observed that there is no culture of apprenticeships or internships in Armenia. A handful of companies (many of them multinationals) have established effective internship programs that could serve as models, for example, Coca Cola's Youth Empowered program and the EU's SAY YES Skills for Jobs. Many youths reported that local companies certified that students had completed internships, but in reality, they did not. Youths were unable to learn the skills they might have learned in preparing for their first professional jobs, and hiring managers become skeptical about the veracity of claims of experience through internships.

Soft or Transversal Skills

Quickly following critiques about the lack of applied learning opportunities came discussions around the lack of soft skills or transversal skills[4] among Armenian youths. The top three skills that KII respondents identified as missing were communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. The top skills that youths identified in PGDs were decision-making, teamwork, and leadership. The current curricula are limited in content and approaches that cultivate these skills (see below). Yet, according to the employers in the FGDs and youth in PGDs, these soft skills are an essential part of learning and should be equally important outputs of education system as the specific knowledge students gain.

This gap in soft skill training is mainly filled in by NGOs, yet these opportunities are only accessed by small numbers of active youth who seek them out (typically in the larger communities – few opportunities exist in remote or border areas), while the general youth population lacks these opportunities. Another channel through which youths could learn these skills is internships or apprenticeships, but as noted above, youths' access to meaningful internships or apprenticeships is limited. Some youths, therefore, have attempted to learn soft skills through volunteer work. Volunteerism is relatively nascent in Armenia, and KII respondents noted that some organizations are wary of bringing in volunteers who have no legal status in relation to the organization. In addition, as the volunteers have no legal standing, youth said that employers discount volunteer experience. "Teamwork, risk taking – the university does not provide us these kinds of skills. And these skills can be gained during volunteering work. But when the employers ask about these skills and you say you have volunteering experience, they don't take it into account," according to a young woman in Gavar.

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[4] For more information about the importance of soft skills, see Soft Skills for Positive Youth Development.

Curricula and Teaching Approaches

The educational curricula have not changed for many years – youths often referred to the educational material they receive as being from "Soviet times", which does not correspond to the current labor market requirements and is not aligned with the current knowledge bases for most professions. For the existing and limited up-to-date curricula, the content is mostly theoretical and often only available in Russian and English, making it even harder to comprehend for many students.

In most education institutions, the teaching methods used are also considered outmoded by most of the youths who participated. They were viewed as being ineffective, while adults in the community reported that from the teachers' perspective, the students are not motivated to learn. It was mentioned several times that if a young person values education, s/he will be able to learn what they need to know, even in a low-quality institution, which is not necessarily a fair assessment. Most teachers, especially those who are towards the end of their teaching career, do not employ interactive and student-centered teaching methods, which emphasize learning (and support a range of soft skills development), but instead resort to traditional, lecture-based teaching. Youths reported that younger teachers try to use more student-centered approaches, but they lack the skills to implement them effectively.

The World Bank is cooperating with GOAM on a significant reform of the education system, including all primary and secondary curricula, teaching training, and textbooks, as well as the institution of pre-schools in all marzes and rehabilitation of high schools in various marzes. A curriculum framework for the competencies a higher school graduate should have has been developed, along with determinations on the types of assessment that will be used. Subject standards will follow in subsequent phases. The private sector has begun to be engaged in these efforts, and the Tumo Center will lead the technology education component. Another area of focus is entrepreneurial learning, and GOAM has developed and is introducing modules for entrepreneurship key competences across all levels of formal education (general and vocational) (European Training Foundation, 2019). This effort is ongoing, with the curriculum reform in all grades and subjects expected to be complete in two to three years, followed by a national roll-out. KII respondents indicated plans for in-service teacher training (and presumably pre-service teacher training) and implementation of career orientation services will flow from the current Ministry of Education and Science/World Bank reform process over the next several years. In practice, the beneficial impacts of these positive reforms on students may still be several years away given the complexity and breadth of the reform effort.

Complementing this reform, GIZ is also working with the Ministry of Education and Science to reform the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, with the goal of instituting a dual system in Armenia similar to the dual systems found in Germany that builds on the Armenia National Qualifications Framework that incorporates industry participation, work-based learning, and ongoing, lifelong learning structures. As part of this reform, each TVET institution has instituted career orientation services, though KII respondents reported that some were functioning more highly than others.

In addition, the World Bank supported an assessment of higher education using the SABER tertiary education tool, and the report and recommendations will be forthcoming shortly. According to KII respondents, GOAM is planning to review the law on higher education and post-graduate education and issue a new strategy for education.

Professional Orientation

Another common challenge mentioned by PGD participants is the quality or availability of professional orientation or career counselling. Youths' current work aspirations are limited to a fairly small spectrum of professions (mainly economics and finance, law, tourism, and information technology (IT)), and their choices often have little basis in labor market demand or the alignment of their personal attributes and

interests with the requirements of the field. Parents' preferences and the perceived popularity or prestige of the professions are typically the deciding factors. PGD participants believe that there should be a systematic approach to providing professional orientation from primary through secondary and tertiary education. Many respondents thought that by high school graduation, a young person should have a basic understanding of different professions and related job prospects and potential employment, as well know what potential professions they should or can choose to study in university. Yet a primary challenge or barrier to delivering quality career orientation is the lack of relevant labor market information, which at the moment is not available to inform systematic career orientation. In a sign of progress, TVET institutions are now implementing career orientation services, and the anticipated general education reforms will also include career orientation services. New mandatory requirements have been imposed on universities to provide those services as well (European Training Foundation, 2019).

Accessibility

Respondents found accessibility of education problematic in rural and remote areas. The number of post-secondary educational institutions and courses across the country (except in the three major cities) is very limited. Some youth want to stay in their home communities, while others find the cost of moving to another city or abroad to study to be prohibitive. The youth in PGDs mentioned that very often they are obliged to choose a specific profession, regardless of their interests, due to the limited offerings of the educational institution(s) in their proximity, and many of those do not offer wide range of courses of study. Given Armenia's relatively high level of internet connectivity, course offerings at regional institutions could be supplemented with distance learning courses in partnership with other institutions in the three major cities or abroad. A few PGD participants also mentioned the availability of online resources as an alternative to low-quality education at the secondary level.

Another facet of accessibility is access to all levels of education for youths and children with disabilities. The two PGDs with youths with disabilities concluded that neither TVET nor higher education institutions have any systematic approach to include or reduce barriers for students with disabilities, as has been done at the primary and secondary levels.

Educational Pathways

Although there has been some movement on the adoption of career orientation services, there still appears to be a gap in the navigation of educational pathways. Given a choice between vocational and academic tertiary institutions, youths consistently choose in favor of universities for several reasons. First, a stereotype persists that TVET institutions are only for those with lower intellectual capacity, and that with this level of education one may not be able to secure lucrative employment. Colleges are also often perceived to offer lower quality than universities. Secondly, university ranking is thought to be critical for employment opportunities upon graduation, and youths may select less popular majors to go to university or to a more prestigious university, even if they have no interest in working in that field. This is evidently a common occurrence with agriculture, as one respondent said, "Agriculture can also be developed, but many people don't want to do such kind of work. Two years ago, you would see more people in this sphere than now."

It would seem from these patterns that current information about careers and occupations (including the physicality and typical work environments of some) is insufficient. More information about linkages between areas of study and career paths would likely be useful to youth as they proceed through the education system.

GOING TO WORK

Youth Employment and Unemployment

There is currently insufficient demand in the labor market to absorb all the new job seekers who enter the labor market. Labor market participation by youth (as defined by the ILO[5]) in Armenia is fairly low, and different patterns emerge by sex and by location. In rural areas, participation is higher, but only for young men. Participation in urban areas is equal between men and women, as shown in Table 3. Given the relatively low levels of labor market participation and the significant drop-off in school completion between intermediate school and senior secondary, as well as the gross enrollment ratios in tertiary school, a sizable number of Armenian youths are not in education, employment or training. This applies to 35.7 percent of young men and 37.5 percent of young women aged 15-24 (International Labor Organization, 2019).

Table 3. Employment to Population Ratio in 2017 (ages 15-24)

Type of Community	Total	Male	Female
Total (all youth)	21.7	25.0	18.1
Rural	24.0	31.0	15.9
Urban	19.9	19.9	19.8

Source: International Labor Organization, ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org, 2017 LFS data

Among those youth who are employed, the majority have completed an intermediate education. As it takes a long time for many university graduates to enter the labor market, and as many young men may just be finishing their undergraduate education at age 24 given the two-year mandatory military service many complete, it is not surprising that many fewer employed youth in the 15-24 age range have advanced levels of education, or that proportionately fewer men in this group are employed than women.

Table 4. Employment Distribution by Level of Education in 2017 (ages 15-24)

Level of Education	Total	Male	Female
Basic education	6.0	6.7	4.9
Intermediate education	65.3	75.8	49.3
Advanced education	28.8	17.5	45.8

Source: International Labor Organization, ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org, 2017 LFS data

Data about youth by sector and by occupation are not available, but in looking at the overall data for ages 15 and over, clear patterns of segregation by sector emerge by sex (though there appears to be a trend of convergence in agriculture and services). Consistent with stereotypical gender norms, men dominate in industry, while women have a higher rate of participation in services. Women's participation rate in agriculture actually exceeds men's, but men's participation in the labor force overall exceeds women's participation by 20 percentage points (International Labor Organization, 2019), so agriculture still employs more men than women.

Table 5. Employment by Sector in 2017 (ages 15+)

Sector	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture	31.3	28.2	34.8

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[5] Labor data are calculated based on "youth" being defined as ages 15 to 24. When using a broader definition up to age 29, the rates would presumably increase, but the information is not available to be disaggregated and reaggregated into a redefined age bracket. Thus, the 15-24 age group is reported as a proxy.

Industry	16.7	23.8	6.9
Services	52.0	48.0	56.3

Source: International Labor Organization, ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org, 2017 LFS data

It is also useful to note that informal employment remains a challenge in Armenia. Overall, 29 percent of men and 19.6 percent of women aged 15 and over are informally employed, which means they may lack access to labor protections and benefits. As the data are not available by age intervals, it is not clear if informal employment among youth is higher or lower than the overall figures.

A breakdown of occupations by age was not available. Overall patterns of occupations for men and women aged 15 and over reflect some of the prevailing attitudes about which jobs are socially acceptable for men and women. More women are concentrated in professional, associate professional, technician, and skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery positions. Given the current rates of enrollment in tertiary programs on agricultural, forestry, and fishery, it is likely that this difference will flip over time, particularly given the disparity in overall labor force participation. The only intermediate or low-skilled category in which women dominate is clerical support. These patterns demonstrate the limitations that female respondents noted in PGDs.

These gendered patterns seem to be stronger in rural areas than in urban areas, and where opportunities are few, women's participation in the labor force may be constrained. As one female respondent in Vayk shared, "When I applied for a job, they answered me: you are a girl, you will marry soon and go, why do you need a job? Only that question, and nothing else."

It is not surprising, then, that unemployment rates among youth are fairly high overall, and significantly higher among females than males. Unemployment of men in rural areas is significantly lower than that of women in rural areas and of either in urban areas. A significant portion of that may reflect self-employment in agriculture (i.e., working family-owned farms with limited access to employment benefits), which does constitute gainful employment. In spite of the perceptions of youth vulnerability in rural and remote areas (see discussion following), unemployment is significantly higher in urban areas than rural areas. Unemployment is also higher among women with an intermediate or advanced education than among men with the same qualifications: 17.6 percentage points and 5.5 percentage points, respectively (see Table 6)Table 6. Youth Unemployment Rate in 2017 (ages 15-24).

Table 6. Youth Unemployment Rate in 2017 (ages 15-24)

Youth population	Total	Male	Female
Total (all youth)	38.2	32.8	44.8
Rural	21.8	13.5	35.8
Urban	48.6	48.1	49.2
Basic education	35.3	38.8	N/A
Intermediate education	38.0	31.5	49.1
Advanced education	39.2	35.6	41.1
Underemployment rate 2017 (ages 15-24)	15.2	16.1	13.8

Source: International Labor Organization, ILOSTAT, https://ilostat.ilo.org, 2017 LFS data. The ILO deemed female youth unemployment among those with only a basic education unreliable as the sample was too small.

Expectations and Influence of Social Perceptions

Youths' aspirations toward work and their perceptions of the relative prestige of different careers vary by age group, gender, and location (marz, urban/rural). Social perception is among the primary factors affecting youths' career goals. Parents and extended family have a great deal of influence over the courses of study that youths pursue. As noted above, the gendered patterns of study, particularly in tertiary

education, may result in significantly different opportunities for men and women in the labor market. Little information about careers is available to youths in school, and a lack of understanding of professions, career trajectories (from entry-level to senior expert/leadership roles), and the labor market was more notable among younger age cohorts, who would typically be in the process of choosing their professions. As such, many young people decide on a career based on perceptions or emotions instead of considering market demand, potential future earnings, career path trajectories, and the likelihood of securing a job. Nevertheless, the shared top priority when it comes to career aspirations, for all youths, regardless of age, sex, or location, was "profitability" or "salary", which they seem to associate with professional jobs that they view as being high status (regardless of whether or not there is a strong correlation between perceived status and earnings).

Despite earnings potential being the top priority, youths do not apply for or take jobs that would be lucrative if they were viewed as being low status, particularly in smaller communities. "I cannot find a person who would work for 15,000 drams per day[6] for cleaning the water pipes. They might say it is a shameful work, yet they would do the same job in Yerevan or Russia where no one knows them. They do not do that job here for the stereotype of being shameful," a young man in Gavar observed. Working in the trades is similarly not well regarded, but there appear to be a range of opportunities in those fields. This, again, resonates with the earlier point that social norms or perceptions contribute to shaping of youths' attitudes towards employment.

Gender norms also play a role in shaping youths' career choices. More young men are willing to take jobs in industry, and many more migrate for work they think will provide greater earnings opportunities, as discussed in the Youth Employment and Unemployment sections previously. This was reaffirmed during the PGDs, where a majority of male youths envisioned that someday they will move to Yerevan or abroad (mostly Russian Federation locations) for employment even if they were not enthusiastic about the prospect, while only a few young women hoped to move to Yerevan or the EU. Given the lack of opportunities in their local communities and their lower willingness to migrate, despite their higher levels of education, women may, on the whole, have fewer opportunities for work and lower earning potential than men.

The PGDs also revealed important changes in the career-related aspirations of some segments of Armenian youth over the past few years. Recent studies found that all youth were more interested in the security of paid employment than in entrepreneurship (Serriere, 2014). Outside of Gyumri and Yerevan, however, male youth (of all ages) who participated in this study aspire to start their own businesses, considering it to be autonomous, profitable, and more prestigious than paid employment working for someone else. This represents a significant shift in attitudes from the past, and the revolution may have been an important contributor to that shift. "After the revolution, everything has changed here. Seventy percent of the people cannot find themselves. Before the revolution, those people were following some strong, powerful people; now there is no place to cling to," as one young man (20-24) in Vagharshapat said. Similarly, a respondent in Koghb observed, "Nobody wants to go to Yerevan, take a credit, and buy a house. They want to be sure it is peaceful and build their house in their region, create a business and be sure that their kids are going to be secure later." Although respondents stated that the revolution contributed to reshaping youth aspirations regarding their careers, many of the participants were still unsure how to navigate the labor market for formal employment or had a very limited understanding of entrepreneurship.

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[6] A full-time job at 15,000 AMD/day would result in an annual salary of around 8,500 USD/year, more than double the per capita GDP.

In general, young people who had not engaged in entrepreneurship before had high (and often unrealistic) expectations, misinterpreting it as a fast and easy way to earn money. They seemed to have a particular blind spot to the fact that most start-ups are self-financed. Current social perceptions around entrepreneurs contribute to youths' shifting attitudes. In Vagharshapat, for example, which had significant influence in the pre-revolution power structure, informal power structures had an influence over the local community and mostly earned their income through business. These powerful groups that were well known in their communities enjoyed a high social status, but many youths have seen them as role models and associate doing business or entrepreneurship with social status or perceived success. It is not surprising, therefore, that a higher proportion of youth in Vargharshapat showed interest in or aspired to entrepreneurship over employment. In other communities, youths see so few opportunities for formal employment and no action on the part of the government to remedy it that they likely see it as the only viable option.

In fact, few youths seemed to have a clear understanding or concept of how entrepreneurship typically works or what skills or commitment levels are required. In response to what they think the barriers to starting up a business are, many mentioned a lack of financial input as the main barrier, and only a few mentioned the lack of a viable business plan or proper skills and knowledge. This lack of accurate information was particularly prominent in Vayk, Vagharshapat, and Gavar.

Expectation Mismatch Between Youths and Employers

In the community leader FGDs and KIIs, respondents noted that while there is an unmet demand for qualified professionals, in some fields, there are also vacancies in entry and mid-levels jobs that remain open for an extended period of time. Employers indicated that the pool of job applicants was limited, or they just could not find the right employees with relevant skills or experience. Concurrently, they asserted that the educational level of their current and future employees is not the decisive factor for hiring them, rather their experience and ability to learn and adapt to the work environment is most critical. Among the skills that employers (and others) identified as lacking were communication, soft skills, motivation, applied learning, and knowing how to learn on the job. It is not clear, however, that their systems of advertising for positions, the minimum requirements they set for positions, or their internal training and promotion systems reflect these assertions, as in a recent study, 22.2 percent of youth attributed their failure in finding jobs to their understanding that employers "do not take [applicants] without work experience" (Media Model LLC, 2018). Further, youths reported that the most common way to find a job is through their personal networks, and adult respondents agreed that the most effective method for staff recruitment is again through their networks (colleagues, family, friends), which may significantly limit the opportunities of youths migrating from other communities or youths with poor social networks. A limited number of employers have begun train-to-hire programs to develop a talent pipeline for their organizations, such as [Synopsys Armenia Educational Department](#), but these are few and small-scale to date.

The mismatch seems to go both ways in that it is not clear that youths understand that even with a university degree, their skills and knowledge may truly be at an entry level within their chosen field. They seemed to be focused on short-term prospects, making lower-paid entry- or mid-level jobs seem unappealing, rather than understanding the career trajectory and future earnings potential. A recent survey showed that 21.6 percent of youths attributed their failure in finding jobs is because employers "propose a very small salary," and 10 percent attributed it to employers "propose inappropriate working hours" (Media Model LLC, 2018). Some youths would rather stay unemployed and continue the long job hunt, rather than going into these jobs that they regard unfavorably.

After investing many years and resources in their chosen academic pursuits, youths do not want to settle for jobs other than those to which they have aspired. The ultimate root cause of this mindset is the lack

of proper and systematic career guidance at schools, using a labor market demand analysis, which results in youths pursuing educational tracks that may not be a best fit for their interests and abilities and do not meet employer requirements. Many youths reflected that it is important to have mentors guide or advise them in their career choices or business start-up, yet in many cases, adults themselves in schools and communities lack proper tools, understanding, or experience to be a mentor even as youths turn to them for help.

Accessing Job Opportunities

Youth face a wide range of challenges in entering the workplace. Formal employment opportunities seem to be quite limited and most are concentrated in Yerevan and the other large cities. Even among those youths who have realistic expectations, the limited number of formal employment opportunities and the knowledge and skill mismatches noted above result in a high probability of not finding a job after graduation. Forty-two percent of unemployed youth seek a job for one year or longer (Media Model LLC, 2018), which causes frustration and loss in confidence and motivation to adjust their skills for a job hunt. According to a recent UNDP-sponsored study of labor practices and trade unions in Lori, Shirak, Tavush, and Gegharkunik (Sahakyan, 2019), youth and women have been discriminated against in hiring practices, which aligns with the frustrations expressed by the female PGD participants. In addition, the study identified a number of practices related to late payment or non-payment of wages, overtime work without pay, illegal probationary periods, unethical and discriminatory behavior, and use of fixed-term contracts rather than permanent employment contracts. Given the prevalence of some of these practices and the fact that similar abuses were documented in a broader 2012 study (RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and UNDP Armenia, 2012), it is not surprising that youth are more interested in working for themselves than working for others. It is also unsurprising that no culture of internships or apprenticeships has taken hold, as basic labor code provisions are not enforced – if registered employees cannot be protected from exploitation in various forms, there is no reason to think that interns/apprentices would have any protections under the current legal structure.

Added to the above barriers, a lack of accurate information about the range of careers within various industries (as well as stereotypes associated with those industries) create barriers for youth in accessing relevant job opportunities throughout the value chain. For example, common perceptions of jobs in the agriculture industry are that they largely involve base-level production, but there are also many highly technical jobs that could provide career advancement through productivity enhancement, value addition, and export management, yet these are poorly understood. In addition, some youths are unaware of or do not know how to access or use relevant job search platforms. Access to these types of information is hindered by low ICT skills among a small proportion of youths (particularly those with lower levels of education) or limited English language. Also, as mentioned above, most job opportunities are concentrated in Yerevan or urban areas, which are not accessible to youth in rural and remote areas.

PGD participants were most interested in IT or tourism, and while those sectors have experienced significant growth (10 to 20 percent per year over the past few years (Enterprise Incubator Foundation, 2018; Media Model LLC, 2018)), additional opportunities seemed to be concentrated in the trades and agriculture. Promotion of IT and tourism by GOAM and NGOs may have been a significant contributor to the shift in interest in those sectors.

The assessment team observed, however, that younger cohort youths have an overly simplified understanding of careers within the sector, similar to their expectations of entrepreneurship. Youths seem to expect that higher education alone is sufficient for successful employment, but in reality, from the perspective of the employers, experience is considered the top requirement. Some large IT companies find that higher education institutions do not provide compatible training that can equip the youth with the skills they are seeking. As a result, some companies have to invest in additional job training for youth

employees to meet the job requirements, which may sometimes result in a lower salary (at least for the first year) so the company can recoup that investment. Addressing this gap systematically (rather than on an individual basis) requires professional work orientation and updated curricula and teaching methodologies in relevant courses of study, including proper internships.

In contrast to the IT sector, educational institutions better meet employers' requirements in the tourism industry (Media Model LLC, 2018). Youths particularly favor working in the tourism industry, as it does not require very high education, and youth believe (whether or not there is a sound basis) that tourism jobs allow them the flexibility of being self-employed (in which case they might be able to stay in their own communities) or being formally employed in the private sector.

Financial Access and Literacy

For youth who opt for self-employment or entrepreneurship, access to financial means and financial literacy are very important for successful start-up and sustainability. Yet youths in Armenia have varied understanding, behaviors, and attitudes toward financial management. Many youths, especially those considered vulnerable or living in rural areas, tend to have limited or skewed financial management knowledge or capacity, which results in misuse of capital or going into debt.

Aside from work, participants from PGDs and KIIs said that youths can access financing from friends and family, as well grants through different programs – but banks remain the main source to access capital in Armenia. Banks account for 88 percent of the total assets of the country's financial system, followed by credit organizations with 8.7 percent (Nurbekyan & Hovanessian, 2018).

During the PGDs, the team found that most youths have little income, and 50 percent were dependent on their parents. Some of these youths, particularly the older male cohorts, reported taking out loans to cover their daily needs or to purchase high-cost goods such as smartphones or computers. As one young man from Vayk noted, "Sometimes uneducated people might get loans for iPhone X, which they do not need, and they can hardly cover." Many young respondents mentioned that they have or had personal loans from the bank, but none of them have taken business loans. While some of these loans could be used to purchase equipment that facilitates business start-up (smartphones, computers), youths who are borrowing to cover their daily living expenses are likely not saving enough to invest in any start-up they might want to establish.

Gambling is also one of the behaviors contributing to a lack of saving among youths. Hence, it is quite common for youths to be in debt to banks or friends even before they start earning income, which may in turn hinder or limit their income generation prospects. Youths need better financial management skills to break this cycle.

Many youths, especially those who had previously participated in financial literacy training, mentioned that financial literacy is very important, and they would participate in such trainings if they were available. Yet in most cases, youths were not aware of any programs in their communities to assist them with strengthening their financial management skills, despite a number of reports about programs being implemented in Armenia to support youth in financial literacy and access to finance. At the same time, the KIIs indicate that it is usually just a small group of engaged youths that are actively participating in different development initiatives, including financial literacy training, whereas the most vulnerable youths who may benefit most from such initiatives are usually not participating.

Existing Resources and Trends

From both KIIs and other sources, it seems that a handful of companies are starting to provide technical training to young graduates to prepare them for working in their operational environment, establishing a

train-to-hire model. In other words, companies target youths who have the relevant educational background and build their capacity around soft skills and practical skills, so that they can be hired into upcoming job openings. However, this is mostly in the IT and tourism industries, concentrated in Yerevan, and limited in scale.

On the other hand, many youths currently see advantages to entrepreneurship and business start-up. To this end, a limited number of programs exist to support youths in their start-ups, such as American University of Armenia's (AUA) Entrepreneurship & Product Innovation Center (EPIC) and the National Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship's Seaside Startup Summit. However, the major challenge is that youths are not aware of these opportunities. Throughout all the PGDs, only two youths mentioned any of these. Information dissemination and promotion of these existing resources has been insufficient, especially for vulnerable groups.

One positive trend is the organization of cooperatives in some rural communities, which enables youths and their families to aggregate their goods and promote sales on a more cost-effective basis. For example, handicrafts produced in Koghb were seen in touristy areas or souvenir shops in Vagharshapat. These are still fairly small in scale, however.

EXERCISING CITIZENSHIP

In democratic societies, civic participation constitutes an important developmental task during adolescence (Ballard, Malin, Porter, Colby, & Damon, 2015). Earlier studies found that the majority of young people were not willing to be involved in the activities of political parties, local self-governing bodies, civil initiative groups, and various councils within higher educational institutions or schools because they had little trust in those organizations and believed their participation could not influence outcomes (RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and UNDP Armenia, 2012; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2016).

Despite those findings, demonstrations of active civic and political participation have been emerging among Armenian youths in recent years, particularly in urban areas, mainly with the support of CSOs, which have organized capacity-building events and supported youth engagement in decision-making processes. The Velvet Revolution of 2018 marked a turning point in civic and political participation among Armenian youths, with greater participation of youths in rural and remote areas. Although belief that ordinary people can influence the direction of the country is decreasing with older groups, youth still largely believe that they can influence the direction of the country (29% definitely yes, and 39% probably yes) (International Republican Institute, 2019). Nevertheless, the youth of Armenia, and particularly those who participated in the PGDs, think that youth are not yet active decision-makers or part of the decision-making process. They are not actively engaged in the local and central governments (either formally or informally). Active civic and political participation (beyond voting and demonstrations) is not a common practice, especially among youth in small and rural communities.

Interestingly, the young people who were engaged in the PGDs rarely selected the topic of citizenship as a major issue for discussion, and only three groups identified this as a priority. A recent survey indicated that public perception was that there has been progress on freedom of speech, media independence, individual human rights, the fight against corruption, and democracy, which likely explains their relative lack of concern and lower level of urgency on issues tied to civic and political participation (International Republican Institute, 2019). Despite these perceived improvements, however, it is not clear from the recent data that youths know how to make their influence felt on a day-to-day basis or that they have the political will to do so. The same poll showed that the general trend (across the whole population – age-disaggregated figures not available) between October 2018 and May 2019 was a decreased interest in

politics (high interest decreased from 40 percent to 30 percent and low interest increased from 30 percent to 43 percent), and it is likely that the overall figures also represent declining interest among youth.

Motivators and Impeding Factors

The current landscape of government and civil society actors is itself a structural barrier to youth participation in civic and political processes. In the past, there were no state programs or activities that would promote youth participation in existing power structures beyond voting, and youth therefore had to resort to activity outside of the political system. In general, civil society organizations lack general organizational capacity (Aghekyan, 2018), and while there are many that represent youth interests, they typically do not engage youth using PYD approaches, which limits youth influence in the organizations and therefore their interest and confidence in them. The lack of effective government-sponsored or civil society channels leave youth with the option of direct action in the civic and political arena. Direct action, typically through demonstrations, is limiting because it is highly visible, which may be a deterrent for some, and it is rarely sustainable over long periods of time (though there are examples, such as Ukraine's Orange Revolution, in which demonstrations persisted over months). Direct action does not facilitate long-term cooperation towards the resolution of identified problems without trusted organizations that can be engaged to represent the interests of various groups.

It is also important to understand youths' motivations for engaging in civic and political activity. Recent scholarship has identified three specific categories of motivations for youth engagement in civic life: identity, instrumental (achieving a specific community or social goal), and personal (Ballard, Malin, Porter, Colby, & Damon, 2015).[7] Some youths' engagement with civil society activities fall into the first category – helping identity. LGBT youth reportedly participate in social activities with LGBT advocacy organizations as a way of affirming their identities, but they are not necessarily motivated to engage in civic or political action as a result. Some youth civic activities may similarly fall into this category – participants may not be seeking change so much as social connections and new opportunities to learn. Most of the civic and political activities that PGD participants discussed, however, fall into the instrumental or personal issue categories, though it is important to note that any of these motivations may be weakened if youth perceive that their actions will bring them into conflict with others in the community, as noted in Youth Contributions and Engagement.

PGD participants recalled several major and minor demonstrations, initiated by youth for different issues of concern (action against Teghut mine, Electric Yerevan, action against increase of transportations costs, etc.), which fell into the instrumental category. Earlier demonstrations also included those in 2017 against proposed changed to military service requirements, which was a personal issue for young men. Most of the youth proudly said that they were part of the recent revolution and made it happen. Despite their efficacy in the demonstrations leading to the revolution, youth and adult respondents agreed that the youth were led (rather than being initiators), and they would only do what they were told to do. Therefore, generally, no cadre of leading youth civic activists emerged from the revolution. Youth also think that the momentum at the grassroots level was lost after the revolution, when youth were willing to remain engaged, but lacked tools to initiate that engagement. Further, leaders in their communities did not meaningfully involve youth in decision-making processes aside from those youth who successfully pursued political office. While they view those new, young elected leaders as role models, PGD participants said that the broad willingness of youth who are not typically engaged in politics to contribute to the building of a new Armenia after the revolution was not leveraged, and interest is dying down as youth refocus their attention on quality of life.

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[7] This study also identified a fourth category, weak motivation, that essentially included any other explanation. For the purposes of this assessment, we focus on the three that are most helpful.

The community leaders and other adult respondents noted that since the revolution, youth are certainly more active in civic affairs over the past seven or eight years than they had been prior to that. They maintained that youth have developed a demanding attitude towards government, but said they lack a full understanding of how government systems work, of their rights and responsibilities, and how to choose effective advocacy measures. They said youth choose to demonstrate rather than engage in dialog or make use of such channels as community councils.

The continued use of direct action may reflect multiple factors: (1) youth lack a basic understanding of civics and their political system, indicating a need for basic civic education for all youth; (2) although channels exist through which youth could try to address their concerns, those channels are not viewed as being effective; and (3) the consolidation of local governments may be changing the actual or perceived access points for youth at the local level, which may require different approaches to engagement or lengthening the learning curve for youth who want to engage in civic and political action.

Gendered Participation

PGD and KII respondents in urban areas noted that women are more active in civil society and community affairs than men. In CSOs' interventions for promotion of active citizenship and participation of youth in decision-making processes, the overwhelming majority of participants are women. One reason for this may be the way gender norms are experienced by youth. Recent research has shown that young men in Armenia have greater social contact sovereignty than young women, i.e., young men can socialize with people unknown to their parents or families without repercussions while young women cannot (Nartova-Bochavera, Hakobjanyan, Harutyunyan, Khachatryan, & Wu, 2018). Structured activities under the aegis of a recognized organization may provide opportunities for socialization that are more appealing to women than to men, making those activities instrumental in addressing change young women might want to see but also in expanding their social networks without interference from family members. In rural and more conservative areas, female PGD respondents described their communities as being very patriarchal, with very clear and strict gender roles and stereotypes, which do not support political activity by women. The revolution, however, may have been a departure point or an opening, as young women said they had equal participation in all of the processes and even "closed up" the streets.

Another possibility is that the equality of young men and young women participating in demonstrations leading up to the revolution was an anomaly, particularly in rural and conservative areas. Patterns of gendered participation in politics have not changed significantly since Armenia's independence, with 30 percent of parliamentary seats being filled by women (or more, per the Soviet quota), but very few women in central committee or cabinet posts. Women currently hold 24 percent of Parliament seats, but only one serves in a ministerial position (New Armenia's Parliamentarians, 2019), and the first female mayor was just elected in 2018. One KII respondent noted that female politicians were not necessarily viewed in a positive light, and their success was usually associated with urgent issues in their communities or districts (typically social issues, education, or health). Thus, it seems that young women, although they may be more politically active than young men on the whole, still have less effective access to power structures, particularly in rural and conservative areas.

Community Structures and Opportunities for Leadership

According to youth in PGDs, there remain few opportunities for youth participation and leadership in their communities. The number of young community council members increased, but not significantly according to the participants, and community councils were not seen as being responsive to youth. Some local governments have made concerted efforts to engage youth through youth councils (particularly in Gavar and Vargharshapat), but the degree to which this approach is effective is not yet clear. One political party, Bright Armenia, has established the Liberal Political School to educate youth on the country's political processes, the party, and political engagement, but to date, other parties have not followed suit.

PGD respondents reported that most opportunities for participation and leadership are provided by local CSOs and international NGOs. Although youth-serving organizations are numerous, confidence and trust in them remains fairly low overall, as they are often not sustainable financially and are therefore subject to donor drag and shifting priorities and programs. Further, as noted before, few engage youth using PYD approaches, which limits the influence youth can have in these organizations. Therefore, the lack of effective and trusted civil society organizations that engage broad swaths of the youth population is a limiting factor.

AVAILABLE SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH AND INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH

Infrastructure, Policies, and Laws that Affect Youth

Armenia has a wide range of legislation, policies, and government strategies that support youth development in different ways. Overarching development programs, including the Development Strategy of Armenia 2014–2025 and the Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2017–2022, provide overall guidance for the patterns of investment that might be expected. However, Armenia currently lacks a comprehensive youth policy, though one is in development. Earlier youth policy documents, such as Concept of State Youth Policy (1998) and Strategy for the State Youth Policy 2013–2017 were widely criticized for not being responsive to youth needs and not establishing specific targets for youth outcomes. Further, various KII respondents noted that the lack of a coherent policy and division of responsibilities across ministries means that youth programming is fragmented despite having the Council on Youth Affairs[8] as the main platform providing cross-sectoral coordination of youth policy.

At the municipal level, some localities (such as Gavar and Vargharshapat) have established youth councils and designated gathering spaces for youth. While these initiatives seem to be appreciated by the youth, it is neither clear that these resources are sufficient to address specific youth needs in the community nor that they are accessible to all youth in the community, particularly marginalized or vulnerable youth.

Education is one of the primary ways in which governments support youth development. Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia and the Law on Education (1999) guarantee youth the right to free, compulsory education up to age 17. Additional policy documents that codify investments in youth include the Vocational Education and Training Reform Program 2012–2016, the Supplementary and Continuing Education Strategy 2013–2017, and the Draft of Program of Preliminary and Middle Professional Education and Training Development for 2017–2021. As noted above, a new education strategy is in development, and extensive educational reforms are underway.

It is important to note, however, that education services and other interventions offered through schools may not reach all youth. For the 10-14 age group (intermediate school), at-scale programming through the schools has a good chance of reaching almost all youth, however in for the 15-16 age group (senior secondary), interventions in schools (even at scale) will have already lost a number of youth, particularly young men, and among them probably some of the most vulnerable. Any short-term interventions to reach youth in this age bracket likely need to work both within and outside of the formal school system. Some youth turn to non-formal and online learning alternatives, but Armenia does not yet have the legal basis, methodologies, standards, or trained workforce for validating non-formal learning (European Training Foundation, 2019), which places those youth at a disadvantage in the labor market.

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[8] The Council on Youth Affairs is headed by the Prime Minister, and all relevant ministries are represented by a deputy minister.

Labor market regulation is another important area through which GOAM affects youth development. Key laws and policies include the Labor Code (2004), the Law on Employment (2014), the Armenia Development Strategy 2014-2025, and the National Employment Strategy 2013–2018. GOAM has focused in its strategies on the creation of high productivity jobs, as well as targeted approaches to address youth unemployment. A recent European Training foundation report (2019) indicated that in 2019, a new online job vacancies system is being launched, which should help match youth with opportunities, and also noted that GOAM is offering a new program to support young mothers with professional training and subsidized childcare, although none of the PGD participants mentioned this program. Other elements of the regulatory structure have not met the needs of youth. Based on recent studies and the comments of PGD participants, the State Labor Inspectorate is weak in its enforcement of the basic provisions of the labor code. In addition, while the public employment services conduct annual employer surveys to identify workforce requirements (European Training Foundation, 2019), there is no system in place for that information to flow to vocational and higher education institutions or other training providers (such as CSOs). In addition, there appears to be little effort to collect information on the informal sector and informal employment.

GOAM also has some resources available for youth entrepreneurs through the Small and Medium Enterprises Development National Center (SMEDNC), through training, information, and financial support. None of the youth who participated in PGDs had any experience with SMEDNC, however, some KII respondents felt it could be more effective. It manages the EU-funded Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs exchange program and the Enterprise Europe Network, which links Armenian firms interested in exporting their goods or services with firms in the EU.

A law on volunteering is also being discussed, and this would provide another avenue to support youth development – both for economic and civic ends. While some KII respondents noted that no regulation of voluntary activities should be necessary, one of the legacies of the Soviet system is that under the previous legal system, laws were generally written to permit specific activities (rather than to prohibit them). Therefore, some organizations and people may not view volunteerism as a "valid" activity without codification.

Youth-Centered Activities by Donors, NGOs, and the Private Sector

The most highly regarded youth activities the respondents identified were the EU4Youth programs to support employability and UNDP's Impact Aim Venture Accelerator and its Demo Codesign Lab/I Am the Community network. All three of these programs assist youth with space and expertise to develop their own ideas about how they can develop their potential or change their communities. Although these programs are all relatively new, the perceptions are that they are effective.

Current USAID activities have involved youth to some extent, but the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, InfoTuns, and Participatory Utilization and Resource Efficiency of Water stand out for their focus on leveraging youth assets. Each of these has identified a specific approach to engaging youth, but they are fairly narrow in the youth population that they may reach (e.g., youth aligned with the Bright Armenia party, human rights activists, youth in specific fields of study or who are environmental activists, etc.). Other USAID programs have certainly served youth as well, but the majority of participants came from the eldest youth cohort (25-29) and did not include specific approaches for identifying and meeting the needs of youth. As the goals of each program and its intended beneficiaries differ, a tailored approach is needed for each program to apply PYD principles to its activities.

A wide variety of NGOs and CBOs support youth activities in Armenia. Among those NGOs and CBOs interviewed for the assessment, youth are interested in engaging in activities that are meaningful, fun, and

contribute to their futures (either through skills gained, connections made, or changes that can be achieved in their communities). As noted earlier, more young women participate in these kinds of activities than young men, so specific strategies may be needed to draw young men into similar activities. In addition, the general lack of capacity (financial sustainability and basic organizational functioning were the two most frequently noted) hinders the ability of many organizations to work effectively with and for youth.

The team found no evidence on youth-led networks in Armenia. A number of youth-oriented networks do exist, including the Armenian Federation of Youth Clubs and the Lifelong Learning League. A number of informal networks exist among international NGOs, but these are service delivery-oriented and dependent on donor funding to a large extent. Capacity of these organizations to develop into youth-led networks is fairly low.

Several KII respondents identified opportunities to engage the private sector on issues impacting youth. The two most frequently cited were education reform (particularly around curriculum changes) and internships/apprenticeships and work-based learning. However, the handful of private-sector representatives who participated in FGDs noted that many companies are struggling just to stay afloat, and they lack the resources to establish and administer internship or apprenticeship programs. More respondents were positive about inputs to the curriculum, as that required less of their organizations.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Armenian youth and other stakeholders have identified a range of unmet needs and gaps in information and services that would enable them to contribute more meaningfully to the development of their country. Respondents identified critical needs to support youth livelihoods as well as performance gaps in the education system and the labor market. While some of the momentum from the revolution has ebbed, about half of the youth respondents also demonstrated a willingness to engage in civic and political activities if they will be productive. Therefore, USAID has a window of opportunity to support youth in Armenia at both small and large scale in its upcoming CDCS.

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ANNEX 1. ARMENIA CYSA STATEMENT OF WORK

USAID/Armenia
Youth Assessment Statement of Work

PURPOSE
USAID/Armenia is interested in conducting a comprehensive cross-sectoral assessment of the assets and needs of youth. This assessment must provide a detailed understanding of the drivers that motivate youth and identify the obstacles or constraints that undermine their contributing to Armenia's political, economic, and social well-being in a meaningful way. Additionally, this assessment must identify opportunities to optimally support youth. Collectively, these findings must guide the Mission toward a more strategic engagement with Armenian youth as: a) beneficiaries and participants of sustainable Armenia-owned development solutions that can be brought to scale over time and, b) key actors empowered to identify and prioritize challenges and propose innovative solutions to the country's democratic development and economic growth. Results of this youth assessment will inform the Mission's 2019-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) design and the design of new projects.

The primary audience will be USAID/Armenia and USAID/Washington. At the same time, the assessment (or a version of it) will be accessible to all interested parties in the development community and beyond.

II.   BACKGROUND
Armenian youth are a crucial human resource and valuable asset with enormous potential to be active, positive contributors to the country's democratic development and economic growth. Youth played a central role in the April-May 2018 events that led to the peaceful transition of power, standing with the opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan, raising their voice and ensuring the critical mass for the success of peaceful transition.

Armenia is a lower middle income country with 3 million people and a population growth of 0.3% in 2016. GDP growth is at 2,7% and GDP per capita at US$3,937 was smaller than the regional average of US$4,049 in 2018. The 2017 UN Human Development Index[9] ranks Armenia 83 out of 189 countries. As of 2016, 29.4% of the population lives below the national poverty line[10]. Net migration rate for 2017 was -5.7/1000 population[11].

Nearly 30 percent of Armenia's population is between the ages of 15 and 29, which offers a compelling opportunity to engage Armenia's youth for positive and long lasting change. In 2017, the youth unemployment rate in Armenia was at 39.04 percent.[12] Further, the most current (2017) International Labor Office statistics found that 43.1 % of the Armenian population is engaged in "vulnerable" employment, employment with inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work.   Most young workers (74.1 %) are in paid employment, but almost a quarter remained in vulnerable employment as self-employed workers or unpaid family

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[9] Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update
[10] Asian Development Bank: Basic Statistics 2018
[11] CIA World Factbook
[12] Statista Country Reports, 2017

workers. At the same time, 30.6 % of youth in paid employment were engaged without a written contract. Moreover, young men were twice as likely to work as young women (employment ratios 43.7 and 22.6 percent, respectively).

The results of a 2016 youth study[13] draw an interesting picture of young people in Armenia by showing the challenges they have to deal with in terms of private, economic, and political life. For example, they have been facing economic and political insecurity caused by an insufficient educational system, high unemployment, and the impact lingering autocratic political structures. These dynamics have pushed youth toward a strong focus on family and friends and a high reluctance to get involved politically and/or socially. Nevertheless, Armenian young people tend to be optimistic about the future.

The youth survey also revealed huge disparities between youth in the capital and rural areas as well as between female and male participants. Traditional male-dominated role models and Armenian family values prevail, which young people generally accept and adopt despite being the generation of independence. Finally, the results also showed that there is a group of young people— albeit a minority group—who believe in a more democratic and liberal society and is prepared to commit to this outlook. Looking at recent developments in Armenia, this group appears to be becoming bigger and more visible. This growing segment of the youth population is poised to become Armenia's agents of change for a better, more prosperous and inclusive Armenia.

Another survey revealed[14] that employment is the most prevalent issue for Armenian youth. Among major Armenian labor market issues, the, the young people surveyed mentioned the lack of vacancies and the essential role played by non-formal connections and the low level of protection of employee rights. Thus, the perception of limited employment possibilities in the country increases the attraction for youth to emigrate.

The same survey found that the majority of young people were not willing to be involved in the activities of political parties, local self-governing bodies, civil initiative groups and various councils within higher educational institutions/schools. Their unwillingness to engage was due to the presupposition that their engagement will not change anything. The lack of trust in various political organizations was most identified as the key factor preventing youth from participating in political parties and civic events. However, youth engagement has changed in 2018 and 46 percent of youth respondents in the recent (July 2018) IRI poll indicated high interest in politics and about 70 percent believed that they could influence decision making in the country. For example, youth were at the forefront of the 2018 peaceful transition to a new government. They played the role of mobilizer and catalyzer of change. This change in Armenia's political landscape with keen youth involvement requires close examination to understand what motivated this youth awakening and how Armenia's youth momentum can be harnessed for the greater good of the country going forward.

In preparation for its next five-year strategy, USAID/Armenia requires a thorough analysis of the status and landscape of youth, including their aspirations, internal and external motivators and

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[13] Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Independence Generation, Youth Study 2016 – Armenia
[14] National Youth Aspiration report, UNDP

barriers to participation. This includes analyses of youth initiatives in Armenia, the National Youth policy, and youth development plans in the country. The youth assessment will serve as the basis for strategic planning and future programming decisions, including the extent to which such plans and programs will target or include youth under the 2019-2023 CDCS and resulting activities. Thus, understanding the context of youth in Armenia will directly benefit the development of USAID/Armenia's new CDCS that will emphasize increased youth involvement in the areas of economic status and job creation, civic and political participation, unemployment levels, and educational opportunities.

A unique window of opportunity exists to tap into the commitment and creativity of Armenia's youth, and to advance the change started with the 2018 peaceful political transition. USAID/Armenia will support and engage Armenia's newly-inspired youth in their quest for a better, more prosperous and inclusive Armenia.

III.   GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The guiding research questions that the assessment will answer are:
1. What are youth (14-30) interests and desires (life goals) disaggregated by age groups: 14-18, 19-23, and 24-30?
    d. What do youth express as their priorities and ambitions?
    e. Who are the most vulnerable youth in Armenia, and what are their unique needs? (Differentiate by gender, age, region, rural/urban, other marginalization, i.e. religious, national, sexual minorities)
    f. Which youth segments have been targeted by USAID to date, and which ones align with USAID strategic priorities going forward?
2. What challenges do youth face in reaching their potential?
    c. What are the salient challenges with youth being successful in employment, self-employment, and business opportunities?
    d. What have been motivators and impeding factors, both internal and external, for youth participation in social and political processes, including the recent peaceful transition and the resulting new political landscape?
3. What is working well to support youth in Armenia and enable them to actualize their potential civically, politically, socially, and economically? What opportunities do these bright spots (and remaining gaps) present for USAID?
    h. What promising policies, structures, programs and partnerships currently exist that could be learned from and/or scaled up?
    i. What models of USAID programming from contexts similar to Armenia might be useful to review to advance youth development in civic engagement, education, employment/economic growth?
    j. What infrastructure exists to support youth development? What works? What doesn't? Why?
    k. Which youth are not benefitting from these resources that could potentially benefit.
    l. What opportunities, if any, are provided by the new political context?
    m. What do people perceive as specific strong opportunities for promoting private sector engagement in issues impacting youth?

n. What do people perceive as specific strong opportunities for advancing self-reliance (and how do Armenian youth envision the concept of their role in building self-reliance)?

Illustrative secondary-level research questions have been identified and grouped into categories below. The team is not expected to answer each of these questions but shall use them when designing the research design process and questionnaire as prompts or probes. Where possible, recognition of diverse populations, interests, and opinions should be noted such as gender, age, rural/urban, or other sub-groups of youth.

Overall
- What are the defining structures and characteristics of youth in Armenia?
- What are the investments of the government of Armenia that benefit young people?
- How are youth currently contributing to economic growth? Civic engagement? Health programs? How would they like to engage?
- How/where are youth currently developing skills and knowledge for marketplace? Civic and political engagement? Social programs? How would they like to engage?
- What do youth express as their priorities and ambitions?
- What rules, laws and policies impede or support full engagement of youth socially, politically, civically and economically?
- What youth-led and/or youth-oriented networks exist in Armenia? Are they effective (why/why not)?
- What values are most important to youth?

Youth Demographics and Dynamics – *findings can be drawn from available literature and included in the background section of the youth assessment report.*
- What are the defining structure and characteristics of youth cohorts in Armenia? What are the prevailing differences between male and female, urban and rural, youth and age cohorts?
- What do these youth cohorts express as their goals, priorities, and ambitions? What are their greatest frustrations? How are these goals, priorities, ambitions, and frustrations expressed?
- What are the statistics on youth employment and unemployment in Armenia? What are the primary occupations of youth, and how does this vary by youth cohort and demographic?
- What percentage of youth has access to computers? Internet? Mobile phones? How do youth use the internet? How does this differ among male and female youth?

Going to Work
- What are the expectations of Armenian youth with regard to employment (including self-employment)/livelihoods by age cohort, gender, and rural/urban location? What are the key barriers to getting employed?
- What employment opportunities exist for youth in the market?
- What vocational, entrepreneurship, employability and life skills training institutions/programs exist in Armenia and are these accessible to youth? Are these institutions/programs adequate? Responsive to labor market demands? What

opportunities and challenges do youth face when accessing, staying in and completing these programs?

- What are the employers expectations from the youth they employ? How is this communicated to potential employees?
- What opportunities and challenges are faced by youth in accessing credit/land and building savings?
- To what extent are youth moving between rural and urban areas and/or migrating to other countries or regions to find employment?

Learning for Work and Life
- Do youth feel their education has prepared them for the decisions and challenges they face in their lives, or not?
- What do they identify as barriers to education? How does this differ for male and female youth?
- What opportunities and factors positively influence youth access to safe, quality education?
- How do youth and potential employers perceive the relevance of knowledge and skills provided through education opportunities? What is missing?
- How are innovation hubs and schools helping extend ICT, "soft"/"life"skills to youth?
- How are youth positively or negatively impacted by adults in their family and community including parents, teachers, policy officers, community and religious leaders?

Exercising Citizenship
- What challenges and opportunities do youth experience in their civic engagement? How do these challenges differ by age, gender, disabilities, and/or other demographic information or marginalization?

- What informal or traditional structures exist at community level that involve youth in civic engagement activities? Are the youth aware of them? Do they participate? if yes/no, why/why not?

- What opportunities are there for supporting leadership development of young people? How many people are interested? if yes/no why/why not?
- How are families engaged in supporting youth education, employment and civic engagement?
- What opportunities exist for youth to engage at the family, school, community, and national level? Do young people have genuine opportunities to participate in shared decision making with adults?

Institutional and Policy Infrastructure for Supporting Youth
- What other donors, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) have youth-centered activities in Armenia? What have been their experiences and accomplishments? What lessons learned and/or recommendations do they have for potential USG youth programming?
- What institutions, structures, programs and/or policies has the GOA set up to address youth issues? How do these institutions or ministries collaborate to address youth issues?

- What is the capacity of Armenian institutions (e.g schools, NGOs, CBOs, relevant government agencies) to support and engage youth and/or respond to their needs?
- What rules, laws and policies impede or support full engagement of youth civically and economically?

Findings must be disaggregated by sex and age (14-18, 19-23, and 24-30), to the extent possible. It is expected that the assessment team will work with USAID to further refine these research questions and identify the research areas that are most significant, salient and of strategic interest to USAID/Armenia.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although USAID defines youth as those aged 10-29, this assessment will focus on those 14-30 years of age, with interviews held with youth 18 and older. The assessment will employ research methodologies with sufficient rigor to generate actionable answers to the research questions within the resources and timeframe available for this effort. A research design based on rigorous methodologies that balances the needs of the situational analysis and available resources will be proposed. The methodology shall triangulate existing literature and data, perceptions of relevant stakeholders (parents, teachers, private sector), and perceptions of youth. Principles of participatory methods shall be utilized in the research process. Key components of the research methodology must include:

Literature Review and Secondary Data Collection: The contractor will complete a comprehensive document review from previous (approximately from the past five years), current USAID/Armenia, and other stakeholder and donor work plans, program descriptions, assessments and evaluations integrating or dedicated to youth programming in Armenia. The review will also include data sets (such as the 2016 Armenia Demographic and Health Survey), peer reviewed articles, and other literature, as appropriate, related to youth in Armenia. The team is expected to have conducted a comprehensive review of literature prior to arrival in Armenia.

Geographic Sampling: USAID is looking for a broad and diverse sampling of youth and must include both men and women in the sample. Sampling shall be done in a variety of regions and in rural and urban communities, recognizing the approach will be exploratory in nature. Most of the stakeholder interviews will be virtual with the team leader, supported by the in country field researchers. Focus groups with youth outside Yerevan will be conducted over approximately one week. Efforts should be made to also include youth with disabilities in sampling. USAID encourages the contractor to engage with USAID's implementing partners to help identify youth to participate in focus groups and interviews. The contractor will propose a sampling framework that takes these considerations into account. The sampling framework will be subject to Mission review and approval.

Youth-Centered & Participatory Methodologies: The assessment must actively engage youth as protagonists throughout the research design, data-gathering, and analysis. Engagement of youth is a key objective of the assessment, and the focus will be on qualitative data, at the primary data collection level. Participatory methodologies are mandatory, and shall aim to include diverse participant samples to create a nuanced picture of youth development from multiple perspectives.

- Peer Group Discussions: It is expected that systematic discussions with groups of youth will be the core approach for primary data collection and participatory assessment. It is important that these youth be groups of peers, or those of the same socio-economic class, age, gender and ethnicity who are comfortable speaking and interacting with one another. Enough time must be allotted for each session to give youth the space to "open up" and speak honestly in front of the facilitator. Ideally the research will employ creative approaches that use youth to help facilitate these sessions and support the analysis. This will build capacity among the youth researchers (see below) as well as deepen the analysis and assessment. If necessary, follow-up sessions with the same peer groups can be scheduled if the first meeting does not allow enough time for open dialogue with the target peer group.

- Key Informant Interviews: Primary data collection through group discussions shall be complemented and expanded using semi-structured interviews with key interviewees; primarily youth. Other interviewees will include implementing partner staff, youth-focused organizations and associations, service providers, educational and training institution officials, private sector stakeholders, government officials, and donors.

Engagement of USG and GOAM Stakeholders and Partners: Information-sharing and engagement of GOAM stakeholders, USG Agencies and USG-funded partners will be included. USAID will provide contact information for the relevant individuals within the GOAM and partner organizations, but the assessment team may also reach out to other relevant stakeholders. The assessment team can meet with these contacts one-on-one or assemble groups of stakeholders for roundtable discussions.

The assessment team shall draw upon relevant assessment tools developed for positive youth development programming, including the Youth Compass (YouthPower Action), Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment" (Workforce Connections), and Youth Mapping (EQUIP3).
All data collected during the assessment must be provided in formats in accordance with USAID's Open Data policy (see ADS 579). All project data and records must be submitted in full and must be in electronic form in an easily readable format, organized and documented for use by those not fully familiar with the project or survey. USAID/Armenia will retain ownership of the assessment and all datasets developed.

V.   TEAM COMPOSITION

USAID/Armenia will review and approve the team lead and composition of the Armenia youth assessment team prior to the commencement of the assessment. The assessment team will include professionals with expertise in youth assessments and youth programming for the various issues to be covered under this assessment.

The assessment team will be led by a senior specialist with at least 10 years of experience in youth livelihoods and/or development, field research methodologies, and cross-sectoral youth assessment. Experience in E&E region is preferred, with a preference for prior experience in Armenia. Experience leading assessment teams, conducting analyses and writing high quality

reports in English is required. The team leader will be complemented with an appropriate mix of professionals (as the budget allows) with collective expertise in relevant sectors:

- Positive youth development
- Civic engagement and political participation
- Youth livelihoods and entrepreneurship
- Workforce development
- Education
- Gender

The assessment could also include enumerators, a logistics coordinator, drivers, etc. as members of an extended team. These individuals are not subject to USAID approval.

The contractor shall identify youth to be engaged and trained to assist in data collection, facilitation of interviews, focus groups, data analysis and to make recommendations in the final report (or identify a youth-led organization). Youth facilitators will be a balanced group of Armenian males and females up to age 30 who possess social science skills to conduct the data collection and analysis activities mentioned above.

USAID will be closely involved with the assessment and considered part of the extended team. In addition to reviewing and approving assessment deliverables, USAID may also contribute personnel to guide the strategic focus of the assessment, strengthen sectoral expertise, and/or interact with relevant stakeholders within USAID, the donor community, civil society, and the Government of Armenia. The youth design team lead will be the team's primary POC within USAID/Armenia for the assessment.

VI.   DELIVERABLES

This assessment will result in a series of deliverables that will be expected as part of this assessment:

1. **Work Plan:** Due to USAID/Armenia at least four weeks prior to commencing field data collection. The Work Plan will lay out the logistics for the assessment, and a schedule of activities. It must include a draft proposed research agenda including methodologies, protocols, and tools.

2. **In-Briefing meetings**: This will include at least a virtual 30 minute meeting with the USAID/Armenia Front Office and a longer, likely one-hour, virtual with in person option meeting with key representatives from the youth design team. These meetings will take place at the start of data collection work.

3. **Armenia Youth Situational Analysis**: A main deliverable of the assessment will be a situational analysis questions that answers the main research defined in Section III above. The draft is due 4-6 weeks after the data collection is complete. USAID will have 10 business days to provide input and contractor will submit the final version addressing the comments within 14 day period. This deliverable, or a sanitized version of it, is expected to become a public document.

4. **<u>Recommendations Slide Deck</u>**: Within this slide deck, the draft of which will be delivered in 4 weeks after the data collection work is complete, the assessment team will summarize the main findings that are relevant to USAID, including any USAID-sensitive information, and will recommend concrete approaches to integrating youth into the USAID/Armenia CDCS and any current and /or subsequent activities. The priorities shall seek to ensure that they are building on best practices and lessons learned across the positive youth development field. USAID will have 10 business days to provide input and contractor will submit the final version addressing the comments within 14 day period. This document will not be public, but will be just for Mission use.

5. **<u>Out-briefing Presentation</u>:** At the conclusion of the data collection, the assessment team will hold one virtual briefing for the Mission aimed at presenting the findings based on the Armenia youth Situational Analysis and preliminary recommendations for strategic priorities. The outbrief will be considered an initial conversation to vet ideas with the Mission, across sectors in order to ensure they meet USAID needs. USAID will have 10 business days to provide input and contractor will submit the final version addressing the comments within 14 day period.

ANNEX 2. METHODOLOGY

Consistent with USAID/Armenia CSYA Statement of Work (see Annex 1), the following guiding research questions served as the framework to inform the YouthPower Learning Team's technical approach in conducting the CSYA:

1. What are youth (ages 15-29) interests and desires (life goals) disaggregated by age groups: 15-19, 20-24, and 25-29?
    a. What do youth express as their priorities and ambitions?
    b. Who are the most vulnerable youth in Armenia, and what are their unique needs? (Differentiate by sex, age, region, rural/urban, other marginalization, i.e., religious, national, sexual minorities)
    c. Which youth segments have been targeted by USAID to date, and which ones align with USAID strategic priorities going forward?

2. What challenges do youth face in reaching their potential?
    a. What are the salient challenges with youth being successful in employment, self-employment, and business opportunities?
    b. What have been motivators and impeding factors, both internal and external, for youth participation in social and political processes, including the recent peaceful transition and the resulting new political landscape?

3. What is working well to support youth in Armenia and enable them to actualize their potential civically, politically, socially, and economically? What opportunities do these bright spots (and remaining gaps) present for USAID?
    a. What promising policies, structures, programs and partnerships currently exist that could be learned from and/or scaled up?
    b. What models of USAID programming from contexts similar to Armenia might be useful to review to advance youth development in civic engagement, education, employment/economic growth?
    c. What infrastructure exists to support youth development? What works? What does not? Why?
    d. Which youth are not benefitting from these resources that could potentially benefit?
    e. What opportunities, if any, are provided by the new political context?
    f. What do people perceive as specific strong opportunities for promoting private sector engagement in issues impacting youth?
    g. What do people perceive as specific strong opportunities for advancing self-reliance (and how do Armenian youth envision the concept of their role in building self-reliance)?

SITE SELECTION

Criteria for Field Site Selection. The assessment team visited six marzes—Yerevan, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Tavush, and Vayots Dvor—in order to capture a range of youth opinions and experiences across the country. Sites were selected to gather insights from youth in areas where USAID has been active (Yerevan, Shirak) and where they have been less active

(Armavir, Gegharkunik, Tavush, Vayots Dvor). Information on selected sites is included in **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.**.

Table 7. Marz and Municipality Sampling

Marz	Municipality	Character
Armavir	Vargharshapat	Urban
Gegharkunik	Gavar	Rural
Shirak	Gyumri	Urban
Tavush	Koghb	Rural
Vayots Dvor	Vayk	Rural
Yerevan	Yerevan	Urban

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The YouthPower Learning team's data collection design used four primary methodologies: (a) literature review; (b) peer group discussions with youth; (c) focus group discussions with community leaders; and (d) key informant interviews. A description of how the team used each methodology follows.

Literature Review and Secondary Data Collection. Focusing on the last five years, the team completed a comprehensive document review on the situation of youth in Armenia and current programming for youth (see **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). The findings from these sources informed instrument development and provided excellent grounding for the team's data collection.

Peer Group Discussions with Youth, Ages 18-29. The YouthPower Learning assessment team collected primary data through peer group discussions (PGDs) with separate male and female groups of "a broad and diverse sampling of youth" ages 18-29. The YouthPower Learning assessment team used purposive sampling to identify between eight and ten same-sex and age-specific individuals for each PGD.

As illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**, the assessment team conducted 22 youth PGDs (11 female and 11 male), for a total of 170 youth directly consulted for this assessment. Of those, 9 were held in rural areas and 13 were held in urban areas. The assessment team worked with local NGOs, local youth centers, municipal agencies, and mayors' offices to recruit youth to participate in the PGDs. This sample size resulted in *saturation* in each location and across locations across sex and age categories. Two PGDs were held with individuals with disabilities (one female and one male). See Annex 4. Youth Peer Group Discussion Protocols for the youth PGD protocols.

Table 8. Number of FGDs by Site, Sex, and Age Group

Site	Female Youth 18-19	Female Youth 20-24	Female Youth 25-29	Male Youth 18-19	Male Youth 20-24	Male Youth 25-29	Community Leaders	Total by Site
Gavar*	1		1		1		1	4
Gyumri		1	1	1		1	1	5
Koghb*	1		1		1		1	4
Vargharshapat		1			1		1	3

Vayk*		1		1		1	1	4
Yerevan	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	8
Total	3	4	4	3	5	3	6	28

* Indicates a rural area.

In addition to the PGDs conducted for this assessment, USAID/Armenia's partners hosted a series of public town hall meetings for youth ages 15-17 in the same communities. The town hall meetings gathered information on the specific concerns of the 15-17 age cohort (who were not of the age of consent to directly participate in the assessment). The transcripts from those town hall meetings were made available to the assessment team.

Community Leader Focus Groups. In each site visited, the team also held one Community Leader FGD to capture the perceptions and attitudes of adults toward youth in their communities. Community Leader focus groups typically included a political leader, religious leader, youth leader, women's leader, and one to two business leaders. A total of 35 community leaders participated in this assessment. See Annex 5. Community Focus Group Interview Protocol for the community leader FGD protocols.

Key Informant Interviews. The YouthPower Learning team collected additional primary data through key informant interviews (KII) with 50 staff from key organizations that develop and implement policy, provide programming, or advocate for the rights and interests of youth, such as the Government of Armenia, USAID and other donors, international and national NGOs, and local community-based organizations (CBOs) serving youth. The team relied primarily on purposive sampling, but additional interviewees were identified during the fieldwork using snowball sampling. **Error! Reference source not found.** summarizes the number of KIIs within the various stakeholder categories identified. See Annex 6. Interview Protocols for Key Stakeholders for the KII protocols.

Table 9. Total Sampling of Other Informants (Number of KIIs)

Key Informant Category	Yerevan	Vargharshapat	Gavar	Gyumri	Koghb	Vayk
USAID	11					
Government of Armenia (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport; Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; Work Armenia; representative from each municipality)	4	1	1	1	1	1
Other Donors (UNDP (2), UNICEF, World Bank, EU)	5					
International Implementing Partners (World Vision Armenia, International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, American Bar Association/Rule of Law Initiative, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, IBM GDA Enterprise Incubator Foundation, Smithsonian Institution, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Freedom House)	9					

National NGOs (Armenian Progressive Youth, Armenian Young Women's Association, Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development, Communities Financial Officers Association, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Media Initiatives Center, Oxygen Foundation, PinkArmenia, +Transparency International Anticorruption Center, Unison/Pyunic, Urban Foundation, APY)	11					
Local CBOs (AGATE Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities (Gyumri), Cultural Center (Koghb), Geghareg NGO (Gavar), Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Center (Gyumri), Work and Motherland NGO (Vayk)	0	0	1	2	1	1
Total	40	1	2	3	2	2

Data Analysis. Once the discussion groups were completed, any audio recordings were transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Since few interviewees gave permission for interviews to be recorded, interviewers wrote up their notes as the basis for data analysis. The team used content analysis to extract information relevant to each research question.

Limitations. As the research for this study was conducted between June and July, some donor representatives and government officials who could have provided great insight were not available due to summer travel schedules. Given that, and the relative lack of availability of senior government officials, the information obtained about the status of certain reforms or policies was less detailed than anticipated.

With regard to the youth, young men were harder to engage than young women, and on average, the number of participants in men's discussion groups was smaller than in women's. Further, in two sites (Vayk and Vargharshapat), PGDs had to be rescheduled repeatedly because youth agreed to attend but did not come the first time (more so the men than the women). It was also difficult to engage young men in the 18-19 age group, as many were serving their mandatory military service and were absent from their home communities.

Finally, encouraging the participation of marginalized youth yielded uneven results. The team was successful in reaching out to youth with disabilities, but not in reaching out to LGBT youth. As the study design called for the team to use intermediary organizations, and only a limited number of organizations currently serve or advocate specifically for LGBT youth in Armenia, the team's ability to leverage networks was limited, and none of the organizations contacted were willing or able to assist with the recruitment of PGD participants. Therefore, USAID should assume that more information will likely be needed to better understand how to effectively engage this group of youth, particularly around concerns related to civic and political participation.

ANNEX 3. YOUTH PEER GROUP DISCUSSION FACILITATOR GUIDE

ETHICS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENTING

Research Ethics

Research ethics need to be observed during the assessment. We must protect assessment participants from harm and also ensure their confidentiality of information. Research ethical issues to consider:

- Obtain consent from respondents
- Maintain confidentiality of issues obtained from respondents
- Make sure respondents are not harmed in any way
- Do not manipulate answers
- Respect respondents' right, e.g., when they refuse to answer certain questions
- Adhere to standards set in the research area where the study is taking place
- Avoid using technical jargon – keep language simple
- Respect the right of the respondents to withdraw their participation from the study at any time

Consenting

The research adheres to international best practices of research ethics. The study will use verbal instead of written consent. Each participant will be read the intake form that addresses their rights and welfare as a participant in the assessment and will be given time to ask questions and then will provide verbal consent if they agree to participate in the focus group discussion.

Confidentiality

An important responsibility of a researcher is that of protecting the confidentiality of assessment information. As a researcher, the work may involve collecting confidential information. The researcher must NOT show any materials collected to anyone who is not a member of the assessment team.

As researchers, always use discretion in expressing personal opinions or taking part in disputes that occur in the discussions. This is important because an expression of disapproval can cause people to change or conceal their behavior, which means that the researcher cannot observe the behavior that he/she has been trained to record.

If people ask about the assessment, tell them that the assessment is financed by USAID and that the confidentiality of all respondents will be protected: for that reason, no names will appear in any research results.

FACILITATING PGDs

This document provides guidance on the procedures for facilitating peer discussion groups with youth ages 18-29 for the Armenia Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment.

Welcome

As participants arrive, the facilitator greets guests and makes small talk or introduces them to a fun activity. <u>Try to make youth participants feel as welcome and as comfortable as possible</u>. Youth participants are sometimes nervous, which can either be expressed with high energy, joking, and loud voices, or sometimes can look reserved and quiet, more so than adult participants. During first contact with participants, it is often best to remain positive, asking general questions and engaging them in light conversation, where possible.

If participants ask questions about the PGD before the start of the discussion, kindly and gently tell them we will be answering their questions shortly, once the focus group discussion begins. As you engage youth participants before and during the discussion, be careful not to express yourself in a way that could be considered judgmental, patronizing, insensitive, or rude.

At this time the facilitators have a chance to quickly assess the communication styles of the participants. Based upon their assessment, they can place nametags around the table. It has been suggested that dominant communication styles be placed near the facilitator and more quiet participants be seated where eye contact can be easily established. When participants happen to know each other, they can be separated.

Introduction

Once all participants are seated, the moderator welcomes the group, introduces himself/herself, introduces the other team members. The moderator explains the **purpose** of this focus group. It is helpful to explain that this assessment to help USAID learn about the lives of youth in this country. Emphasize that youths' experiences are very important for the assessment. It is an opportunity for participants to give voice to their opinions and that the assessment team is there to learn from the participants. Since much of the success of the assessment depends on the quality of information provided by them, it is important to emphasize their role in describing what they consider important about their lives. Emphasize that all points of view are important to the discussion.

The moderator then explains what the results of the focus group will be used for, and what form the data will take. The moderator then outlines the **ground rules**. Emphasize that one person speaks at a time and that the session is being recorded or notes taken to ensure that all comments are noted. Reassure participants that the **confidentiality** of all individuals must be protected and therefore no names will be used in any reports of the research results. Assure that no specific names will be used in the final report.

Intake Form

The moderator introduces the intake form, and reads the introduction to all participants. Working with individuals as needed, spend about 5 minutes collecting individual information from each participant, using the intake form. Make sure that each participant completes the form individually, in a private place out of the hearing range of others.

Facilitation of the Discussion

After intake forms are completed, the moderator starts the PGD by asking the first question—usually a warm-up question that everyone is asked to answer, one-by-one. The moderator then moves to the other questions/topics, as pre-decided in conjunction with the Team Leader.

The job of the moderator is to **remain a neutral party** while he/she elicits as much information from participants:
- **Probe** for more information from participants by asking "Tell me more about that", "What do you mean when you say ….?" or "Can you explain?" Request clarification when needed.
- **Paraphrase** to confirm understanding. Say things like, "So what I heard you say is…"
- Ask **facilitating questions** such as "Do the rest of you agree with X's statement?" "How would you extend what X has said?" "Does anyone have a different experience?"
- The moderator may suggest that all participants initially write down a few thoughts in response to a question before the group discusses it together.

- Encourage candid dialogue by **avoiding affirmative/negative verbal and nonverbal responses** (e.g., facial expressions or excessive nodding of the head that communicate agreement or disagreement). Avoid expressing your own opinion (positive or negative), so as not to inhibit others to express theirs.

During the FGD/PGD, allow respondents time to think and respond. Allow periods of silence, even if it feels uncomfortable. It is important to let respondents reflect on their answers. Do not answer for them, offer words to them, or debate them. Use neutral probes to get them to say more, for example "Tell me more about that" rather than something that they could interpret as judgmental. Sometimes simply asking, "Why?" could be perceived as judgmental. The moderator may not argue with respondents, rebuke them, or enter into any political discussions with them. Also, allow respondents to finish speaking, try not to interrupt them [unless redirecting per point four below].

The moderator should encourage **all** participants to speak. In order to avoid one member from dominating the conversation, the facilitator may use the following tactics:
- Minimize dominance from an excessive talker by focusing eye contact on other participants;
- Call on quieter persons, asking them, "What do you think?" or "What would you say in response to what he/she just said?";
- Poll the group on specific items or questions, if there isn't a balanced participation;
- Do not allow participants to ramble for a long time;
- When the discussion gets off on a track, bring the group back to the topic of the question, making a smooth transition.

During the discussion, the moderator may use a flipchart to illustrate the ideas expressed.

Listen carefully, both for what is said and what is not said. Body language may indicate something important about the respondent: he or she may not trust the moderator, may lie, or may not feel comfortable speaking about his/her experiences. The moderator can pick the cues and non-verbal signals given by the respondent during the course of the discussion.

Consider the following:
Listen for inconsistent comments, and probe for understanding.
Listen for vague or cryptic comments, and seek clarification.
Consider asking each participant a final preference question.
Offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation.

Conclusion
Tell participants that that you have no additional questions to ask. Offer them the opportunity to say anything else, or to ask any additional questions. Make sure that the recorder writes down the questions that PGD participants asked, and any additional responses they provided during this time.

Once the discussion has concluded, thank participants for their time. Remind participants how the information collected will be used. Although we cannot offer to provide copies of the results to the community, the facilitator can say that the assessment will be used to improve USAID's support to youth and their communities, and that the researcher appreciates the time and effort they have taken to participate and help the team.

Now is the time to mention that refreshments have been provided for each participant.

NOTE-TAKING

As moderators will record the discussions, they should prepare for each discussion by setting up notes with clear labels for the location, time of day, and composition (number, sex, age banding) of each PGD. Moderators should make notes to themselves about key points in the conversation, either consistently throughout the conversation or only AFTER the PGD. It is noticeable to participants if the moderator suddenly picks up a pen and begins writing during a certain point in the conversation, and it may make them uncomfortable. Therefore, the approach should be to take notes all the way through or to write up key points and interpretations only at the end.

For each of the ranking exercises, the moderator must record the counts and provide that information to the transcriber.

While an audio recorder will provide a record of what was said, notes should also include a record of non-verbal interactions and responses in the session, describing body language, reluctance or eagerness to speak, dynamics between group members that either open up or shut down conversation.

USAID / Cross Sector Youth Assessment

		Date: August 10, 2018	
		Time: 10:00 am	
Name of Facilitator: Thomas Smart			
Name of Recorder: Maria Penn			
County: Riverside	Community: Riverdale		Total # of participaint:10
FGD Sex: Male	Age Cohort Ages 18 – 24	Observers / Comments:	

Q: How do youth in your community spend their time in a typical day?

Responses:

5 youth in my community do farming, carpentry, in other for them to earn their living.

7 youths go to school, after we come home we go to the farm burn coal and sell it to support ourselves. There is no support for youths in our community.

2 Youth in this community are lack of job and parents cannot afford sending them to school.

#7 Disabled, we the disable in the community need wheelchairs to enable us move around or school. Due to lack of wheel, many disable are seated homes and parents can afford getting some their movement. They also need (financial) support for schooling. They are willing and want to school but due their living condition, they are unable to school.

Women in this community do want to go to school but non formal education.

#8 Palm cutting is what youths are surviving by in this community. Majority does not have parental support and help their parents by undertaking palm cutting to enable them help their families.

#1 ???????? [NOT CLEAR – MUMBLED]

Q: What is the goal of youths in your community?

#4 Education, to learn for the future.

#7 Education is the highest and key to life. The disabled most often drop from school due to lack of support. They are not able to hustle like others in cutting palm, burning coal and other related activities that people of the community are surviving by.

#2 Trade school is needed for generating income purposes. With the present of the trade school, most youths will not be a liability on the community because after they finish high school, there is no financial support to go to university.

[EVERYONE NODDING IN AGREEMENT]

Q: What are some of the challenges youths face with in this community?

#9 financial problems- we cannot meet up with our dreams and goals due to this problem.

Image 1. Sample notes from a youth assessment.

All audio recordings will be transferred to a transcriber. The transcribers should ensure that all notes should follow these guidelines:

- Consistent labeling at the top of each set of notes.
- Write down each question posed by the moderator, starting with "Q:" and indicating the question in **bold italics**.
- All responses start with "A:" with the responses in normal font.
- Exact quotes are important! Any exact quotes should be "written in quotation marks" in order to distinguish the exact quotes from the paraphrases. Quotes serve an important purpose for the final report.
- Any questions or observations (e.g., body language) written in [ALL CAPS IN PARENTHESES].
- For any ranking or ratings exercises, include the counts and responses provided by the moderator.
- If the audio recording is garbled, or what a participant was saying was unclear, it should be indicated it in the notes (e.g., "????????") with a blank space for that part of the conversation. Then the moderator can review that section to summarize the points that were discussed.

Notes from each PGD must be recorded in MS Word format within 2 days of receipt of the audio recording. As each one is completed, the moderator of that session will review it for accuracy and completeness, especially in the early part of the assessment process.

WEEKLY/DAILY ANALYSIS

At the end of each week of data collection (and each day when the team is outside of Yerevan), the Team Leader will guide a debrief with the assessment team about key themes and trends of the week/day. The debrief sessions will provide insights into key findings and emerging themes, while serving to identify process challenges and jointly identify solutions.
- A note-taker will be identified to take notes of this discussion (note taking for these sessions may rotate among team members).
- The Team Leader will also document the emerging themes and gaps identified by the youth researchers.

The aim of this analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear within either a single focus group or among various focus groups. It is inappropriate to report the results of focus groups by percentage (e.g., "56 percent of participants mentioned XYZ topic"). Rather, look for emerging themes by question and then for the discussion overall. The team will thus compare the words used to answer specific questions, the emphasis or intensity of the respondents' comments, and the consistency of comments and the specificity of responses in follow up probes.

RESEARCHER CONDUCT

The way a researcher presents himself/herself confers professionalism and respect. As a researcher:
- Always be polite and try to establish good relationships with all youth participants, CBO staff, local authorities and any authorities within the assigned area.
- Keep a respectful and calm demeanor at all times.
- Explain terms simply.
- Listen carefully.
- Dress appropriately (for women this means no mini-skirts, tube tops or tight revealing clothing, and for men this means no sagging or dropped jeans/trousers)
- Carry nothing except what is required for the interview: forms, supplies, and any approved materials.
- During PGDs, facilitators should use a posture that expresses interest, such as leaning forward and not crossing your arms or legs. Maintain eye contact with and body language: focus on the person speaking.

Finally, there are a few important **"don'ts"** in assessment work:
- Do not conduct focus group discussions with any youth participants under age 18. If you suspect there are minors in the group, please immediately let them know they cannot join.
- Do not use first names unless permitted.
- Do not discuss an individual's personal experiences—frame all questions in general terms, e.g., "youth in your community."
- Do not rush the participants. Never complete answers for the participants that do not reflect what they have said.
- Do not eat food or chew bubble gum during the discussion.
- Do not use your mobile phone during the discussion unless you are using it as an audio recorder. **MOBILE PHONES MUST BE <u>SWITCHED OFF</u>** (*not* put on silent/vibrate

mode).

- Do not express any personal opinions about politics, elections, or related issues with any of the participants.
- Never share previously collected data or information with PGD participants. They will not believe their responses are confidential if the researcher reveals other participant data to them.
- Never pressure a participant when they begin to look tired, bored, frustrated, or irritated. Do not force anyone to participate that does not want to participate in the focus group discussion. If anyone wishes to leave, remain courteous as you allow them to leave, and thank them for their time. Take a few moments, walk around, breathe deeply before continuing, and proceed with the other participants.

ANNEX 4. YOUTH PEER GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS

PART I. INDIVIDUAL INTAKE FORM

PGD INFORMATION			Date: ___/___/___
Name of Facilitator:			
Name of Recorder:			
Province/Marz:		**Municipality/Hamaynk:**	**PGD # in this location:** _____
PGD sex: ( ) Male ( ) Female	**Age cohort:[15]** ( ) Ages 18-19 ( ) Ages 20-24 ( ) Ages 25-29	**Observations / comments:**	

[Before the start of the peer group discussion, complete the intake form below for each youth participating in the peer group discussion. The intake form should be completed for each participant individually, in a private place out of the hearing range of others.]

Introduction to Part 1 Individual Intake Form

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is _____. I am part of the YouthPower Learning Assessment team. Together, we are conducting an assessment on youth in your country, to better understand the economic, social, and political aspirations and challenges young people like you have. You have been asked to participate in this study because your knowledge, views, and experience as youth are very valuable and important to us.

Our discussion today will take place in two parts. First, I am going to ask some questions to learn more about you. We will do this individually so that only I will hear your responses. Then, we will ask some questions about the lives of youth like you and particularly what aspirations and challenges young people like you have. We will do through a group discussion.

Whatever information you provide for us during our time together will be kept strictly confidential and will not be attributed specifically to you. We would like to record the conversation to make sure we capture the important insights shared with us. We will use only assigned numbers and will not be recording any other identifiable information at any time. In our reporting, we will not attribute anything said to you, rather will be used to inform broader insights from this and other focus groups. We ask that you not share who took part in this discussion or what others have said in this room with anyone outside of this room. However, we cannot promise others will not share what you have said during the discussion. We ask that you respond to the questions based on how you think youth in general would respond. Please do not share personal experiences when you respond to the questions. Participation in this discussion is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any individual question or all of the questions. You can also stop the discussion or leave the group or individual interviews at any time. If you do not wish to be recorded, then you are also free to leave the group at any time. However, we hope you will participate in this discussion since your views are important.

Will you join us today for this discussion? Please feel free to ask if you have any questions at any time, even before I start. *[Note any questions raised by participants and your responses in the comments section below.]*

We anticipate our time together will be up to 90 minutes long. Refreshments will be served at the end.

Comments:

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[15] Only youth age 18 and over will be eligible to participate in peer group discussions.

Individual Intake Form

Demographic Information: We would now like to spend approximately 5 minutes collecting individual information from each of you. My colleague _____ and I will fill out an individual form for each of you that gives us a bit more detail about some of your basic background. *[Complete the form individually, in a private place out of the hearing range of others.]*

Sex: ( ) Female ( ) Male ( ) Other   **Age:** _____

Province/Marz: _____   **Municipality/Hamaynk:** _____

Marital status?
( ) Married
( ) Partnered (not married, co-habitating)
( ) Unmarried / Unpartnered

If Unmarried, or un-partnered, have you been married/partnered previously? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Do you have children?
( ) Yes **If yes, how many:** *( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 or more*
( ) No

What formal educational level have you completed? (Grade) _____

Are you currently enrolled in a formal education program:
( ) Enrolled   **If enrolled, please provide grade level** _____
( ) Not enrolled

Are you currently enrolled in a *non-formal* education program:
( ) Enrolled **If enrolled, please describe program type/ name of institution:** _____
( ) Not enrolled   _____

What is your employment status:
( ) Formal employment **If formally employed, list type of employment** _____
( ) Informal employment **If *informally* employed, list type of employment** _____
( ) Not employed, Not looking for work
( ) Not employed, Looking for work
( ) Unable to work [please indicate reason why] _____

COMMENTS:

PART II. PEER GROUP DISCUSSION FORM

PGD INFORMATION		Date: ___/____/_____
Name of Facilitator:		
Name of Recorder:		
Province/Marz:	**Municipality/Hamaynk:**	**PGD # in this location: _____**
PGD sex: ( ) Male ( ) Female	**Age cohort:**[16] ( ) Ages 18-19 ( ) Ages 20-24 ( ) Ages 25-29	**Number of PGD participants:**
COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS:		

Introduction to Part II Peer Group Discussion

Hi! Welcome, and thank you so much for agreeing to participate with us in this peer group discussion! I am _____ I am here on behalf of YouthPower Learning, a global USAID-funded program based in the United States that seeks to generate information about effective youth engagement. USAID has asked us to conduct an assessment in your country to identify challenges and potential opportunities for effectively engaging youth in this country. We're excited to be here with you!

As mentioned earlier, during this Peer Group Discussion, we would like to talk with you about the lives of youth like you, with particular focus on what aspirations young people have and what challenges you face. We would like this be a *conversation* between us here in the room. As such, in this process, there are **no right or wrong answers**, only differing points of view. You don't need to agree with others, but we would request that everyone listen respectfully as others share their views. In that spirit we would ask that you speak one-at-a-time. We look forward to this being a lively and energetic conversation where everyone feels safe and comfortable speaking. Remember, participation is voluntary, and you can choose to leave the group at any time. However, we hope you will participate since your views are important. And we also think it will be fun and informative for all of you!

My role will be to facilitate the discussion. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we want to make sure we don't miss any of the important insights you will provide for us! As a reminder, everyone gave their consent to record when we met initially. If you are not comfortable, you are free to leave the group. As mentioned, we will not be attributing any information specifically to you. Instead, we will use the information you provide us to generate a report and recommendations for USAID regarding potential future strategic investments to better support youth in this country.

Remember, in keeping with our commitment to the confidentiality of all participants, we ask that you not share with people outside of this group EITHER who took part in this discussion OR what they have said during the course of our discussion

Do you have any questions for us before we start? *[Record both questions raised by participants as well as responses]*
Okay, let's get started!

Only youth ages 18-29 are eligible to participate in peer group discussions

PEER GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PGD QUESTIONS: GENERAL ASPIRATIONS, BARRIERS, OPPORTUNITIES

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most PGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period, with probing questions to follow. In most cases, the first few PGDs start out broadly, while subsequent PGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each PGD. The following protocols are intended for the former—as a starting point to gain a big-picture view of the general goals, aspirations, challenges, opportunities faced by youth, and a mapping of the assets that are available to them.

Purpose: Get a big-picture overview of major goals, aspirations, opportunities, and barriers faced by different youth segments, and general a general mapping of the assets, services, and supports available to them in their communities.
Participants: Homogenous groups of youth (e.g. same gender, age banding, and geographic area, but can also be further segmented by socio-economic, educational status, ethnicity, language, etc.)

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most contextually appropriate way to facilitate introductions]

I'd like to start by talking about the goals and dreams of people like you in your community. Thinking about the people your age that you know in *your community*, what are some of the dreams and goals they have for the future?

Probes:
- What do some of the people your age that you know seek to achieve or become in the future? (university studies, office jobs, jobs as farmers, etc.)
- What are the goals and ambitions of young people your age? These can be related to education, work, family or anything else you like.
- Do you feel like these goals are achievable? Why/why not?
- Who are the most influential role models for youth? Which traits/behaviors do young people admire, learn from them and try to adopt?

ALTERNATIVE OPENING QUESTION: **So we are not from this community and we'd like to understand what it's like to be a typical young person in your community. What do they do during the day? Describe a typical day for an average young person in your community.**

Now I'm going to lay out some note cards with some words on each of them. These are things that are important to a person's well-being. We will be asking you to reflect on which top two things are the most important priorities for youth like you in your community:

IMPROVED HEALTH	CONNECTIONS W/ FAMILY/ FREINDS	BETTER SOCIAL/ CIVIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH	IMPROVED SPIRITUAL LIFE
BETTER EDUCATION	INCREASED SAFETY/ SECURITY	BETTER LIVELIHOODS/ JOBS/ BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	

- *Improved health*
- *Stronger connections with family/ friends*
- *Increased safety/ security*
- *Better social/ civic opportunities for youth*
- *Improved spiritual life*
- *Increased education (academic or vocational)* *(FACILITATOR SHOULD PROBE)*
- *Better livelihoods/ business opportunities/ jobs*
- *Other* *(Blank card, facilitator to PROBE)*

I am now going to give you 2 buttons for you to indicate which ones are the most important. Among these things, which are the top two priorities for youth in your community. Which two things that would most improve the quality of life for youth in your community? *[FACILITATOR prepares cards by writing several themes on pieces of paper or index card, with each topic listed on a separate card (see above bullets). Facilitator then lays each piece of paper on the table or ground. Facilitator provides each member 2 buttons (or stones/ marbles/ stickies). Youth participants are asked to place their 2 buttons each on top of their top 2 priorities. Facilitator asks youth about their responses. (For groups that rank "Health" as a high priority, facilitator may decide to move to the "PGD QUESTIONS: HEALTH, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, AND FAMILY PLANNING" protocols; groups ranking "Livelihoods" as a top priority may move to the "PGD QUESTIONS: YOUTH LIVELIHODOS AND EMPLOYMENT," and so on.)]*

What opportunities exist here in *your community* that support people your age to reach their goals/ improve the quality of their lives? *[THIS QUESTION WILL ALSO ADDRESS CHALLENGES. Try to fully engage around one topic before moving on to the next]*
Probes:
- What social activities are available in your community (religious, sports, theater, dance, music, etc.)?
- Are you aware of any vocational / entrepreneurship education programs in your community? If so, which ones? Who sponsors those programs (government, CBOs, NGOS)? What are the key barriers to accessing those opportunities? If you think about what you have heard about those programs, how successful have they been in linking people to employment? Do the people you know who have participated in those activities had success finding employment?
- Are you aware of any programs that friends your age have participated in that have helped them secure employment (on/off-farm, local businesses, etc.)? Which ones? Who sponsors those programs (government, CBOs, NGOS)? What have you heard about those activities?
- What kinds of opportunities for civic and political engagement are available to youth? Do you know young people who have taken these opportunities?
- Which services and opportunities would be most useful for you? Why?

Can you think of any other challenges or barriers that keep people your age from achieving their goals?
Probes:
- Is crime a challenge in your community? What are the most common kinds of crimes here in your community? What are the key causes?
- To what extent are youth moving between rural and urban areas and/or migrating to other countries or regions to find employment? How does this affect your community?
- How do the views of parents, community leaders, employers or business people affect youth's ability to achieve

their goals?

Suppose that you were in charge and could make changes to help young people like you achieve their goals and ambitions. What would you do?
Probes:
- What do you think could be done to improve job opportunities / vocational training / agriculture and food systems programs / links to private businesses, etc.?
- What institutions have been particularly helpful for youth in advancing their interests and voices? *[Probe on schools, NGOs, CBOs, international donors, government programs; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*
- Thinking about the programs you have seen, which ones do you think should be replicated or expanded and why?

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

PGD QUESTIONS: LEARNING FOR WORK AND LIFE

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most PGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few PGDs start out broadly, while subsequent PGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each PGD. The following protocols are intended for a dedicated conversation around youth livelihoods and employment.

Purpose: understand the general perceptions of educational outcomes and impact on livelihood goals/aspirations, barriers, and opportunities.
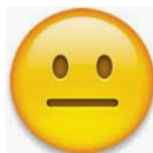
Participants: Homogenous groups of youth (e.g. same usually same gender, age banding, and geographic area, but can also be further segmented by socio-economic, educational status, ethnicity, language, etc.)

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.

[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

When you think about the quality of education that most youth in this community receive, how would you rate the quality of their educational experiences in preparing them for the future?

[The facilitator may distribute the following three "Face Cards" to each youth participants, and ask them to rate their education in terms of preparing them for their dreams. The facilitator can probe more about why youth responded as they did. Note-taker records how participants rated their education.]

Now I'd like to ask you to think about a young person in your community whose education prepared him or her well. Everyone just take a moment to think of that person. (Pause.) **Okay, thinking about that successful young person in your community, what factors helped him or her in his/her education? What factors have contributed to their success?**

(Prompts: help from mentors/ family/ friends, persistence or other soft personal skills, etc.)

Okay, we've talked what helps make youth successful in their education. I would also like to know about any barriers to the kind of education or certification youth need. What have been the barriers for youth in this community? Why? *[Probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*

Some of you spoke about the importance of having mentors or other adults who support youth. Let's unpack this a little.
- How do adults in the community support youth in getting a good education? *[Probe on parents, teachers, policy makers, community and religious leaders; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*
- How do adults in the community discourage or prevent youth from getting a good education? *[Probe on parents, teachers, policy makers, community and religious leaders; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*
- How are life skills and technology skills introduced or supported in their educational experience?

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

PGD QUESTIONS: GOING TO WORK

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most PGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few PGDs start out broadly, while subsequent PGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each PGD. The following protocols are intended for a dedicated conversation around youth livelihoods and employment.

Purpose: understand the general livelihood goals/aspirations, barriers, opportunities, and assets.
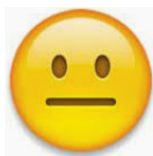*Participants: Homogenous groups of youth (e.g. same usually same gender, age banding, and geographic area, but can also be further segmented by socio-economic, educational status, ethnicity, language, etc.)*

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

I'd like to first start out this conversation by asking you about youth's dreams for the future. What are young people's goals or dreams for the future in this community?

Many of you have mentioned dreams related to earning a livelihood. *[Facilitator may repeat back some select examples given by participants.]* **Thinking about the kinds of livelihood activities that youth aspire to, which sectors or types of jobs are most interesting to youth? Which sectors or jobs are least attractive to youth? Why?**

[If facilitator has a list of pre-identified sectors, here the facilitator may distribute the following three "Face Cards" to each youth participants, and ask them to rate their level of interest in each sector. For each sector, facilitator can probe more about why youth rate certain sectors certain ways. Note-taker records how participants voted for each sector.]

Now I'd like to ask you to think about a young person in your community who has been successful at obtaining employment, starting a business, or earning income. Everyone just take a moment to think of that person. (Pause.) **Okay, thinking about that successful young person in your community, what do you think are the reasons for their success? What factors have contributed to their success?**

(Prompts: help from mentors/ family/ friends, persistence or other soft personal skills, savings, ability to complete education or training programs, participation in internship, etc.)

Okay, we've talked what helps make youth successful in their livelihoods. I would also like to know about the things that are holding youth back from earning a livelihood. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question: What have been the top barriers to success for youth who are a business person? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor or table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards; on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
What have been the top barriers that hinder youth from earning an income?

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

SKILLS/ EDUCATION	**MONEY/ ASSETS**	**FAMILY/ FRIENDS**	**GOVERNMENT/ POLICY**

HEALTH	**SECURITY**	**INFRASTRUCTUR E**	

- *Skills/ Education*
- *Money/ Assets (materials, tools)*
- *Family/ Friends*
- *Government/ Policy*
- *Health*
- *Security*
- *Infrastructure*
- *(BLANK card)*

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics.)

Some of you spoke about the importance of having access to finance. Let's unpack this a little.
- Do youth in your community save money? Tell me more about the savings habits of young people.
- Do youth have bank accounts? Why or why not?
- Do youth in your community take out loans? If not, why not? Tell me more about how youth are able to access credit. What are the barriers to accessing credit in your community?
- Do youth use mobile money? For personal transactions, and/or business transactions? How is this different for males vs. females?

Now I'd like to talk about the differences in males vs. females earning an income. When girls/women are economically engaged, are there things that are not acceptable for girls to do? When boys/men and economically engaged, are there things that are not acceptable for them to do?

[Probes:]
- Are there certain jobs where males are better skilled or prepared? Are there certain jobs for which females are better skilled or prepared? Explain.

- What kinds of work environments are best/ least suited for males? Which work environments are best/ least suited for females? (prompt: entrepreneurship/ self-employment, working as an employee in an enterprise, contract work/ wage labor, close to home/ home-based enterprises, etc.)
- Are there certain work environments where women don't feel safe? Are women at risk of physical violence or workplace harassment?
- Are women safe traveling to/from the work place?
- How do youth manage their other responsibilities, like school, cleaning house, cooking, collecting water, childcare, or managing the family garden or family crops/ livestock? Explain the differences between men and women in managing these other responsibilities with their work responsibilities.

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

PGD QUESTIONS: YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most PGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few PGDs start out broadly, while subsequent PGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each PGD. The following protocols are intended for narrower conversation with youth entrepreneurs around opportunities and barriers to youth self-employment.

Purpose: Understand the factors for success and constraints faced by different youth entrepreneur segments
Participants: Homogenous group of youth entrepreneurs (business owners), or homogenous group of self-employed operators of household enterprises/ microenterprises

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

So I understand that many youth are engaged in some kind of enterprise or business. What type of businesses do youth engage?

It sounds like some youth have been successful in earning a good living. This is not easy to do. How did they make it? How did they get to where you are today? What factors have contributed to their success?

(Prompts: help from mentors/family/friends, persistence or other soft skills, education & training programs, participation in internship, savings, etc.)

So we've talked about the factors that have made young people successful, what dreams to youth have for your future, and how do they plan to get there?

(Note: If participants are inclined to talk about barriers, try to re-direct the conversation to goals and plans, as we will be focusing on barriers in the next question.)

Okay, we've talked about our business plans/ dreams. I would also like to know about some of the struggles encountered as a business person, or the things that holding young business person back from achieving their dreams. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question: Think about one particular person. What have been the top barriers to success for this business person? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor/ table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards, and on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
What have been the top barriers to success of young business people?

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

SKILLS/ EDUCATION	MONEY/ ASSETS	FAMILY/ FRIENDS	GOVERNMENT/ POLICY

HEALTH	SECURITY	INFRASTRUCTURE	

- *Skills/ Education*
- *Money/ Assets (materials, tools)*
- *Family/ Friends*
- *Government/ Policy*
- *Health*
- *Security*
- *Infrastructure*
- *(BLANK card)*

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics.)

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

PGD QUESTIONS: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Purpose: Understand the different ways youth are engaged in society, in the community, and in civic activities.
Participants: Homogenous groups of youth, between the ages of 18-24.

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

So we are not from this community and we'd like to understand what it's like to be a typical young person in your community. What do they do during the day? Describe a typical day for an average young person in your community. How do youth spend their time during the day?

Okay, we've talked about what we do in a day. [Most of you have talked about school, and earning a livelihood.] I am also interested to know how young people spend any of their free time. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question:

When youth are not in school or not trying to earn cash, how do young people in your community spend their time? What things are here in your community for youth to do? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor/ table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards, and on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
(Facilitator repeats the question) **When youth are not in school or not trying to earn cash, how do young people in your community spend their time? What things are here in your community for youth to do outside of work and learning at school?**

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

AT HOME	**YOUTH CLUBS/ YOUTH GROUPS**	**ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES**	**CHURCH/ MOSQUE/ OTHER RELIGIOUS PLACE**	
SOCIAL MEDIA/ TEXTING	**CAFÉ, INTERNET CENTER, VIDEO CLUB**	**NOWHERE SPECIAL/ IN STREET**	**VOLUNTEERING/ COMMUNITY SERVICE/ ADVOCACY**	

- *At home*
- *Youth clubs/ youth group activities*
- *On-campus activities*

- *Church/ Mosque/ other religious place*
- *Social Media/ texting/ calling*
- *Café, computer center, video club*
- *Nowhere special/ in street*
- *Volunteering/ Community service/ Advocacy*
- *(BLANK CARD)*

Probes:

- What do youth do there?
- Who are youth with?
- How often do youth go there?
- How satisfied or happy are youth being there?
- Are there adults there to offer guidance?
- Boys vs. girls?

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics. Facilitator can probe about the frequency of these activities, quality of these activities, satisfaction with these activities, barriers, who benefits from these activities and who doesn't, etc.)

Okay, we've talked about how young people engage in the community. We'd like to discuss the participation of people your age in the community. Thinking about the people you know, in general how actively do the young people you know participate in community activities and leadership opportunities?

[Probes:]

- How actively do youth participate in decision-making bodies, such as local governance or utility management bodies, school management bodies, community development committees, or other groups that influence local decision? Why/why not?
- How common is volunteerism among youth? For what kinds of causes do youth volunteer? Why do some youth not engage in volunteer opportunities? What volunteer opportunities are of greatest interest to youth, and why?
- What challenges do youth experience in their civic engagement? What are the key barriers to youth participation?
- How do older people's attitudes about people your age affect participation?
- How do parental attitudes or expectations affect youth's ability to participate in society?
- What kinds of civic activities would you be interested in doing more? What would encourage you to become more active in your community?

One way young people engage is by exercising their leadership. When I say the word "leadership", what does that word mean to you?
(Alternatively, especially if the energy is low, Facilitator can do a "Wordstorm" exercise: Facilitator tells participants that he/she is going to call out a word. Participants are asked to yell out the first word that comes to mind when they hear it. Then, the Facilitator calls out the word "Leadership". Facilitator listens to and repeats all the words that participants yell out, then probes more for why people said what they did.)

(Probes:)

- What does it mean for a male to be a leader, and what does it mean for a female to be a leader? (Facilitator probes more questions about what's acceptable for males/females when it comes to youth engagement and leadership.)

- Do any of you know youth leaders in your community? Describe those leaders to the group.
- How do youth become leaders in their community?
- Thinking about youth leadership and empowerment, what kinds of decisions do young people make in this community? Who makes them? Is it different for boys/ girls?
- What kinds of decisions do young people make in the home? Is it different for boys/ girls?

I would like to understand the role of youth in the household. What responsibilities do youth carry in the household?
(Probes:)
- What kinds of decisions are young people able to influence in the household? (Prompt: decisions about whether to go to school or work; how/when to do household chores; what food to buy for family meals; major household purchases; health care decisions; how to earn money (what livelihoods activities to engage in); how money earned is used; etc.
- When you earn money, who makes decisions about how that money is used? Where does that money go?

What do most youth believe to be the role of men in society? What is the most important role of women in society?
(Probe:)
- In your opinion, who makes the important decisions in the household: the man/husband, the woman/wife, or do they make decisions together? What kinds of household decisions does the man make, and what kinds of household decisions does the woman make?

Do you know any young people in your community who are involved in politics? Describe how they are involved.

(FACILITATOR PROMPT: "politics" could mean: advocacy for local, regional, or national issues, involvement on local forums on public policy issues, attending political rallies or political party events and activities, involvement in electoral campaigns, and voting in elections.

Do you know of any girls or young women who are involved in politics?

I would also like to ask about youth's voter participation in the last elections. I don't want to ask anyone whether they voted or whom they voted for.   But, thinking about youth in your community who voted in the last election, what do you think were the major factors or issues that were important to youth when they made their decision about whom to vote for?
(Probes:)
- What were the major issues of concern to youth in the last elections?
- Were these local concerns, or national concerns?

An important part of youth engagement in the community is their ability to access and share information. How do young people in your community share and obtain information about what's going on in the community?
(Probes:)
- How do young people hear about events in the community, or other important information?
- How do young people communicate their concerns?
- What are—or would be—the most effective ways to spread information among youth in your community?
- To what extent does media and technology help youth access/share information? What kinds of media and technology? (prompt: Radio, TV, print media, internet websites, social media, SMS/ text features, etc.) What are the different barriers to accessing such channels of communication?
- Do males vs. females obtain or share information differently?   *(Prompt: word of mouth, posted announcements, social media, SMS, other)*

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH **for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!**

PGD QUESTIONS: HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most PGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few PGDs start out broadly, while subsequent PGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each PGD. The following protocols are intended for a narrower conversation around youth engagement.

Purpose: Understand youth's perspective on safety and security in their communities
Participants: Homogenous groups of youth, between the ages of 18-29.

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

I'd like to ask about the health and well-being of youth in your community. Tell me about the general health status of youth in your community.
Prompts:
- Communicable Diseases: malaria, TB, diarrheal diseases, cholera, STDs, respiratory infections
- Teenage pregnancy
- Malnutrition/ food security
- Physical fitness
- Physical safety, security
- Mental wellness (including trauma, depression, and anxiety)
- Substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, tobacco, other)
- Behavioral addiction (gambling, pornography, internet use, video games, sex, etc.)

Some of you have mentioned physical safety or security as a concern among youth in your community. Would most of you in this room agree or disagree that physical safety or security is a major concern in your community? Can you tell me more about that?

[Probes:]
- What does "insecurity" look like?
- How common is it for youth to experience insecurity?
- How often do youth in your community experience insecurity?

When are youth most likely to experience insecurity, or a threat to personal safety? How is this different for males vs. females?
[Prompts:
- *In the street*
- *Public markets/ public places*
- *At the workplace/ in the fields*
- *School*
- *At home/ with family members*
- *Social events*
- *Online/ internet/ mobile phone)]*

Some people say that there are sometimes good reasons for someone to exert physical violence on another person. Do you agree with this? Tell me more.
[Probes:]
- Is it sometimes okay for personal disputes to be settled through violence?
- Is it sometimes okay for adults to discipline children with physical violence?
- Is it sometimes okay for a husband/male partner to hit or beat his wife/ female partner?

Okay, I am interested to know about the "safe spaces" that exist in this community for youth. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question:

Among all the places where youth spend their time, which places do youth feel most safe and secure? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor/ table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards, and on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
(Facilitator repeats the question) **Among all the places where youth spend their time, which places do youth feel most safe and secure?**

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

AT HOME	**YOUTH CLUBS/ YOUTH GROUPS**	**AT SCHOOL/ AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**	**CHURCH/ MOSQUE/ OTHER RELIGIOUS PLACE**	**PLAYING SPORTS/ SPORTS FIELDS**
ONLINE/ SOCIAL MEDIA/ TEXTING	**CAFÉ, INTERNET CENTER, VIDEO CLUB**	**NOWHERE SPECIAL/ IN STREET**	**NGO/ VOLUNTEERING/ ADVOCACY**	

- *At home*
- *Youth clubs/ youth group activities*
- *Playing sports/ sports fields*
- *School*
- *Church/ mosque/ other religious place*
- *Social media/ online/ texting*
- *Café, computer center, video club*
- *NGO/ Volunteering/ Community service/ Advocacy*
- *(BLANK CARD)*

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics. Facilitator can probe about the frequency of these activities, quality of these activities, satisfaction with these activities, barriers, who benefits from these activities and who doesn't, etc.)

[Probes:]
- What do you do there?
- Who are you with? Who goes to these places?
- How often do you go there?
- How satisfied or happy are you being there?
- Are there adults there to offer guidance?
- Places for males vs. females?

Okay, now I'd like to talk about where youth can go when they are experiencing physical violence. If a young person has experienced or witnessed physical violence, who/ where can they turn to for help?
(Prompt: parent/ caregiver, family member, peer, teacher, NGO worker, church leader/member, health worker, counselor, mental health professional, etc.)

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? [Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? [If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? [Recorder captures questions and answers]

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

ANNEX 5. COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PART I. INDIVIDUAL INTAKE FORM

FGD INFORMATION		Date: ___/____/____
Name of Facilitator:		
Name of Recorder:		
Province/Marz:	**Community/Hamaynk:**	**FGD # in this location:** _____
FGD participant sex: (#) Male (#) Female	**Age range:**[17]	**Observations / comments:**

[Before the start of the focus group, complete the intake form below for each youth participating in the focus group. The intake form should be completed for each participant individually, in a private place out of the hearing range of others.]

Introduction to Part 1 Individual Intake Form

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. My name is _____and my colleague's name is _____. We are part of the YouthPower Learning Assessment team. Together, we are conducting n assessment on youth in Armenia, to better understand the economic, social, and political aspirations and challenges young people have. You have been asked to participate in this study because your knowledge, views, and experience as community leaders are very valuable and important to us.

Our discussion today will take place in two parts. First, I am going to ask some questions to learn more about you. We will do this individually so that only I will hear your responses. Then, we will ask some questions about the lives of youth in your community and particularly what aspirations and challenges you think young people have. We will do through a group discussion.

Whatever information you provide for us during our time together will be kept strictly confidential and will not be attributed specifically to you. We would like to record the conversation to make sure we capture the important insights shared with us. We will use only first or nick names and will not be recording any other identifiable information at any time. In our reporting, we will not attribute anything said to you, rather will be used to inform broader insights from this and other focus groups. We ask that you not share who took part in this discussion or what others have said in this room with anyone outside of this room. However, we cannot promise others will not share what you have said during the discussion. We ask that you respond to the questions based on how you think youth in general would respond. Please do not share personal experiences when you respond to the questions. Participation in this discussion is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any individual question or all of the questions. You can also stop the discussion or leave the group or individual interviews at any time. If you do not wish to be recorded, then you are also free to leave the group at any time. However, we hope you will participate in this discussion since your views are important.

Will you join us today for this discussion? Please feel free to ask if you have any questions at any time, even before I start. *[Note any questions raised by participants and your responses in the comments section below.]*

We anticipate our time together will be up to 90 minutes long. Refreshments will be served at the end.

Comments:

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[17] Only youth age 18 and over will be eligible to participate in focus groups.

Individual Intake Form

Demographic Information: We would now like to spend approximately 5 minutes collecting individual information from each of you. My colleague _____ and I will fill out an individual form for each of you that gives us a bit more detail about some of your basic background. *[Complete the form individually, in a private place out of the hearing range of others.]*

Sex: ( ) Female   ( ) Male   ( ) Other   **Age:** _____

Province/Marz: _____   **Municipality/Hamaynk:** _____

Organization:_____

What formal educational level have you completed? (Grade) _____

COMMENTS:

PART II. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FORM

FGD INFORMATION		Date: ___/____/_____
Name of Facilitator:		
Name of Recorder:		
Province/Marz:	**Municipality/Hamaynk:**	**FGD # in this location: _____**
FGD participant sex: (#) Male (#) Female		**Number of FGD participants:**
COMMENTS/ OBSERVATIONS:		

Introduction to Part II Focus Group Discussion

Hi! Welcome, and thank you so much for agreeing to participate with us in this focus group discussion! I am
_____ and this is _____, and we are here on behalf of YouthPower Learning, a global
USAID-funded program based in the United States that seeks to generate information about effective youth
engagement. USAID has asked us to conduct an assessment in Armenia to identify challenges and potential
opportunities for effectively engaging youth in this country. We're excited to be here with you!

As mentioned earlier, during this focus group discussion, we would like to talk with you about the lives of youth in your
community, with particular focus on what aspirations young people have and what challenges you face. We would like
this be a *conversation* between us here in the room. As such, in this process, there are **no right or wrong answers**, only
differing points of view. You don't need to agree with others, but we would request that everyone listen respectfully as
others share their views. In that spirit we would ask that you speak one-at-a-time. We look forward to this being a
lively and energetic conversation where everyone feels safe and comfortable speaking. Remember, participation is
voluntary, and you can choose to leave the group at any time. However, we hope you will participate since your views
are important. And we also think it will be fun and informative for all of you!

My role will be to facilitate the discussion. You will notice that my colleague, _____, will be taking notes.
People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we want to make sure we don't miss any of the important
insights you will provide for us! So you'll probably see [recorder's name] furiously writing! As mentioned, we will not
record your names. Instead, we will use the information you provide us to generate a report and recommendations for
USAID regarding potential future strategic investments to better support youth in this country.

Remember, in keeping with our commitment to the confidentiality of all participants, we ask that you not share with
people outside of this group EITHER who took part in this discussion OR what they have said during the course of our
discussion

Do you have any questions for us before we start? *[Record both questions raised by participants as well as responses]*

Okay, let's get started!

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FGD QUESTIONS: GENERAL ASPIRATIONS, BARRIERS, OPPORTUNITIES

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most FGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period, with probing questions to follow. In most cases, the first few FGDs start out broadly, while subsequent FGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each FGD. The following protocols are intended for the former—as a starting point to gain a big-picture view of the general goals, aspirations, challenges, opportunities faced by youth, and a mapping of the assets that are available to them.

Purpose: Get a big-picture overview of major goals, aspirations, opportunities, and barriers faced by different youth segments, and general a general mapping of the assets, services, and supports available to them in their communities.
Participants: Community leaders

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball or other device], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball or other device], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball or other device] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most contextually appropriate way to facilitate introductions]

I'd like to start by talking about the goals and dreams of youth in your community. Thinking about the youth (ages 15-29) whom you know in *your community*, what are some of the dreams and goals they have for the future?

Probes:
- What do some of the youth whom you know seek to achieve or become in the future? (university studies, office jobs, jobs as farmers, etc.)
- Do you feel like these goals are achievable? Why/why not?

ALTERNATIVE OPENING QUESTION: **So we are not from this community and we'd like to understand what it's like to be a typical young person in your community. What do they do during the day? Describe a typical day for an average young person in your community.**

Now I'm going to lay out some note cards with some words on each of them. These are things that are important to a person's well-being. We will be asking you to reflect on which top two things are the most important priorities for youth in your community:

IMPROVED HEALTH	CONNECTIONS W/ FAMILY/ FREINDS	BETTER POLITICAL/ CIVIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH	IMPROVED SPIRITUAL LIFE
BETTER EDUCATION	INCREASED SAFETY/ SECURITY	BETTER LIVELIHOODS/ JOBS/ BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	

- *Improved health*

- *Stronger connections with family/ friends*
- *Increased safety/ security*
- *Better political/ civic opportunities for youth*
- *Improved spiritual life*
- *Better education (academic or vocational)* *(FACILITATOR SHOULD PROBE)*
- *Better livelihoods/ business opportunities/ jobs*
- *Other* *(Blank card, facilitator to PROBE)*

I am now going to give you 2 buttons for you to indicate which ones are the most important. Among these things, which are the top two priorities for youth in your community. Which two things that would most improve the quality of life for youth in your community? *[FACILITATOR prepares cards by writing several themes on pieces of paper or index card, with each topic listed on a separate card (see above bullets). Facilitator then lays each piece of paper on the table or ground. Facilitator provides each member 2 buttons (or stones/ marbles/ stickies). Youth participants are asked to place their 2 buttons each on top of their top 2 priorities. Facilitator asks youth about their responses. (For groups that rank "Health" as a high priority, facilitator may decide to move to a subset of questions; groups ranking "Livelihoods" as a top priority may move to the "FGD QUESTIONS: YOUTH LIVELIHOODS AND EMPLOYMENT," and so on.)]*

What opportunities exist here in *your community* that support people your age to reach their goals/ improve the quality of their lives? *[THIS QUESTION WILL ALSO ADDRESS CHALLENGES. Try to fully engage around one topic before moving on to the next]*
Probes:
- What social activities are available in your community (religious, sports, theater, dance, music, etc.)?
- Are you aware of any vocational / entrepreneurship education programs in your community? If so, which ones? Who sponsors those programs (government, CBOs, NGOS)? What are the key barriers to accessing those opportunities? If you think about what you have heard about those programs, how successful have they been in linking people to employment? Do the people you know who have participated in those activities had success finding employment?
- Are you aware of any programs that youth have participated in that have helped them secure employment (on/off-farm, local businesses, etc.)? Which ones? Who sponsors those programs (government, CBOs, NGOS)? What have you heard about those activities?
- What kinds of opportunities for civic and political engagement are available to youth? Do you know young people who have taken these opportunities?
- Which services and opportunities are most useful for youth? Why?

What are the main challenges or barriers that keep people your age from achieving their goals?
Probes:
- Is crime a challenge in your community? What are the most common kinds of crimes here in your community? What are the key causes?
- To what extent are youth moving between rural and urban areas and/or migrating to other countries or regions to find employment? How does this affect your community?
- How do the views of parents, community leaders, employers or business people affect youth's ability to achieve their goals?

Suppose that you were in charge and could make changes to help young people like you achieve their goals and ambitions. What would you do?
Probes:
- What do you think could be done to improve job opportunities / vocational training / links to private businesses, etc.?
- What institutions have been particularly helpful for youth in advancing their interests and voices? *[Probe on schools, NGOs, CBOs, international donors, government programs; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*

- Thinking about the programs you have seen, which ones do you think should be replicated or expanded and why?

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

FGD QUESTIONS: LEARNING FOR WORK AND LIFE

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most FGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few FGDs start out broadly, while subsequent FGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each FGD. The following protocols are intended for a dedicated conversation around youth livelihoods and employment.

Purpose: understand the general perceptions of educational outcomes and impact on livelihood goals/aspirations, barriers, and opportunities.
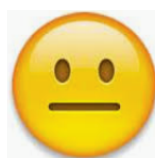*Participants: Community leaders*

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

When you think about the quality of education that most youth in this community receive, how would you rate the quality of their educational experiences in preparing them for the future?

[The facilitator may distribute the following three "Face Cards" to each youth participants, and ask them to rate their education in terms of preparing them for their dreams.   The facilitator can probe more about why youth responded as they did. Note-taker records how participants rated their education.]

Now I'd like to ask you to think about a young person in your community whose education prepared him or her well. Everyone just take a moment to think of that person. (Pause.) **Okay, thinking about that successful young person in your community, what factors helped him or her in his/her education? What factors have contributed to their success?**

(Prompts: help from mentors/ family/ friends, persistence or other soft personal skills, etc.)

Okay, we've talked what helps make youth successful in their education. I would also like to know about any barriers to the kind of education or certification youth need. What have been the barriers for youth in this community? Why? *[Probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*

Some of you spoke about the importance of having mentors or other adults who support youth. Let's unpack this a little.
- How do adults in the community support youth in getting a good education? *[Probe on parents, teachers, policy makers, community and religious leaders; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*
- How do adults in the community discourage or prevent youth from getting a good education? *[Probe on parents, teachers, policy makers, community and religious leaders; probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*
- How are life skills and technology skills introduced or supported in their educational experience?

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people like you living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

FGD QUESTIONS: GOING TO WORK

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most FGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few FGDs start out broadly, while subsequent FGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each FGD. The following protocols are intended for a dedicated conversation around youth livelihoods and employment.

Purpose: understand the general livelihood goals/aspirations, barriers, opportunities, and assets.
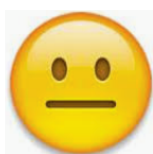*Participants: Community leaders*

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

Thinking about the kinds of livelihood activities that youth aspire to, which sectors or types of jobs are most interesting to youth? Which sectors or jobs are least attractive to youth? Why?

[If facilitator has a list of pre-identified sectors, here the facilitator may distribute the following three "Face Cards" to each youth participants, and ask them to rate their level of interest in each sector.   For each sector, facilitator can probe more about why youth rate certain sectors certain ways. Note-taker records how participants voted for each sector.]

Now I'd like to ask you to think about a young person in your community who has been successful at obtaining employment, starting a business, or earning income. Everyone just take a moment to think of that person. (Pause.) **Okay, thinking about that successful young person in your community, what do you think are the reasons for their success? What factors have contributed to their success?**

(Prompts: help from mentors/ family/ friends, persistence or other soft personal skills, savings, ability to complete education or training programs, participation in internship, etc.)

Okay, we've talked what helps make youth successful in their livelihoods. I would also like to know about the things that are holding youth back from earning a livelihood. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question: What have been the top barriers to success for you as a business person? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor or table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards; on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
What have been the top barriers that hinder youth from earning an income?

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

SKILLS/ EDUCATION	MONEY/ ASSETS	FAMILY/ FRIENDS	GOVERNMENT/ POLICY

HEALTH	SECURITY	INFRASTRUCTURE	

- *Skills/ Education*
- *Money/ Assets (materials, tools)*
- *Family/ Friends*
- *Government/ Policy*
- *Health*
- *Security*
- *Infrastructure*
- *(BLANK card)*

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics.)

Some of you spoke about the importance of having access to finance. Let's unpack this a little.
- Do youth in your community save money? Tell me more about the savings habits of young people you know.
- Do youth have bank accounts? Why or why not?
- Do youth in your community take out loans? If not, why not? Tell me more about how youth are able to access credit. What are the barriers to accessing credit in your community?
- Do youth use mobile money? For personal transactions, and/or business transactions? How is this different for males vs. females?

Now I'd like to talk about the differences in males vs. females earning an income. When girls/women are economically engaged, are there things that are not acceptable for girls to do? When boys/men and economically engaged, are there things that are not acceptable for them to do?

[Probes:]
- Are there certain jobs where males are better skilled or prepared? Are there certain jobs for which females are better skilled or prepared? Explain.
- What kinds of work environments are best/ least suited for males? Which work environments are best/ least suited for females? (prompt: entrepreneurship/ self-employment, working as an employee in an enterprise, contract work/ wage labor, close to home/ home-based enterprises, etc.)
- Are there certain work environments where women don't feel safe? Are women at risk of physical violence or workplace harassment?
- Are women safe traveling to/from the work place?
- How do youth manage their other responsibilities, like school, cleaning house, cooking, collecting water, childcare, or managing the family garden or family crops/ livestock? Explain the differences between men and women in managing these other responsibilities with their work responsibilities.

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people like you living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

FGD QUESTIONS: YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most FGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few FGDs start out broadly, while subsequent FGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each FGD. The following protocols are intended for a narrower conversation with youth entrepreneurs around opportunities and barriers to youth self-employment.

Purpose: Understand the factors for success and constraints faced by different youth entrepreneur segments
Participants: Community leaders

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

In what sectors can youth prosper as entrepreneurs in this community?

What factors have contributed to the success of those youth who have "made it"?

(Prompts: help from mentors/family/friends, persistence or other soft skills, education & training programs, participation in internship, savings, etc.)

Okay, we've talked about success factors. I would also like to know about some of the struggles youth encounter as entrepreneurs, or the things that hold them back from achieving their dreams. What have been the barriers for youth in this community? Why? *[Probe on differences between males' and females' experiences.]*

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people like you living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

FGD QUESTIONS: EXERCISING CITIZENSHIP

Note: Due to limits of time and attention spans, most FGDs are able to cover only a few questions at a time—usually no more than five questions within a 90-minute period. In most cases, the first few FGDs start out broadly, while subsequent FGDs tend to narrow the conversation, focusing on a specific topic for each FGD. The following protocols are intended for a narrower conversation around youth engagement.

Purpose: Understand the different ways youth are engaged in society, in the community, and in civic activities.
Participants: Community leaders

Because this conversation is confidential, we are not going to be using any names today. Instead, you will be given a number. Here is a [koosh ball], and we will pass this ball around in a circle and count upward: as you get the [koosh ball], you will call out the next number from the person before you. That will be your number for this conversation. Only the person with the [koosh ball] is allowed to speak. Each time you wish to speak, ask your friend to toss you the ball, and when you get the ball, you call out your number.
[Work with youth facilitators to determine the most appropriate way to address introductions]

So we are not from this community and we'd like to understand what it's like to be a typical young person in your community. What do they do during the day? Describe a typical day for an average young person in your community. How do youth spend their time during the day?

Okay, we've talked about what they do in a day. Most of you have talked about [insert main topics identified]. I am also interested to know how young people spend any of their free time. We are going to do a little exercise, or game. I would like to first ask you a question, and would like for you to reflect on this question. I don't want you to answer right away, but to think about this question:

When youth are not in school or not trying to earn cash, how do young people in your community spend their time? What things are here in your community for youth to do? *(Pause).* **Okay, now we're going to do this game.**

(Facilitator lays out index cards on the floor/ table. Each index card is labeled with a word or term. Facilitator hands out 2 buttons to each participant.)

I have laid out these index cards, and on them are certain words or phrases. I have also given you two buttons, and I would like you to answer the question by ranking your top two choices:
(Facilitator repeats the question) **When youth are not in school or not trying to earn money, how do young people in your community spend their time? What things are here in your community for youth to do outside of work and learning at school?**

Ranking Index Cards will have the following terms – one term per card:

AT HOME	**YOUTH CLUBS/ YOUTH GROUPS**	**ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES**	**CHURCH/ MOSQUE/ OTHER RELIGIOUS PLACE**	
SOCIAL MEDIA/ TEXTING	**CAFÉ, INTERNET CENTER, VIDEO CLUB**	**NOWHERE SPECIAL/ IN STREET**	**VOLUNTEERING/ COMMUNITY SERVICE/ ADVOCACY**	

- *At home*
- *Youth clubs/ youth group activities*

- *On-campus activities*
- *Church/ Mosque/ other religious place*
- *Social Media/ texting/ calling*
- *Café, computer center, video club*
- *Nowhere special/ in street*
- *Volunteering/ Community service/ Advocacy*
- *(BLANK CARD)*

Probes:

- What do they do there?
- Who are they with?
- How often do they go there?
- How satisfied or happy are they being there?
- Are there adults there to offer guidance?
- Boys vs. girls?

(Facilitator explains what each card means. For the blank card, participants are allowed to put a button there, in case their response is not indicated in the other cards. After everyone has placed their buttons on the index card, Facilitator then counts out loud the number of buttons on each card. Facilitator identifies the top-ranking card (the one with them most buttons) and asks respondents to talk about that topic, why they chose it, describe what they were thinking about. After talking about the top-ranking items, facilitator can choose to probe on any of the other topics, as desired. Facilitator can also ask participants if anyone has a burning urge to talk about one of these topics. Facilitator can probe about the frequency of these activities, quality of these activities, satisfaction with these activities, barriers, who benefits from these activities and who doesn't, etc.)

Okay, we've talked about how young people engage in the community. We'd like to discuss the participation of people your age in the community. Thinking about the people you know, in general how actively do the young people you know participate in community activities and leadership opportunities?

[Probes:]

- How actively do youth participate in decision-making bodies, such as local governance or utility management bodies, school management bodies, community development committees, or other groups that influence local decision? Why/why not?
- How common is volunteerism among youth? For what kinds of causes do youth volunteer? Why do some youth not engage in volunteer opportunities? What volunteer opportunities are of greatest interest to youth, and why?
- What challenges do youth experience in their civic engagement? What are the key barriers to youth participation?
- How do older people's attitudes about people your age affect participation?
- How do parental attitudes or expectations affect youth's ability to participate in society?
- What kinds of civic activities would you be interested in doing more? What would encourage you to become more active in your community?

One way young people engage is by exercising their leadership. When I say the word "leadership", what does that word mean to you?
(Alternatively, especially if the energy is low, Facilitator can do a "Wordstorm" exercise: Facilitator tells participants that he/she is going to call out a word. Participants are asked to yell out the first word that comes to mind when they hear it. Then, the Facilitator calls out the word "Leadership". Facilitator listens to and repeats all the words that participants yell out, then probes more for why people said what they did.)

(Probes:)

- What does it mean for a male to be a leader, and what does it mean for a female to be a leader? (Facilitator probes more questions about what's acceptable for males/females when it comes to youth engagement and leadership.)
- Do any of you know youth leaders in your community? Describe those leaders to the group.
- How do youth become leaders in their community?
- Thinking about youth leadership and empowerment, what kinds of decisions do young people make in this community? Who makes them? Is it different for boys/ girls?
- What kinds of decisions do young people make in the home? Is it different for boys/ girls?

I would like to understand the role of youth in the household. What responsibilities do youth carry in the household?
(Probes:)
- What kinds of decisions are young people able to influence in the household? (Prompt: decisions about whether to go to school or work; how/when to do household chores; what food to buy for family meals; major household purchases; health care decisions; how to earn money (what livelihoods activities to engage in); how money earned is used; etc.
- When you earn money, who makes decisions about how that money is used? Where does that money go?

What do most youth believe to be the role of men in society? What is the most important role of women in society?
(Probe:)
- In your opinion, who makes the important decisions in the household: the man/husband, the woman/wife, or do they make decisions together? What kinds of household decisions does the man make, and what kinds of household decisions does the woman make?

Do you know any young people in your community who are involved in politics? Describe how they are involved.

(FACILITATOR PROMPT: "politics" could mean: advocacy for local, regional, or national issues, involvement on local forums on public policy issues, attending political rallies or political party events and activities, involvement in electoral campaigns, and voting in elections.

Do you know of any girls or young women who are involved in politics?

I would also like to ask about youths' participation in voting in the last elections. I don't want to ask anyone whether they voted or whom they voted for. But, thinking about youth in your community who voted in the last election, what do you think were the major factors or issues that were important to youth when they made their decision about whom to vote for?
(Probes:)
- What were the major issues of concern to youth in the last elections?
- Were these local concerns, or national concerns?

An important part of youth engagement in the community is their ability to access and share information. How do young people in your community share and obtain information about what's going on in the community?
(Probes:)
- How do young people hear about events in the community, or other important information?
- How do young people communicate their concerns?
- What are—or would be—the most effective ways to spread information among youth in your community?
- To what extent does media and technology help youth access/share information? What kinds of media and technology? (prompt: Radio, TV, print media, internet websites, social media, SMS/ text features, etc.) What are the different barriers to accessing such channels of communication?

- Do males vs. females obtain or share information differently? *(Prompt: word of mouth, posted announcements, social media, SMS, other)*

Wrap-up: As I mentioned earlier in our discussion, in our assessment we are trying to understand the situation of young people like you living in this country today. Of all the things we discussed today, what do you think is the most important thing for us to understand? *[Recorder to highlight the key issues raised]*

Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about what it's like to be a young person living in this country today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information as youth share their thoughts with the group.]*

As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team? *[Recorder captures questions and answers]*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your thoughts and insights today. We really appreciate your time and energy!

ANNEX 6. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

KII INFORMATION		Date: ___/____/_____
Name of Facilitator:		
Name of Recorder (if applicable):		
Province/Marz:	Municipality/Hamaynk:	
Name of Respondent:	Institution	

INTRODUCTION

Hello! Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with us. I am *[NAME]* and here on behalf of Making Cents International, the implementer of USAID's global YouthPower Learning project, a global activity based in Washington DC that seeks to achieve sustainable outcomes in health, education, and political and economic empowerment for youth. The project seeks to empower youth to contribute to, and benefit from, the creation of more peaceful and prosperous communities. USAID has asked us to conduct an assessment in this country to better understand the status and aspirations of youth ages 15-29 in their journey from adolescence to adulthood. During our time together, I'm going to ask you a series of questions related to: youth goals and aspirations, opportunities for youth engagement, the priorities, policies and programs of your office/organization, as well your recommendations about how to improve youth engagement programming. My role will be to lead the interview. We will use the information you provide us to generate a report and recommendations for USAID regarding potential future strategic investments to better support youth in this country. Do you have any questions for us before we start? *[Record both questions raised by participants as well as responses]* Do you consent to participate in this assessment? I would like to record our conversation so I can be sure I capture all the insights you share with me. Would this be ok? If so, then let's get started.

[Note: Interviewer should always carry a blank USB thumb drive, in case key informants would like to share relevant electronic reports, documents, or other secondary data.]

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

When you think about "youth," how would you describe a young person in this country? Broadly speaking, what are the different youth cohorts/ youth segments in this country, and how would they be characterized?
- What are the defining structure and characteristics of youth cohorts in this country? What are the prevailing differences between male and female, urban and rural, and different age bandings of youth?
- What features or characteristics constitute youth "vulnerability" in this country? How would you define "vulnerability" among youth in this country?

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1. What are the key challenges for youth development in this country? What are the key challenges that youth in this country face?

Probes:
- *How do youth think their education has prepared them for the decisions and challenges they face in their lives, or not?*
- *What do they identify as barriers to completing education? (by gender)*
- *What opportunities and resilience factors positively influence youth access to safe, quality education?*
- *What opportunities and resilience factors positively influence young people's ability to persist in and complete a minimum basic education?*
- *How, and has, education prepared youth to earn income and meet life priorities?*
- *What are the main causes of drop-out? Grade repetition? (by gender)*
- *What can schools do to better prepare youth for work opportunities?*
- *After completing secondary school, would youth rather go to university or a tertiary technical school (TVET)? Why?*
- *What are the aspirations of youth with regard to employment/self-employment/livelihoods disaggregated by age cohort, gender, and rural/urban location? What are the key opportunities and barriers to getting employed?*
- *What current skill sets do youth believe can help them earn income?*
- *What's hindering them from accessing skill development programs in their communities?*
- *What can be done to make employment in the agriculture (economic growth) sector a viable or desirable livelihood option for youth?*
- *What vocational, entrepreneurship, employability and life skills training institutions/programs exist in this country, and are these accessible to most youth? Are these institutions/programs adequate as viewed by the youth and are they responsive to labor market demands?*
- *What challenges do youth face when accessing, staying and completing vocational and entrepreneurship programs?*
- *What opportunities and barriers are faced by youth in accessing credit and building savings?*
- *To what extent are youth moving between rural and urban areas and/or migrating to other countries or regions to find employment?*
- *How do youth use the internet? How does this differ among male and female youth? How do innovation hubs and schools help extend ICT skills to youth?*

2. Can you tell us a little bit about [ORGANIZATION NAME'S] priorities/strategies/programs as they relate to youth aged 15-29 in this country?

Probes:
- *Describe the programming conducted by your office targeting young people, ages 15-29? names of programs offered; locations where they're implemented [In the case of USAID and other donors, ask the names of implementing partners; Obtain youth program descriptions, program summaries, reports, evaluations, website links, etc. Be sure to drive how the point about why the age groups]*
- *Probe to see if the office's programming for youth covers any of the following themes: civic engagement, community service, entrepreneurship, financial services, life and employability skills, vocational/technical skills, youth leadership*
- *What are the characteristics of the young people, ages 15-29, who are targeted by your office's programming?*

3. How you rate young people's civic engagement opportunities?

Probes:
- *How do youth engage civically and politically in this country?*
- *What barriers do youth experience in their civic engagement? How do these challenges differ by age, gender, disabilities, and/or other demographic information or marginalization?*
- *What informal or traditional structures exist at community level that involve youth in civic engagement activities?*
- *What opportunities are there for supporting leadership development of young people?*
- *What youth-led and/or youth-oriented networks exist in this country? What has allowed some networks to be effective and others not? What relationships and networks are or can advance youth engagement and participation?*
- *Where does the youth led networks and initiatives get their support? Who give them and what type of support?*
- *Where do youth get their news from? What social media outlets do they use for civic/political engagement?*

4. What currently works well to support youth in this country?

Probes:
- *What policies, programs and partnerships have you observed in your own work that you would consider effective? Why did you choose those programs? Please provide examples?*
- *What activities have you seen that you think offer strong opportunities for learning? [request copies of reports, evaluations, or other evidence]*
- *What are the youth-centered activities of other donors, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) in this country? What have they done well? What do you think they could change?*
- *Which programs/strategies/approaches do you think should be scaled up or replicated? In particular, what has worked with regard to engaging the private sector? Supporting youth to develop self-reliance?*

5. Where are their opportunities for aligning private sector interests with the interests and capacities of youth?

Probes:
- *What are the growing sectors in this country that offer opportunities for youth employment and self-employment?*
- *What market gaps could potentially be filled by youth operating in the informal sector?*
- *What skills are in most demand by these sectors, and by employers/lead firms more broadly, especially for entry-level youth?*
- *What partners and/or programs could USAID work with in the area of youth employment/ entrepreneurship?*
- *Are there examples of private sector actors—including local SMEs—that have partnered with development programs to support positive youth development?*
- *What opportunities are there for youth to access apprenticeships/ internships?*
- *What opportunities are there for youth to access finance (savings and/or credit) for youth entrepreneurship? What are the barriers youth face in accessing finance?*
- *How do youth and potential employers perceive the relevance of knowledge and skills provided through education opportunities?*
- *What are the barriers or challenges that employers have encountered in hiring youth?*
- *What is the rural youth perspective as it relates to agriculture as a pathway for income generation?*

6. What recommendations would you provide for decision-makers (GOAM, donors, your own organization) to increase youth engagement in productive, remunerative, and leadership activities? Please provide a rationale for each recommendation you may make.

Probes:
- *What specific priority areas and programs should be the strategic focus of future support for youth in this country?*
- *How can institutions across sectors be engaged to support increased impact?*
- *What areas for partnership offer the most potential benefit for engaging youth, (e.g., partnerships with other USG agencies, the private sector, NGOs, universities, faith-based organizations)?*
- *Are there currently mechanisms to support coordination between agencies? Which ones? Do they work effectively? What could be changed to make them better?*

7. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me before we end this interview? Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking time to talk with me today and sharing your insights!

Note: Interviewer can take any remaining time at the end of the interview to copy relevant reports onto the USB thumb drive.

ANNEX 7. TOWN HALL OBSERVATION FORM

TOWN HALL INFORMATION		Date: ___/____/_____
Name of Observer:		
Province/Marz:	**Municipality/Hamaynk:**	**TH # in this location:** _____
Venue:	**Approx. # Participants:** _____	**Time Scheduled:** _____ - _____
TIME & SETTING NOTES	**OBSERVED RESPONSES & BEHAVIOR OF RESPONDENTS**	**OBSERVER'S INTERPRETATION & COMMENTS**
Question 1		
Question 2		
Question 3		
Question 4		
Closing		
Overall Reflections		