



**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S FUND
IN ARMENIA**

CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	3
SPHERES OF OPERATION FOR WOMENS' ORGANISATIONS AND INITIATIVES IN ARMENIA	4
PECULIARITIES OF FORMATION OF FEMINIST INITIATIVES IN ARMENIA	7
OBSTACLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS	9
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	13
DONOR RELATIONS	15
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S FUNDS	19

PREFACE

Currently, in various countries foundations are being established that choose as subject of their support target group of women as individuals, researchers, activists, as well as civil society organizations that are founded and managed by women and whose mandate is to protect women's rights and promote women's agenda in various spheres of life.

The support of similar foundations is not limited to financing various projects. The women's foundations stand out in their investment effort to drive the development of capacities, knowledge and skills, they not only provide money and demand reports in exchange to it, instead they walk the way along with providing grants by constantly providing consulting and support throughout implementation, ensuring the improvement of recipients' personal and working capacities. This study aims at not only highlighting the importance of women's foundations, but also highlighting those areas in which they provide support to target groups.

Although spheres of operation are generally different, the main objective of women's foundations is to create a more enabling environment for the realization of the rights of women and girls in general.

SPHERES OF OPERATION FOR WOMENS' ORGANISATIONS AND INITIATIVES IN ARMENIA

The spheres of operation of organizations that deal with women's' issues are different and include several areas. Along with that, active individuals, researchers and initiatives operate in various areas, which include a wide range of feminist and non-feminist issues. It is noteworthy that even in a reality of frequently diverging principles and approaches among organizations that deal with women's issues, there still is a general will for cooperation. It is not only backed by the fact of cross support within various projects, but also the formation of coalitions with the most notable being the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women (1). Of particular interest is another circumstance, i. e. a part of women's organizations and initiatives/groups in Armenia also working (mostly in peacebuilding areas) in Nagorno Karabakh (2).

The study has analyzed the operations and actions of gender and women's issues based civil society organizations, initiatives, groups and active individuals, researchers that provide services (prevention and management), the achievements registered in their professional and personal lives, challenges that they have confronted from the perspective of reaching gender equality, as well as knowledge and skills, that the respondents have highlighted as necessary ones to be either gained or to be improved.

Part of **non-formal organizations**, as noted by themselves, would like to be registered and benefit either from some form of financing or receive larger funds. However, in this subgroup there are initiatives that think the official registration and formalization of the status would lead to diminishing the value of their work, as after all it implies the existence of economic interest in all of this, which by definition is against the ethos of an initiative, values and principles of individuals that have come to create it, as well as it intensifies the pressures exerted by the capitalist and patriarchal system of values.

The second subgroup of initiatives, that has been identified during the study, is registered and quite often has a status of a civil society organization (CSO), meanwhile preferring to call themselves as an initiative (3). These organizations/initiatives unlike the first subgroup, find that they have broader opportunities in terms of access to financial resources, since the fact of them being registered, allows them to have simplified access to funds. In general, initiatives feel more free in terms of choosing various forms of action, as unlike organizations they are not pressured to have office operations employing a rather formal work schedule.

In essence, initiatives are also differentiated based on their ideologies, since there are some that exclusively cater to women, others try to engage men in the process of solving women's issues and call themselves as advocates for gender equality.

From the perspective of the area's development, the study revealed an interesting and important circumstance, i. e. gender equality is not an objective for some of the initiatives, so it is not proclaimed as something to be reached. According to them gender equality is not something to be pursued: *“We have several things that I have to state one by one, we have a rather diverging*

¹ Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women, <http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/home/>

² Examples include Women's Resource Center, Democracy Today CSOs

³ For example, the international movement of Women in Black

*political course, for example, when judging my position, I would not mention gender equality. It more implies being **against patriarchal norms, not for gender equality.***” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

Some of the representatives of those initiatives question the discourse of gender equality and often try to be distanced from the struggle for that equality.

“...I am in a stage now, that I think gender equality is not at all the thing I want and identify as a discourse, as according to me it is a very dangerous one and frequently serves the interests of that same patriarchal system, war discourse (it serves the war) and is hijacked for number of reasons, coopting the gender equality per se, that is why I sense that I do not want to be associated with that struggle any more, quite the contrary, I want those that think that it is an end in itself, to ask themselves, is that at all important or not?” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

Interestingly, unlike initiatives, in case of organizations only one representative had shared a similar point of view, which could safely lead to a generalization that most of organizations in Armenia working for women's issues still operate within the paradigm of **gender mainstreaming**, accept gender equality as an end and assign importance to gender component as a necessity in various spheres of operation and life. The researchers as well are mostly proponents of gender equality and declare the objective of their work the end of reaching gender equality in Armenia.

Coming to the organizations, one needs to **classify them** as identified during the study. First, organizations dealing with women's and gender issues can be classified based on the duration of their operations, i. e. there are some that have a record of 1 to 2 years, up to 5 years, more than 5 years and up to 20 years in raising issues related to women and finding solutions, as well as in studying gender issues.

Besides, the organizations vary in the type of work they do, such as the groups **that they target and directions of the work that is being done**. Generally, the considered organizations work for all women (regardless of age, capacity, opportunities, etc.). However, when looking at projects that are being implemented, one clearly sees a difference. For instance, the **following directions of work that is being done by organizations can be identified**:

- Violence, i. e. domestic violence, gender based violence and sexual violence,
- Gender equality and gender justice,
- Peacebuilding processes,
- Engagement with young women and/or men,
- Development of adolescents and working with them,
- Sexual and reproductive health,
- Empowerment of LBT and queer women and protection of human rights,
- Issues related to women with disabilities,
- Education and particularly gender education,
- Human rights, particularly women's rights,
- Development of policies geared at enlarging opportunities for women and reaching gender equality,
- Research related to women's and gender issues.

Coming back to initiatives, it must be stated that in Armenia, those as well have divergent directions, from art to peacebuilding, from struggle against hate speech to feminist groups preaching different ideologies. The initiatives target women, young girls and all those that are in any way related to women's and gender issues or are concerned about them (including men), they also target politicians that are engaged in decision making, feminist women and feminists in general, women artists, queer, lesbian and bisexual women, women that have lost children because of armed conflict, etc. It is also noteworthy that in case of initiatives, especially in cases that target everyone without any exception and set an objective to impact political decision making processes, those initiatives find it groundless to officially register the members and participants. *“Very different...We have mainly tried to circumvent those application forms. Let me speak on my behalf, I am afraid to turn my actions into an application form, when you are forced to identify a target group and so on...Whatever I do is open to anyone who gets interested, if so, that person will come on board. I have no intent to divide based on any kind of gender, age, social status or other professional profiling, but in the meantime, it is directed at a specific political community, to carve a space outside pubs or other consumeristic places, where they can come together. For example, you know that the event is not aimed at a certain political awareness raising, it is a situation, where you spend time and which is interesting to you and which in its potential can turn into a political action and so on. This is what has an importance for me.”* (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

PECULIARITIES OF FORMATION OF FEMINIST INITIATIVES IN ARMENIA

The frames of operations described by the initiatives themselves vary greatly, i. e. impacting policy making, direct service delivery, organization of meetings, discussions and trainings, provision of shelters if needed (via cooperation with organizations and/or relying on own resources), etc.

The **impetus to form an initiative** has been driven by several factors. For instance, there are initiatives that have been formed driven by donor financing. There are others that are representatives of international initiatives or movements in Armenia. Certain groups have been created based on their own initiative and for extended periods have been operational on voluntary basis, later they have been able to attract symbolic resources. Among recently established initiatives, there are some, whose current members have a previous experience of working within CSOs and based on the revisiting of certain values and principles they have chosen to operate within initiatives. Members from both organizations and initiatives in their statements confirm that those entities have been established from the identified need to improve the conditions of women.

Initiatives in Armenia consider their work grounded on feminist premises based on a few circumstances. First and foremost, all those groups operate based on feminist principles and are aimed at the improvement of women's conditions, advocating for their rights, anti-militarism, enhancement of women's visibility and representation, etc. Second, those are feminist by definition, as they promote the feminist agenda. In this case, the perceptions around feminism and its emanations are multivariate and can have different character, i. e. liberal, radical, anarchist, queer, etc.

It is noteworthy that those initiatives that do not consider themselves grounded on feminist premises have justifications for that. First, representatives of those initiatives state that from the very beginning they had not pursued a feminist objective and were not based on feminist agenda, instead their work is of more of a general format, such as working with youth, women and adolescents from various social groups, as well as among groups that have no feminist values. In those cases, the initiatives have both feminist and non-feminist members. Besides, within those initiatives led by women, there are some that deliberately and firmly deny the feminist agenda, have conflicting understanding about it and most of the times their views are detached from the reality. In these cases, ideas about feminism are encapsulated in an image of women that advocate for nontraditional sexual orientation, marching down either fully or partially undressed, demanding sexual freedoms. It is important to specifically mention that several of those initiatives have confessed changing their perception about feminism, as previously they did not have any information.

“This is how it all started in the marzes with a project dedicated to women's issues, S.A. was the organizer, it was a really good one and I learned a lot in reality. I learned about feminism, and particularly about feminists, as it was previously very stereotypical in approach and perception.” (representative of an initiative, Lori marz)

Essentially, the same can be stated about organizations. Many of the organizations' representatives were mentioning that their activities are of feminist nature, as they are grounded on feminist values, however, when working with the beneficiaries they try to cater to linguistic

peculiarities of the latter to support, not to frighten (since feminism and feminist approaches are generally perceived in a negative light). *“Quite frankly, the team is new and it is not yet clear who has what kind of views, but for me equality is tantamount and women come first. I have my understanding of the word feminist, which surely is different from the understanding of that of the others. I am not for those radical things, like getting done and over with men, I don’t have those radical things. I don’t get it, women’s right, men’s right, there is one right and it is a human one. I consider myself a feminist, but not in those directions, I am my own direction.”* (representative of an organization, Lori marz)

More in Yerevan than regions, the representatives have stated that the organization’s work could be considered of feminist nature. In regions, certain women’s organizations are still in denial of feminist outlook.

“Maybe they [donor organizations], if they were of different type, that same feminism could have arrived sooner, and would have provoked decay, but their [of donor organizations] intellect, human kind and reflectiveness, in a word contributed, and now whatever we reach.” (representative of an organization, Armavir marz)

Interestingly, some of the researchers also exhibit signs of detachment from feminism, which as they explain is linked to the modern revelations of it that have made them to adopt a certain position.

“No, but before I would have said yes, as feminism means equality of women and men and so on. I am for it and in that sense, I support feminism. Unfortunately, to me that radical and extreme feminism is now on the rise and I can maybe see that it is a natural thing, since if the rights of women and gender issues progressed smoothly, people would have engaged in it in a calm manner, but when you put pressure, it is clear that a counter strike will follow and that radical feminism is some kind of a way, it uplifts the spirits of some, but I don’t like it. Why do I say that? It is not something theoretical. I have communicated with them both in the US and Europe, the ones that do not even want to establish any contacts with you. I think that it is wrong, as when you look at me as if I am an enemy, even then you need to listen to me, especially when I am not an enemy and I am not against you.” (researcher, Yerevan)

OBSTACLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

When speaking about achievements, members from both organizations and initiatives not only mention work related ones, but they also stress the others of more personal nature. For instance, achievements vary when looked at gender equality perspective. Part of the respondents states that due to their work changes, such as passing of the law on equality between men and women has occurred, as well as their active participation has taken place in the process of debating the draft laws on domestic violence and anti-discrimination along with advocacy efforts aimed at the adoption of those laws. More specifically, as an achievement it was mentioned that due to the works of those organizations in relation to domestic violence more women now come out, as well as the issue has started to be discussed in the society.

Coming to personal level, achievements that prevail are as follows:

- **Expressing non-sexist points of view** and contributing to their formulation -frequently even in organizations and initiatives that deal with gender issues discussions at times carry sexist overtones. Respondents think that bringing down to the minimum the expression of those kinds of sexist messages can already be considered as an achievement.
- **Achievements made at educational and academic levels** – many of those in women’s initiatives are young, who try to get a specialization of their liking. Often, educational institutions in Armenia exert pressures on choosing topics of research interest. Per respondents, considering those statements, research related to sexual orientation, gender identity and related topics is much less welcomed. When coming to achievements, the respondents stress the importance of organizing big conferences and conducting large scale research.
- **Realization of self-importance within feminist movement** – up until recently, it is noteworthy to state that feminist movement and initiatives were perceived to be the prerogative of the organizations operating in the field, as those were being mainly organizing by those entities, frequently remaining within their boundaries. However, recently, the financing channeled from local and international sources, benefitting various feminist groups and initiatives, allowed to act beyond those organizations in a rather independent way. Many of the respondents think that it is a big achievement in terms of realizing the self-worth via personal investments made within those initiatives.
- **Boosted self-esteem, changed self-perception and broadened opportunities for action** – considering the fact that perceptions about feminism in Armenia are quite contradictory and have mostly been formed based on the actions of anti-feminist groups, the respondents state that debates held within feminist circles definitely help to boost self-esteem and change self-perception. The respondents confess that feminist ideas have helped them to develop their self-esteem and act upon one’s inner calling.
- **Achievements in political sphere** – in the regions women that are active in social life have more opportunities to also engage politically (for example, become council members). Women with such experience that have been questioned state that their presence at any level of decision making can unequivocally be considered as an achievement.

“Well, if I were to look from gender perspective, I am one of the women in this region that men invite to business meetings and frequently I am the only woman present. I think that is an achievement, also it is an achievement that they look at me as their partner, equal to them, as someone who knows that sphere, not as a woman, not as someone whom they have allowed to

come and seat with them, that in itself is a quite an important thing for me, because I have struggled for this day to dawn.” (representative of an initiative, Gegharkunik region).

In regions, the respondents think that the fact of other women being allowed to come out of their houses and participate in their activities is an evidence of empowerment and gender equality. *“Yes, and also, the issue of violence, that not allowing to wear something is also a form of violence, as it negates your right and desire. My father, mother and brother have never told me do this, or don’t do that, here we are afraid to invite a married woman to a meeting, or if we do so, we are certain that the husband might join along or if not, he will be calling her recurrently, driving her mad. The poor woman finds herself in a bad situation. And you know what, when within this project of first aid, we were inviting women, they were coming and telling us, “bless you, finally we could wear nice cloths and get out into the crowd, we’ve got couple of nice cloths and have no chances to wear them anywhere...” and then you realize that those couples of hours help them to get distracted from their daily routine.”* (representative of an organization, Armavir marz)

In regions, members of initiatives are different in their actions that include borderline communities (for example, initiatives of Tavush region), where apart from solving several problems, they need to take care about basic security matters, which should not be done at the expense of advocating for gender issues.

The perception of achievement is not uniform, as at times the respondents have no definition for it and clarity about the content of the word, which is directly linked to the need for clarification of above stated objectives.

Nevertheless, even in a situation, when there is no clear understanding of the concept, the respondents mention that it is an achievement that **queer women find platforms**. *“...I meet incredibly strong women and young people, so strong, that it was a surprise to encounter them in Armenia, as before this I did not know them... There are women, who are not heterosexual, they are queer, they have a child, but do not have a husband and it was their decision to conceive a child... For Armenia, it is a very challenging decision... I know a couple of women that are of that type, whom I did not know and it did not even cross my mind that there are such women in Armenia. I see a lot of difference, I see that if you empower women they can achieve much more and bring about more change than men...That is how I feel, because men seem quite broken and shattered... And that is the result of the army...”* (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

During interviews with several representatives of initiatives, it became clear that they define as **achievement the fact that because of their work changes occur and most of all the need for further involvement becomes no longer needed**. *“...when you become redundant in that area. It means that there are people, who know to do all the things you know to do, which means that you have succeeded in empowering them....before the initiative, we were doing trust clubs in one of the organizations, after two groups, I noticed that they would engage in self-help actions, fill out the CVs of each other...So they were reaching a point, when they could help the others and in a way you were starting to feel that you are no longer needed...”* (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

One of the objectives of the study was to find out the main obstacles that women’s initiatives encounter during their works. While trying to identify the obstacles, one can find out about the actual needs, that will be discussed in further detail.

Per respondents, the modern Armenian reality creates quite tangible obstacles for feminist and women’s initiatives, which are not only confined to spreading disinformation and comments in online media outlets.

The obstacles have deeper roots per respondents. Both for new and old initiatives with rather extant experience, one of the obstacles is the absence of knowledge about how to avoid being besmirched. In some cases, as noted by respondents, they have a fear of being negatively targeted, leading to rather non-serious approach of the public to them (which is directly linked to the paucity of participants that had already been discussed in the section on achievements), mostly representing the rather conservative and traditionalist segment of the population.

Among obstacles respondents also mention the aggression that is stemming from spreading disinformation and sexual orientation, gender identity related myths, stereotypes that place under attack those organizations, researchers and individuals that deal with or are in any way related to so called “European values”, feminism, women’s and gender issues, LGBT and queer persons’ protection of human rights. Respondents also identify obstacles linked to this and other aspects of their work, such as the violation of human rights publicly, hate speeches that is used against them, public debates about death threats and violence targeted at them. It is interesting, that those respondents that have been subjected to death threats from various groups find it futile and at times impossible to take due action against them.

“There were obstacles linked to security. In 2013, I have been subjected to threats of very personal nature, they were placing my photo in different Facebook groups and spreading libelous threats about me and so on...So I was subjected to threats that had broadly defined political repercussions, as well as they impacted me at a very personal level, whereas now it is a rather calm period, and me too, I have changed my tactics, now I am trying to figure out what is it that I want to pursue and I do not want to hurry it.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

Opinions raised during interviews with representatives from regional initiatives sum up the following obstacles:

- **Being left out of decision making processes**, even when they are formally registered in those groups,

“Here lately I felt that it is an obstacle, in our Armenian reality it is a way of settling issues, so when someone comes with a business proposal, they meet, then here comes the beloved part for our Armenian men, the eating and drinking part, and this is where gender inequality kicks in, I am a woman, I do not do that thing and it is really an obstacle. The others things, I have not noticed anything particular.” (representative of an initiative, Gegharkunik marz)

- **The gaps that have come about due to the operations of other social institutions and infrastructures** (such as kindergartens, the mismatch of school hours with working schedule, service providers in social sphere)
- **Pressures and limitations applied to women’s employment and mobility** (violence against women, pressures, oversight of places she visits and checking with her in terms of the time schedule, etc.),

- **The scarcity of human resources** and their high turnover rate within initiatives and organizations (shifting from organization to another one, the same occurring within initiatives, as well as leaving the country all together),
- **The paucity of new ideas.**

The interviews attempted to identify, if respondents thought that their work within the last five years has progressed or regressed or has remained the same, which the respondents have confirmed that has progressed, even in cases when from the first sight, the changes seemed rather negligent, they have contributed to the development of the initiative, as well as its members. **If representatives from organizations link the progress with the operations of the organization, in case of initiatives respondents rather tend to see it impacting their personal development and self-improvement (4).**

“It has progressed quite a lot...Previously, I was not feeling comfortable when looking at the pace of other organizations, how speedy their progress was, but then when reflecting on myself, I could see how my steps were like big leaps forward. Looking back, we dreamed of having a computer, projector, chairs and a table, now we are a small organization, but we have it all.” (representative of an organization, Lori marz)

Financial difficulties were also highlighted as obstacles along with low wages in the field: *“If it was a salary of 3000-4000 dollars, it would have been normal, we could have done that all. For example, we have now received a small grant for website development, but again it is not us being paid for that. And this way, it is very hard, as if you want to go somewhere, to travel, again we do it on our own, from our pocket and at the end it turns out that the work we do does not give us any income and your husband says “and what is it that you do?”* (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

⁴ Since many initiatives have not been active at the moment of conducting the study due to human capital issues and/or financial difficulties.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

With an ultimate goal to receive opinions of respondents about women's funds and the directions of possible work within those, the study also tried to identify **the skills and knowledge** that they would mention as the most needed. For each area, an interesting picture has been compiled the details of which are provided below.

During interviews the respondents mentioned the need to hone and improve the following knowledge (the list is provided per thematic areas):

- feminism
- sexuality
- human rights
- domestic violence
- psychological violence
- gender, gender education

In general, respondents from regions were more open and freely shared their views about receiving new knowledge and/or the improvement of those, they were also very open when sharing the lack of their knowledge unlike their counterparts from organizations, initiatives that came from Yerevan, as well as individual experts, researchers, activists, who eagerly spoke of their efforts in daily self-perfection of skills and knowledge, whereby they thought that many of the directions were already in place (for example, fund raising, policy development, etc.) and that those are more needed for newly established initiatives and organizations. *“For me, to be frank, I can’t say that I have gaps, as I read a lot, I am in constant search to the extent possible, as much time I can get, since I am also active professionally, but it seems I do not have any gaps.”* (researcher, Yerevan)

When examining skills, they turn out to be quite diverse. The representatives of initiatives and organizations, researchers and activists have mentioned the need for developing and/or honing of the following skills:

- fund raising, filing out of applications
- strategy and policy development
- monitoring and evaluation
- mentoring
- facilitation of meetings and working groups
- research skills
- business, marketing and management
- public relations and strategic communication
- utilization of new digital technologies (particularly, effective operations of social networks, advertising and marketing in social media)
- communication and collaboration with international organizations
- advocacy
- leadership

The above stated skills are important to researchers as apart from doing the research they need practical knowledge and skills to apply the results of their research. During the fieldwork of the study it became clear that researchers have experienced serious disappointments in this regard, as for a long time they have researched and studied gender issues, providing simple and

feasible solutions, they still see that those have had no impact on the development of gender policy. *“First, an opportunity to conduct more research, continue studying it and generating new ideas and then, because of those new ideas, maybe, have new effective solutions, which can pull me out of this impasse.”* (researcher, Yerevan)

The study also revealed that participants also have more down to earth financial needs and a necessity to urgently tend to them. Apart from above stated knowledge and skills, the respondents also identified the need to change the location or have a space, they also mentioned the lack of resources for the development or improvement of websites, the need to buy equipment within the context of certain programs.

From the perspective of planning of future actions and research, it is very important that particularly the representatives of initiatives and organizations from regions need to learn **foreign languages** (mainly English), which they directly link to their ability to solve the needs (for example, communication with international donors, capacity development, etc.). Apart from that, during interviews frequently respondents stated the need to have **international exchange programs**, which will contribute to capacity development, as well as allowing to broaden the outlook and work related horizons.

DONOR RELATIONS

The financial resources of initiatives and organizations that have been included in this study vary, as they state, from 500 to 150000 USDs per annum, but the participants were finding it hard to provide an exact amount.

“We don’t have such high expectations, taking into account also our volunteer work, it is about 25000 euros per annum that is kind of a lifeline that allows for a team to be on board, identify needs, make calls, check the emails, keep in touch and get information and other routines, which do not imply other technical expenses, such as for example, renting of a space, fuel expenses, travel to regions, etc.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Some of the respondents were completely against grant based projects, considering those as modern ways of colonization.

“Overall, I think this grant provision is some kind of a new colonization, because someone is getting millions to throw at you pennies to go and change something. But from the other side all this is a two-sided coin, if they do not exist you will never be able to downgrade or upgrade someone’s idea or work, you will have to juggle with those, as both are equally important. Frankly, it would be good not to be that dependent on donors, if you find private funding or some other mechanism of sustainability, so that you do your work.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Many of the representatives from initiatives are against financial compensation for the work and activities they do.

“Money tends to induce parasitism, when you get money, you start hiring people, outsource things, they end up doing the work, but you get to enlarge your resource base. That is why just generally with big money be it a business or an activity, I am against it. The person gets into parasitic state of being, if I see that there is money and I cannot do this or that thing, I find a specialist and that person does the job, but that gives no development perspective to me, whereas this way I will find resources myself, will make an effort to learn something, and then will train someone else for that person to help me out, which in the end of the day, results in a situation that I have engaged yet another person into this process.” (activist, Yerevan)

Donor-grantee relations for activists are purely a form of a power relations.

“Generally, working with a donor implies a problem from the very onset, as the relations of the donor to the grantee are of hierarchic nature, where one party is the money provider and thus, power holder with an agency, the other party then is the doer for whom money is key and in most of the cases, the doers implement the desires and demands of those donors and things like that, as they are placed within the lower level of the hierarchy. Therefore, donor-grantee classical model is already problematic. If there were developed mechanisms whereby not confining the decision making only to a few people on choices of who gets the grant or not, but instead there was some kind of a mechanism in place, then this conceptual problem would be solved. At a global level, there are two three organizations that operate like this, where the applicants decide for themselves who will get the funds.” (activist, Yerevan)

“Also, many donors think that if they are donors then they are very smart, which is really funny. That entire donor system fully reflects the colonial systems, how someone from the West comes

and explains to you the ways you should work... these donor-grantee relations are problematic from the very beginning.” (activist, Yerevan)

“The main complication is again the same, when you want to implement something, but they confine you into limited thematic areas and resource utilization modes... I understand their perspective, but sometimes, when doing a project, you start feeling that people need something else and you are just not doing something that brings change, because per your budget the donor has not planned for that. For example, the projector is an expensive thing and when you want to show files, it does not work out, because we do not have financing for that, we do have issues related to office space and furniture.” (representative of an initiative, Lori marz)

Particularly, the respondents that are also engaged in research also mentioned the fact of proposing projects that did not resonate with the Armenian context, as a demand placed by donors.

“Artificial, out of context targeting, let me not go into providing examples, but instead of us identifying the real problems in our reality, which is like what kind of problems women face, what is the interesting thing in all of that, many organizations target the avenues for creating women’s movements or the need to target LGBT women. For me as a researcher, this kind of an abstract reality...I understand that the research field is now gravitating towards that and that has always made me annoyed that we always try to locate exclusive, rare and localized issues, it is the same in anthropology, for example, instead of looking at the entire population of Armenia, we might go and start scrutinizing Molokans, but in the meantime 3 million people suffer, while trying to live their lives in futile efforts, but we do not want to see that. Those are very standard problems.” (researcher, Yerevan)

Nevertheless, the main complaint among respondents was the **cumbersome process of applications** and extremely detailed reporting, as well as no realistic demands placed by donors.

“The priorities of donors are a challenge when they do not coincide with yours and that is mostly when the donor catches you and tells, let’s do something. And let’s say they can force you to communicate with those organizations with whom you do not have compatible value system, but in this case, you must place it in limitations, since you want the money, you want to help your team against the choice of keeping up with your value system, it is a dilemma in a way.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

“...secondly, those bureaucrat donors that do their best to turn your life in a hell. They are not much into the care thing, when it comes to what you do, they mostly care about their reporting for it to be normal. And we have one such kind of a donor that we give a narrative report on a monthly basis, every month. USAID is better if compared, for example European Union and stuff is..., USAID at least has some clarity that it says “this you do this way, that in that way...” They define clear requirements from the very beginning at least.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Representatives from regions particularly stressed the issue of **lack of skills for proposal writing**.

“Our biggest challenge is proposal writing skills. The first time we got rejected was for a project developed for journalists submitted to US Embassy. But when the responsible officers

came to our office and we described it what we intended to do with that project, they were surprised and were saying that whatever we were now telling was not reflected in the proposal. So, it is an issue that we are not able to professionally fill out the application forms. That is actually one of our shortcomings. Last year, we already applied twice to the EU and have been rejected in both cases, that is another big issue, the EU has no way to know how good we are as an organization, if we are unable to present ourselves. And we do face fund finding issues, because in Armenia methods have changed, as well as the ways. In Armenia, no one thinks to organize those kinds of activities that invite donors from outside and in a rather conference like setting share the best practices and projects, where you present your case and if donors are interested they have a possibility to get in contact with you and instead you try to work with them in further developing the proposal.” (representative of an organization, Syunik)

Cumbersome and lengthy reports were also mentioned as a challenge that organizations face regularly.

“Reports. There are donors that require very detailed reporting along with scanned receipts also reported here and there, so in reality it turns out that (especially when the project is small) you are more dealing with reporting than actual work and that is again an issue. Not only us, other organizations have raised that issue...” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

“...they ask for lists of people and that is not subject to change. But that is not possible, there is no project of that type or you will have to engage friends and relatives to be sure that they will not leave midway, but we do not operate this way, especially when you go to a new village, it is not doable. Especially, now when migration is big and the person takes and leaves, should we pursue that person and go after her to Russia to bring her back? What can you do? Nothing...So that is absurd, but still there are donors that are very....” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Generally, respondents also raised the issue of **presenting the results of projects**.

“You know, the requirements of results reporting vary from one donor to another and we face difficulties. Not on the financial side though, as we apparently have good specialists, who do the financing reporting in a due manner, but on the project side we always face problems. Our biggest problem was always that we do a lot, but report about it in a very brief format, which might not be enough for the donor.” (representative of an organization, Syunik)

However, **very few of those studied have raised their concerns in front of donors, since they were concerned that it would negatively impact their financing**.

“It would be good that grantees raise this issue, because frequently they are afraid that they would be rejected and the money would be given to the others, but that funding is like a lifeline source for the organization that they are ready to swallow all that.” (representative of an organization, Syunik)

In this sense, it is noteworthy to cite a passage from one of the interviews:

Have you ever raised your concerns in front of donor community? If not, why? If yes, what was the reaction?

Recently, something like that happened... and almost with a bad ending, again fights and arguments, I don't know, when the donor gets his nose into your organization nothing good comes out of it.

Are you satisfied by the response? If not, why?

No, they in a way have something egoistic, as they also think about the reputation of their organization, so I am not that satisfied. And, of course, there are very good donors, very flexible and those are mainly the ones that work in your sphere. As they have gone through the same road, they say "ok, if you have trouble giving the report, it is ok, go get your case better...", there are good ones like this, but very few and their funds are very limited.

The situation gets further complicated, as grantees rarely get a chance to meet with their donors and do not want to use those rare occasions to be turned into sessions for complaints and grievances. This issue is particularly salient for regional representatives.

"Meeting donors is quite complex with rare occasions, but I would have wanted to at least once per two months see organized meetings, because especially in Yerevan there are more events and people go there, here in the regions it is very difficult. There has to be some kind of an event for this purpose so that you come and meet to raise your issues. In this sense, it is very, very hard in the regions." (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Considering all those difficulties, the respondents highly stress **the existence of flexible funds that would among other things encourage the newly established organizations and initiatives.**

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN'S FUNDS

Most respondents thought that women's funds can play a big role in supporting women's movements, as well as in contributing to the facilitation and solution of disagreements and conflicts that different women's organizations have among themselves. According to them, this kind of an organization can play a catalytic role in feminist movement in Armenia.

"In reality, it is very important, especially in this political situation, when misogyny...in reality the existence of that is very important. It is also very important from within, because from my experience, the experiences are very different and because of that difference there are many disagreements, clashes, also many of them set them apart, whereas we do not need that at all, we need to be more in solidarity. Maybe that will serve as a reason for supporting each other, not necessarily financially, but rather with knowledge and experiences." (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

"I imagine that the fund is going to trigger an important chain reaction and will sizably boost the solidarity. For example, the Women's Fund in Georgia managed to solve certain issues in relation to solidarity among various women's groups, LGBT groups, which previously were quick to criticize each other, poking each other, but that fund in a way managed to create the atmosphere of solidarity. Thus, I am fully positive about the idea of a fund, but one needs to be well aware of the issues it will bring along with itself and seriously reflect on it." (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

"...this is a great idea, and it would be good to have one in our country, because, roughly speaking, we won't travel miles to find something, we would know where to apply and in that case, there would be more programs, because no matter how much we engage in volunteer things, we still face financial difficulties. It is very important and it would be good to have a fund." (representative of an initiative, Lori marz)

Most of the respondents believe that the fund will contribute to the timely response to most pressing gender and women's issues relevant to Armenian context, as it would be better informed about the problems and needs that organizations face in the country.

"Well it is a very good thing, naturally, if there are so called urgent funds available, for example, if you are an NGO and have projects, but also want to urgently execute something that is very important and can get funds expediently, that in itself is a very good thing. And these kinds of urgent funds are practiced in various places and that is a very good experience, when within 5 to 10 days you can get funds or even within one month, when you know that this thing needs to be implemented. Even if we are talking about small sums, or when the funds in your project are not enough and you can get it even in a form of a co-funding or I don't know how. In a word, it is a very good thing in reality." (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

"That is a very good thing, if our state does not have those funds to help women's organizations and the tendency is that without funds it is becoming almost impossible, then it means that there is a need to find alternative solutions. That same fund can serve for fund raising coming from diaspora or foreign business donations or organizations that are interested in women's organizations, benevolent entities and individuals. All that could become the initiating group

that could create the fund, which would have its mission to support women's organizations in Armenia.” (representative of an organization, Syunik marz)

“Really? That would be very good, I would only be thankful, especially for our region I would be grateful. I mean really, if there was something of that type, when you realize that there is someone next to you backing you up then everything would be fine. I am not telling that each project should get approved and financed, no, instead we would apply and granted you approve it, we would get the funding... That would be something that we could take pride in, why we should always depend on external resources, why should a foreign person always come and push for their ideas? If there were similar things with local funding, we would also feel good realizing that our country also supports us.” (representative of an organization, Aragatsotn marz)

Besides, according to respondents big donors mainly finance rights' protection and political change inducing projects, which is almost impossible, if there are no quality services for vulnerable groups. Currently, in those conditions women's NGOs are forced to provide services along many other things, as the state is not fulfilling the function (for example, provision of shelters, hotline, psychological, legal services, etc.). Women's fund can come to fill in that gap, empowering various structures and entities that provide services to women.

“Service provision with a psychologist, lawyer, with a doctor and a social worker, a professional team, if I were to say it in a word, yes, and also the capacity development among women. Just that, frankly speaking, for advocacy there is always a way to find funds, but for services they do not give anything. They somehow want the change to arrive immediately and they think that if on a political level a change is introduced, things will start changing, here it won't work like that. And they look at it from a more cost effectiveness angle, this unit cost for one person is this much and they can give the multiple of that for many persons. Now we have this gender equality law and who cares and needs that law?” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

The comparative advantage of having a local women's fund, according to respondents, would obviate itself in **a more active engagement of the fund in the activities of local organizations.**

For many having a local donor fund can also lead to **a simplified process of applications for funding,** as not all organizations have the capacity to prepare proposals in English.

Respondents from those regions, where the migration of men is very high, also stressed the importance of the fund's operations in rural communities, where most of the residents are women.

“Me more in women's empowerment... the empowerment of women, be it economically or psychologically, as well as boosting their role, because you know how they say it, the woman is the neck, whichever way she turns, also they usually say that the man is the outer wall, who migrates for work, in the meantime the woman has to be resilient. It is the woman that goes to the head of the community to solve the issues related to water, or ask for land, but instead she feels shy... the driver of a tractor is a male, how she can go and ask him to come and plow her land? It is shameful, what the passersby will think? This is what I stress, the importance of raising this kind of self-esteem, as whatever happens in the family, the woman still participates in the decision making. I mean really, we joke about it, that during this season you will hardly see a man in the village, you'll only see the sick ones or the elderly. Well, then, what do you

suggest that women should do? This is the season of sowing, how do you see her going to the others and asking for them to come and sow her land? We need to empower her, so that she gains self-esteem and finds solutions of the issues she faces. Those are the things, boosting the role and self-esteem, gaining leadership skills, women's leadership trainings.” (representative of an organization, Aragatsotn marz)

Out of 35 respondents included in the study, only one had of an organization was against the idea of establishing a women's fund in Armenia.

“... that entity can interpret that is doing a very important work, helping others and women's organizations, and still that entity has to go and get funds and then has to write a report back on how it helps other entities. And how that entity is going to support those organizations, is it going to hand out grants? This is not feasible.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

In Armenia, representatives of women’s initiatives and organizations, first, see the role of the fund in **ensuring the solidarity and supporting the capacity development of organizations.**

The directions of the **operations of women’s fund**, first and foremost, must include the following areas:

- Realization of anti-militaristic projects,
- Based on needs of the organization or the initiative provision of trainings for trainers,
- Research on women’s and gender issues,
- Implementation of projects that support activists and representatives of NGOs to avoid burnouts, as well as activities that are aimed at self-care and capacity development,
- Support to translations of feminist literature,
- Support to projects that deal with issues that are taboo in Armenia, particularly, awareness raising about sexuality and abatement of sexual violence,
- Support to women and girls to develop business skills and promotion of social enterprises,
- Support to newly established women’s groups and initiatives in developing their strategic planning and setting the priorities,
- Support to implementation of projects related to sexual and reproductive health, especially in regions,
- Support to collecting the oral history, private stories of women from different groups,
- Organization of study tours for feminist and women’s issue based organizations and initiatives to visit similar organizations and get acquainted with their work,
- Support to feminist art, including queer feminist art and their representatives.

During the study, it was also suggested that the fund provides grants for the self-development of women, for instance, by financing the learning of languages or other skill acquisition, especially for those that are beyond 40-years-of-age and are left out of the labor market.

“I would want it very-very much, that women get grants for self-development. For examples, it is already for years I am not able to improve my English language skills, because my salary is 120000 AMDs from Coalition. How can I then divide the sum between my family and then keep some for language classes...? I did not allocate time or money to that, it is a resource after all. Also, if there was some kind of a scholarship for further education even from the perspective of later to be employed by the fund.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

It is interesting, but also alarming, that when discussing the priorities of the fund, most respondents surprisingly for us (especially representatives of NGOs) stated that the fund would become almost the only entity that could support them for recovering from professional burnout (psychological support, well-being skills) up to the point of having physical space, where activists can come from time to time and recover. Especially, those individuals and organizations that were operating in the field for extended period, were mentioning that they are providing support to younger staffers and members to come out of burnout, counseling them, but there are no individuals in the field that can provide support to them.

“If I need some kind of advice I run to L. or H. separately or I call M. Now, if the experts are going to be H and L, then I know where to find them... But most of the times the burnout is encountered by old organizations, and who is going to find experts for them? ... Let the fund finance travel to Europe or seaside areas, supporting the vacation, the Mediterranean is preferable.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

According to most organizations and activists, one of the priorities of the fund should be to support the storage and promotion of products developed by women.

“Since I am saying science, then I would at no expense want the art to be excluded, but... it would have been good, if the funds were given for some kind of a critical thinking development, more that the critical thinking developed and become more visible, which women do in different ways: it can be in a form of a book, film or article, I don't know...” (feminist activist, Yerevan)

During the study, we also encountered opinions that not only highlighted the need for the fund to engage in capacity development, but also stimulate the exchange of knowledge and skills among organizations and initiatives.

Per respondents, **the beneficiaries of the fund** should most of all be women from vulnerable groups:

“... the empowerment of the most vulnerable groups, these could be women that have ideas, but lack resources for bringing them to life, also women that physically are deprived of means or are in minority groups and find it harder to reach their goal.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

Per the participants, organizations should be prioritized. Meanwhile, per organizations **the fund should be possibly inclusive and accessible for women's groups that operate in remote areas and regions.**

Per the respondents, the Women's Fund should also support such initiatives that face challenges when seeking financing from other sources. For instance, according to one of the representatives of an organization *“the local Armenia fund should be very sensitive towards those groups and in those directions, that are not within the business cycle of the grants. There are groups that are not competitive when faced with western funds and it would be good that a local fund supports them. I just recalled those 3 directions, also it would be good that the fund finances cooperatives. That would mean that the fund would create conditions for people to come out of the influence of other funds. For example, it is already a while that they say, the LGBT organizations say that transgender individuals are out of the labor market, try to create a cooperative for them, so that they do not at times resort to extreme steps. Instead of pounding on the same issue, it would be better to create jobs. If a local fund helps to establish jobs for*

people that would be a real help ad if local funds give their jobs to them, that again would be very good.” (Representative of an organization, Yerevan)

“Preferably, I don’t think that it should be that way, it should be very flexible system, depending on the project, problem, it should not turn into a bureaucratic structure, a there is a danger here, it has to be accessible, and naturally, each funding should have a sound justification and not be based on fads, but rather financing the needs that stem from the conditions of our country, please.” (researcher, Yerevan)

As a **target group researchers and scientists** were identified as well, with very few among the group being interested in gender issues. We also encountered an opinion that the fund should also encourage the research on these topics by providing financing to them and thus, in a way, directing their research towards these themes.

“The target group should be the organizations, initiatives and coalitions, as well as academia, let the academia get some funds. We have issues, the academia is miles away from practical issues, it has remained in the Soviet era. Even artificially, it needs a boost, all that is said that “let’s give money for them to write, let give funds for them to research” though artificial, is very much needed, it is ok.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

According to **queer and more radical activists**, the fund should encourage the **critical feminist discourse** in Armenia, as other donors do not have those kinds of priorities.

“Today, there is a need to support creative individuals, as the artists were always the ones with a critical outlook, they are more radical and show better the shortcoming of the system. However, I think we need to do everything to reach a point of self-financing to come out of the vicious circle of depending on financing, we should try and self-organize ourselves. When it comes to using the funds, then we also need to use them for self-organizational endeavors and start creating our own economies in order to refuse those other sources of funding. But if we look at it that way, then all the Armenia then become money free, I don't know which women's group to single out, it would not make justice to it, either all should receive funding or all women in Armenia should have money.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

Women working in regions think that the fund should support non-registered groups, as they are the most vulnerable ones and are not able to implement their projects.

“Mostly, it is that you need to be a registered entity most of the times and should have a profile of implemented projects... I get their concern, but then in this case, it is very hard to find a donor on a personal level, as many donors do not provide for the space, they only give funds for transportation and food, therefore, it is not possible to do large scale projects. This creates the main challenge, to find a donor that would finance the premises and other expenses. Frida was like that mainly, and this year I tried to apply... there is the Queer House and I encourage everyone to go there, it is a really good place.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

“The main challenge is, when you want to do something specific and they put you in certain frames both thematically, as well as financially... I get them, but sometimes, when implementing projects, you sense that people need something else and whatever you are doing now is in no way contributing to any change, but your donor has not planned for those needs in the budget. For example, the projector is expensive, and when you want to show films, it is not possible, because they do not finance such things, we also have issues with space, etc. That

is why it is hard to find a donor that would finance both the space, as well as the equipment. They do not give personal grants for you to start from scratch and get a space. We have this "Peace talks" that is ready to support, but to me they will either do it in a piecemeal way or the program would close all together and we would be forced to look for another NGO, and in Vanadzor locating another NGO that is more sensitive and open to those themes is very complicated, because most of the times, it is only then, where you can go and discuss such topics and organize something." (representative of an initiative, Lori marz)

Representatives from regions think that the **fund should have local sub-offices, as only operating in Yerevan would lead to elitist and exclusive nature when trying to respond to the real needs.**

Most respondents stress the importance of the fund's operation on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Most of them agree that the fund should not encourage the establishment of new organizations, instead it should support the already existing ones. In the meantime, there is an expectation, that **the fund should support initiatives, non-registered women's and girl's groups along with the support to various activities (street actions).**

"The fund should collaborate with somehow established feminist organizations as well as initiatives, not only supporting to the establishment of the new ones. There is no need to establish that many organizations, there is more need for initiatives." (activist, Yerevan)

The younger organizations and initiatives voiced an opinion that **the fund should avoid collaborating with Soviet style organizations that are led by elder women**, even though that could create problems for the fund, however, to them, the support to those types of organizations would negatively impact the women's movement.

Reflecting on the idea of grants possibly provided by the fund, the respondents suggest to have two options. First, in a classical format of **open calls**, with the second, more targeting individuals and organizations by the fund on a recurrent basis. Generally, the respondents think that announcing specific themes for grant application to be a wrong strategy, as well as they find it wrong to set certain deadlines. Thus, the fund needs to be possibly flexible and accessible to all.

"I think there should be no thematic calls, since that suggests the availability of a set agenda on the part of the fund and instructs others about the themes that are accepted. I think it must be more open and it should avoid setting limitations. If the fund, let's say, identifies three priority themes, that again would be a catastrophe, as this would mean that the fund has monopolized the field, all feminist groups must go to it and on top of that it now says that those are the set themes along which you can submit proposals, while you can't do anything along other themes. I would suggest to avoid this path, as many funds do that, but to me it is extremely bad." (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

There were suggestions provided concerning the deadlines for the submission of proposals.

"Coming to the issue of deadlines, it is wrong, because when you give three months then it pursues an objective to give equal chance to everyone, when it is an open call then the experience shows that those that apply the first have a greater chance, where the last ones get refused due to the shortage of funds by the end of the cycle. Therefore, maybe it is worth declaring at a certain point that these are days, when you can apply for funding during the

upcoming year, but again not set thematic limitations. While for urgent funds, I think it is a very good idea, because frequently you need to do something right then, but do not want to enter the bureaucratic process. Definitely. It needs to be there and cover many different issues, security issues, doing some kind of a counter-action, the security issues of victims of violence, etc. Thus, there need to be some reserves, so that it can be allocated constantly, but in small amounts.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

The study identified an interesting pattern: the NGOs are more inclined to see the fund providing core funding, whereas activists or initiatives more expect support to specific initiatives and/or actions.

During the study one of the recurrent opinions was the possible complications that the fund could face, since almost all women’s organizations and initiatives know each other in Armenia. In those conditions, the administrators of the fund need to set certain boundaries from the very beginning to avoid creating tensions and conflicts.

“Let the fund realize that it is a fund and needs to distance itself, the rest of the issues that arise, let them solve it in the spirit of cross-support. The fund, when it is a fund, needs to realize that it is a fund, not a friend. And if the fund is well distancing itself, then I am more than convinced that it would turn out better for everyone. If the fund violates that and does not project that distance, by all means, then that is a recipe for future burnouts and distress, as people will start thinking that they are close and they should get the funds, and now you can see what problems are going to come out. I don’t say that people working in the fund should not have friends, but it would be good for it to keep the distance.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

“For me it is critical who gets to decide which group is going to get the funding? There needs to be a system, the model of Frida could be emulated in the process, so that it becomes a participatory one, so that in certain ways those that have applied get to participate in the decision making. However, since in Armenia they are many interpersonal issues, it is possible that project that gets funded is not the best, but rather it turns out to be driven by personal relations and if someone who has presented a very good project does not get selected, because they don’t like her. I don’t think that it is the right moment for us to discuss the mechanisms, but it needs to be considered, so that it is possibly open, transparent, employing participatory mechanisms.” (representative of an initiative, Yerevan)

According to representatives of regional organizations and initiatives it would be desirable for the Board of the fund to have members from regions. The study revealed that certain organizations expect for the **Board to be as inclusive and diverse** as possible, which would ensure the effective operations of the fund.

“Let the board engage people from different backgrounds with a bit of diversity, for example, a member that has overcome domestic violence, an artist, a radical feminist, a member from an NGO, someone from academia... let it have a broader spectrum with a bigger perspective.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

Coming to the financing of the fund, the respondents think that it must explore all the possible avenues, starting from engaging individual entrepreneurs up to international donors. Per the results of the study, in order for the fund to be able to effectively operate, it has to have at least two-three sources of funding.

“In my opinion, it would be good if there are specific donors that provide sustained funding. If it is a fund, but finds itself in a situation as to at times have funds, at other times, not have them, it is not good at all. I think it is critical to find several donors that would ensure funds... Let's assume if that is an urgent fund, then local organizations are aware of it and that they can apply with a hope of getting small grants. Meaning, there is a need to identify specific foreign organizations that are targeted women's fund and give funds for women's rights related topics. To me, it would be good to locate several of those types of donors and start with them, because the fund cannot afford getting 5000 from here, 200 from there, it would not be serious. When we say a fund, we understand a rather sound thing... It would be good to get in contact with serious funds.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

In the meantime, the already established organizations are ready to assist in the process of establishing the fund.

“We ourselves can think of some kind of input in the process of establishing the fund, depending on the format of it, but even in the process of getting started or even in providing some resources. I don't know, some kind of strengthening stuff that we can plan to invest.” (representative of an organization, Yerevan)

It is noteworthy to state that the financing of the fund is not perceived unequivocally among women's organizations, as given the fact that already scarce feminist donors, such as Global Fund for Women, Kvinna till Kvinna, start to divert funds to it, that would lead to unhealthy competition between women's organizations and the fund.

As an obstacle, the respondents raised the issue of **transparency of the fund**. According to them, since people in Armenia are full of distrust when it comes to several funds, donors, the Women's Fund should ensure maximum transparency and just allocation of resources.

“Oh, funds have been mismanaged, appropriated...They are not just, what is going to happen?... The fund is a very tough thing to manage, but now it is technically very accessible and anyone can open and look at how the funds have been allocated, but it would be good if it does not adopt the format of the community budget, so that you get nothing, let it be stated clearly that this much has been spent on this thing.” (representative of an organization, Lori marz)

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the possible names for the fund. The suggested options for it were “Women for Women”, “Different, Equal and Diverse”, “Women's Empowerment Fund”, “Women's Support Fund”, “Women's Initiative Fund.”

Generally, as the study showed, the main expectations from the fund are quite big and as one of the respondents stated “...Because the expectations from that fund are going to be big, as unlike Georgia the situation in Armenia is worse, thus, the hopes can be really high when it comes to that fund. That is why, it should not turn into a service delivery or action driven structure, it must be very neutral, it has to work as a catalyzing force.” (Representative of an initiative, Yerevan).