

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN ARMENIA

WOMEN'S FUND ARMENIA

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Presentation of the Findings of a Qualitative Study

Yerevan 2026

Introduction

This report presents a thematic analysis of the findings of a qualitative survey conducted among the Women's Fund's partners—women's/feminist organizations and activists. The survey aimed to understand how representatives of the movement assess the current state and inclusiveness of the women's/feminist movement, its strengths and weaknesses, its main challenges, and its priority needs for development and support.

The analysis shows that over the past decade, the feminist movement in Armenia has become more visible, multifaceted, and politically aware. At the same time, it operates amid multiple crises, war and post-war conditions, growing anti-gender rhetoric, political polarization, and limited resources. Despite these challenges, respondents describe the movement as a resilient, values-driven community with considerable potential for solidarity.

1. An Overview of the Current Feminist Movement

Most respondents describe Armenia's feminist movement as developing, transforming, and expanding thematically. Whereas it was previously associated mainly with the protection of women's rights, today it also addresses issues such as:

- Gender equality
- Economic justice
- Peacebuilding
- The politics of care
- Bodily autonomy
- Labour rights
- Sexual and reproductive rights
- Digital safety
- Environmental justice
- Intersectional approaches

Participants note that the movement has gradually expanded beyond the NGO sector, bringing in artists, researchers, journalists, students, young activists, and representatives of community initiatives.

At the same time, all participants emphasize that the pandemic, the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, post-war crises, and displacement have significantly changed the movement's agenda. Feminist organizations have continued their human rights work while also becoming important actors in community support, care, solidarity, and recovery.

2. Assessing Inclusiveness

Most respondents agree that the feminist movement is more inclusive today than it was in the past, although full inclusiveness has yet to be achieved.

Responses often mention efforts to more actively involve women living in the regions, displaced women, women with disabilities, older women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and sex workers.

> *"We are living through a period of global crises and wars, which deeply affects the feminist movement as well. All members of society—especially women and people with intersecting identities, such as LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities, and members of minorities—often experience fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and sometimes a sense of helplessness in the face of global and local disasters. In these circumstances, the feminist movement seeks to bring people closer together and create communities and safe spaces where they can come together. One of its important goals today is therefore to strengthen connections and build solidarity. Over the past decade, the feminist movement in Armenia has sought to become more inclusive by paying attention to the concerns of women with different experiences and identities."*
> *Representative of a partner organization*

"Today's feminist movement is a multifaceted social movement that includes different approaches and initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality, protecting women's rights, and overcoming different forms of discrimination. However, groups within the movement often operate with separate agendas, strategies, and methods. The feminist movement in Armenia has not yet fully developed a shared collective identity or a unified voice, which limits its influence on public policy and decision-making."
-Representative of a partner organization

Participants also note that these groups' voices remain insufficiently represented in decision-making and leadership. Several responses point out that the movement is sometimes perceived as "closed" because of its academic language, its concentration in the capital, and the limited involvement of regional communities.

"We believe the movement strives to be inclusive in terms of its values. However, women in the regions, socially vulnerable groups, women with disabilities, older women, and, in some cases, different groups within the LGBTQ+ community are not fully represented."
-Representative of a partner organization

3. Strengths of the Movement

The analysis identifies several strengths that recur in almost all responses.

Solidarity and the Ability to Respond Quickly

Participants repeatedly emphasize that one of the Armenian feminist movement's greatest strengths is its ability to mobilize quickly in times of crisis.

During war, displacement, cases of domestic violence, and other emergencies, the movement has been able to establish support networks, safe spaces, and community assistance mechanisms.

> *"The movement's strengths include solidarity networks, the ability to mobilize quickly, the presence of experienced activists, and connections with international partners. Evidence-based advocacy on gender-based violence, discrimination, and violations of women's rights is another strength. Challenges include financial instability, activist burnout, public resistance, and anti-feminist rhetoric. There are also sometimes ideological divisions and a lack of cooperation within the movement. The instability of the political environment further reduces the visibility of the feminist agenda."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

A Values-Driven and Committed Community

Despite its relatively small size, respondents describe the movement as a community with a strong values base. Its members are committed to social justice, equality, care, human rights, and peace.

> *"One strength is the ideological commitment of people involved in the feminist movement. Despite widespread obstacles and challenges, they largely remain true to their principles and let them guide their work. The movement has become broad in scope and gained wider reach because it responds to real needs: the protection of women's rights remains highly relevant today. Feminist initiatives increasingly involve different sectors, including civil society organizations, state and non-state institutions, and media outlets. Information about these initiatives is also readily accessible, and the feminist community is welcoming and supportive."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

Experience and Professional Capacity

Other strengths of the movement include:

- Conducting research
- Influencing policy
- Organizing public awareness campaigns
- Promoting legislative reforms
- International cooperation

International Connections

Participants also value cooperation with international feminist networks, which supports the exchange of experience, increases the movement's visibility, and strengthens international solidarity.

4. Main Challenges

Despite the variety of responses, all respondents identify largely the same issues: financial instability, burnout, insufficient cooperation, and the influence of anti-gender movements.

"Today, the movement faces a new challenge: the gradual rise of militarization at regional and global levels. The dominance of security discourse and the growing politics of power reproduce patriarchal structures, deepen intolerance, and intensify hate speech. In this context, feminist ideology becomes a defender not only of gender justice, but also of democracy, peace, and the politics of care."

-Representative of a partner organization

"In post-war Armenia, public discourse is highly polarized, and there is a need for mutual understanding, consolidation, and the restoration of public trust. The elections expected in 2026 are becoming another period of tension, during which democracy and democratic values once again come under attack. Women's rights, gender justice, and cultural rights are also often targeted in these developments. In this context, the feminist movement faces a complex challenge while also becoming an integral participant in public developments. It has an important role to play in strengthening care, responsibility, solidarity, and non-violent politics."*

-Representative of a partner organization

[*] The assessment has been carried out before the elections of 2026

Financial Instability

The challenge mentioned most frequently is the lack of long-term and flexible funding.

Organizations mainly operate through short-term project grants, which limits institutional development, long-term planning, staff well-being, and the sustainability of the movement.

Activist Burnout

Almost all responses highlight emotional and professional burnout among activists. Its causes include:

- Constant crisis response
- Heavy workloads
- Secondary trauma
- Limited human resources
- Long-term uncertainty

> *"There is a risk of professional burnout and psychological strain within the movement. Participants are often targeted and harassed by different groups. Social and cultural tensions also arise between traditional domestic roles and women's rights. Misinformation and myths are widespread in society, while financial constraints undermine the continuity of projects. Conflicts of various kinds around the world also create challenges for feminist movements."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

Limited Cooperation

Although solidarity is presented as a core value of the feminist movement, respondents also mention intense competition for funding, ideological disagreements, mutual distrust, and the absence of a shared strategy.

An Anti-Gender Environment

A significant number of respondents also point to the persistence of patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes, misinformation, and anti-feminist rhetoric in society.

Feminism is often portrayed as a "foreign" or "Western" ideology, making it harder for the public to understand the movement.

> *"In many communities, long-standing, conventional stereotypes about women's roles continue to prevail, making open discussion and the building of public support difficult. The movement is often viewed as something 'imported from abroad,' which creates distrust or resistance."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

"Limited resources, including human resources, are also an obstacle, as is the very limited and selective support available at national and state levels."
-Representative of a partner organization

Political and Security Context

Participants note that the war and post-war context, regional instability, and political polarization limit the visibility of the feminist agenda.

In public discourse focused on security, gender equality issues are often pushed into the background.

5. Distinctive Features of Armenia's Feminist Movement

According to respondents, Armenia's feminist movement differs from movements in many other countries because of its social and political context, particularly the consequences of war, displacement, domestic political tensions, democratic challenges, social inequality, and economic difficulties.

"The movement in Armenia is closely intertwined with the national context and the realities of war and its aftermath. Unlike Western movements, which focus more on individual freedoms, feminism in Armenia often has to engage with security issues, state-building, and the rethinking of national identity. This makes the movement more sensitive to local realities, but also makes it more difficult for it to withstand political manipulation."
-Representative of a partner organization

Participants believe the movement is often required not only to defend women's rights, but also to continually explain and defend the very idea of feminism.

In this context, the feminist movement brings together human rights advocacy, community support, educational work, and the creation of public dialogue.

"In recent years, the feminist movement in Armenia has sought to develop across social, political, and cultural spheres, protecting women's rights, addressing gender inequalities, and raising the concerns of vulnerable groups. It addresses social and economic inequalities in everyday life, violence against women, domestic and sexual abuse, and systemic barriers in employment and education. The movement is relatively inclusive because it involves different age and social groups and pays attention to the concerns of vulnerable communities. At the same time, it remains more

closed in relation to some issues, as participation is concentrated mainly among civil society activists and professional groups.
The movement's strengths include its values base, grounded in equality and the protection of rights, as well as cooperation with local and international networks. Challenges include resistance from some parts of society, misconceptions, stereotypes, financial and resource constraints, and disagreements within the movement over approaches and priorities.

Armenia's feminist movement is distinctive because it operates in a small country where traditional culture, religious influence, stereotypes, and the effects of geopolitical realities hinder its expansion and the process of change. The movement focuses primarily on raising awareness, education, and social support programmes, especially those addressing the needs of vulnerable groups of women and girls. Key obstacles include insufficient resources and communication difficulties between younger and more experienced activists."
-Representative of a partner organization

6. Priority Support Needs

The analysis of responses shows that strengthening the women's/feminist movement requires attention to the following key needs.

- Long-Term and Flexible Funding

Participants emphasize the importance of funding that enables organizations not only to implement projects but also to develop their institutional capacities.

> *"The movement needs long-term and flexible funding to ensure organizational stability and activists' well-being. Feminist groups should actively cooperate with environmental, labour and economic justice movements, as well as contemporary artists, and use digital tools to broaden engagement and mobilization. International solidarity, the exchange of experience, and the creation of safe spaces where activists can recover and continue their work are also important."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

- Institutional Development

Support is needed for organizational development, strategic planning, leadership development, communications, fundraising, research capacity, and digital security.

- Collective Care and Well-Being

Respondents repeatedly emphasize the need to support activists' mental health, provide psychological support, prevent burnout, and create safe spaces.

- Strengthening Collective Action

Respondents also call for sustainable, collaborative platforms for dialogue, trust-building, joint strategy development, exchange of experience, and stronger cooperation within the movement.

Intergenerational relations were also identified as an issue.

> *"The main obstacles are insufficient resources and communication difficulties between younger and more experienced activists."*
> *-Representative of a partner organization*

- Support for Regional Initiatives

Participants emphasize the importance of long-term support for initiatives and community-based feminist spaces operating in Armenia's regions. This would help decentralize the movement and enable broader participation.

Conclusion

The survey findings show that Armenia's feminist movement has developed considerably in recent years, becoming more multifaceted, intersectional, and responsive to social developments. Despite its relatively small size, it stands out for its ability to respond quickly, its culture of solidarity, its values-driven work, and its strong potential for community support.

At the same time, several structural challenges continue to hinder the movement's sustainable development: financial instability, activist burnout, an anti-gender environment, political polarization, and limited cooperation within the movement.

The report's findings indicate that further strengthening the feminist movement requires not only continued project funding, but also investment in organizations' institutional development, collective care, movement-building, research capacity, and long-term, flexible funding. Such investment can help ensure the movement's resilience and increase its impact in advancing gender justice, democracy, and social change.


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