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## Part II

### **APPENDICES:**

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## **i. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CIG	Civic Initiative Groups
CPI	Counterpart International
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Center
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ENA	Electric Networks of Armenia
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ISS	Integrated Social Services
LG	Local Government
MA	Mission Armenia
MLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Issues
NA	National Assembly
PSSS	Public Social Services Sector
RoA	Republic of Armenia
RFA	Request for Application
SANAP	Support to the Armenian National Assembly Program
UFSD	Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development

## ii. Background

In December 2014, in response to the submitted proposal for *RFA No. 111-14-000003: Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Project*, Mission Armenia was awarded USD 3,349,187.00 under the USAID Cooperative Agreement No.: AID-111-A-15-00003 for the implementation of the “**Support to Social Sector Reforms in Armenia**” program.

This is a five-year program and focuses on Social Sector Reforms under *Civil Society Consortium 2* of the mentioned RFA. The program directly supports the **Intermediate Result 2.1**: “*More participatory, effective and accountable governance*” and its sub-IRs under Development Objective 2 of the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy for 2013-2017.

The overarching **goal** of the program is to promote improved and sustained social protection system in Armenia that is effectively responsive to the needs and concerns of the citizens. The program seeks to achieve the following key **results**:

- Result Area 1: Civil Society’s ability to engage citizens and articulate their interests improved and sustained;
- Result Area 2: Monitoring of government institutions, officials and policy processes strengthened;
- Result Area 3: Citizen access to independent and reliable information increased;
- Result Area 4: Civil society enabling environment improved.

These Results are supported by a wide scope of activities focused on capacity building, creation of community platforms, sub-grants management, advocacy, monitoring, gap analysis, and visibility. The program is to intervene in 29 communities/districts of Yerevan and 8 provinces of Armenia, including Ararat, Shirak, Gegharkunik, Lori, Kotayk, Syunik, Armavir, and Tavush.

A consortium of four local and international organizations implements the program, namely:

1. Mission Armenia - Armenia-based NGO, the lead organization;
2. Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development - Armenia-based NGO;
3. Child Development Foundation - Armenia-based NGO;
4. Counterpart International - US-based NGO.

Mission Armenia, Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development and Child Development Foundation serve as the primary implementers of the program, while Counterpart International provides capacity building and assistance in key technical and management areas. The major roles of the Consortium are to:

1. mobilize and empower citizens with relevant capacities to ensure citizens’ engagement in the monitoring of social sector reforms that Government of Armenia (GoA) has recently introduced in Armenia to the social services, child protection services, and pension system;
2. strengthen the capacity of CSOs to monitor these reforms and provide quality services in line with the Integrated Social Services (ISS) principals;
3. engage in monitoring and advocacy for the realization of these social sector reforms;
4. develop evidence-based recommendations for further improvement of reforms and the better protection of social rights.

# 1. Political Context / Enabling Environment

## **Political Situation:**

**Draft Law on NGOs:** On March 24, 2015, Ministry of Justice of Armenia published the new [Draft Law on Non-governmental organizations](#). By joining their efforts, civil society organizations and the Ministry developed the Draft Law and currently it is circulated in the Government for comments, suggestions and recommendations.

**Parliamentary Hearings on the Theme “Consolidation of Communities”:** On May 4, 2015, the NA deputies, members of the RoA Government, governors, heads of communities, experts and representatives of CSOs took part in parliamentary hearings on “Expansion of Communities” organized by the NA Standing Committee on Territorial Management and Local Self-Government. Speaking about the necessity of expansion of communities, the Committee Chairman Mr. Stepan Margaryan mentioned the studied experience of different countries in the sphere, the debates held both with the heads of the communities and the residents. Mr. Vache Terteryan, First Deputy Minister of the RoA Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations, presented the expansion of communities focusing on “a pilot” program of community expansion in Syunik, Lori and Tavush Marzes. He announced about local referenda to be held on May 17 to clarify residents’ opinion on uniting a number of Marz communities.

[http://www.parliament.am/news.php?do=view&cat\\_id=2&day=04&month=05&year=2015&NewsID=7486&lang=eng](http://www.parliament.am/news.php?do=view&cat_id=2&day=04&month=05&year=2015&NewsID=7486&lang=eng)

**Local Referendum:** On May 17, 2015, the first local referendum took place in Armenia since its independence. Three community clusters in Lori, Tavush and Syunik carried out a local referendum on community enlargement. 3 communities out of 7 in Lori Marz and 3 communities out of 7 in Tavush Marz voted against community enlargement. According to Article 110 of the Constitution of Armenia, communities can be united and divided without considering the results of local referendum. As of now, the Government of Armenia has not presented any Draft Law on amending the law on Administrative-Territorial Division of Armenia.

**CSO Day at the National Assembly:** On June 11, 2015, the National Assembly of Armenia in collaboration with the Support to Armenian National Assembly Project organized a CSO Day at the parliament aimed at enabling CSOs to present their concerns and suggestions to respective NA Committees. The SSSRA Consortium partners attended the event and they were represented in NA Committees, as this event was a good opportunity to raise the issues and concerns having been voiced by community people during the SSSRA program kick-off meetings.

**Country Reports:** During the reporting period, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the United States Department of State released Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014, including one on [Armenia](#). Along with other issues and achievements, the report highlights issues related to the rights to freedom of association, mainly indicating the poor legal framework to support financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations.

**Constitutional Reform: Expert commission “in favor of parliamentary system”:** According to constitutional law expert Mr. Vardan Poghosyan, Armenia’s commission that was set up to draft constitutional amendments was being directed towards transition to a parliamentary system of government. Though the Commission had received proposals on the concept of constitutional changes from as many as 14 political forces, however, most of Armenia’s leading opposition parties represented in the National Assembly had not backed the reform. In particular, the Armenian National Congress and Heritage parties claimed as a main reason the trend of ensuring reproduction of President’s power.

<https://www.armenianow.com/news/politics/63370/armenia-constitutional-reform-commission-on-experts-parliamentary-system>

### **Social-Economic Context:**

**President Sargsyan in favor of international audit into Russian-owned energy company in Armenia:** June 26, 2015: The Armenian electricity distribution company, which is a subsidiary of Russia’s state-owned energy holding Inter RAO, must be subjected to an international audit from an early date of their operations, that will also engage the expert community and civil society representatives.

According to the press service of the Armenian President, President Serzh Sargsyan made such a suggestion meeting earlier today with the Russian co-chair of the Russian-Armenian inter-governmental commission, Minister of Transport of Russian Federation Maxim Sokolov. Minister Sokolov agreed to the suggestion of President Sargsyan, and said an audit will be carried out under the umbrella of inter-governmental commission.

In response, Minister Sokolov said that he had earlier meetings with the Armenian Deputy Prime-Minister, Minister of Energy and the Chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Commission in order to discuss in every detail all previous operations of the electricity distribution company. Sokolov said he was glad that there was the substantial program to pull out the company from the crisis it dug itself into -- through certain measures and within a timeframe specified. <http://www.panorama.am/en/politics/2015/06/26/serzh-sargsyan-3/>

**Conclusive Conference of Phase I Activities for Improvement of Budget Program Key Performance Indicators:** On May 21, 2015, Conclusive Conference of the Phase I Activities for Improvement of Budget Program Key Performance Indicators took place. It was held by the RoA NA Standing Committee on Financial - Credit and Budgetary Affairs, supported by the USAID-funded SANAP program and GIZ on behalf of the German Government. The RoA NA Deputy Speaker Hermine Naghdalyan, deputies, representatives of the RoA Government, the NA Staff, local NGOs and international organizations participated in the event.

At the meeting, Hermine Naghdalyan highlighted the goal of the reforms being implemented in the budgetary system of Armenia. It aims at improving the efficiency of management, accountability and transparency of public finances. Efficient solutions of those problems would mean not only contribution to the dynamic development of the country, but also making the whole budget process, from drafting to implementation and reporting, more visible, perceivable and controllable for the wide layers of the society. As one of practical means for increasing efficiency of the management system of public finances, Hermine Naghdalyan mentioned investment in the budget program (BP).

During the event, the representatives of the 8 NA Standing Committees presented detailed information about the key performance indicators of the budgetary programs regarding the Committee.

[http://parliament.am/news.php?cat\\_id=2&NewsID=7554&year=2015&month=05&day=21&lang=eng](http://parliament.am/news.php?cat_id=2&NewsID=7554&year=2015&month=05&day=21&lang=eng)

## **Social Protection/Social Sector Reforms:**

**If our citizen has a social problem he/she should apply to Social Service Center: Artem Asatryan:** According to Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Artem Asatryan, every citizen who has any social problem: in need of care, medical-social and other services, employment, pension, can apply to Social Services local centers. It more than important to understand our citizen's concerns and give solution to his/her problems, - he mentioned.”

There are already 19 established centers out of the planned 54 Integrated Social Service Centers. The Minister presented two main levels of integration. Particularly, the first level of integration means all the service centers and receptions headquartered in one common space under the “one – window” principle and the second level is the information integration referred to compiled information resource database system.

The main problem in accessing relevant services people are in need of, the Minister sees poor awareness efforts to publicize social sector reforms and social service provision among the citizens.

Social protection sector in general and social services provision in particular first of all are investment projects in human capital. Minister stressed the importance of social worker institute especially in Integrated social service centers, the social worker's role in supporting people in need not only with social packages but also with promotion to information accessibility, competitiveness, self-willing in finding solutions to own problems and needs.

[http://www.mlsa.am/home/show\\_news.php?id=1005&sec=news&back](http://www.mlsa.am/home/show_news.php?id=1005&sec=news&back)

<http://www.aravot.am/2015/05/22/573992/>

**Joint reception centers to cut corruption risks in social protection sector – Minister:** In an interview with Tert.am, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Artem Asatryan commented on the past year's accomplishments and achievements in the social sector, talking about the previous reforms and the recently launched integrated information system and joint reception centers.

He stressed the importance of joint information system encompassing the information pertaining to the social protection sector and other areas in the point of making services targeted and self-driven. A general precondition for such a system is having all the service centers headquartered in one common space. In particular, such system makes the process of documentation easier for citizens: so the availability of all the information databases in Integrated social centers spares the citizen's effort and saves his time of running from one service to another.

“Our citizens visiting non-integrated centers have contacts with inspectors who themselves are the decision-maker. And when those decision-makers make clarifications, many questions remain non-clarified. There may be misunderstandings or other reasons, which at times deprive a citizen of the right to benefit from a social service.

In joint reception centers, the function of those receiving application-requests remains limited only to that; individuals themselves are the decision-makers. It is also planned to launch an institution of counselors which, to my mind, is one of the most important problems, also as an anti-corruption measure, as the inspectors thus never have a face-to-face contact with the citizens”- he stated.

[http://www.mlsa.am/home/show\\_news.php?id=1008&sec=news&back](http://www.mlsa.am/home/show_news.php?id=1008&sec=news&back)

<http://www.tert.am/am/news/2015/05/26/artem-asatryan/1686551>

**Introduction of Integrated Social Services brings change in the overall logic of our social protection system:** At the meeting with heads of 19 Integrated Social Services local centers Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Artem Asatryan highlighted the drastic need and pertinence of introduction of Integrated Social Services. This is a transition from benefit payment system into radical ways of problem solution for our citizens, he mentioned.

During the meeting, issues related to joint receptions, forms and mechanisms of applications and application submission, main role of receptionist, etc. were discussed.

[http://www.epension.am/am/news/news\\_article?content.cid=1930](http://www.epension.am/am/news/news_article?content.cid=1930)

**Calls Received to Hotline service “114” of RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs:**

Over the reporting period, total 9,592 calls were received to the MLSA hotline service “114”, of them the overwhelming majority of calls ( 9520) was related to receiving information on a variety of social issues on Pension System, Poverty Family Benefits, Child Care Benefits, Disability issues, Deposit Compensation and other issues.

<http://www.a1plus.am/1381895.html>;

<http://armlur.am/382457/>; <http://armlur.am/367158/>;

**Round-table:** On June 19, 2015, Child Protection Network organized a round table called “Strengthening families and children's protection in Armenia: challenges and solutions”. At the meeting, representatives of international and local CSOs and state bodies discussed issues linked to child protection, early intervention and prevention, services provided by CSOs in this regard. Child Protection Network presented strategic priorities of its work highlighting promotion of community based social worker in Armenia, development of community based family and child-oriented alternative services, possible legislative changes for effective child protection system. CDF as a member of Child Protection Network was presented by its Director. She highlighted the importance of child’s physical and mental development, as well as consideration of side-effect prevention in the development of mechanisms for early intervention and identification of child’s problems. CDF gives importance to quality service development in Armenia, which will be outsourced by the state and supported from the state budget. <http://armeniachildprotection.org/>

**Family Day:** On May 15, 2015, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs jointly with UNICEF representatives to discuss the progress of the work within the framework of Memorandum between the Ministry and UNICEF. Referral mechanisms of children to biological and adopting families based on child needs assessment were discussed.

**HRD Annual Report:** On March 31, 2015, the Human Rights Defender of Armenia released the Annual Report-2014. The report refers to issues related to people with disability, refugees, women’s rights and social-economic issues in general. The report is available on [www.ombuds.am](http://www.ombuds.am) website. The report includes also many aspects and fields of child rights protection. Particularly, Defender mentioned de-institutionalization of residential care institutions and prevention of children's new flow there, as a core issue that, by his estimation, was implemented not sufficiently. Another issue emphasized by the Defender is lack of social protection and services for vagrant and beggar children and their families, as well as identification and support to children engaged in illegal/forced work. Lack of legal mechanisms to regulate and supervise activities of Trusteeship and Guardianship Committees at a community level was mentioned among other issues.

Human Rights Defender's Office released also a special report where they refer to child rights

violations at some childcare and special educational institutions. In response to this report, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs stated that they would take appropriate measures to follow-up and address the raised issues.

**Interview with G.Gyunashyan, MLSA:** On April 24, 2015, Head of Family, Women and Children Department at Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Mrs. Geghanush Gyunashyan, in her interview to Iravunk Tert expressed positively on the results of recent reforms in child rights protection. In particular, due to de-institutionalization and preventive measures taken, less number of children have been sent to orphanages in recent years. She valued the work of CSOs working with children and their parents, thanks to which children are not sent to special institutions. She also stated the significance of establishment of alternative care institutions as a mechanism to keep children in families. Mrs. Gyunashyan stressed the importance of family in child's life and development and referred to alternative care, social-rehabilitation and other service provider centers to ensure that.

[http://iravunk.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26283:2012-04-04-19-36-17&catid=53:hanrutyun&Itemid=176](http://iravunk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26283:2012-04-04-19-36-17&catid=53:hanrutyun&Itemid=176)

**Disability New Model:** On June 29, 2015, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Mr.Artem Asatryan held a meeting on the activities performed under the New Disability Model. Present were also international organizations (UNICEF, USAID, UNDP). He highlighted its importance and the prospective piloting procedures. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in cooperation with has started retrospective piloting of a new disability model. This Model is developed by World Health Organization. The new model defines disability as an interaction between health conditions and environmental factors and aims at preventing subjective approach to disability estimation.

<http://www.oratert.com/armenian/%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%BD%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%AC%D5%B8%D6%82%D6%80%D5%A5%D6%80/87527.html>

## 2. Summary of Conducted Activities

Over the reporting period, the four members of Consortium: Mission Armenia, Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development, Child Development Foundation and Counterpart International carried out activities under 4 Result Areas of the SSSRA Program. Detailed description of performance is provided below.

### Result Area 1: Civil Society’s Ability to engage citizens and articulate their interests improved and sustained.

#### Result 1.1: Citizens more involved in CSO activities:

##### Activity 1.1.1 Form Civic Initiative Groups (CIGs)

**Kick-off Meetings:** In the course of the reporting quarter, the SSSRA team continued conducting kick-off meetings according to the planned schedule. The aim of those meetings was to widely introduce the Program to all interested parties in the target communities and support establishing local Civic Initiative Groups (CIG). CIGs are envisaged to have a core group of members representing active citizens and local civil society, different public and educational infrastructures, as well as Program mentors. CIG members are to be trained to get involved in the monitoring process of social sector reforms.

Throughout the quarter, meetings were held in Yerevan and in 10 communities of 6 provinces, including *Ararat, Shirak, Syunik, Lori, Gegharkunik and Kotayk*. Total 258 participants attended the meetings, of them, the largest representation had the NGO sector (49 percent), 39 percent of attendees represented public sector/local governance. Citizens and media participants made up 9 percent and 3 percent respectively. Breakdown of participants of kick-off meetings by stakeholder sectors and target communities is presented below:

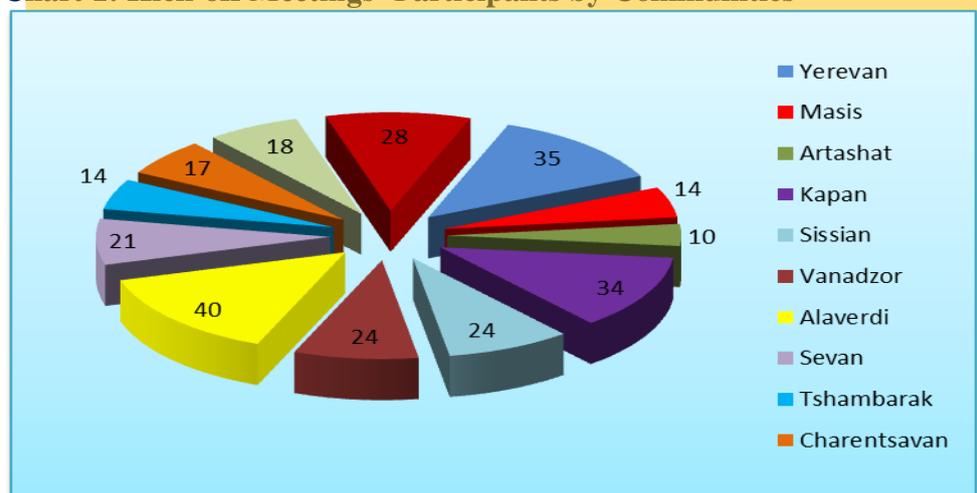
**Table 1: Breakdown of Kick-off Meetings’ Participants**

Province	Community	Number of Kick-off Meeting Participants Represented by :					Sub-Total
		PSSS <sup>1</sup>	NGO	LG	Citizens	Media	
Ararat	Masis	2	10	2	-	-	14
	Artashat	5	3	2	-	-	10
Syunik	Kapan	5	19	5	4	1	34
	Sissian	3	17	3	-	1	24
Lori	Vanadzor	3	8	10	-	3	24
	Alaverdi	6	19	1	13	1	40
	Tshambarak	5	7	2	-	-	14
Kotayk	Charentsavan	3	6	3	5	-	17
Shirak	Artik	3	10	4	-	1	18

<sup>1</sup> PSSS –Public Social Services Sector

	Gyumri	4	22	2			28
	Yerevan	30	5				35
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>258</b>

**Chart 1: Kick-off Meetings' Participants by Communities**



Community leaders, Mayors, Province Governors and representatives of public and civil society sectors, mass media, as well as citizens of target communities were invited to and they took part in those meetings in *Yerevan, Masis, Artashat, Kapan, Sissian, Vanadzor, Alaverdi, Sevan, Tshambarak, Gyumri, Artik and Charentsavan*. The meetings and other events of the quarter are elucidated in *Appendix A –Photo Report*.

A concerted effort was made to ensure representation of women, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Thus, Consortium ensured a multi-sectorial representation of participants: providers of social services, representatives of local authorities and beneficiaries of those services as well as other civil society representatives.

Such composition of participants facilitated and promoted constructive discussions among the attendees on several key issues:

- key problems and specific priorities for each of the selected communities;
- approaches of the participants for possible solutions;
- willingness to get involved in the SSSRA activities related to the implementation of the social sector reforms;
- attitude on their own role and participation in the process of problem solving and CIG activities

*CIGs Formed:* Effective outcomes of active and participatory kick-off meetings enabled Consortium members to form Civic Initiative Groups (CIGs) in target communities. Many participants of those meetings expressed their willingness and readiness to become a Civic Initiative Group member and to have his/her own input in the monitoring processes of social reforms.

To better facilitate the process of CIG formation and their further operation in the scope of

the program, Counterpart developed and circulated the draft of a Guide on Formation and Operation of CIGs (*Appendix B*).

Over the reporting period, CIGs were formed in 15 target communities, including Yerevan (3), as well as Lori (2), Gegharkunik (3), Ararat (2), Kotayk (1), Shirak (2) and Syunik (2) provinces.

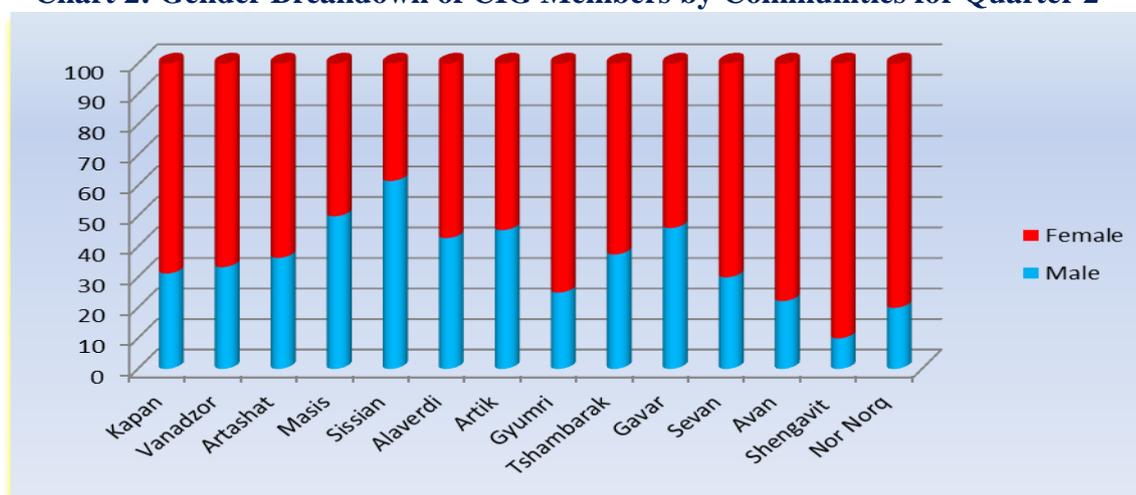
**Table 2 :Breakdown of Formed CIGs by Target Communities**

PROVINCE	Yerevan	Lori	Gegharkunik	Ararat	Kotayk	Shirak	Syunik
COMMUNITY	Shengavit	Vanadzor	Gavar	Artashat	Charents - avan	Gyumri	Sissian
	Nor Nork	Alaverdi	Tshambarak	Masis		Artik	Kapan
	Avan		Sevan				

By the end of the reporting period, the number of CIG core members totaled to 160, each Group consisting of a core group of about 10-12 active members.

They demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to work on voluntary basis within the years of Program implementation. In CIG formation, Consortium made effort of ensuring female-male representation balance. 63% of CIG members were females. Gender breakdown of CIGs is presented below:

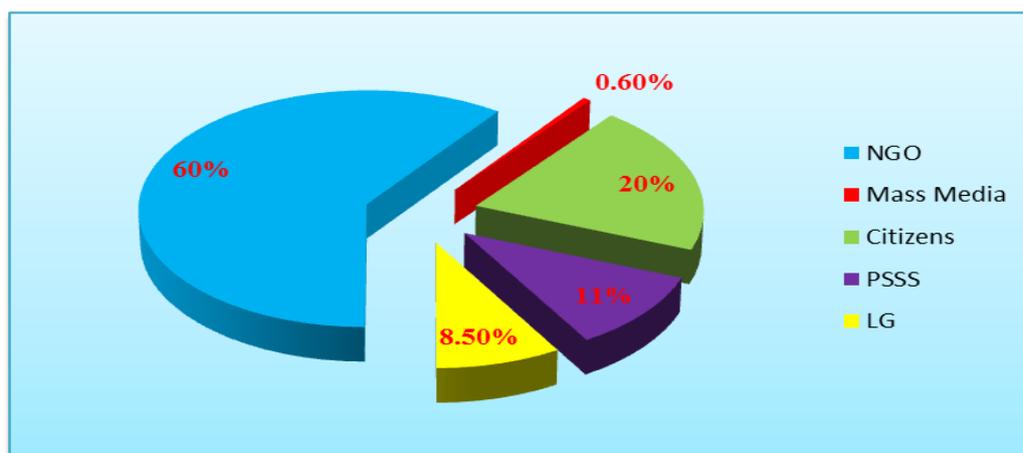
**Chart 2: Gender Breakdown of CIG Members by Communities for Quarter 2**



As the above Chart shows, in most communities the number of female members significantly prevailed over the male representatives, with two exceptions: in Sissian where males made up over 70 % of the CIG members and in Masis with over 60 % male participation.

It is important to mention, that CIG composition was multi-sectorial, including representatives of CSOs, they made up 60%, Public Social Services and Local Governance (almost 20%), citizens (20%), as well as mass media (with less than 1% representation).

**Chart 3. CIG Composition by Sectors**



*First CIG Actions:* Pursuant to their mission that of a viable platform for civic mobilization, monitoring and advocacy, many members of the newly formed CIGs took part in the large-scale protests that began in Yerevan and other cities of Armenia against electricity price hike in response to a request made by Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA). ENA is entirely owned by Inter-RAO, a large Russian energy company. Lack of a dialogue between state authorities and representatives of civil society compelled most active citizens, the CIG members among them, to get mobilized and peacefully present concerns and claims of the population on electricity price hike. Thanks to civic solidarity, joint and mobilized efforts, Government of Armenia now deems to reconsider its initial decision.

This positive result having gained from the peaceful civic protests that voiced against manipulations with all its negative consequences on the already-deteriorated social conditions of the population proved that our society realizes the importance of mobilized efforts. It gave more confidence to the CIG members that united they could be a real power for betterment. Another success for this civic movement was to make the authorities consider the opinion and disposition of society in decision-making and make that process more participatory.

### **Activity 1.1.2. Partner CSOs are identified**

*Elaboration of Request for Applications (RFA):* Preparatory activities were initiated for the selection of 4 partner CSOs. These CSOs are to be selected to monitor the Child Protection component of the social protection reform. Request for Application was developed by CDF and was circulated among the Consortium partners for comments and feedback. Suggestions were compiled and the draft RFA is at its finalization stage now. The RFA will be publicized among CSOs in Yerevan and in the provinces. Announcements will be posted on Consortium members web-sites and social networks as well.

The selection of CSOs will be based on such additional criteria as the geographical coverage of the areas where ISSs has already functioning, having sufficient human resources and willingness to develop capacity in the child protection sector.

Activities were underway also for formation of Proposal Review and Evaluation Panel. The Panel will consist of representatives from Consortium member organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Activity 1.1.3 Build the capacity of the CIGs and 4 CSOs**

Working Meeting on Child Rights Protection: Child Development Foundation with international and local CSOs organized a working meeting. The meeting was a good opportunity to introduce the SSSRA program to the invitees. The meeting aimed at presenting child rights protection and related reforms, as well as to discuss the work done so far in this regard. Representatives of local and international organizations, as well as partners engaged in other consortia and networks were invited to the meeting.

Guest speakers from UNICEF Armenia, Save the Children Armenia Country Office, World Vision Armenia, “Social Justice” NGO, and Child Protection Network shared the activities performed in relevance to child right protection reforms, highlighting also challenges and problems they face. Lack of family-centered services, lack of child-needs-based services, shortcomings in interagency cooperation, non-cooperative nature of educational system, non-clear mechanisms of integration between three-tier child protection system and ISS, etc. were among the major issues the speakers referred to.

Mira Antonyan from Child Protection Network referred to the lack of coordination of and overlaps in services provided, as well as to the uncertainty of terminology in the field. She prioritized child sector analysis, centralized coverage of provided social services in Armenia and non-developed quality child-welfare standards.

UNICEF representative Anna Harutyunyan highlighted such challenges as lack of family-centered services, the social services being not oriented on child needs, shortcomings of governmental interagency cooperation, and lack of flexibility in the child protection system, etc.

Some of the participant organizations expressed interest to cooperate with the Consortium in the framework of “Support to Social Sector Reforms in Armenia” Program.

Preparatory Activities for Citizen Engagement trainings: UFSD initiated preparatory activities for Citizen Engagement trainings, in the framework of capacity development of CIGs. The UFSD team posted announcements through electronic media to hire consultant/trainer to elaborate the training module and later to carry out the trainings. UFSD project staff reviewed the CVs and selected Mr. Gevorg Yeghiazaryan with whom contract was signed. An orientation meeting was carried out with the consultant during which the UFSD team provided an overview of the project, the activities carried out so far and those planned to give the consultant an opportunity to better perceive the context of his task.

Besides, UFSD shared with the consultant materials and modules previously developed by the organization for resource and reference. The consultant elaborated the draft training plan which was discussed and commented by UFSD, after that the draft plan was finalized and ready for implementation. The trainings are planned to be carried out in July.

Mentor Training of Trainers: Counterpart’s Advocacy and Transparency Technical Advisor carried out a one-day Training for Trainers with 20 participants, including project mentors, social workers and project staff. This activity was not specified by work-plan, but in order to

ensure that all the participants of the upcoming Advocacy TOT have some basic trainer's skills, Counterpart team decided to first equip them with basic training skills and tools and then carry out the Advocacy TOT. The TOT Module (*Appendix C*) was developed by Counterpart's Advocacy and Transparency Technical Advisor together with Advocacy Specialist of Mission Armenia, the training is planned to be carried out in August.

### **Result 1.3. Citizens' understanding of policies increased**

#### **Activity 1.3.1. Support and facilitate mechanisms for CSOs to foster civic awareness of reforms in CP sector, particularly related to the establishment of the ISS**

Consortium members designed a leaflet highlighting the key information on ISS, Pension and CP sphere. It provides necessary information on what is ISS, how it works, what are its functions and fields of activities and how to apply for services. Counterpart team worked closely with MA colleagues to improve the draft leaflet to make it more targeted, clear and informative.

The final version of the leaflet is to be easy to read and understand information material that will be distributed during town-hall meetings, at all times when community members interact with CIGs. The leaflets will help the community members to understand the basics of the social sector reform and the ways it functions at the community level.

## **Result Area 2: Monitoring of government institutions, officials and policy processes strengthened.**

### **Result 2.1: CSOs use systematic and evidence-based approaches to monitor, and assess impact of and report on selected government reforms and reform processes**

#### **Activity 2.1.1: Civil Society Monitoring tools of the ISS reform implementation is developed.**

During the reporting quarter, the Mission Armenia team elaborated the monitoring methodology and tools and presented it to Consortium members. Throughout the quarter, a number of internal meetings were held to refine the Integrated Social Services monitoring tools developed by Mission Armenia with expertise provided by Counterpart Armenia. These tools include operationalization plan, focus group discussion guides, in-depth interview questionnaires as well as evaluation forms of Integrated Social Services. The overall monitoring methodology of ISS system and the developed tools in particular will be further fine-tuned during the next quarter in an effort to examine and synchronize them with the tools developed and applied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, if any.

The aim of this monitoring is to reveal the flaws of the reform implementation for diverse population groups that ISS will cover, in particular provision of social services to the unemployed, families living under the poverty line, people with disabilities, elderly singles/couples without family members, naturalized former refugees living under the

poverty line, displaced persons from Syria, extremely vulnerable refugees from other countries without permanent shelter, and children in difficult life situations). The process of the Integrated Social Service reform will be monitored by the 17 Civic Initiative Groups, 4 CSOs partnering with the Child Development Foundation and other CSOs that will take part in the trainings using the finalized package of the monitoring tools.

**Activity 2.1.2. Citizens’ concerns about the Integrated Social Services across Armenia are systematically collected and analyzed.**

Mission Armenia team started the elaboration of a Citizen Concern Form. This template is designed for CIG members that are to record citizen complaints. Such important factors as are gender breakdown, geographic distribution, categorization of issues under major groups, etc. are strongly considered on this template, therewith mapping common issues for local, regional and national levels.

The template will enable the CIG members to compile all complaints and observations, identified gaps, classify them into sub-categories and analyze. The analysis of citizen complaints and applications are to be summarized and shared by local ISSs, LGs, Marz Administration and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The analysis results will also be publicized through quarterly e-bulletins.

**Result Area 3: Citizens’ access to independent and reliable information increased**

**Result 3.1. High-quality, research-based, independent information and analysis on priority reforms produced.**

**Activity 3.1.1. Collaboration with local and national Government is established to ensure access and support for CSOs to lead the monitoring of the selected reforms’ operation and effectiveness.**

During the reporting period, a number of meetings were conducted with the representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to ensure close collaboration and discuss potential partnership opportunities and collaboration format with MLSA within the SSSRA program. In particular, meetings were held with:

- Sona Harutyunyan, Deputy Minister
- Areg Savgulyan, Advisor to the Minister
- Geghanush Gyunashyan, Head of the Department on Family, Women and Children Issues
- Astghik Minasyan, Head of the Social Assistance Department
- Arman Sargsyan, Coordinator of the Capacity Building Resource Center
- Smbat Sahiyan, Deputy Head of Social Security State Service
- Koryun Sargsyan, Head of the “Nork” Information-Analytical Center

During those meetings, the parties discussed the reform implementation processes, stated the needs and possible ways forward. All state representatives highly valued the public outreach and monitoring components of the program and mentioned specific needs faced by the Ministry within the framework of Program's mandate.

The following observations and suggestions were of particular value:

1. Establishment of a Coordination Board and specific working groups for each area covered by the SSSRA program (ISS, pension system and child protection system). Upon the establishment of the Board, a joint action plan will be agreed upon and respective timelines and responsible persons will be outlined.
2. Synchronization and possible review of activity timelines considering the reform implementation processes and timelines with view of avoiding duplication of efforts.
3. Mapping of the strategic directions of reforms implemented by the Ministry and synchronization of the SSSRA monitoring activities with the reform processes. This suggestion implied development of a monitoring concept, timelines and methodology taking into account monitoring needs, priorities and tools that are already designed by the Ministry. The Deputy Minister specified the following monitoring needs faced by the Ministry:
  - Assessment of the quality of services provided by the ISS centers and their comparison with those provided in communities that do not have such centers yet. The Ministry has envisaged this activity for 2016 and there is an initial agreement with the World Bank to conduct such an assessment, therefore, steps should be taken to avoid duplication of efforts.
  - Monitoring of reforms in the field of employment. The respective tools are already developed by the Ministry and there is a need for data collection in the field.
  - Monitoring of the child protection reforms.
4. Mapping of human and technical resources of both the Ministry and the Consortium partner organizations in quest of their mutually supportive and effective use.
5. Involvement of Pension Reform Implementation Program in outreach and monitoring activities of the Consortium as well as in exploitation of the social portal, an information management tool recently developed by the capacity building resource center called "ISS Frontline" (ԻՍՏ առփիծ). The tool serves as a resource space combining information on services and programs delivered in the sector, the ISS centers, professionals in the field, volunteers, available resources, related legal documents and the like. The tool is designed to provide also online trainings and consultancies to citizens as well as serve as a space for case management where to-be-managed cases are reported by citizens, where case managers interact with each other to find solutions and play virtual training games designed specifically for case managers with the ultimate goal of enhancing their skills in the field. The tool also contains certain tools for assessing the operational efficiency of ISS centers.
6. Inclusion of the Consortium members, partner organizations and CIG representatives in the to-be-established social assistance networks.
7. Review of the SSSRA program geography to reflect the current distribution of ISS centers.
8. Development of a cooperation model to ensure the link between the ISS centers, social assistance networks and beneficiaries.

9. Organization of trainings for case managers to enhance their skills, as well as support the establishment and institutionalization of the case management institute in the country.
10. Trainings and public outreach activities for both citizens and public officials to enhance their knowledge with respect to reforms implemented in the pension system and provide them with practical skills in how to read and grasp their account statements, differentiate between and select asset managers, assess their profitability, check their accounts through identification cards, demand accountability from asset managers and the like.

Many suggestions presented by the representatives of the Ministry were deemed quite possible to realize. Consortium partners will further discuss these suggestions and observations, upon which a revisited work plan will be presented to USAID for approval.

## **Result Area 4: Civil society enabling environment improved**

### **Result 4.1: CSOs identify and advocate on specific improvements to CSO legal framework**

#### **Activity 4.1.1: Forum with CSOs to discuss the progress improving the CSO legal framework and deciding on next steps.**

*CSO Legal Framework Forum:* The Program team organized the projected CSO Forum with participation of about 40 representatives from various CSOs, many of them being engaged in service delivery activities. Ms. Heriknaz Tigranyan, Transparency International Anti-corruption Center, presented the newly developed and circulated Draft Law on Non-governmental organizations highlighting the major areas of suggested amendments. The presentation was followed by a discussion on diverse sources of revenue generation for NGOs, mainly focusing on granting CSOs the right to carry out direct entrepreneurial activities and regulate service delegation by public agencies to CSOs. The shortcomings in current Procurement legislation too were a subject for discussion, which the participants considered an obstacle for CSOs to participate in procurement competitions announced by public bodies. Several suggestions/recommendations were made during the discussion, which would be submitted to the Working Group of Ministry of Justice.

### **Other Activities:**

#### **Cooperation with Other Stakeholders**

During the quarter, SSSRA Consortia effectively cooperated with other consortia and participated in the events/workshops organized by respective consortia partners. Particularly:

- Mission Armenia and Child Development Foundation participated in a round-table discussion at the UNICEF office about child trafficking and child sexual abuse. It was a good interactive dialogue between local CSO representatives involved in the child-

protection field with UN special speaker Maud De Boer-Buquicchio. CSO representatives raised many problems in this field, including problems related to early marriages, adoption procedures, etc.

- Eurasia Partnership Foundation organized a workshop on Communication and invited all consortia partners. The workshop was rather interesting and helpful, and participants suggested creating an “all consortia” group e-mail to keep all partners informed about the basic activities/events that will be carried out by any USAID funded consortium. Counterpart also suggested forming a smaller group of Communications/Outreach specialists to brainstorm and discuss the basic frame for the Overall Program Outreach Strategy. During the upcoming quarter, the group will meet and work in this regard.
- Counterparts' staff members also participated in a two-day International Digital Media Conference organized by Media Initiative Center aimed at introducing the modern experience of digital media content development, new tools for outreach, communication and digital story telling. The conference was followed by another two-day of more practical working seminars conducted by international experts.
- In the reporting period, another three-day training was organized by Media Initiative Center on “How to work with Media” with participation of Consortium partners. Some of the main challenges on working with Media were discussed. The training was offering opportunities particularly for PR specialists to take in consideration some of specifics on working with local Media.
- During the quarter, representatives of Counterpart and Urban Foundation participated in two working discussions organized by Community Finance Officers Association; the first discussion was on the Law on Administrative-Territorial Division of RoA; the second one was on Citizens Participation in Local Self-Government, the draft Procedure on Organizing Public Hearings and Discussions, as well as Formulation and Operation of Advisory Body adjacent to the Mayors. During the discussions, Counterpart raised many issues and made tangible and valuable suggestions.
- Prior to local referendums, Media Initiative Center organized another meeting with the representatives of Lori Marz regional TV channels aimed at introducing and discussing how media should elucidate consolidation issues so that people in communities could be more informed and well aware about the reforms. Counterpart's representative highlighted the key points and formulated specific messages for media representatives on effective elucidation of reforms taking place in the country.

## **Finance, Grants and Administration**

*Sub-agreements Timely and Accurate Reporting Ensured:* In the course of the reporting period, Mission Armenia finance team worked with the Consortium members to ensure proper performance of professional day-to-day operations in the finance area. Throughout the quarter, Mission Armenia Finance team continued focusing particular attention to the accurate and timely submission of documentation related to Financial Reporting by the partners in compliance with the applicable rules and regulations to ensure smooth implementation of programmatic activities and timely transfers of program funds.

Additionally, the templates provided by CPI were discussed and adapted to fully match and best reflect the program financial procedures to be coherent and consolidated. Thus, financial reporting forms were finalized to best ensure compliance with rules and regulations and legal requirements of RoA.

As a routine procedure, Mission Armenia sustained sufficient and appropriate control to have partners' detailed information on sub-agreement funds received, the expenditures made and planned and actual cost share amounts, to facilitate comparison of actual expenditures to the approved project budget, and to verify those expenditures, their nature, eligibility and compliance with the project objectives.

In addition to the approved financial appendices forms, the scanned copies of all relevant supporting documentation were compiled, the originals of which were reviewed during the on-site visits by Mission Armenia to the partner organizations.

This quarter, based on aspects revealed on financial reporting for the previous quarter, Mission Armenia Finance team assisted the local partners of Consortium in preparation of the Financial reports to ensure their accurate, complete and timely submission. In cooperation with Counterpart Finance and Grants team there had been conducted advisory visits to the Sub-grantee organizations to monitor and verify the documentation as well as to provide an on-site consultation. Constant information exchange, regular feedback and ad hoc discussions on successes and challenges were ensured through meetings, phone calls and via e-mail communication.

*SSSRA Grant Manual Developed.* To ensure the effective administration and management of grants to be issued within the SSSRA framework and to build the Consortium partners capacity in the above area, Counterpart worked with the Consortium partners to develop the SSSRA Grant Manual. To this end a number of working meetings were organized with Consortium representatives to develop user-friendly, effective and applicable tool. The Manual was elaborated by taking into account Consortium partners suggestions, Counterpart Armenia successful practices and lessons learned in grants management and administration as well as with careful consideration of the multi-objective nature and specifics of SSSRA. The Manual included all grants related procedures, instruments and forms and is regarded as one of the crucial stages in the Program development as Consortium three partners have no previous experience in providing grants to other organizations and limited experience in grants administering and overseeing in accordance with USAID rules and regulations.

*Standard Template for Grants RFA Elaborated and Finalized.* During the reporting period, Consortium partners elaborated and finalized the standard template of Request for Applications (RFA) for Grants (*Appendix D*). The template was developed taking into account the SSSRA Program specifics and can be applicable for all types of grants announced under the Program. It is designed to help developing good quality applications with the detailed information on problem statement, proposed methods/solutions, goals and objectives, intended beneficiaries, project implementation locations, the main activities that need to be implemented, expected results, project staffing and management. The template also provides instructions and format for the development of grant project workplan, budget, budget narrative and logical framework.

*Grantees Guidelines to Obtain a DUNS Number Finalized.* To ensure compliance with the US government regulations, Counterpart shared with the Consortium partners the detailed Guidelines for grantees to obtain a DUNS number (Data Universal Numbering System). The Guideline provides detailed information in Armenian on how to register on <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> website, provides instructions for filling in the requested

forms and specifies in details how to maintain the up-to-date information on grantee organizations using this source. The Consortium partners will share the Guideline with all the prospective grantees of the Program.

*Ongoing Capacity Building:* Throughout the quarter, Counterpart continued to work with the Consortium members to further build their institutional and professional capacities in the areas of finance, administration, grants, procurement and human resource management. The particular attention was given to the fields identified during the previous quarter.

Specifically, the ongoing consultancy to the partners was provided in their procurement-related, staff recruitment and other financial/administrative/grants issues. Several small-scale meetings have been conducted in Counterpart's and Mission Armenia's offices.

Following the suggestions from Counterpart to the Consortium members on revising their procurement manuals in consistence with the US Government procurement policies for cooperative agreements, this quarter constant discussions on evaluating the policies have been under process and separate meetings with Consortium members have being organized.

### 3. Analysis of Program Progress

Throughout the quarter, Consortium members maintained effective communication and coordination routine. Regular meetings, phone calls, e-mails with the Consortium Partners helped to further promote work effectiveness, coordination of activities and consistency in management and performance of activities and in the area of finance, grants and administration. Mission Armenia's staff regularly conducted meetings with Consortium member organizations to discuss the main activities of Program. This format proved to be successful and practical and allowed to effectively share information, exchange updates, monitor the progress and discuss the challenges in the above-mentioned areas. The four organizations forming the Program implementation consortium, although quite seasoned and skillful, have different working styles and internal procedures. However, those differences that sometimes required additional communication and coordination efforts, were overcome by time ensuring well-orchestrated implementation of the program.

Successful was the collaboration with local and central government bodies. Collaborative and supportive working relations that were established with relevant public officials, MLSA in particular, within the SSSRA program have created a solid base for effective partnership to promote fulfillment of the expected outcomes of the SSSRA program.

Basically, the program progressed in accordance with the approved Work-plan. Almost all the activities were carried out within the set timeframes, with a tilt towards the end of the deadline, for a few exceptions though.

## 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Baseline and follow up study: During the reporting period, team members of Counterpart Armenia and Mission Armenia participated in a number of meetings with Caucasus Research Resource Center Armenia (CRRC), to discuss issues related to the baseline assessment. Accordingly, household survey tool and survey questionnaire were developed, synchronized with CRRC and finalized. Further to which, fieldwork started. The respective report on baseline study is expected to be issued during the next quarter.

As mentioned in the previous report, CRRC is conducting the sociological research for the Programs that all consortia are implementing under the USAID funding covering areas for interest of all the three Consortia. Research outcomes, respectively, will be shared by all the three consortia for their further use in their programmatic activities. The results to be gained will enable the SSSRA team to scientifically and objectively assess the level of awareness of citizens on social service provider organizations and other relevant infrastructures and measure degree of citizens' satisfaction concerning social services.

Performance Management System (PMS) Tools Designed:

Throughout the quarter, Consortium partners underwent a collaborative brainstorming and mutual support process towards the design and ultimate productivity of the program's Performance Management System. Towards this purpose, Counterpart Armenia's team revisited and modified its internal monitoring and reporting tools. In particular, policy monitoring and advocacy report templates were developed and Counterpart Armenia's event, training and public outreach reports were revisited to adjust to current programmatic requirements. The developed templates were further elaborated and synchronized with Mission Armenia's available databases to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the project. These tools are designed to serve as basis for the development of the PMS intended for the use of Consortium partners, CIGs and partner CSOs to compile all program data and enable to follow indicator development as it occurs. Currently, efforts are being made with Mission Armenia's IT team to find best IT solutions for the development and launch of the system.

## 5. Best Practices and Challenges

Challenges:

According to the SSSRA Work-plan, the monitoring process of the ISS is envisaged for the second half of 2015, and Consortium has done all the preparatory activities to be ready for timely start-up of the monitoring. However, the implementation process of the ISS reform by relevant public stakeholders has been proceeding with great delays. It is a sad fact to state that the ISS reform is still at its initial phase that of an establishment in the planned communities without observing the MLSA planned schedule.

### Best Practices:

Consortium partners successfully arranged the kick-off meetings, the effective and consolidated approach of which resulted in a set of proactive and participatory discussions with noteworthy and constructive suggestions and recommendations. Along with due and timely routine management/coordination issues, Partners also shared their best practices on organization of community meetings and thanks to that consolidated approach they were successful to bring together state and local authorities, CSOs, active citizens and beneficiaries, business and media representatives, as well as other stakeholders with relevant knowledge and experience in the sphere.

**Naira Hovsepyan** and her co-workers, most of whom have various disabilities, attended the SSSRA kick-off meeting in Sevan. They liked the project idea and decided to join the local CIG in order to be able to advocate for a general challenge: unequal business conditions versus large factories that make their business not competitive and viable in the market.

Even though Naira herself suffers from severe hearing and speaking imparity, however, this is not an obstacle any more for her to get involved in societal life. Today Naira is one of active members of Sevan Civic Initiative Group.

Because of numerous social-economic issues, hardships people were facing in the country, general mistrust and apathy, people were believed to be inactive and unwilling to commit their time and efforts. Yet, kick-off meetings held in target communities proved the opposite. Representatives from all social groups, LG officials, public and CSO sectors equally showed interest and commitment towards CIG activities. In some cases, even though certain communities

were not projected for targeting under the SSSRA program, however, they were enthusiastic to join CIGs that were established in other communities. That was the case with Martuni community, the SSSRA program does not target it, nevertheless, community members have great interest and are eager to travel to neighboring Tshambarak community to join their co-thinkers - a trend observed in other communities as well.

Consortium pursued an important objective of receiving direct feedback from participants on specific priorities and concerns for each of the selected communities, their approaches for possible solutions, their willingness to get involved in such activities and attitude on their own role and participation in the process of problem solving. The participants of kick-off meetings discussed a variety of significant issues and problems that are of primary importance raising numerous issues on a wide range of major problems regarding disability, pension system, labor market, inefficient and non-targeted assistance, ISS, etc.

Local governments were similarly interested in the success of the Program. As the closest authority to the public, they are very well aware of the needs and constrains of the population and therefore it was in their best interest to have some of the social problems of their citizens alleviated by making social support services more efficient and targeted.

“I was very happy to learn that this Consortium is implementing a program focusing on public oversight and awareness-raising on social sector reforms as well as participatory processes. Usually, I wonder what I can do, how I can improve my life, the life of my society, the life of my country. With many ideas and questions on my mind, I came to this meeting. Couldn't do otherwise,”- stated **Nune Mirzoyan from Martuni**

“You have Municipality’s full support and encouragement in your effort to monitor the reform. This is our chance and duty to take ownership of the reform, pinpoint any problem and pressure the government to improve.”

**Mr. R.Ghukasyan, Mayor of Sevan, Gegharkunik Province**

Mayor of Sevan, Mr.R.Ghukasyan and Governor of Lori Marz, Mr. Arthur Nalbandyan also joined the kick-off meetings. At the meeting organized in Vanadzor, Mr.Nalbandyan welcomed the participants, attached great importance to the Program and expressed his willingness to provide any kind of support to for its smooth and successful implementation. He also noted that previous experience with implementing partners proved to be very successful and effective with rather tangible outcomes.

“The changes emanate from awareness; the State is also in need of information from the ground. If you don’t know what your beneficiaries think, you will eventually waste your time and resources with limited chances to have a positive impact” - believes **Arthur Hakobyan, Head of State Employment Agency of Kapan.**

Thus, the conducted kick-off meetings did play a positive role: today we have many motivated people available in all the target communities. The discussions helped them to signify their involvement in the process of Social Sector Reforms. At this stage, we have groups of community members with restored hope and confidence that their participation can have a

decisive role in the betterment of the reform process.

## 6. Expenditures

For this quarter, all the expenditures were made according to the pre-approved budget. There were no major cost overruns or high unit costs. Besides, all the expenditures were based on the best combination of price and quality. All the financial data are detailed in the Financial report submitted by Consortium to USAID/Armenia.

## 7. Programming Priorities for Next Quarter

The following activities are to be carried out in the course of the next reporting period:

1. Conduct 2 trainings on CIG Mentors’ capacity building
2. Conduct 34 trainings for 17 CIGs on social reforms and advocacy
3. Conduct a 2-day ToT in Advocacy for CIGs, partner CSOs and members of the Consortium
4. Conduct capacity-building trainings/seminars for CIGs on different topics (event organization, public hearings, etc.)
5. Conduct four trainings for 17 CIGs on citizen engagement.
6. Develop value chain mapping tools for civil society’s involvement in the reform areas

7. Conduct Grants Management and Administration Training for Consortium representatives
8. Finalize the selection process of 4 partner CSOs
9. Provide assistance in building the capacity of four CSOs.
10. Prepare and conduct 17 annual town-hall meetings
11. Hold town hall meetings in 12 target communities
12. Establish collaboration with local and national Government to ensure access and support for CSOs to lead the monitoring of the selected reforms
13. Get involved in all working groups of MLSA to work on the improvement and adjustment of monitoring and outreach tools.
14. Support and facilitate mechanisms for CSOs to foster civic awareness of social sector reforms
15. Inform Project beneficiaries about the reform through meetings, print-outs, etc.
16. Collect and analyze citizens' concerns about the ISS across Armenia
17. Produce and publish 1 type of information leaflet on social service reforms
18. Develop and publish 1 brochure on ISS
19. Develop and publish 1 poster on ISS a Talk-Show

## **Part II: Appendices**

The report has four Appendices attached. These are:

- Appendix A: Photo Report
- Appendix B: Guide on Formation and Operation of CIGs (Draft)
- Appendix C: Advocacy TOT Module
- Appendix D: Grants RFA Template
- Appendix E: Monitoring Tools (Draft)