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CULTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION
IN ARMENIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore is there culture of volunteerism and civic participation in Armenia. Volunteering is an essential element in citizenship and in establishing a sense of community; volunteers can make a tremendous contribution to society by giving freely of their time and talents, their energy and enthusiasm, and their experience. Volunteers play an essential part in the diverse activities of the voluntary and public sectors. If volunteer is highly active inside an organization or in a community - he or she is positively relates to being active in local politics.

The paper reviews the current situation in Armenia regarding the issue of volunteering and civic participation. The answers to the hypothesis and the research questions were found with the help of two surveys conducted among randomly selected households and non-governmental organizations. Results support the hypothesis that the culture of volunteering in Armenia is very weak and government authorities do not fully recognize the importance of civic participation. Based on the survey results the paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations.

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Introduction

Volunteerism is a key aspect of civil society, because it is made up of organized activities in which individuals make a deliberate choice to participate. Civil society highlights one basic precondition of democracy: state power has to be monitored, engaged with, and be accountable through engaged citizen action. Thus, civic and political participation is fundamentally important in democratic society. Some researches state that now the civic participation, vitality and social capital has declined, while other scholars argue that now civic life and forms of civic participation are in a period of reform; there are new kinds of voluntary organizations, and there is a high level of volunteering, social capital and civic engagement.

The purpose of this research is mainly exploratory which aim to find out is there culture of volunteerism and civic participation in Armenia.

The paper begins with the literature review, sets the hypothesis and the research questions discussed in this study, and provides description of the methodology used to test the hypothesis and the research questions. The finding section provides the results of the survey. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations.

Research Questions

The research questions of this paper are chosen in a manner to reveal the main purposes of this essay. The research questions of this paper are as follows:

1. Are people encouraged through diverse formal and informal mechanisms to become volunteers?
2. What are the motives for volunteerism?
3. Do authorities recognize the importance of civic engagement in the provision of public service and decision-making process?
4. What are the major forms of volunteerism?
5. What are the major forms of civic engagement?
6. Is there any connection between volunteering and civic participation?

This research is exploratory which aims to find out the answers of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is no culture of volunteering in Armenia.

H2: Government authorities do not fully recognize the importance of civic participation.

To obtain data for supporting hypothesis case study is implemented. Review of primary and secondary data, including books, reports, publications, etc. and analysis of existing statistics conducted by CIVICUS was done to find out the current situation in Armenia regarding the issue of volunteering and civic participation. CIVICUS is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

Chapter 1. General Review of the Concept of Volunteerism and Civic Participation and Historical Perspective on its Origin

1.1 Background, Definition and General Description of the Civil Society, Concept of Volunteerism and Civic Participation

Notions of volunteerism and civic participation are closely intertwined with the general concept of civil society. To understand what volunteerism and civic participation are we need first to look what civil society means, for the definition and understand why there is a need for civic participation and volunteerism in civil society.

As Hyden and Hailemariam (2003) state civil society remains an umbrella concept that means a lot of different things to different people and, thus, in academic contexts means little, if anything. Civil society has historically been associated with the rise of democracy in both Europe and North America. This is not the place for a review of its philosophical origins, but it is important to emphasize that it is a product of a specific historical evolution associated with the Enlightenment (Hyden and Hailemariam, 2003). The emergence of civil society in Eastern Europe is connected with perusing democratic projects of all kinds in freedom from bureaucratic state power. It plays an important role in governance and development around the world. It highlights one basic precondition of democracy: state power has to be monitored, engaged with, and be accountable through engaged citizen action. Moreover, there should be demand for political rights, particularly civil rights, right to freedom of expression and to form association. Civil society consists only of voluntary agencies. As Chandhoke (2007, p.354) states it “people struggling against authoritarian regimes had demanded civil society; what they got instead was NGOs.” For de Tocqueville (1835, 1840), civil society limits the state; for Hegel (1821), civil society is a necessary stage in the formation of the state; for Marx, civil society is the source of the power of the state; and for

Gramsci (1929-1935), civil society is the space where the state constructs its hegemony in alliance with the dominant classes.

The importance of civil society and its negative impact on democratic development become significant. As Howard (2002) mentioned, citizens of transition societies deprived of opportunities to develop democratic practice being apart from participating in civil society organizations. The reason why civil society is important for democracy has to do with the direct influence of voluntary organizations as that Theda Skocpol (1999, p. 70) calls “a source of considerable popular leverage” on the political process. According to this argument, civil society organizations, which represent the aggregate opinion, interests, and preferences of their members, can protect citizens from potentially unjust laws and policies and promote legislation that their members favor. Therefore, their voices and views are hardly represented in the political decision-making process. As Howard (2002, p. 165) mentioned, “The distinguishing element of post communist democracy is the troubling but not fatal weakness of its civil society.”

It is fact that congregations draw people into volunteering and the meaning of volunteering in people's lives; the amount and nature of civic involvement in the United States has changed due to religion.

In their research Becker and Dhingra (2001) found that congregations foster the strong connections that are necessary for a vital civic life. Congregations create social ties between attenders which increases volunteering.

1.2 Definition of Volunteerism

“Voluntarism is a key aspect of civil society, because it is made up of organized activities in which individuals make a deliberate choice to participate.” (Bekkers 2005, p. 198). Participation of voluntary associations is studied very intensely because it contributes to a

healthy democracy. Citizens participate in voluntary associations not only to advocate their interests in politics, but also to find meaning in life, to express their social identity, to contribute to the well being of others, and to improve their chances on the labor market-among many other things (Becker and Dhingra, 2001). As Wilson (2000) defines volunteering is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization. Volunteering is an activity that produces goods and services. It means acting to produce a “public” good. Volunteering is undertaken of one’s own free will. Volunteering is also some kind of helping activity. It is “proactive rather than reactive and entails some commitment of time and effort.” (Wilson 2000, p. 216) It should not be confused with caring; there are some differences between these two activities: caring is more emotional labor towards people for whom one has personal attitude, there is a level of obligation implied by the care relationship; volunteerism is more formalized and public and there is no level of obligation. Volunteerism is an essential element in active citizenship and in establishing a sense of community; volunteers can make a tremendous contribution to society by giving freely of their time and talents, their energy, enthusiasm, and their experience. Volunteering empowers individuals, and enhances social cohesion. Moreover, volunteers increase the influence and capacity of organizations. The organization which has volunteers is more effective and efficient (Tadevosyan and Hakobyan, 2010). They bring new skills and perspective to organizations. Besides, community indirectly benefits from voluntary labor. It includes creating healthier environment, strengthening the stability of the local community and improving community-government relations (Peterson, 2004). Voluntary activity is dynamic and innovative. Getting youth interested in volunteer work is a way of teaching new attitude and behavior. Not only community benefits from volunteering but also people who volunteer. According to Stephan (1991) volunteers are more physically healthy people even in old age, moreover score higher on measures of functional ability and are at lower risk of

mortality. What is interesting is that most of the health benefits accrue to those who volunteer in connection with a church. However, it is also most likely that healthier people are more likely to volunteer. Good health is preserved by volunteering (Wilson, 2000). Also, a volunteering effects positively to the mental health, as it is a way for people to become integrated into their community. Volunteering increases self-esteem and self-confidence which in turn increases overall life satisfaction (Peterson, 2004). When people volunteer they believe that they can make a difference in the world, and this feeling protects them from depression. Thus, volunteers indeed value the importance of working to improve their communities, aiding the less fortunate, and doing something for their country than non volunteers. They also “rank the life-goals of personal charity and helping others higher than non volunteers.” (Wilson 2000, p. 219). The typical volunteer is a person with average education and income, actively attends church, and is possibly a parent.

Reasons for volunteering may vary. Motivation plays the most important role in volunteering. Most often people volunteer to help others, to make difference, to gain work experience, to feel needed etc. Clary and Snyder (1999) adopted a functional approach to understand the motivations that encourage people to become volunteers and sustain their efforts over time. They identified six personal and social functions potentially served by volunteering. These functions are: values - volunteer based on the important value as humanitarianism; understandings – to exercise skills; enhancement – volunteering can make the individual to feel better about him/herself; career – to gain experience; social – to strengthen his or her social relationships and protective – to reduce negative feeling.

Another research done by Peterson (2004) classified the most commonly identified motives for volunteering into six categories. The categories along with brief description of each motive are as follows: altruistic – motivated by the desire to be useful, helpful to those in need, and wanting to contribute to society; social relations – motivated by the desire to

interact with others, socialize, and make new friends; ideological – motivated by a specific cause the individual believes is highly important (e.g., fight against AIDS); status reward – motivated by indirect rewards, such as publicity, goodwill, and status in the community; material reward – motivated by tangible benefits, such as prizes, free passes, and awards offering exclusive privileges; time – motivated because the individual either has or does not have sufficient time (Janoski, Musick, and Wilson, 1998)

There are two types of volunteering; formal and informal (Wilson and Musick 1997). The examples of informal volunteering are helping friends, neighbors, and kin living outside the household and it is more private and is not organized. Formal volunteering is carried out in the organizations. There is no sense of obligation in formal volunteer work. Volunteers think that it is important to help others, without any feeling of obligation. In informal helping, there is a sense of obligation as the two sides are likely to already have a relationship. “Formal volunteer work typically contributes to a collective good (e.g., help out at the soup kitchen, clean litter from parks) that makes "society" better, usually through an organization.” (Wilson and Musick 1997, p. 700) How much people help informally, on the other hand, depends more on their ability to meet the demand.

There are many indicator of volunteering. The most consistent predictor of volunteering is the level of education (Wislon, 2000). The positive impact of education on voluntary participation has been proved in many studies (Galston, 2003). Education fosters volunteering because “it heightens awareness of problems, increases empathy, and build self-confidence.” (Wislon 2000, p. 220). Also, volunteering provides the opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills. According to the finding done in Netherlands by Bekkers (2005) the higher level of education is the most important resource promoting active civic participation and volunteering. The second predictor of volunteering is social networks. The chances of volunteering are increased through extensive social networks, multiple

organizational memberships and previous volunteer experience. Social connections were measured both directly and indirectly by Wilson and Musick (1997). They state that direct method involves a self-assessment of the amount of time spent socializing. People who have conversations and meetings with friends and acquaintances more often are more likely to volunteer than people who rarely get out or who have few friends. An example of an indirect measure of social connection would be the number of children currently living in the household. The indirect measure assumes that parents who have children are more likely to be engaged in community activities as they have more social contacts and higher rates of social interaction. According to Sundeen (1994, p. :497) married people are more likely to volunteer than single people. If one spouse volunteers, there is a high chance that the other does also. However, political participation has no significant correlation with marital status. The other indicator is parental status (Wilson, 2000). According to Kahne, Chi and Middaugh (2006) parents are more likely to volunteer if there are children at home; however, parents with young children volunteer fewer hours than parents with older children. Also, the nature of volunteering is very important; children impact positively if it is a community-oriented volunteer work, when it is a professional association or union children impact negatively (Janoski et al, 1998). Also, parents play an important role in motivating their children to volunteer. Thus, one reason why teenagers are more likely to volunteer is that their parents volunteer and have taught them a positive way to think about volunteer work. Parents teach their children about social responsibility, reciprocity, and justice which give children motivations for volunteering (Wilson, 2000). It is not less important the role of school in motivating volunteerism. Children learn how to think about volunteer work through schools. Sundeen & Raskoff (1994) find that the chances a student will volunteer increase if he or she attends a school that requires or encourages community service. Children who volunteer during their school years are more likely to volunteer later in their adult life (Wilson, 2000).

People's age is also an indicator of volunteering. People of different age have different attitude towards life, which may change their approach towards volunteering. According to different surveys done before, middle age people are more likely to volunteer (Wilson, 2000). Also, retired people volunteer more, as they have more free time. According to Janoski et al. (1998) middle age people volunteer much on community-oriented work, political and ethnic group services, and old age people volunteer much on service organizations, recreational clubs and agencies to help the elderly. This is because people do the work from which they might one day benefit. In their research Kahne et al (2006) find out that young females tend to volunteer more than young male. Gender volunteering depends on human capital, motivations and beliefs, and social resources. "Females score higher on measures of altruism and empathy, attach more value to helping others, and feel guilty when they have not been compassionate." (Wilson 2000, p. 227) Many women see their volunteer work as an inseparable role as wives and mothers. Gender differences based on what kind of work they do. For example, women are less likely to be found in public, political activities and in leadership positions. Thus, the strongest attachment was shown by volunteers who are highly educated, had children in the household and interacted frequently with their friends and neighbors (Wilson & Musick 1999). Income can be considered another indicator for volunteering. As the statistics show wealthy people are three times more likely to volunteer than poor people. An interesting research was done by Stubbings and Humble (1984) according to which lowest unemployed people and homemakers are less likely to do volunteer work. Also the positive effect of employment on volunteering is stronger for women than men. In another research (Wilson & Musick 1997) the authors find a connection between religiosity and volunteering. Religiosity increases the opportunity that people will volunteer. Religious organizations tell people how to serve, and provide personal contacts,

committees, meeting spaces, phone numbers, transportation etc. According to Sirianni (2002), historically, churches have promoted the culture of benevolence. Thus churches are institutions for treating benevolence which in turn fosters volunteering.

1.3 Definition of Civic Engagement

There are different definitions for citizen involvement (CI); citizen participation, public participation, political participation, and civic engagement. According to Gallant, Smale, Arai (2010), public participation includes four types: citizen action such as lobbying and protest, citizen involvement such as public hearings and citizen surveys, electoral participation such as voting and campaigning for political candidates, and obligatory participation such as paying taxes and performing jury duty. According to Yang and Callahan (2005) CI is the government efforts to involve citizens in administrative decision making and management processes. Political participation involves voting in elections, contacting elected officials, and campaigning for political candidates. On the other hand, civic engagement takes many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. Citizen involvement especially, in involvement in government decision making process, makes it possible to increase government responsibility, improve government performance, citizen responsiveness, decision legitimacy, and trust in government.

There are two kinds of CI: direct and indirect. In citizen indirect involvement elected officials and professional administrators act in the best interest of citizens and the state, while direct democracy suggests that citizens are the "owners" of government and should therefore be involved in the state decision making process (Yang and Callahan, 2005). An interesting research was done by Nye, Zelikow, & King, (1997) in which they prove that distrust in government makes government perform better and be more accountable and responsive. In their study Yang and Callahan (2005) compare community size and form of government.

They found out that in larger communities citizens less willing to participate in civic organizations and government decision making, but the governments of larger communities are more likely to sustain more civic participation efforts. They are more likely to have the necessary resources for civic participation such as budget, staff, space, and technology. On the other hand, governments in smaller communities are less likely to create civic participation opportunities because smaller communities tend to be more homogeneous and few issues can be challenged.

In his article titled “Civic Education and Political Participation” Galston (2003) states that civic disengagement is a problem. In his words “I believe that the increasing civic detachment of the young cannot be regarded with equanimity.” (p. 30) For debating higher education finance, job training, and family policy citizens should become more engaged. The author offers an old-fashioned argument from obligation. The young generation enjoys the benefits from their membership in a stable, prosperous, and free society. In fact, these benefits must be changed and formed by each generation and the involvement of young generation in the development of public institutions and processes is vital. Moreover, citizenship is positively related to the people’s self-development. Also, political engagement helps develop capacities that are intrinsically important. According to the author “it helps to gain enlarged interests, a wider human sympathy, a sense of active responsibility for oneself, the skills needed to work with others.” (p. 52) Civic knowledge is fundamentally important as it was proved that civic knowledge promotes support for democratic values. The more people know about the workings of government, the more likely they are to support the core values of democratic self-government. Moreover, civic knowledge promotes civil and political participation. Civic knowledge helps citizens to understand their interests as individuals and as members of groups. It helps citizens learn more about civic affairs. The more knowledge people have, the more consistent their views over time on political affairs.

This does not mean that people do not change their views, but they do it without changing their minds. Thus, civic and political engagement should be achieved through civic education. Galston suggests school-based civic education which should include government, civics and democracy courses.

School-based civic education can have more than one positive outcome. For example, it enhances students' intention to vote, to work on local problems, to join voluntary associations, and to follow the news; it encourages civic and political engagement; it offer students the chance to engage in discussions of relevant issues and to take part in activities that help put a "real-life" perspective on classroom learning (Galston, 2003).

The research done by Ingen and Meer (2009) shows that high school government course has positive correlation with pupils' motivation to participate and volunteer. High-school government courses support development of key elements of social capital (i.e., norms for civic commitment and engagement, social trust, and knowledge of social networks) as a means to promote civic and political participation.

1.4. Connection between Volunteering and Civic Participation

Volunteering and civic participation have reciprocal effect; when people volunteer they draw into social participation more frequently, which in turn fosters pro-social attitudes. Meanwhile, social participation provides the right skills and social contacts for volunteering. Likewise, volunteering encourage membership in organization, involvement in political campaign where community problems are solved (Hyden and Hailemariam, 2003). Volunteers play an essential part in the diverse activities of the voluntary and public sectors. If volunteer is highly active inside an organization or in a community - he or she is positively related to being active in local politics. Volunteers are likely to be more politically active than non-volunteers. In their research Hamilton and Fenzel (1988) prove that adolescent

volunteers are more society responsible people and more interested in serving the public interest. Moreover, high school pupils are more likely to be engaged in political affairs, for example, to work for political campaign.

However, the inspiration of pro-social attitudes appears to be much more effective a method of encouraging volunteering. There is a clear reciprocal effect. One way of encouraging a civic-minded population is to get them into volunteering and enjoying it. As Ingen and Meer (2009, p. 108) have argued, "Fulfillment precedes caring, rather than deriving from it." But it is equally true that the supply of volunteer labor is increased by getting people to think about their obligations as citizens-fostering tolerance, "fellow-feeling, and empathy-and boosting people's civic skills and self-confidence about how they can make a difference." (Ingen and Meer 2009, p. 108)

Chapter 2. Historical Development of Civic participation and Volunteerism in Armenia

2.1 Civil Society in Armenia

During the communist era, numerous social and political constraints limited civic engagement; this potentially slowed the process of democratization in Armenia. Currently, citizens in Armenia are not strongly engaged in political processes, discussions and decision-making both at the central and local (community) level. They do not feel themselves an important part of local government and responsible for policy making processes within the community. Public awareness of local self-government processes is very weak, which does not allow the citizens to actively engage in decision-making process. However, the development of different forms of civic engagement is critical to establish democracy.

In some ways (as non-formal and self-organized associational life), civil society in Armenia has a very long history. Armenia, being one of the world's oldest civilizations, through its history was invaded by different nations (Greeks, Romans, Persians, Byzantines,

Mongols, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, and Russians). However, despite the domination and oppression by various nations, and even the absence of statehood, Armenians showed different forms of self-organization, developed a strong survival system of volunteerism within the church and community (Hakobyan and Tadevosyan, 2010).

As it mentioned above, during the communist era, civic engagement was limited by different social and political constraints. During the Soviet rule all formal organizations and associations were controlled by the authoritarian state. Moreover, they mostly served for state's ideology about Communism (Blue and Ghazaryan, 2004). However, Perestroika in 1988 was the beginning of modern social movements within Armenian society. During that period Armenian volunteers naturally responded and assisted earthquake victims of 1988 and helped refugees from Azerbaijan and other vulnerable groups.

As was indicated previously, a new type of civil society emerged after independence. According to the data made in 2006, there are 4,000 non-governmental organizations, 68 political parties, 46 religious groups and 600 registered mass media units (although in reality 200 were active) in Armenia. In this period decentralization strategies were established in Armenia. Thus, general structure of civil society organizations exists in Armenia, but the extent to which these organizations actively influence social and political processes and government control is weak.

It is obvious that Armenia still faces many challenges that remained from the previous Soviet system, but there is a lot of progress being made. For example, Armenia still learns to liberalize its economy, build democratic structures and integrate itself with the international community. Armenia ratified the basic conventions and agreements of the international system, and has joined important international organizations such as the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe. It has also established diplomatic relationships with 94 countries and has become an active member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the political alliance of former-Soviet countries).

All civic rights as well as rights relating to housing, education, employment, medical care and social security are protected by the new constitution of Armenia, adopted in 1995. Moreover, Armenia adopted number of international conventions specifically protecting women's rights, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 1951 ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, the Employment and Occupation Convention, the 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage. However, the adopted laws and conventions very often are not implemented or are not implemented properly.

2.2 Volunteering and Civic Participation in Armenia

Volunteering in Armenia has different forms; “compulsory volunteering” which was implemented in Soviet government through providing free service to public projects, and “freewill volunteering” such as after the 1988 earthquake and during Karabakh conflict, when people voluntarily assisted vulnerable people.

Despite the historical practice of civic participation and volunteerism within Armenia, participation within community organizations is currently quite limited. Moreover, although there are many public organizations in the country, their impact and influence is small.

According to the population survey done by the CIVICUS CSI (2005-2006), 80% of citizens were involved in volunteer work. However, this volunteering involve assistance to neighbors, friends, co-workers, or the poor (refugees, single persons, handicapped or disabled persons) than to working with formal NGOs or for government organizations. Only 8.2% of the survey respondents do voluntary work for at least one socially based civil society

organizations. Thus, the major form of volunteering in Armenia is informal, which means that volunteering is often concentrated around family or friends rather than within the community and society. The reason could be the paternalistic nature of both the Soviet system and the Church, which have affected Armenia's sense of personal and community responsibility. As a leftover from the Soviet era, citizens still consciously or subconsciously believe that the State is responsible for the overall well being of society. According to the same population survey done by CIVICUS CSI (2005-2006), only 15.9% of citizens participate in communal activities. Though, a great number of Armenians readily participate in activities such as attending community meetings for discussing community problems. For example, CIVICUS CSI Community sample survey (2003-2006) found that 64% of the respondents had participated in community level discussion. On the other hand, the level of participating in decision-making on the formulation and design of local policies is low (Babajanyan, 2008). The low level of citizens' civic activeness, and the even lower level of any initiative shown by them in pursuing any kind of collective solutions for their problems is because of the stereotype of overwhelming majority, which is reflected in the idea that collective actions must be carried out only when it is necessary to oppose some negative processes or phenomena. Most often, people protest activity when particular rights and freedoms of citizens are violated. However, violations citizens' rights and freedoms take place very often in our country, while the level of acts of protest against them remains low. In most cases, our citizens do not try to solve their problems collectively by joining together in civic organizations or associations. Most often, they either rely on themselves for solving their own problems or those of their families, or they simply resolve the situation themselves and never protest. This is because most Armenian citizens do not feel confident that any leader or activist of civic initiatives and civic associations and organizations can support them. The ICSR survey revealed that in cases known to the respondents where attempts were

made to realize some idea through collective action, for the most part they turned out to be successful. But this does not prevent most of our citizens from rating collective action intended to solve social problems as having little effect, because this majority is prepared to engage in civic action only in ways that do not require them to invest their own resources of time, intelligence, and professional training. This majority has a negative attitude toward situations that would require them to make some kind of effort and spend their own personal or family resources in order to solve social problems, and, after which, other citizens might enjoy the benefits of these solutions without having to incur such costs themselves.

Methodology

To obtain data for supporting hypothesis case study is implemented. The questionnaire was administered to 60 people living in multi-apartment buildings on one street in Arabkir community of Yerevan and to three NGOs of Armenia overall 30 employees (10 in each NGO). Random selection process was used. The respondents were from 18 to 70 years old, and were selected according to “the next birthday principle”. In case of refusal or empty apartment the scheme of going the next door was used. Face-to face interviews were conducted lasting 15-25 minutes using a pre-designed survey instrument. There was no special representation in terms of gender, age group, and educational levels. Finally, the database was produced in SPSS format. Due to small number of cases, hypotheses are not tested with statistical rigor.

Findings

Household survey

More than half of the respondents (55 %) have not volunteered at any time (see Table 2). 55.6 percent of all respondents who have volunteered said that they volunteered based on the important value as humanitarianism “I feel it is important to help”, in the second place is the answer “I feel compassion towards people in need”. Only 7.4 percent of respondents believe that volunteering is the essential part of any citizen’s obligation (see Table 4).

The main sources of information through which these people know about volunteering opportunities are friends and neighbors (see Table 5). The survey found out that more than half of households 59.3 % have done informal volunteering, namely helped their neighbors and took care of neighbor’s child/children (see Table 6).

The noteworthy fact here is that more than half of all respondents (55 %) stated that there was no encouragement which would promote volunteering (see Table 7). The answer to the question “How important do the authorities consider public participation in decision-making?” was mostly negative; 65 % of respondents do not believe that authorities recognize the importance of volunteerism and civic engagement in the provision of public service and decision-making process (see Table 8). What is more attractive is that there was no “very important” answer for this question. The major forms of civic participation for households is voting 83.3 %, second place is community based participation; 23.3% responded that they worked to better their community (see Table 9). The question “How likely is that you will participate in public discussions about the legislation on orphanages, if you help orphanages on a volunteer basis?” was asked with the purpose to reveal the connection between volunteering and civic participation. However, the connection between volunteering and civic participation is obvious; 65.2 % stated that they would participate in public discussions about the legislation on orphanages; if they helped orphanages on a volunteer basis (see Table 10). However, this question has some limitations; the findings would be more reliable if the question was asked to the volunteers of orphanages.

NGO survey

More than half of NGO respondents (63.3%) answered that they had volunteered at any time (see Table 2). 52.6 percent of all respondents volunteered based on the important value as humanitarianism “I feel it is important to help”, the second place share “I receive financial rewards” and “I feel compassion towards people in need” answers (see Table 4). For employees the main source of information through which they know about volunteering opportunities are colleagues, the second place are friends (see Table 5). The major form of volunteering is formal for NGO employees, namely in NGO sector or government institutions (see Table 6). The survey found out that NGO employees believed that their organization promoted volunteer and civic participation through various activities; however, 26.7 stated that there was no encouragement (see Table 7). Employees in the NGOs believed that government authorities did not recognize the importance of volunteerism and civic engagement in the provision of public service and decision-making process. In the question of “How important do the authorities consider public participation in decision-making?” 51.7 percent of all respondents answered “very unimportant” and 24.1 answered “somehow unimportant” (see Table 8). The most common civic participation for employees in the NGO is voting; 73.3 percent participated in the election’s voting process. The survey find out that NGO employees are more active in political participation; the second major civic engagement is participating in political rallies. The connection between volunteering and civic participation is also obvious for NGO survey; 55.5 % of employees stated that they would participate in public discussions about the legislation on orphanages, if they helped orphanages on a volunteer basis.

Conclusion

As the findings and analysis suggest the first hypothesis which is “There is no culture of volunteering in Armenia” is partially supported by the findings. According to the findings, more than half of households answered that there was no encouragement which would promote volunteering, more than half of households stated that they had not volunteered. While more than half of employees believed that their organizations encouraged volunteer participation through various activities, moreover, 63.3% of NGO employees had volunteered. However, neither households, nor NGO employees believed that volunteering is the essential part of every citizen’s obligation (see Tables 2, 4 and 7).

The second hypothesis which is “Government authorities do not fully recognize the importance of civic participation” is On account of findings, neither households nor NGO employees believed that authorities recognized the importance of civic engagement in the provision of public service and decision-making process. The findings show that no household answered “very important” to the question, and only one NGO employee answered that authorities consider civic participation in the decision-making process “very important”. (See Table 8) Thus, by the findings it may be stated that the hypothesis is supported.

Recommendation

As the survey found out, volunteering in Armenia is not an essential part of every citizen’s life and is not considered as citizen’s obligation. Moreover, about two third of respondents thought that government authorities do not recognize the importance of civic participation.

Based on the analysis and results of this study the following recommendations can be given:

1. Civil society organizations, particularly NGOs and various interest groups should educate community members on engagement in decision-making process and highlight the importance of civic participation. But the process of encouragement is

reciprocal. The way governments support organizations and people to promote volunteering and civic participation is also very important. Government should develop policies and programs for promoting volunteering and civic participation; also it should give some privilege to those organizations which promote volunteer and civic activities. One example will be to exempt organizations from social security tax for volunteers. Organizations such as Churches play an important role in formulating people's obligations and beliefs. Thus, congregations can foster the strong connections that are necessary for a vital civic life.

2. Given the fundamental importance of civic and political engagement in a democratic society, one strategy for encouraging volunteering and civic participation will be to ensure that lessons of civic duty and social obligations are learned early and well. For that reason, it is recommended to establish community-service requirements as conditions of graduation from high schools. With the help of mandatory volunteering system students will return to volunteering after graduating from the schools. However, there can be negative effect of mandatory volunteering as well, if there is a high level of external control.
3. Also, public awareness and interest regarding the issue of volunteering and civic participation should be raised with the help of mass media. Since most perceptions about the world largely depend on the information received from mass media, one way of forming and/or changing public opinion is exposing the public to more channels of information by providing broader opportunities for mass media choice.
4. Organizing civic participation activities through Web sites can be very useful tool for promoting civic participation. The development of technology makes it easier to initiate this kind of activities.

5. Based on the survey results majority of NGO employees believe that their organization promote volunteering through various activities, however, 16.7 percent of respondents still think that there is no encouragement for volunteering. Volunteers are valuable human resources that can directly contribute to achievement of the organization's mission. Thus, organizations should have and act based on the Policy on Volunteering, which may include the description of all stages of the involvement of volunteers -including managing the recruitment process, keeping volunteers, supervising, supporting and evaluating them. The value of volunteering should be appreciated and widely advertised through various events, ceremonies, awards.

Limitation and Further Research

It is necessary to mention, however, that the results of the present study have to be treated with certain caution. As any research study, this one also had its limitations.

First of all, only some indicators were given to find out is volunteering and civic participation encouraged in Armenia, so future studies should involve as many indicators as possible.

Second, the study has been based on small sample size and therefore created difficulties to make generalization. To describe the entire picture in Armenia regarding the issue of volunteering and civic participation the future study should significantly increase the sample size.

The research was exploratory in design and does not have tests of confirmatory power. Measures and instruments can be improved as well.

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APPENDIX

RESULTS OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Table 1: Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	39	65
Male	21	35

Table 2: Have you volunteered at any time?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	45
No	33	55

Table 3: Have you volunteered by your own initiative, by someone's advice or some organization's advice?		
	Frequency	Percent
My own initiative	19	70.4
By someone's advice	6	22.2
By some organization's advice	2	7.4

Table 4: Why did you volunteer?		
	Frequency	Percent
I feel it is important to help	15	55.6
I feel compassion towards people in need	4	14.8

It is important for me that I feel that I am useful	2	7.4
To interact with others	2	7.4
Because volunteering is the essential part of any citizen obligation	2	7.4
I receive financial rewards	2	7.4

Table 5: How did you know about volunteer work opportunity?

	Frequency	Percent
Family members	9	33.3
TV	2	7.4
Friends	21	77.8
Internet	9	33.3
Government	1	3.7
Neighbors	4	14.8
NGO	3	11.1

Table 6: What kind of volunteer work did you provide?

<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Volunteer in NGO	13	22.0
Volunteer in government institution	4	6.8
Participate for community improvement	7	11.9
Help my neighbors	25	42.4
Take care of neighbor's child (children) free of charge	10	16.9

Table 7: How does your company/organization encourage volunteer participation?		
<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Through articles, awards, commendations, etc.	10	31.25
No encouragement	17	53.125
Information about community needs/volunteer opportunities	2	6.25
Financial donations for volunteer work	3	9.375

Table 8: How important do the authorities consider public participation in decision-making?		
	Frequency	Percent
Somewhat important	21	35.0
Somewhat unimportant	17	28.3
Very unimportant	22	36.7

Table 9: What kind of civic participation you have had during the last five years?		
<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Voting	53	57.0
Writing to public officials	6	6.5
Working to better the community	15	16.1
Trying to change unjust laws	5	5.4
Participating in political demonstrations	10	10.8
Participating in pre-election meetings	2	2.2

Table 10: How likely is that you will participate in public discussions about the legislation on orphanages, if you help orphanages on a volunteer basis?		
	Frequency	Percent
Very likely	10	21.7
Somewhat likely	20	43.5
Somewhat unlikely	8	17.4
Very unlikely	8	17.4

RESULTS OF NGO SURVEY

Table 1: Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	20	66.7
Male	10	33.3

Table 2: Have you volunteered at any time?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	63.3
No	11	36.7

Table 3: Have you volunteered by your own initiative, by someone's advice or some organization's advice?		
	Frequency	Percent
My own initiative	9	47.4
By someone's advice	6	31.6
By some organization's advice	4	21.1

Table 4: Why did you volunteer?		
	Frequency	Percent
I feel it is important to help	10	52.6
I feel compassion towards people in need	3	15.8
It is important for me that I feel that I am useful		

To interact with others	1	5.3
Because volunteering is the essential part of any citizen obligation	2	10.5
I receive financial rewards	3	15.8

Table 5: How did you know about volunteer work opportunity?

	Frequency	Percent
Family members	2	10.0
TV	2	10.0
Friends	3	15.0
Internet	7	35.0
Colleague	3	15.0
University	1	5.0
NGO	2	10.0

Table 6: What kind of volunteer work did you provide?

<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Volunteer in NGO	12	40.0
Volunteer in government institution	4	13.3
Participate for community improvement		
Help my neighbors	9	30.0
Take care of neighbor's child (children) free of charge	5	16.7

Table 7: How does your organization encourage volunteer participation?		
<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Through articles, awards, commendations, etc.	10	41.7
No encouragement	4	16.7
Information about community needs/volunteer opportunities	7	29.2
Financial donations for volunteer work	2	8.2

Table 8: How important do the authorities consider public participation in decision-making?		
	Frequency	Percent
Very important	1	3.4
Somewhat important	6	2.7
Somewhat unimportant	7	24.1
Very unimportant	15	51.7

Table 9: What kind of civic participation you have had during the last five years?		
<i>(multiple answers permitted)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Voting	53	57.0
Writing to public officials	6	6.5
Working to better the community	15	16.1
Trying to change unjust laws	5	5.4
Participating in political rallies	10	10.8
Participating in pre-election meetings	2	2.2

Table 10: How likely is that you will participate in public discussions about the legislation on orphanages, if you help orphanages on a volunteer basis?		
	Frequency	Percent
Very likely	5	18.5
Somewhat likely	10	37
Somewhat unlikely	7	25.9
Very unlikely	5	18.5