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**Social and Economic Consequences of  
Mandatory Military Service**

*Policy Paper*

*By*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AGBU- Armenian General Benevolent Union

CMS-Compulsory Military Service

DoD-Department of Defense

MMS-Mandatory Military Service

MoD- Ministry of Defense

NGO-Non Governmental Organization

PTSD-Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

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## **Abstract**

*Military service is an essential strategy for sustaining the security of the country with unresolved conflicts. Armenia is one of the post-Soviet countries that is still reliant on conscription, particularly in a “no war no peace” situation. The present policy paper aims to reveal the major social and economic consequences of mandatory military service. The policy paper utilized qualitative research method conducted from 2013 to 2014 with conscripts’ families and other people involved in the mitigating the severe consequences of the army service. The paper found that there are several social and economic problems generated by the conscription. The major finding is the gap between the existing law and implementation. The policy paper analyzed four options of solutions. It concludes that the role of government is crucial in amending the law on social security of conscripts and their families. Moreover, the short run solution is starting awareness campaign with the conscripts and their families, since unawareness is the major problem revealed from the research.*

## 1. Introduction to the problem

Military service is an essential part of the state security. It is the case for almost every country, especially if there is an external threat or a possibility of war. National Defense is a priority issue for Armenia, simply because now there is a condition when it has “no war, no peace.” Therefore, the army needs soldiers to keep the borders safe and secure. Ironically, the safety and social security of military families and for serviceman is questionable. There are many reasons for which both family and conscripts encounter social and economic hardships. Firstly, soldiers are mostly deployed after having finished school education. There are also cases when they interrupt their education and go to army already being a student. They go to army, interrupting their education and spend two years on defense. Meanwhile, families, are losing their “working hand”, since some of those conscripts were previously the wage earners for their families. Secondly, the deployment creates a stressful environment for family members. Thirdly, because of financial hardships and distance many families are unable to visit their family member in the army. The limited direct communication or even the absence of it also generates depression and stress both

to family members and to the conscript. The chart below is summarizing the aspects under the scope of this paper.

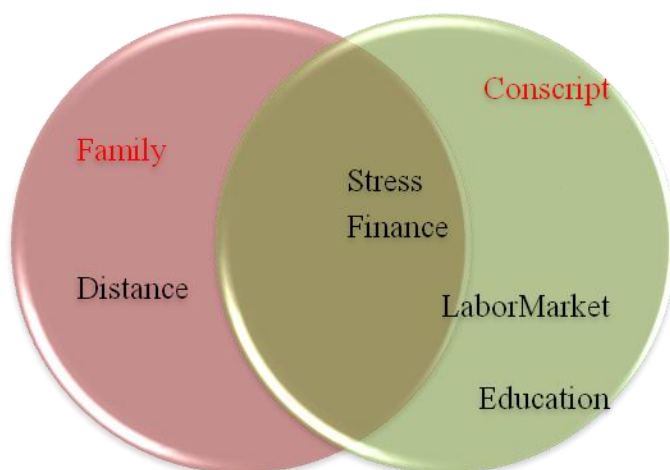


Figure 1 Summary of the Problems. Author: Marine Sargsyan

Thus, this policy paper aims to reveal the main issues concerning military families. Those issues are financial, psychological problems



for families during the military conscription. On the other hand, the policy paper investigates the major issues concerning the soldiers, such as interruption of education and its consequences and difficulty in engaging in labor market. The purpose is to find the major social and economic consequences of mandatory military service both for families and for conscripts. Furthermore, it seeks to provide possible ways of improving the situation and recommending feasible ways for problem solution.

The structure of the policy paper is as follows: Firstly, it provides a relevant literature pertaining to social and economic consequences of MMS (mandatory military service). The rationale for choosing mainly American sources is because this field is not too deeply elaborated and developed in other countries. That's why it was hard to find academic sources on this topic in the literature of post-Soviet countries, where military service is mandatory. The literature review aims to shed light on the issues highlighted in the Figure 1. It consists of two sections: one refers to problems concerning particularly to military families, the other is mainly focused on conscripts' perspective.

Secondly, the policy paper elaborates on the problem that exists in Armenia. That is, Armenian military families and conscripts encounter social and economic hardships. There are several reasons for it. However, the main issues are financial hardships, stress and lack of direct communication. These are the problems referring particularly to military families. Similarly, conscripts have problems with interrupting education and then integrating into civilian job market after completing military service.

Thirdly, the policy paper presents the methodology used to reveal the problems and concerns of military families and conscripts. This part also gives a rationale for which the

methodology is qualitative. As such, the policy problem has a sensitive nature, requiring talking to those people and listening to their stories and experiences.

Furthermore, the policy paper analyzes the main findings of the research, which is the gap between the law and implementation. There are several repercussions of this gap, which the policy paper analyzes separately. In particular, most of the family members are unaware about the privileges stated by law. Furthermore, they have lack of trust and efficacy towards the government. Most of the interviewees were not optimistic about the future of their life in Armenia. This and other issues are presented in the fifth part of the policy paper.

The next part examines possible policy options in order to solve or to some extent mitigate the negative repercussions of the MMS. This part discusses four options with their limitations and side effects. The rationale for choosing especially those options is the particular social, political environment and culture, existing in Armenia. Moreover, the paper uses also international practices to benchmark in Armenia. As such, the post-Soviet countries serve as a model for international practices for two reasons. Firstly, those countries have common past experience with Armenia in the Soviet Union, which implies that they inherited some common institutional and cultural features from their predecessors. Secondly, those countries still keep mandatory military service, which makes it easy to compare them with Armenia (see Table 3)

Finally, the paper summarizes the main findings based on the research. Moreover, it finishes with practical recommendations and provides the policy option that is implementable given the optimal time period, side effects and limitations.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature about military service and its consequences has different categorizations. Some authors stress that families are in economic hardship when the wage earner is deployed (Morris and Age 2009; Booth 2009; Winkler 1967; Wiens and Boss 2006; Drummet, Coleman, and Cable 2003; Henderson 1998; Peterson 2008; Hoshmand and Hoshmand 2007). Other authors highlight the psychological aspect of military service. They state that because of ambiguity about the service member's return families, especially children, are in stress (Rentz et al. 2007; McCubbin et al. 1980; Drummet, Coleman, and Cable 2003; Huebner et al. 2007; Britton, Ouimette, and Bossarte 2012). Another feature of military service is economic, meaning conscripts have difficulty in being engaged in labor market immediately after returning home. Some authors explain this by the fact that they mostly have secondary education and after returning home (redeployment) they encounter a barrier regarding engagement in the labor market (Angrist 1998). The following subsections discuss those issues in more detail.

### **2.1 Problems from Military Families' Perspective**

Families need social support in the case when a "working hand" has deployed. This phenomenon is what Henderson argues in his article, in which he tries to prove that spending on military personnel reduces poverty. According to the author, the primary reason for it is its impact on the less skilled sectors of the labor force (1998). Appreciating the role of the military service in life satisfaction of a serviceman, some authors hypothesized that those who had served in the army are more satisfied with their lives. The theory behind the argument was that life satisfaction is tantamount to their overall well-being (Britton, Ouimette, and Bossarte 2012). Given the interrelation between life satisfaction and the mission of the army, one of the potential solutions to this issue is building an atmosphere of assurance in military support agencies.

Moreover, as Drummet, Coleman, and Cable posit, particular organizations must be properly trained in order to take care of the military families. The authors emphasize that those organizations should focus on family and individual well-being over the life course (2003). According to Winkler, one proper solution is to offer “adequate” and “reasonable” support to families. By saying adequate, the author implies the financial condition of the family and serviceman’s situation in the army. Winkler states that the government should distinguish priorities concerning different target groups of society (1967). Overall, social support for families is essential in meeting their financial needs. Alternatively, it is palpable that there is mistrust towards the government in many countries, which hinders the efficient implementation of such types of policy.

The second dimension is the depression and stress after the deployment. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether this has the same intensity of impact as those mentioned above. Booth (2009); Winkler (1967); Clervil, Grandin, and Greendlinger (2010) highlight the significance of assisting military family having confronted with depression and stress. Nonetheless, all of them agree that the most primary concerns are relating to children since they experience a new routine after their fathers’ deployment. According to Clervil, Grandin, and Greendlinger, serviceman encounters depression, anxiety because of the new life circumstances and isolation from the others (2010). In contrast, (Elder 1986) states that those who served in the army during Korean War in 1940s have brighter future, in terms of getting married, having a child, getting a job and so on . The author claims that the veterans have more stable life compared to the nonveterans. However, the author does not exclude the fact that there were cases when veterans lost their health both physically and psychologically during Korean War. Referring to children, Morris and Age state that, children face mental health problems caused by family separation provoked by

the military service (2009). In particular, children tend to experience stress during pre-deployment period, which is conditioned by the fact that they are usually stressful knowing that their father is going to army. Their behavior during this period is very poor, meaning they are sad, thinking that they will no longer see their father. This refers particularly to younger children, since they have difficulty in imagining that after some periods later their father will return. In contrast, older children are more concerned with safety of their deployed parent (Laser and Stephens 2011).

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sad, thinking that they will no longer see their father. This refers particularly to younger children, since they have difficulty in imagining that some periods later their father will return. In contrast, older children are more concerned with safety of their deployed parent (Laser and Stephens 2011)..

Besides, the separation is more stressful if the serviceman is married. According to Pincus et al. (2001), when the young spouses are separated for a certain period, they need usual face-to-face communication in order to keep ties strong. In addition, important life events, such as birth of a child, imply presence of both parents. Ironically, military service generates additional burdens for families. Firstly, spouses usually talk to phone or via the Net, since face-to-face communication requires additional financial sources. This implies that they communicate in a constrained manner, inasmuch as indirect communication does not allow spouses to discuss very sensitive issues, given the risk of uncovering classified information. Secondly, the serviceman most probably cannot be present during his child's birth, because of army service. This creates additional stress and depression to both family members. Moreover, the mother usually has a double role. She serves both as a mother and a father for the child. That's why after redeployment, servicemen face difficulty in being involved in family life cycle as a father and also as a husband. The reason is that, the separation usually creates feeling of coldness among family members (Laser and Stephens 2011).

The reasons for depression have different nature. Yet, several authors mention that the major reason is the "ambiguous loss" of their service member (Huebner et al. 2007; Rentz et al. 2007; McCubbin et al. 1980; Bowen et al. 2003). According to Huebner et al. (2007), the uncertainty about the date of return of the conscript generates an anxiety, inasmuch as family members are afraid that the redeployment date may be changed. Moreover, ambiguity or

uncertainty bothers the family since they are not aware of the conditions in which their family member is serving (Rentz et al. 2007). Another reason is adaptation, since family need some period to cope with the new routine in the absence of their service member. In this regard, (Bell and Schumm 2000) distinguish two types of adaptation: family separation and physical risk. Family separation is associated with new routine, while physical risk relates to physical injury or death of the service member. The authors posit that in order to support families in overcoming stress, the professionals should be aware of those specific issues inherent to military families.

The stress is possible to soothe by several ways. One of the ways is prevention, meaning people are prepared to the unintended consequences; in this regard the psychological intervention is crucial. However, it is quite questionable whether this intervention can assist people, who have already experienced stress and consequently are in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In order to help people during stressful events psychological debriefing is a way of intervention. Psychological debriefing aims to intensively support people experiencing depression or stress, through specially trained professionals. This method of intervention serves a tool for mitigating post-traumatic psychopathologies. In traumatic situation people need to express their feelings rather than keeping their emotions inside. However, the person to whom they are communicating should be trained specialists with an ability to mitigate the post-traumatic stress consequences (McNally, Bryant, and Ehlers 2003).

The third dimension of the social problem is communication and transportation. In this regard, the role of society is crucial. Communities can support families retaining direct communication between service members. The direct communication also has psychological dimension, especially if there is a child, whose father serves in a distant area.

Twiss and James (1999) maintain that families having small children need social, economic and psychological support. Ironically, the long distance can be considered as a burden for direct communication (Twiss and James, 1999). In this regard Drummet et al. (2003) claim that the government should provide families with suitable and equitable ways to have a direct communication. The author highlighted the importance of direct meetings, inasmuch as communication by telephone contains risks of spreading the classified information. Moreover, the authors underscore the substantial role of direct communication in terms of boosting the efficacy of military service (Drummet et al. 2003). In the same vein, Winkler (1967) contemplates that there is a positive correlation between serviceman's personal activities and efficiency rating. The direct communication with his family is one of the augmenting features of the quality of military service. Furthermore, Winkler underlines the government's role in delivering all essential resources for better conditions of communication between family members (Winkler, 1967).

## 2.2 Problems from Conscripts' Perspective

What is the opportunity cost paid by the conscripts? This question has very different and sometimes even contradicting answers. The academic literature on the economic consequences of conscription for young servicemen has several dimensions. Some authors discuss the repercussions of conscription on the whole economy of the country (Nuria 2007; Hakobyan and



Figure 2, The chart of the consequences of conscription: Author: Marine Sargsyan

Andekyan 2000; Hansen and Weisbrod 1967; Marcus 1941). Another aspect is the impact of



conscription on career development of redeployed servicemen (Paloyo 2010; Hansen and Weisbrod 1967; Angrist 1998; Imbens and Klaauw 1995; Bauer et al. 2012; Poutvaara and Wagener 2006; Clervil, Grandin, and Greendlinger 2010). Finally, the third major issue discussed by several authors (Bjorn Miller 2002; Maurin and Xenogiani 2007; Warner and Negrusa 2005; Berck and Lipow 2011; Renshaw 1960; Routon 2013) is the impact of conscription on education. Consequently, this section will discuss and analyze all those issues separately.

### *Economy of the Country and Conscription*

Historically, conscription constituted a part of almost all European countries. According to Marcus (1941) France was the first country adopted a conscription decree after French Revolution. Thus, conscription has its roots already in 18th century. Starting from the previous century many European countries abolished conscription and shifted to voluntary or professional army. However, there are remaining countries that do not have economic capacities to turn from conscription to the professional army. Although there are several explanations of that kind of behavior, it has a negative impact on the state economy.

There is an assumption that the voluntary army is preferable for countries in transition. The reason is that it seemingly will soothe the psychology of “permanent war” (Hakobyan and Andekyan 2000). Interestingly, the same line is common also for OECD countries. The study from 1960 to 2000 showed that GDP growth is not apparent in countries with conscripted army. Stating it differently, conscription is preferred only by those countries that may not afford extra-budgetary expenditures on military spending. From the economic standpoint, the military draft is considered a tax. That is; draftees are paying this tax for their labor services, which is apparently

underpaid. In contrast, its alternative, voluntary army hires professional staff and compensates them with a competitive remuneration (Poutvaara and Wagener 2006; Knapp 1973). Thus, budget constraints are the major stalemate for countries to adopt a professional army system. The cases of Moldova, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan (countries in transition) are the vivid example of the statement (Nuria 2007).

The draft system most probably will negatively affect the economy of the country for another reason as well. The conscription has only a coercive and not an appealing power. In contrast, the voluntary army has a power to attract men labor force by offering high wage rates. As a result, men recruited in the voluntary army will have more incentives and appropriate professional skills to carry out their job responsibilities. In other words, high wage rates are considered incentives for providing high-quality military service. As a result, their productivity will be much higher from those, recruited as conscripts. High productivity will lead to an increase in aggregate output in the economy (Hansen and Weisbrod 1967). The same is difficult to apply for conscripted army system since as Poutvara and Wagener (1941) posit the lack of incentives and low wage rates make conscripts have low productivity for two reasons. Firstly, they have to serve regardless their effectiveness, which result in inefficiencies. Secondly, some of the conscripts could spend their time on receiving skills much necessary for the whole economy, rather than serving in the army as a cheap labor. Thus, conscription does not necessarily guarantee high-quality service, since it lacks the incentives that will motivate the conscripts to serve as effective and efficient as it requires.

### *Career Development and Conscription*

Since its inception, draft system generated a dilemma as whether it pushes a military service or not. The reason is that there are some intervening variables that may exempt young draftees from service. Those factors are social and economic in their nature. Some authors argue that conscription may potentially have a positive impact on career development and that it has incentive effects for young men (Hansen and Weisbrod 1967; Bauer et al. 2012; Flynn 2014). Others claim that conscription is not only a forced waste of one's discretion of utilizing its time on more productive occupations, but also has a long-term negative impact on their career development (Angrist 1998; Imbens and Klaauw 1995; Poutvaara and Wagener 2006; Clervil, Grandin, and Greendlinger 2010).

Those authors, arguing that conscription is an incentive for draftees to serve in the army, justify the argument on the basis that young men prefer ending with their compulsory service in their teen ages, rather later. For instance, young men know that potential employers will favor those already served in the army. Employers will have less incentive to hire a young man who is supposed to serve in the army since it makes them start the hiring procedure complicated and repeated (Hansen and Weisbrod 1967). Moreover, conscription gives servicemen skills, such as team building, working in a bureaucratic structure and so forth. These skills may be applied to civilian labor (Bauer et al. 2012). In addition, Flynn (2014) found that although after separation servicemen get a job with a difficulty, they receive higher wages compared to their civilian counterparts. Furthermore, there is an argument that if military conscription does not contribute to the career development of redeployed men it at least does not hinder. The research done by Alfredo (2010) showed that conscription has zero effect on career future of conscripts.

In contrast to the authors mentioned earlier, some authors ardently claim that conscription has a negative impact on servicemen's career development. Particularly, conscription takes the time of young men while they could work or invest in their human capital. The problem is that conscripts serve in the age when they mostly could learn some practical skills or work in other areas, where they are more productive. Stating it briefly, two-year conscription is equalized to one-year work experience, meaning conscripts are sacrificing one year of potential job experience (Imbens and Klaauw 1995; Angrist 1998). Similarly, Poutvara and Wagener (2006) analyzed that the conscription forces young men be a "cheap" labor in the army instead of investing in their human capital. This is a real opportunity cost for draftees since, in general; they earn incomparably lower wages than their civilian cohorts do. In contrast to those authors who claim that conscription has a positive or at least zero effect on the career development of conscripts, some authors have a somewhat different pattern. Particularly, ten years after military service, former conscripts earn 5% less than their cohorts who did not serve in the army do (Imbens and Klaauw 1995). In this regard, the conscription also has a long-run negative effect on the career of former conscripts. Furthermore, although Flynn (2014) mentions that after serving in the army former conscripts earn higher wages, Clervil, Grandin, and Greendlinger (2010) state that it happens very rare, since usually former conscripts are unable to translate their military skills and experience into civilian jobs.

### *Education and Conscription*

This subsection focuses on the interruption of education as a consequence of conscription. However, this subsection will show that the reverse may also happen. That is; for several draftees education can serve a way of avoiding conscription (Maurin and Xenogiani 2007). In

general, education is one of the opportunity costs created by conscription because similar to job experience; conscripts are usually sacrificing their education in order to serve.

General theory elaborated by several scientists maintains that conscription makes young men interrupt their education or at least delay it for a certain period. Accordingly, this period that is considered to be the most productive for investing in their human capital by studying and getting some skills is spent in the army with a low remuneration. However, most countries have certain policies for those, entered university before military service. That is; they have a right to deferment if they are studying, or they are the main wage earner of their family (Marcus 1941; Maurin and Xenogiani 2007; Warner and Negrusa 2005). Ironically, this opportunity serves a way of avoiding military service for a certain period. Additionally, given the age limits, it is apparent that these young men will eventually be exempt from military service. That is; they have incentives to study until reaching the age when they will no longer be eligible for conscription (Imbens and Klaauw 1995).

The fact that education was a way to avoid military service can be objectified by the examples of several countries. For instance, France abolished conscription in 1997. The research showed that before that event much more young French were entering universities, anticipating being exempt from conscription. However, when French shifted to voluntary army system the number of men pursuing education decreased (Maurin and Xenogiani 2007). The similar pattern was also in Italy when it abolished conscription following the paths of France and Germany. In any case, there is a slight difference between French and Italy cases. If the abolition of CMS in France resulted in a decrease in numbers of male students, Italy witnessed no significant change in this regard. The research based on 2-year data after the abolition of CMS in Italy showed that it affected only economically disadvantaged segment of the population. Although the period is

not sufficient to make a robust generalization, the results showed that after this shift fewer men from less advantaged background entered university (Di Pietro 2013; Carroll 2015).

Even taking into account all these selection biases (exemption based on education) the majority of academicians claim that conscription is an opportunity cost for draftees. The fact that draftees are trying to avoid conscription is because of their relative social costs. When calculating evasion costs with their social costs some of the draftees prefer avoiding conscription (Warner and Negrusa 2005). The social cost of a young man is the value of missed production chance in a place where his utility would be much higher than in the army. In contrast, the voluntary army is taking into account the amount of remuneration with which the potential servicemen would be convenient to serve (Poutvaara and Wagener 2006; Renshaw 1960).

### 3. Policy Problem

**There are economic and social problems for military families and servicemen.**

As the literature articulated, three main problems encountered by military families are financial, transportation and psychological burdens.

Two main problems for deployed soldiers are an interruption of education and engagement in the labor market after demobilization. These two issues may be interconnected, in the sense that interruption of education results in a lack of skills and knowledge, which are the basic requirements for the labor market. In this regard, there are two categories of soldiers. The first group comprises those, who had the intention but were unable to continue education because of deployment. Alternatively, there are cases when draftees are already students, and they interrupt their education not in schools but in higher educational institutions. The second group includes those servicemen, who were the wage earners of their families, not necessarily with high education. In this case, the problem refers both servicemen and families, since not only servicemen have almost no opportunity to develop their skills during military service, but also families are losing their wage earners.

Thus, this paper focuses on those problems viewing it both from military families' and conscript's perspective. Furthermore it observes the optimal tradeoffs for military service and social and economic security of these people.

## 4. Methodology

This policy paper utilized qualitative method in order to reveal the major problems encountered by the targeted group. The exploratory research helped to understand the root causes of the problem. The method is also longitudinal, since 20 people were interviewed from 2014 to 2015. Although interviewees were not the same, they represented the same social segment of the population. The professions of interviewees ranged from driver to teacher. This means, that they mostly represent the middle or poor strata of the population. The average age of the interviewees was 42 years old. People were found using personal contacts. The interview questions were open-ended and related to their major concerns about military service. The type of interview was face-to-face. Some of the interviewees were also interviewed by telephone and through Skype. The family members were interviewed at their houses and other places convenient for them.

At the same time, 5 in-depth interviews were conducted with key people, involved in a process of supporting military families and servicemen. They are leaders of NGOs, members of Ministry of Defense (MoD) staff, and those cooperating with MoD. It was important to hear the way of improving existing gap between the law and implementation. Furthermore, governmental decisions and existing laws on social security of military families were analyzed. In other words, the objective of the paper is to see the extent to which the existing laws touch upon the reality. Thus, the level of measurement is individual. Units of measurement for interviews are military families. Units of measurement for document analysis are existing laws and decisions on Military service.

Data analysis procedure is the following. Firstly, interviewees were asked whether it was convenient for them to be recorded. After receiving their consent, the interview was tape



recorded. Then it was transcribed. Afterwards, the text was analyzed. Particularly, the words were coded and were inputted to Excel software. Then the software created the graphs based on the frequency of the descriptors mentioned by the interviewees.

Document analysis included the law on “Social Security of the Servicemen and their families. The emphasis was put on those words and expressions that examined the financial and direct communication issues, as well as issues concerning education of the conscripts after military service. This was important in the sense that it gave an opportunity to compare the law with the reality, based on interview results. The absence of a certain article or reference to psychological assistance in the law excluded that part from document analysis. However, the policy paper views some of the articles having an implicit reference to mitigation of stress, encountered especially by the children of the conscripts.

## 5. Findings

After reviewing the documents and conducting in-depth interviews, the research findings revealed the gap between the law and implementation. As such, the document analysis and interview analysis show the main root causes for the problem. Those analyses are presented separately below.

### 5.1 Document Analysis

The aim of analyzing “RA Law on Social Security of Servicemen and their Family Members” is to see the privileges granted to these people. Since this policy paper focuses on three main issues (financial burden, distance, and psychological aspect) concerning military families, the document analysis will also be concentrated on those issues. In other words, it is crucial to examine the way the legal bases present those three issues, in order to check the extent of its implementation. Before delving into the analysis, it is worth mentioning that the law calls “*servicemen*” all those who serve for the defense forces of Armenia, including also the conscripts.

The first issue is a financial burden. Article 33 of the law states: “*Military servicemen and their families are granted with free high-quality medical aid in the corresponding departmental institution.*” However, this article does not provide specific provisions concerning the types of documents, required to submit for receiving high-quality medical care. Furthermore, this law has special point concerning the housing issue, particularly Article 34 states: “*Those servicemen, who during service have been registered as with a need of improving housing conditions, have right to receive uncompensated state subsidies for acquiring an apartment or a land.*” Thus, the financial issues are covered in the law; particularly Article 33 and Article 34 clarify types of financial supports.

The second issue is a distant location of the military unit. In this regard, the law has certain provisions. Particularly, according to Article 33 military families have a right to free health care. Moreover, the expenses related to the prices of health resort accommodations, as well as transportation costs are compensated at the expense of ad hoc allocated funds. All this procedure is in line with the rules and terms of the Government of RA. Furthermore, there is another provision referring specifically to military servicemen. Thus, Article 36 states: *“Military servicemen have a right to utilize all types of passenger transportation freely, except for taxi, regardless of the ownership type.”*

The third aspect of social consequences of military service is psychological assistance. While there is no certain reference to that issue in the law, Article 32 can serve as an alternative to that. This article refers to the vacation of military servicemen, particularly for married conscripts. The reason for considering this phenomenon as a psychological aspect is that usually children are experiencing stress in the absence of their parents. Furthermore, literature review of the present policy paper showed that children face stress during pre-deployment period, thinking that they will no longer see their father (Pincus et al. 2001; Laser and Stephens 2011). Thus, article 32 states: *“Conscripts are entitled to have up to five-day additional vacation according to their service high standings. In addition, married conscripts are entitled to another five-day vacation once per month.”* These are the legal bases, which most of the cases are not enforced. The interviews with military families revealed that their marital status did not prioritize the promotion of frequent direct communication among service member, his wife and child.

## **5.2 Interview Analysis**

This section provides the analysis of in-depth interviews with families from 2014 to 2015 and analysis of in-depth interviews with experts conducted in 2015. It consists of two subsections: problems from military families and problems from conscripts' perspective. The former subsection reveals findings based on financial, direct communication and psychological problems. The latter subsection presents analysis based on two issues concerning the conscripts, that is to say, the interruption of education and engagement in the labor market after redeployment.

### **5.2.1. Problems of Military Families**

After completing in-depth interviews with 20 families, some trends were visible already. The questions were mainly about their experience with the conscription of their service member. The interesting fact is that despite one-year interval, interviewees still mentioned the common major problems during interviews. Overall, military families, had a positive approach towards the incumbent MoD. However, their satisfaction with government support and attention towards military families was quite low. This analysis shows how families interpreted the three major issues concerning financial hardships, lack of face-to-face communications with their service member, and consequently the stress. Moreover, this analysis includes the views of experts in this field concerning the objective reasons for those problems. Although, families stated some minor problems faced during their service members' conscription, the major issues are financial hardships, lack of visits because of distance and finally stress experienced mainly by female

interviewees. In any case, even those minor problems are included in the Appendix part of the paper.

### *a. Financial Hardship*

If the army could be sustained by only its means, it would be nice news for military families. The reason is that as the interviews showed military families also "serve" for the army. Financial hardship because of mandatory military service is because of two reasons. The first reason is losing the breadwinner or "working hand" of the family. The second reason is that most of the families had to send money or some other things to their service member even sacrificing their living means.

Out of 20 interviewees, 6 confirmed that their service member was working and to some extent supported them before deployment. Consequently, conscription, practically, took their wage earner. For instance, one of the interviewees stated:

*"Before going to army my son was working and bringing money to home. Now when he is in the army, I cannot earn the money necessary to survive."*

Housewife, 37 years old, 2015

The same issue is also applicable to the other people. In fact, they survive during these two years both financially and psychologically. The law states that they have a right for certain services. As such, it serves as a compensation for their financial hardships caused by conscription. However, the majority of them (90 %) did not apply for any services. There are several reasons for that issue:

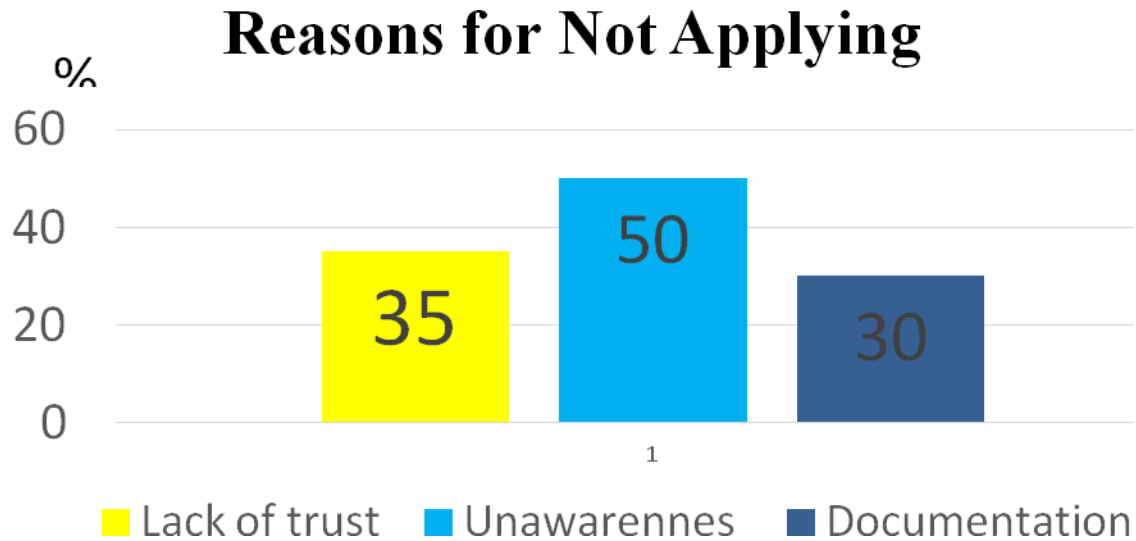


Figure 3. Graph of reasons for not applying for government support. Author: Marine Sargsyan

The graph presents the most frequent reasons for which most of the family members are not inclined to apply for support. There are people that neither trust the government nor are aware that there is an opportunity for certain services, such as free healthcare or transportation. As the graph shows, half of the interviewees are unaware about their rights. It is pertinent here to quote the piece of a speech of one expert:

*“Unawareness became a disease among us. I do not speak only concerning army. We are unaware of everything. We do not even try to be informed. Ironically, even educated people do not try to be informed. In that case, how will the next generation learn to do so? There are exceptions though. However, if someone suffers, it is because of unawareness.”* (Representative of Education Institution, AUA, 2015).

Lack of information is not a new problem in Armenia. It is the case in almost all spheres. How people should be informed is also a role of the government. Even the law is not presenting all the necessary details that people can be informed about their rights. They learn about it from their

relatives, friends and so forth. However, the law is not an effective way to inform people, since the complicated language of legal norms is not simple and graspable for ordinary people.

Documentation is another reason for being frustrated and not applying. This problem existed both in 2014 and 2015. Thus, the reality is cumbersome, and it is not easy to state that the law works as it is intended to. Interviewees claimed that they were required to provide too many documents that they prefer to pay rather than getting all the documents. However, there was a case when a mother of soldier needed the support from the government. The conscription of his son caused financial hardships. As the beginning of the paper mentioned, families encounter financial hardships for two reasons: losing the breadwinner or supporting their service member in the army by sending money or other ad hoc things. As the interviewee mentioned during her speech:

*“We are sustaining the army. It is not a secret that today army cannot work without the help of families of service members. We celebrate every 18th day of the month so that to know that we survived another month... Several years ago I needed a surgery since I had and still have a problem with my veins. I did not have the money (1000 \$) for the surgery. Now the situation is critical, and I really need a surgery. My son is serving almost one year and three months, and during this period we have sent him too much money, that if we did not, I would be able to have not one but ten more surgeries.”* Housewife, 39 years old.

The interviewee was complaining that although she knew her rights quite well she was unable to take advantage of her rights. She was required to provide a document, related to their property ownership. They have difficulty to provide those documents, since as she mentioned they needed money to get the document. However, after interviewing the staff from MoD, it turned out that the woman did not have to provide such a document. Thus, the issue of documentation is a problem that needs government attention and regulation.

## *b. Distance and Transportation*

Armenia is a small country. The total area is estimated to be 29,800 km<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, the transportation and distance is considered a problem for many people. The law on “Social Security of Servicemen and their Families.” includes article 36 that states about the free transportation subsidy granted to servicemen and their families. Ironically, the interview results showed that 16 out of 20 interviewees considered the distance and transportation to be a problem. The major reasons are again unawareness, lack of means to visit their service member and health problems associated with the long distance. Since the previous subsection discussed the problems, related to unawareness, this part is devoted to the remaining reasons.

Family members indicated several issues as a hampering stalemate for visiting their service member. One of those hindrances was the absence of their private transportation means. However, even those families who had their means of transportation again mentioned a lack of visits to their service members. Hence, the question arises in that case: What is the problem? Many families mentioned that even if they could visit their service member, they needed to buy some sweets, clothes, and other necessary things for their conscripts. Another reason for a problem is related to the law itself. Article 36 states that servicemen are entitled to free transportation means regardless of the type of ownership (except for taxi). However, the interviews showed that it is not the case. When the soldiers return home during their vacation, they pay even for minibuses (private ownership). This issue contradicts to the law. One of the interviewees mentioned:

*“When my son came to vacation, after getting a title of sergeant, he had paid the fee for minibus of Artashat. After that, he came here on a taxi. I gave him 5000 dram to pay for taxi service. You know what, at that moment 5000 dram is*



*negligible compared to what you feel when you see your son after too much separation. However, we do it sacrificing ourselves since you know that today earning even 1000 dram is so difficult.”* Housewife, 39 years old, 2015

The long distance is related to financial hardships. People find difficulty even to go nearby marzes, let alone overcoming long distances in order to visit their soldier member. It is timely mentioning the part of one interview:

*“My son serves in Kelbajar, [the distance is almost 300 km.\*]. My sister lives in Yerevan [the distance is almost 22 km. <sup>1</sup>] and we cannot visit her, let alone going to Kelbajar. Of course, we want to visit him, especially the mother but we have to put up with the situation.”* Driver, male, 45 years old, 2015

The “put up with” psychology is prevalent in many cases. Some people cannot afford to visit their service member while others can. This artificially generates inequity in the army among conscripts and in the civilian life among family parents. The reason is that those having their private transportation cars and able to help their conscripts can visit them and support financially in contrast to those from an economically disadvantaged segment of the population. Nonetheless, the interview results showed that parents will do even impossible to help their service member even not communicating with him face to face. It is pertinent to include the following quotation, which presents the common psychology of families:

*“We survive suppressed and stifled. Our means do not allow us to see our son, who serves in Karabakh. But we are sure that he has a strong will to serve his country with honor.”* ( Sculptor, male, 45-year-old, 2014)

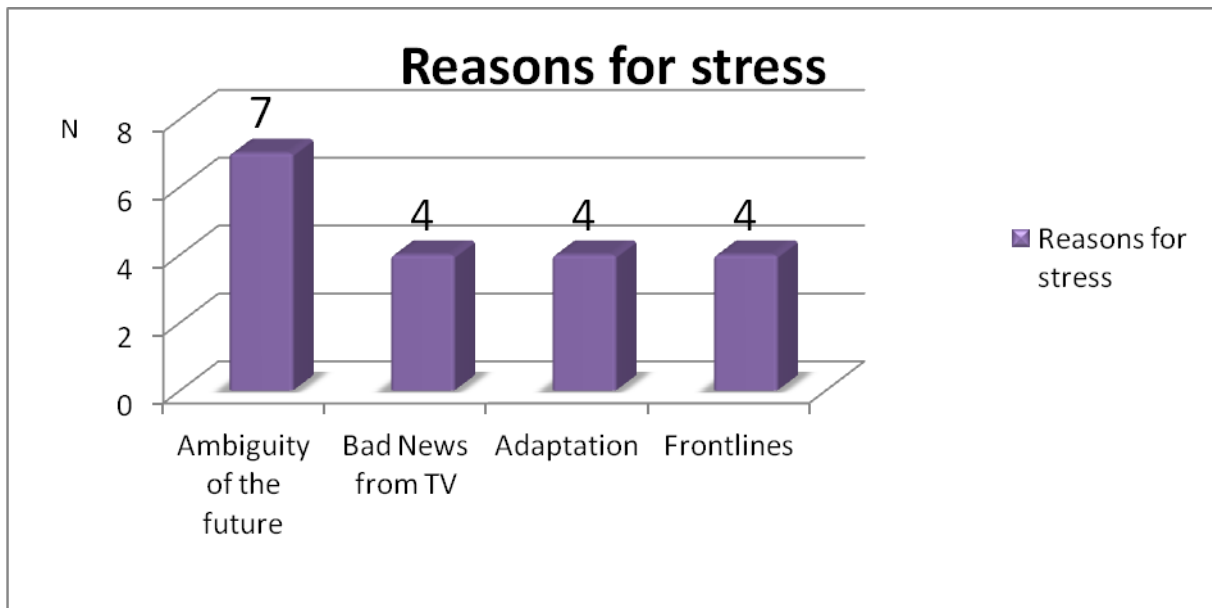
This quotation shows that the interviewee had no options but to hope that everything will be good, even without visiting his son.

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<sup>1</sup> Marine Sargsyan

### *c. Psychological Problems*

In contrast to the previous problems, there is no legal basis for psychological policy. However, the problem is one of the prevalent issues among military families. Sixteen interviewees mentioned the fact of having experienced stress after the deployment of the service member. Out of 16 interviewees, only four people stated that they have to approach it consciously. The rest stated that it is quite difficult to understand that their service member is far from them, especially when they serve in the combat areas. The next graph depicts the main reasons for stress as follows:



*Figure 4. Graph of reasons for stress. Author: Marine Sargsyan*

As the graph shows, the majority is concerned about the future of their service member, which seems vague and obscure. For example, one of the interviewees told the following:

*“We had not heard about the place where our son was going to serve. It was too ambiguous. The next day we bought a map in order to figure out where that place was. We learned that the place is mountainous and is not even inhabited. I could*

*not sleep day and night, and the consequence is that I have heart problems.”*

(Radio manager, female, 55-year-old, 2014)

It is worth mentioning that ambiguity does not only relate to the place of service. The daily activities, the future of their service member and his routine remains ambiguous for many families. The ways to cope with the situation is visiting them and see the environment where they serve. However, it was proven from the previous issues that it is related to several hampering factors, such as absence of private transportation means and insufficient financial resources.

The remaining three reasons mentioned equally are bad news from TV, adaptation and frontlines. The news about a new attack by the adversary generates psychological stress to families. The justification they gave is that they think that it is the place where their son serves. The stress is somehow mitigated only after learning that the attack was from the other side and that it was far from their service member. Adaptation is a problem for families since they experience a new routine, the place of their service member is discernible. Everything reminds them their service member. However, the interviewees mentioned that this was in the beginning, and eventually they got used to the temporary absence of the conscript. Finally, the families are in stress when their service member is on the frontlines. It is worth mentioning that it does not matter for families whether it is a combat area or not. The very fact that their soldier is in frontlines is a reason to be in a stress.

*“My son is keeping the front lines of Khachik village. It is a borderline area. Every time I know he is there, you cannot imagine what I feel. Although my son says that everything is fine, it is not enough. To calm the parent, that is not sufficient. I know the difference of keeping the frontlines in Khachik village and the frontlines in Karabakh, but it does not matter. The fact that my son is keeping*

*the border with a rifle in his hands is enough for me to be in a stress.”*

Housewife, 39 years old, 2015.

That is the way families are encountering stress. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they “gained” several health problems due to stress, including blood pressure, heart problems and so forth. They need a psychologist to soothe the stress. According to one NGO leader interviewed in 2015, most of the women experience the stress at an age when they are in a process of hormonal change. The stress catalyzes the emergence of several health problems. The psychological assistance is important to overcome the stress; however, it is very expensive to them. Psychologists according to an NGO leader are not too rich to provide free services.

Thus, taking into account all the facts and trends the problems that exist in Armenian military families are the following. Families encounter financial problems because of losing their wage earners or because of supporting the conscripts financially. Secondly, families encounter a hindrance for visiting their service member in the army because of distant locations. Finally, families encounter psychological problems because of ambiguity, bad news, adaptation, and frontlines. These are issues that cannot be solved automatically, and government intervention is crucial to address the problem.

### **5.2.2. Problems of the Conscripts**

In order to understand the major problems referring particularly to soldiers families were asked certain questions concerning career and education of the service member. The limitation here is the absence of interviews with conscripts. The reason is that the targeted group includes those serving in the army, and it was difficult to reach the army unit and interview conscripts. Furthermore, the limitation was also due to time constraints. Those, already having served were not interviewed since it will not depict the case without having interviewed them during their

service. Thus, for the purposes of future research it should be taken into account. In any case, the research also involved interviews with NGO leaders and Representative of the Social Council adjunct to MoD, who deal with conscripts’ problems and reveal the common concerns they face. Since this paper aims at revealing, the root causes of two major problems: interruption of education and career, the interviewees were asked to present their views and experiences on these issues. That is, families were asked about the status of their service member prior to deployment and the experts were asked about the common trends they witnessed as talking to conscripts. This aimed at revealing the repercussions of mandatory service for the conscripts. Furthermore, by focusing on two main consequences of MMS, the policy paper does not undermine also other repercussions that were stated by the interviewees. The subsequent sections depict the reasons.

*a. Interruption of education*

As the literature review showed, interruption of education can be considered as one of the opportunity costs paid by conscripts. In this regards, out of 20 interviewees 10 stated that the soldier has to interrupt his education in order to serve in the army. The table below indicates the frequency of mentioning the descriptors to be a problem. That is to say, the table represents the perception of the problem both from family interviewees’ and expert interviewees’ perspective.

*Table 1, Consequences of Conscription on Career Development and Education*

	Interruption of education	Breadwinner	Economic Condition of family as a concern for the conscript
Interviews with families	10 (50%)	6 (30 %)	14 (70 %)
Interviews with experts	3	5	5

Source: Marine Sargsyan

Interestingly enough, the representative of Social Council mentioned that conscripts are deployed immediately after school. That is why the expert did not consider it as a problem. In contrast, the representative of extension programs of AUA, stated that there is a new program, launched with the cooperation of AGBU and MoD. The aim of the program is to start English courses in military units in Stepanakert and in this way generate enthusiasm among young conscripts towards education. The program started in 2014. According to the representative of Extension program, the number of conscripts interested in those courses was unexpectedly high. The aim was to help those, interrupted their education develop their English or even encourage others to start studying and thinking about their education after redeployment. However, it is worth mentioning that other experts without criticism did not accept this approach. Some experts were pessimistic that the program would give intended results, inasmuch as conscripts will not have time to study English in line with accomplishing their daily duties. However, families of conscripts accepted this novel approach positively. They stated that although conscripts are taking courses in the army, those are related only to military literature.

On the other hand, the colonel of MoD, stated that after redeployment conscripts can enjoy their education with 30 % subsidy provided that they have completed combat alert duty. However, according NGO leader, most of the redeployed conscripts are trying to find a job, realizing that they are already mature and need to satisfy their living conditions on their own. Thus, education is left aside in order to survive. Similarly, the Representative of Extension Courses, AUA, mentioned:

*“Almost in all universities the ratio of female to male is not equal, females are more than males. The situation is even worse in graduate schools. When I see a class with five boys, I don’t know how to express my happiness.”* Representative of Educational Institution, Female, 2015.

In essence, most of the redeployed conscripts face a dilemma. They have to choose either to work or to study. Although, having completed combat duty allows them to be entitled to 30% tuition assistance (Colonel, MoD 2015), most of them lose their enthusiasm to study further (NGO leader, 2015).

#### *d. Career development*

The in-depth interviews with family members revealed that some of their service members were working previously. Thus, conscription resulted in the termination of their jobs. However, the job is not necessarily related to education. Some of the conscripts worked based on their technical skills, others worked and studied simultaneously. The family members faced a financial hardship because of losing their wage earner. For the same reason, conscripts sacrificed their job and became reliant on monthly remuneration in the amount of 3500 dram, which is not enough to satisfy their needs. The interview with the colonel of MoD makes it clear that they understand the seriousness of the problem. However, as the Colonel mentioned they spent tremendous resources for soldiers' uniforms, food, and other miscellaneous utensils. However, most of the families state that they are sending many things to their conscripts. Furthermore, the parents stated that without their help and financial support conscripts cannot rely only on the army.

Thus, another issue arises: To what extent does the army give soldiers skills so that they use it in the civilian life and be competitive? There are some contradicting ideas among the experts in this regard. For example, according to the representative of the social council adjunct to MoD, the skills that soldiers receive during military service, such as motorized rifle shootings,

driving and technical works can help find jobs after separation. However, another expert mentioned the following:

*“We systematically conduct a research and talk to soldiers already redeployed. We have noticed already a trend of young men who leave the country after redeployment in order to work abroad. They see the severe situation of their family, unemployment of their parents. Many soldiers want to get married and why not, to live fairly. The percentage of those young men preferring to work abroad is high. Although not all of them succeed abroad and return afterward. Nevertheless, they still face a difficulty in finding a job in Armenia. They work from one place to another. The problem is that there is no systematized policy aimed at this issue.”* NGO leader, 2015.

The above quote indicates that unemployment of young men is an issue that needs government intervention. In essence, the problem is not only economical but also psychological, which exists both during the service and afterward. During in-depth interviews, many families stated the major concern of soldiers is the economic well-being of their family. In general, the fact that they cannot help them from the army makes conscripts bother about their families, which hinders the appropriate implementation of their military duties. This is not a phenomenon inherent only in the Armenian army. For example, in USA Department of Defense (DoD) takes care of military families so that the service member will not think of the well-being of his family. In other words, DoD tries to strengthen the army by supporting military families since in that way serviceman would not bother about their families' social conditions. Hence, the servicemen will focus only on military service (Blaisure et al. 2012; Mission, 2015). Although Armenia and the USA are not comparable countries, in the sense that military service in Armenia is compulsory and in the USA, it is voluntary, the logic is the same. When conscripts in Armenia know that their families are socially secured their attention will be mainly



concentrated only on the army duties. However, families are not socially secured and even on that occasion, they do their best to support their service member.

To sum up this section, the conscripts are experiencing an opportunity cost by sacrificing their education and their career opportunities. After redeployment, many conscripts encounter a dichotomy whether to study or to work. In fact, the economic well-being of their families plays a role in their decision. Most of the redeployed conscripts seek jobs abroad. Some of them succeed others not. In this regard, there is no systematized policy aimed at solving the economic problems of conscripts. Thus, a policy should be elaborated to reduce the intensity of the problem of unemployment of former conscripts and termination of education.

## **6. Policy Options**

As the previous sections articulated, the mandatory military service creates social and economic problems both for the military families and for the conscripts. Particularly, the reasons of problems for families are the financial hardship, distance, and stress. In the same vein, the conscripts encounter a problem of termination of education and vague future of career development. The state security is one of the most core priorities of Armenia in “no war no peace” situations.

Therefore, the government of Armenia should pursue a policy to mitigate the intensity of the social and economic consequences of MMS. Below are provided the alternative options aimed at solving the problem. The first option is awareness campaign with military families, as the research showed that it is the major problem. The second option is the amendments in the law, since it has article with ambiguous and equivalent content, which leaves room for speculation and creates inconsistency with the implementation. The third option is the introduction of new type of policy, where conscripts will serve longer and with higher salaries. Finally, the fourth option is incorporation of education into army service. This option seeks to motivate conscripts continue or even start their education after redeployment. These are the brief introduction of the policy options. The policy paper elaborates those in more detail in the subsections, written below.

### **6.1. Policy of Awareness Campaign**

The qualitative research revealed that most of the families are unaware about the rights, to which they are entitled. Thus, awareness campaign should start in Armenia in order to inform people of

the targeted group (military families). The main stakeholders in charge of implementing it should be a) Military Commissariat, b) Local Government agencies, c) NGOs. How to do it?

*Step 1:* Printing information booklets. The booklets should be easy to the extent that ordinary people can understand it. Otherwise, the law has all the information intricately formulated that most of the people cannot grasp the main points. The role of the booklets should be reducing the complexity of the letter of law.

*Step 2:* Information dissemination: After the booklets are created, some group of people should be in charge of disseminating it to the families. They should beforehand gather the list with names and addresses of military families. It is not an exception that individual volunteers may be encouraged to disseminate the booklets.

*Step 3:* Short information videos on TV. This is also a mean to inform the people. The videos can be very simple and different. They should touch upon different aspects of the issue. They should clearly identify what kind of rights they have, whom they can apply to and how they will be subsidized. It is very crucial to have the exact answers of *what, who, how* questions.

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*Step 4:* Raising the role of the Military Commissariat: This institution should not be only information gathering agency. It should serve also informing the military families about their rights. The interview analysis revealed that this body has a negative reputation among military

families. This pattern can be changed by communicating to military families and taking the responsibility of informing them. The reason is that families were pessimistic that if they ask for information to this institution they will receive appropriate assistance and guidance. Hence, it is important to keep contacts with military families and inform them periodically. As a result, they can build a trust and have a positive reputation, in the sense that people will have confidence of applying for information and guidance.

## **6.2. Policy of Amendments in Law**

After analyzing the law on “Social Security of Servicemen and their Families” as well as its latest amendment, it is clear that the legal basis is not flawless. Furthermore, the interview results showed that the provisions, stated in the law are not enforced as intended to. Given all these issues and considerations, this policy paper finds it necessary to make some amendments to the law. The main stakeholder in this context is the National Assembly of Armenia: legislative branch. The changes should be made following the steps, mentioned below.

*Step1:* In article 33 of the present law, the healthcare support is stated as free. Make certain what are the cases for which it is free. The reason is that although the law states that families are entitled to free and high-quality medical care, the interview results showed that it is not the case for a certain occasion. For instance, one of the interviewees stated the following:

*“We heard from our friends that there are some health support policies from the government. I did not apply because even if they pay the 50 % of the surgery, I cannot pay the rest.”* Driver, 44 years old, 2015.

This is not the only case. Some other interviewees mentioned that only some part of the fee was subsidized. Thus, there is an inconsistency between the law and the reality. Therefore, it is

important to state the criteria according to which the healthcare is free or partially free. The criteria should be as equitable as possible so that the interest groups benefit as fairly as possible.

*Step 2.* Article 34.1 specifies the list of families entitled to monthly allowances. It would be better to add to the list also those conscripts' families, which are either a low-income group or they temporarily, lost their main breadwinner (conscript). This potential article will solve two issues. Firstly, it will address the problem of poverty in Armenia. Many families interviewed did not have even minimum conditions for living standards. Nevertheless, they did their best to help their service member. Thus, they are sacrificing enough in order to be involved in the list of beneficiaries. Secondly, this will also solve the psychological problem since as the literature review showed, conscripts are entirely devoted to their duties if they think only about it. However, the worsening economic situation of their family will not positively contribute to high-quality service of the conscripts. Moreover, the government will somehow compensate the temporary loss of the wage earner. Given all the pieces of the problem, this step can be considered equitable and efficient. Those are the main criteria for an effective policy.

*Step 3:* Add a separate article with detailed information on types of documents, required to provide as a proof of being a family member of the conscript. This article should refer to all the benefits, military families are entitled to. The problem is that in many instances this creates uncertainty and ambiguity. The complicated documentation is an artificial burden, which can be solved by strictly stating all the types of documents required to submit. The seriousness of the issue is that without having regulation and provision the law may be speculated in the local level, inasmuch as the law leaves room for it. Thus, it is of utmost importance to fill the gap by including separate article or government decree with detailed information of the required documentation.

### 6.3. Policy of New Type of Conscription

In 2000, a group of students conducted research, in order to predict the consequences of the shift from compulsory military service to voluntary service. Their research showed that Armenia cannot make that shift in the nearest future. Although their predictions showed that shifting to the voluntary army would increase GDP growth rate by 11.4 %, in the sense that the unemployment rate would decrease by 1.9 %, it showed that Armenia would face budget deficit burden. According to their estimation the budget deficit, generated by increased military expenditure, would be unsustainable in the long run (Hakobyan and Andekyan 2000).

Nevertheless, the alternative policy may not be disregarded. That is, giving a chance to draftee either serving for two years with more or less the same remuneration (although it should be revised) or for three years with a competitive salary. This will solve two types of problems. Firstly, serving three years will solve the problem of number of conscripts in the army because instead of separating two years later, the conscript will serve one year more. Secondly, this policy will reduce unemployment in the country in the sense that conscripts are also employees while serving in the army. Furthermore, in this way conscripts will have more incentives for staying in the army even after three years' service, provided that they work, and the remuneration is enough even to help their families. Otherwise, according to colonel in 2014 only three conscripts decided to continue their service voluntarily.

The limitation of this policy is the budget constraints. However, through benchmarking the practices of the similar countries Armenia may cope with the problem. For instance, Kyrgyzstan 15 years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, put in place a new policy for Armed Forces. Kyrgyzstan is similar to Armenia in the sense that it also has a CMS, and it has a

territorial dispute (Fergana Valley) with Uzbekistan. Similar to almost all former Soviet republics Kyrgyzstan keeps conscription. However, starting from 2004 a professional army was organized and accompanied conscription. One of the aims was to solve social problems of conscripts and their families. The issue of budget constraints also existed in Kyrgyzstan. One of the ways to deal with the issue was selling old weaponry inherited from the Soviet period. This deal helped to make extra-budgetary spending on military (Nuria 2007). By the same token, Armenia may also follow the practice of Kyrgyzstan.

#### **6.4. Policy of Incorporation of Education Vision into Army Service**

As the research revealed, most of the redeployed conscripts are not eager to continue their education. As a result, many former conscripts are out of the educational process, which is highly emphasized by the Armenian government. The root cause of this trend is the fact of the scarcity of financial resources despite the fact that former conscripts are entitled to tuition assistance sponsored by MoD. However, they had to have kept combat alert duty, so that be privileged in their studying institutions. In any case, as the interview results showed even some amount of tuition reduction is not enough to encourage and motivate conscripts to study. The reason is that *“former conscripts are not sure whether their investment in education will bear the desired outcomes or not.”* (NGO leader, 2015). This issue is apparent in most of the universities, where female students are more than male students. In addition, the graduate male students are even less than bachelor male students. This is explained by the fact that most of the conscripts do not apply for admission to universities after army service. They are mainly concerned with finding jobs and so forth (Representative of Education Institution, AUA, 2015).

Thus, the problem is rooted in the lack of education and motivation. In order to motivate conscripts to study after redeployment, it is crucial creating some incentives starting already from the army service. The first sign is already discernible in this regard, inasmuch as AUA in cooperation with MoD and AGBU initiated a language programs in Stepanakert's military unit. The aim of that pilot was to encourage soldiers already in the army to continue their education or even generate enthusiasm among those who previously had no interest towards education (Representative of Education Institution, AUA, 2015). While this program is a promising trend, it is quite insufficient. These types of initiatives should be launched by several other universities. The English courses only are not enough to motivate the soldiers to study. The concern that was bothering several experts related to the spare time of soldiers cannot necessarily serve a reason for terminating this kind of programs in the military units. Although education can become an incentive for several future conscripts, it is not clear whether it works in Armenia or not. The reason is that in many former Soviet Union countries graduates of universities are serving comparably less than their cohorts without high education (see Table 3 in the Appendix 3). This privilege is a way also to incorporate education with conscription. However, for Armenia it may not be applicable, and further investigation is important in this regard since serving less than two years will decrease the number of conscripts for a certain period.

Then the issue here is how to motivate conscripts to study. Indeed, the incentive is not only the knowledge they will receive and develop, but also the instrumental value of acquired knowledge. That is; the knowledge should serve for receiving an appropriate job and earning money. The way of incorporating army service into education is the following. The conscripts can take courses (free of charge) during their spare time. They have to choose the courses that most fits their career needs. The side effect of this trend is that it may affect the military



performance of the conscripts, in the sense that paying too much time on these course preparations may take their combat effectiveness. Nevertheless, the actual program evaluation has not conducted yet. Therefore, it is hard to predict what will be the consequences of initiation of education programs at military units. However, the aim of that kind of programs is strengthening the skills acquired before, so that they use it after the military service. Another objective is to generate interest among those who do not have any prospects for the continuation of their education.

To sum up this policy option, Armenia may have difficulty do design and implement this policy in the long run. Yet the elaboration of the policy implies considering all the external factors and assumptions. Particularly, Armenia may face an issue of number of conscripts in the army. This means that incorporating education and military service may be quite challenging step. However, this policy will solve the issue of interruption of education and eventually, male representation in the universities may increase. This is not proven in Armenia, although educational program initiated by AUA, in cooperation with AGBU and MoD, in the Nagorno-Karabakh's army unit may serve a "litmus test" for future programs in the Army.

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The main objective of the present policy paper was addressing one of the major problems in Armenia: the financial and social burdens generated by MMS. The research results revealed that although the law has specific provisions aimed at supporting the target group of conscripts and their families, in practice they do not work as intended to. This policy paper urges the government of Armenia elaborate the policy of addressing the problem based on the lessons learned indicated as follows.

The gap between implementation and the law requires the endeavors of several stakeholders, such as Ministry of Defense, National Assembly, and Local Government. Particularly, the legal basis should be adjusted as it was stated in the policy options, so that avoid certain intricacies revealed during research analysis. The problem concerning the implementation is apparent in the sphere of medical assistance. The reason is that, the service implies complicated documentation, which generates additional disturbances for families. The transportation aspect can be both a problem of implementation and lack of information, because according to the serviceman, he has always paid for transportation. On the other hand, many military families were unaware about potential transportation compensation set by the government of RA. Concerning the psychological issue, there is mainly implementation issue because the interviews showed that there is no strict distinction between married and unmarried conscripts.

After assessing the four policy options (awareness campaign, facilitation of documentation or a clear statement of those documents in the law, new type of conscription, education vision) this policy paper considers the following. In the short run, the policy of

awareness campaign is feasible. The rest are requiring a set of research and investigation and evaluation. However, the second policy option also can be done in the short run, in the sense that they are critical in maintaining the consistency of the law and implementation. The reason is that the current law contains articles with vague content, which leaves room for speculation, particularly on the local level.

Thus, it is important to see how the government is going to solve the problem so that creating and keeping existing incentives for military service. The aim of military service is to protect state security; however, social security of military families should not be undermined. In other words, the problems require a combination of set of activities aimed at supporting, informing military families and consequently building an atmosphere of trust.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Interview guide (with families)**

1. Please introduce yourselves. (Age, profession)
2. According to you what are the common problems that military families face?
3. How do you feel about military serviceman's concerns about his family? Does it affect the efficacy of military service? Please clarify.
4. What can you say about those aspects of social support for military families?

Financial

Depression

Distance and communication

5. Is there any missing aspect that you may suggest?
6. What is your position on government's role in solving these problems?
7. What possible solutions would you suggest to problems as mentioned earlier?

### **Interview guide (with Experts)**

1. What do you think what are the major issues concerning military families.
2. What are the major issues concerning young conscripts?
3. How do you feel about the government support to military families? Are there any gaps in providing appropriate assistance to military families?
4. How do you feel about the interruption of education of young soldiers? What is the tradeoff between military service and education?
5. Can you tell about the main activities that your NGO/Department is conducting to raise issues concerning military families? Do you collaborate with the government to address certain issues?

## APPENDIX 2

### 1. Demographic Pattern of Interviewees (families)

Table 2 Interviewees (family members)

<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Profession, Gender, Age</b>	
<b>1.Sculptor, male, 45 years old</b>	<b>11. Teacher, female, 52 years old</b>
<b>2.Housewife, female, 37 years old</b>	<b>12. Teacher, female, 46 years old</b>
<b>3.Radio manager, female, 55 years old</b>	<b>13. Housewife, female, 50 years old</b>
<b>4.Serviceman, male, 26 years old</b>	<b>14. Housewife, female, 39 years old</b>
<b>5.Product manager, female, 42 years old</b>	<b>15. Nurse, female, 42 years old</b>
<b>6.Tailor, female, 41 years old</b>	<b>16. Housewife, female, 49 years old</b>
<b>7.Salesman, male, 45 years old</b>	<b>17. Housewife, female, 37 years old</b>
<b>8.Housewife, female, 58 years old</b>	<b>18. Driver, male, 44 years old</b>
<b>9.Teacher, female, 23 years old</b>	<b>19. Housewife, female, 48 years old</b>
<b>10.Saleswoman, female, 35 years old</b>	<b>20. Housewife, female, 35 years old</b>

## **2. Suggestions by Family Members**

1. To provide all important means for keeping hygiene in the army
2. To study some subject during service, so that it is useful for everyone  
(Geography)
3. To set a certain period for telecommunication between family members
4. To teach driving and give driving license during service
5. To give a privilege for appointment for those servicemen, having a wife and a  
child
6. Not to send conscripts to frontlines
7. To create a surveillance body responsible for implementing all those steps

## **3. Common problems stated by families**

1. Sending hygiene utensils to their service member
2. Food supply in the army (canned food delivery to soldiers is not enough)
3. The health problems of the conscripts
4. Vaccination prior to deployment
5. Absence of opportunity to develop their knowledge, received at universities
6. Heavy workload of conscripts with limited capability

## APPENDIX 3

### Countries with CMS

Table 3. Countries with Conscription

Country	Term	Population by 2014	GDP per capita (2013)	Military expenditure (%)	Benefits to families	Privileges for soldiers
Armenia	2 years	<b>2,983,990</b>	3,504.8	4.1	Free healthcare, Transportation	Remuneration (7-8\$) Compensation of tuition in the amount of 30% of the fee
Iran	2 years	<b>78,470,222</b>	4,763.3	2.1	Allowance, if conscript has a child	Remuneration (30-35\$)
Israel	24/36 months	<b>7,822,107</b>	36,050.7	5.6	Monthly grants, extra leave for 30 days for a soldier	Work permit
Kazakhstan	2 year	<b>16,606,878</b>	13,609.8	1.2	Medical care	cash compensation during vacation
Kyrgyzstan	2 year	<b>5,625,015</b>	1,263.5	3.2	Free transportation, including cars in rural areas	Compensation of tuition in the amount of 25% of the fee
Tajikistan	2 year	<b>8,408,947</b>	1,036.6	-	Full medical service	Students are exempt from service
Russia	12 months	<b>142,467,651</b>	14,611.7	4.2	Medical care, resorts once a year	Easy entrance to universities after military service, Support to be engaged in labor market
Moldova	12 months	<b>3,461,380</b>	2,239.3	0.3	Medical Care	Majority are contract based employees (77/23 %)
Lithuania	9 months	<b>3,008,287</b>	15,537.9	0.8	Monthly allowance, if conscript has a	Right to choose a preferred place for the service

					child	
Azerbaijan	12/18 months	<b>9,514,887</b>	7,811.8	4.7	Medical care, Transportation support	Reduction of term if soldiers are graduates of university

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