

# **EMPOWERING DISPLACED YOUTH THROUGH SOFT AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS: A MIXED-METHODS EVALUATION OF A POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN ARMENIA**

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**DOI: 10.54503/2579-2903-2025.2-100**

## **Abstract**

This article discusses the design, implementation, and outcomes of a targeted educational intervention based on the project “Soft and Professional Skills Development for the Displaced Armenians,” which aimed to empower conflict-affected young people in Armenia following the war. After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, large numbers of young Armenians were forced out of education, socially marginalised, and cast out of most career paths, factors that are rarely considered in emergency response strategies. To address this gap, the International Scientific-Educational Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia implemented a project aimed at enhancing the soft and

professional skills of participants, including communication, critical thinking, resume writing, and time management.

The proposed study is relevant because displaced populations, particularly the youth, urgently need scalable, skills-based educational models. The long-term integration and resilience of such populations rely not only on psychosocial support but also on employability training. The program was developed based on the Human Capital Theory, Social Integration Theory, Transformative Learning, and Resilience Framework, and tested using a qualitative feedback analysis and a mixed-methods approach that included quantitative pre- and post-assessments.

The results showed that the participants experienced impressive gains in self-confidence, employability skills and social interaction. Measurements of quantitative data showed a significant improvement of skills in key areas, whereas discussion of the qualitative parts illustrated the emotional and community-building aspect of the training. Furthermore, the project stimulated the development of follow-up activities, which were initiated by project participants themselves and provided evidence of sustainability and local ownership. These findings underscore the importance of learner-centred education in post-conflict settings and the necessity of implementing soft skills-focused responses as part of national recovery plans and policies for displaced youth.

**Keywords:** Displaced youth, soft skills, professional skills, post-conflict education, Armenia, resilience, employability, transformative learning, social integration, youth empowerment, training evaluation, psychosocial support, sustainable development.

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**ՅԱՆ ԲՈՀՄ**

Վերին Ավստրիայի Կրթության համալսարանի պրոֆեսոր,  
Համեմատական կրթության և միջազգային կրթական համակարգերի  
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**Համառոտագիր**

Սույն հոդվածում ներկայացվում է «Տեղահանված հայ երիտա-  
սարդների փափուկ և մասնագիտական հմտությունների զարգացում»  
նախագծի կառուցվածքը, նրա իրականացման ընթացքի և արդյունք-  
ների նկարագրությունը: Հատուկ մշակված կրթական այս նախագիծը  
նպատակաուղղված էր հետպատերազմյան Հայաստանում կոնֆլիկտից  
տուժած երիտասարդների կարողությունների զարգացմանը: 2020 թ. Ար-

ցախյան պատերազմից հետո ընդհատվեց բազմաթիվ երիտասարդ հայերի կրթությունը, նրանք ենթարկվեցին սոցիալական մարգինալացման, նվազեցին նրանց մասնագիտական հմտություններ ձեռք բերելու կամ ունեցած հմտությունները կիրառելու հնարավորությունները. խնդիրներ, որոնք հաճախ անտեսվում են արտակարգ իրավիճակների արձագանքման շրջանակներում: Նախագիծը, որը իրականացրել է ՀՀ Գիտությունների ազգային ակադեմիայի գիտակրթական միջազգային կենտրոնը, նպատակ ուներ լրացնել այդ բացը՝ զարգացնելով մասնակիցների փափուկ և մասնագիտական հմտությունները՝ հաղորդակցություն, քննադատական մտածողություն, ինքնակենսագրության կազմում և ժամանակի կառավարում:

Ուսումնասիրության արդիականությունը պայմանավորված է տեղահանված բնակչության, մասնավորապես՝ երիտասարդության համար, որոնց երկարաժամկետ ինտեգրումն ու դիմակայությունը կախված են ինչպես հոգեւոցիալական աջակցությունից, այնպես էլ աշխատունակության հմտությունների զարգացման հնարավորությունից, փափուկ և մասնագիտական հմտություններին ուղղված կրթական մոդելների ձևավորման հրատապ անհրաժեշտությունից: Նախագիծը հիմնված էր մարդկային կապիտալի տեսության, սոցիալական ինտեգրման տեսության, տրանսֆորմատիվ ուսուցման և դիմակայության շրջանակի տեսական հիմքերի վրա: Նախագծի գնահատումը իրականացվել է խառը մեթոդաբանությամբ՝ համատեղելով քանակական և որակական տվյալների վերլուծությունը:

Ուսումնասիրության հիմնական արդյունքները վկայում են մասնակիցների ինքնավստահության, գործնական հմտությունների և սոցիալական ներգրավվածության նկատելի աճի մասին: Մասնակիցների շրջանում անցկացված հարցումներից պարզվեց, որ զգալիորեն զարգացել են նրանց մասնագիտական և փափուկ հմտությունները, իսկ դասընթացի ժամանակ ունեցած ուժեղ հուզական ապրումները նպաստել են ներհամայնքային կապերի ձևավորմանը և ամրապնդմանը: Բացի այդ, նախագիծը ոգեշնչել է մասնակիցներին՝ իրականացնելու հետագա նախաձեռնություններ, ինչը վկայում է նախագծի կայունության և տեղայնացված լինելու մասին: Այս արդյունքներն ընդգծում են հետպատերազմական կրթության մեջ համապարփակ, սովորողակենտրոն մոտեցումների և փափուկ հմտությունների ծրագրերի ներառման կարևորությունը տեղահանված երիտասարդների վերականգնման ազգային ռազմավարությունների մեջ:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** տեղահանված երիտասարդություն, փափուկ հմտություններ, մասնագիտական հմտություններ, հետպատերազմյան կրթություն, Հայաստան, դիմակայություն, աշխատունակություն, տրանսֆորմատիվ ուսուցում, սոցիալական ինտեգրում, երիտասարդությո-

յան հզորացում, դասընթացի գնահատում, հոգեւնդիալական աջակցություն, կայուն զարգացում:

## Introduction

The problem of displacement is very complex because it touches on the lives of individuals and the community economically, socially, psychologically, and educationally. A report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021) reveals that more than 100 million individuals globally have been displaced through conflict and violence, persecution, or natural disasters. Youth is one of the most vulnerable groups among them. Displacement affects their learning, breaks their peer and community networks, and devastates their psychosocial growth (Dryden–Peterson, 2016). According to research conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2021), there is a high probability of displaced youth becoming unemployed and marginalised in the long term unless intervention measures support them.

Displacement of youths is both a humanitarian and a developmental issue. Instead, the World Bank (Independent Evaluation Group, 2012) has prioritised the early interventions in the context of education and vocational development, believing that it might yield long-term benefits in the long term of restoring the possibility of control and socio-economic stability among the youth. Essential lack of so-called soft skills such as effective communication, critical thinking, resilience, and intercultural competence can add to education and employment hindrances. Such skills are not usually taken into consideration in emergency response programs, even though they remain related to employability and social inclusion.

Within the Armenian context, the green-lighted Nagorno–Karabakh conflict in 2020 resulted in a wave of domestic migration, especially among the young Armenian citizens of Stepanakert, Hadrut, Martakert, etc. They have suffered long-term schooling interruptions, mental breakdowns, and upheavals in their lives. Though the state has been trying to offer humanitarian aid in the short term, there is a lack of structured programming aimed at long-term growth of skills and employability. It is interesting to note that there has been minimal effort in soft skills development programming, which has been the means of integration and self-sufficiency.

In this context, the International Scientific–Educational Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (ISEC NAS RA), i.e. the Department of Foreign Languages of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, embarked on the program on the development of soft and professional skills of the displaced Armenians. Targeted at displaced youth aged 16–29, the project aimed to empower participants by first educating

them through a four-day intensive workshop series on career development, communication, time management, and problem-solving. The paper outlines the theoretical background, deployment strategy, and assessed impacts of the program, providing insights into best practices for post-conflict youth integration and resilience-building. This paper presents the design, theoretical framework, and findings of the project, providing an example of a scalable post-conflict youth development approach.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The rationale behind the design and assessment of the Soft and Professional Skills Development program for Displaced Armenians lies in the field of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches, which, in their cumulative manner, reflect upon the developmental, psychological, and socio-economic aspects of displacement. The intervention rationale and structure are based on four major frameworks: Human Capital Theory, Social Integration Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and the Resilience Framework.

*Human Capital Theory* suggests that it is economically beneficial to the individuals and the society to invest in education and the acquisition of skills (Becker, 1964). Its theory was initially oriented towards formal education but has since been applied to encompass non-cognitive abilities that address issues such as group work, leadership, and emotional intelligence (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). These investments are significant in conflict-prone environments. Targeted development of soft skills can enhance the employability of displaced youth, who often lack access to continuous formal education. The probability of people who have attended soft skills training to work in post-conflict regions, according to world statistics provided by the World Bank (Independent Evaluation Group) is 24 per cent greater.

**Social Integration Theory**, proposed by Berry (1997), suggests four patterns of adaptation: assimilation, separation, marginalisation, and integration. Integration is associated with the most favourable psychological and socio-economic impacts and is characterised by a scenario in which people do not lose elements of their initial identity yet communicate with the host community (Berry, 2005). For displaced youth, social integration involves transcending cultural boundaries, establishing new social relationships, and gaining intercultural communication skills. The term “marginal person” refers to the person who finds themselves at the crossroads of cultures but has not yet accepted one of them (Hakobyan, p. 60). In this respect, it becomes especially significant to promote assertive behaviour and social integration among individuals and social groups, particularly in employment, education, and social bridge spheres, and to create a foundation for good integration and develop a framework for its practical implementation (Hakobyan, p. 175).

*Transformative Learning Theory* is based on the way adults develop their frames of reference by critical thinking and discussion, particularly when they face disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow). The concept of displacement may be observed as one such dilemma that breaks the established norms and expectations. Mezirow views transformative learning as occurring through the course of cognitively and emotionally engaging self-examination processes, rational discussion, and perspective transformation. These principles were implemented through the ISEC training, which utilised experiential forms of work, including simulated interviews and problem-solving activities, to help students reflect on their identity, abilities, and goals. The research by Taylor and Cranton (2013) demonstrate that adult learning facilitated by reflection can lead to a 35% enhancement in self-directed learning outcomes. Transformative learning during post-trauma education is possible only through the provision of relational and affective dimensions (e.g., trust, empathy, collaboration) in education (Taylor, 2008). It has been empirically documented that curricula based on the concepts of transformative learning report post-progress evaluations, stating better retention and reliability of skills (Illeris, 2014).

**Resilience Framework:** Resilience can be described as an adaptive process which involves coping effectively with significant adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). This is a theoretical construct that has been widely applicable in studies on war-affected children and youth (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). Displacement groups may be strengthened by implementing education programs that enhance goal-setting, self-efficacy and support systems. UNICEF (2020) conducted a meta-analysis and revealed that youth programs that incorporated strategies of goal setting and peer support reduced the symptoms of trauma by 40 per cent. Youth programs that included the elements of goal setting and peer support lessened the symptoms of trauma by 40 per cent. Ungar (2012) emphasises the importance of culturally designed interventions that help an individual develop not only personal strengths but also enabling environments. The ISEC program integrated these principles by designing workshops which facilitate a sense of autonomy, structure and meaning-making, and in so doing, trigger the inherent resilience that can be found in ordinary settings once protective mechanisms have been turned on. Moreover, longitudinal research (Panter-Brick et al., 2018) demonstrates that resiliency-based education yields an extremely high rate of social reintegration among conflict-affected youth.

### Literature Review

The existing literature identifies multidimensional problems that the youth face when they are displaced, especially in post-conflict scenarios. As Hakobyan et. al. put it, “In any society, the radical changes implemented

during the post-war period directly affect the social, economic, and moral-psychological atmosphere of the society, as well as the psychological states and behaviour of the population. Phenomena of socio-psychological marginalisation emerge, and psychological defence mechanisms become more active...” (Hakobyan, 2024, p.5). These include unimpeded access to education, societal marginalisation, trauma, and joblessness (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; UNHCR, 2021). To address this, researchers and several international organisations have called for the importance of having integrated educational programs that include academic, emotional, and vocational support (IOM, 2021; Cerna, 2019).

Middle Eastern studies, particularly in Lebanon and Jordan, have demonstrated the effectiveness of hybrid learning models, emphasising both psychosocial counselling and skills-building among the youth in refugee environments. As an illustration, Ager et al. (2011) identified that soft skills and mentorship complemented by experiential learning strengthen the mental health, social interaction, and job readiness of youth-focused programs. Likewise, a World Bank (Independent Evaluation Group) review of youth development projects concluded that soft skills training enhances employment rates by 25–40 per cent in both high-income and low-income countries.

These findings are also supported by region-specific studies, which demonstrate that community-based education programs have raised employment rates and decreased social isolation among internally displaced persons. According to a recent needs assessment conducted in Armenia, the majority of employment barriers of displaced youth are associated with limited professional experience and communication deficiency (Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia, 2024). Additionally, a needs assessment conducted by UNDP Armenia (2021) revealed a gap between the actual needs of displaced persons to be career-ready in real life and the current educational services offered. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have localised training programs that focus on local career development and engagement options, which have succeeded in Eastern European nations.

Intercultural communication, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking—often referred to as the 21st-century skills—have been recognised as valuable aspects of international education policy (OECD, 2018). Nonetheless, soft skills are still underdeveloped in any formal curriculum in conflict-affected areas, and displaced youth are not ready to live in multicultural and competitive labour markets. In brief, the literature supports the strategic value of ISEC NAS RA’s intervention. The project embodies the best global practices in training displaced youth, as it integrates communication, problem-solving, time management, and self-reflection into concise training modules, offering a scalable and context-sensitive model.



## Research Methodology

The research design of this study employed a mixed-methods approach, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively examine the effectiveness and success of the program's implementation, as well as the development of soft and professional skills among displaced Armenians. The mixed-methods paradigm has gained acceptance among scholars in educational and social scientific disciplines due to its capacity to offer nuanced insights into rich human experiences. In the present case, the dual design made it possible not only to evaluate the acquisition of the desired soft skills but also to assess the psychosocial transformation experienced by displaced Armenian youth as a whole. These young people experience multidimensional issues about socialisation, trauma, and interrupted education routes (UNHCR, 2021; IOM, 2021).

## Research Design

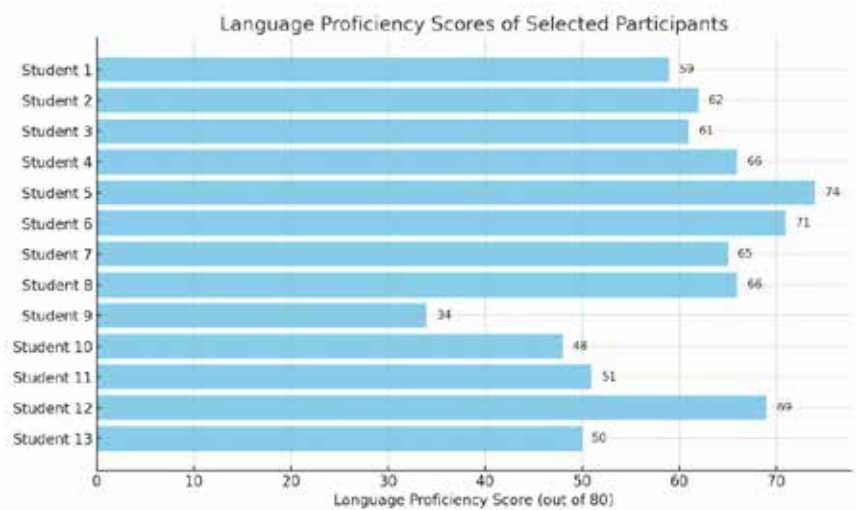
The research employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in parallel, analysed separately, and then integrated to form a combined interpretation. This work method provided the ability to triangulate the results and validated results by delivering more equality between numerical data and compelling narrative insights. The mixed-design solution, in particular, was appropriate due to the nature of the project, which involved behavioural and attitudinal change, where the quantitative information alone might not sufficiently capture the nuances of individual development.

## Participant Selection

The sampling method was also snowball sampling, which is a non-probabilistic approach and is preferable when the objective is to sample a marginalised, displaced, or stigmatised group. The training enrolled 13 displaced young Armenians aged 16–29 years. The recruitment efforts favoured those who had never been involved in any official training on soft or professional skills. The geographic representation was Stepanakert, Martakert, and Qashatagh, with a gender balance of 9 females and 4 males. Since the demographic in Artsakh changed as a result of the conflict, this strategy also addressed the gender-related issues in finding male participants of the same age group.

In addition to the demographic parameters, the participants also underwent a language proficiency exam to ensure they could attend the training conducted by an English-speaking foreign specialist. The prerequisite for the participants to take part in the training was a minimum B2 level of English proficiency. Nevertheless, some participants with B1-level proficiency were also accepted due to strong motivation to participate and the contextual relevance of the project. Four volunteer interpreters were incorporated into

the program to address their needs and ensure the training material was accessible to all of them equitably. These volunteers provided immediate support during the sessions, enabling participants who are not fluent in English to keep pace with the training and actively participate in discussions and practices. A summary of the language test results of the selected participants is presented in the graph below:

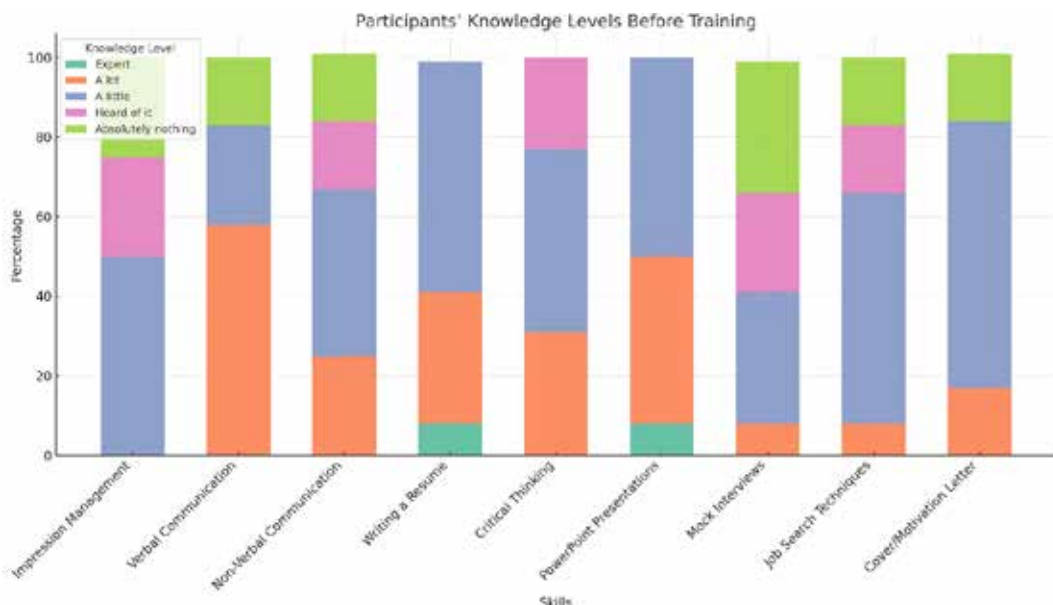


**Figure 1.** Language Proficiency Scores of Selected Participants

**Needs Assessment**

Pre-program surveys, informal interviews, and baseline self-evaluations were conducted to inform a systematic needs assessment before the actual training. The idea was to determine the current level of the skills possessed by the participants, as well as those that require improvement. The typical weaknesses included a lack of confidence in public speaking, poor time management, and limited knowledge of job-seeking strategies. Such results align with the global trends identified by organisations addressing the needs of displaced people (OECD, 2018), demonstrating the timeliness and priority of a specific, skills-oriented project.

To further confirm the needs assessment, participants were instructed to self-report their knowledge levels on ten core topics via an online Mentimeter tool. The visual summary of the baseline knowledge levels of the participants in each skill domain is also available in the figure below:



**Figure 2.** Participants' knowledge levels on core topics before the training

The visual representation reveals critical insights. For example, in the area of *impression management*, none of the participants rated themselves as experts or even very knowledgeable. Half of them reported knowing only a little, while the rest indicated that they had merely heard of it or knew absolutely nothing. This result suggests that there is a significant lack of awareness of core self-presentation techniques that are important in both professional and social contexts of integration.

The situation was better in *verbal communication skills*, where 58 per cent reported they knew a lot, although 42 per cent said they knew little or nothing at all. By contrast, non-verbal communication skills had a more even spread, with 42% claiming a little knowledge, and the remaining 58% either somewhat aware or entirely unfamiliar with the concept.

*Resume writing* and *cover/motivation letter writing* were additional weak spots. In both categories, more than half of the respondents (58% and 67% respectively) admitted to having only a little knowledge. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of youth reported low confidence in *critical thinking* (with 46% having only a little knowledge), *PowerPoint presentations* (50% knew only a little), *mock interviews*, and *job searching techniques*.

Overall, the Mentimeter analysis underscored the limited prior exposure of participants to formal training in essential soft and professional skills.

Although results were moderate enough in some skill areas, the general trend was an indication that there was a need for a broad and basic training. This needs analysis was used during the compilation of the training curriculum to ensure that the curriculum was learner-based, practical, and focused on the most critical gaps.

Training Design and Delivery: the delivery of content was done via four days of face-to-face training, offering 28 hours of instruction. A qualified international expert from Austria conducted the sessions. It relied on experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), hence was founded on learning through doing, reflecting and interaction with others. The training modules were concentrated in the following areas:

*Career counselling* (resume writing, preparing for a job interview)

*Business etiquette* (email etiquette, non-verbal, verbal communication)

*Critical thinking and problem-solving* (case-based)

*Time management and goal setting* (prioritisation tools)

*Presentation and teamwork* (collaborative tasks and speaking before an audience)

The learning design employed an active learning approach, utilising simulations, group projects, peer assessment, and real-world scenarios to illustrate abstract concepts. These educational practices may be referred to as best practices in adult education, particularly with reference to individuals who have had interrupted formal education.

*Follow-Up and Sustainability Assessment*

A follow-up initiative titled “Soft Skills Laboratory: Youth from Artsakh for Youth in the Regions” was carried out post-training. In this peer-led extension, the project graduates organised workshops enriched with educational games, personal stories, and videos and hosted 25 more displaced youth in Armavir. The intention of this step was not only to measure knowledge retention and the transfer of skills but also to introduce participant agency, leadership, and community resilience as essential attributes of sustainability over the long term (UNDP, 2021).

Feedback from participants in this event supported the relevance of soft skills training and demonstrated knowledge exchange among peers, confirming the long-term effectiveness of the initial program. This successful follow-up project was qualitative evidence of sustainability and community resonance in training.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the quantitative data and evaluate the change in average scores before and after training. A success benchmark was set at an 80% or more increment. Qualitative data from feedback and reflection forms were analysed through a thematic approach.

### *Ethical Considerations*

All research activities were conducted in accordance with international ethical standards for working with vulnerable individuals (ESOMAR, 2016). All participants provided informed consent. Anonymity, confidentiality, and psychological safety were rigorously maintained. The project included a no-harm policy, and all dissemination activities respected the post-conflict reality, with additional efforts made to avoid retraumatizing or exploiting the participants' narratives.

This is a methodologically rigorous and ethically mindful framework, which ensures that findings are valuable, consistent, and significant, providing an upwardly mobile scale of capacity-building among forcibly displaced and marginalised groups.

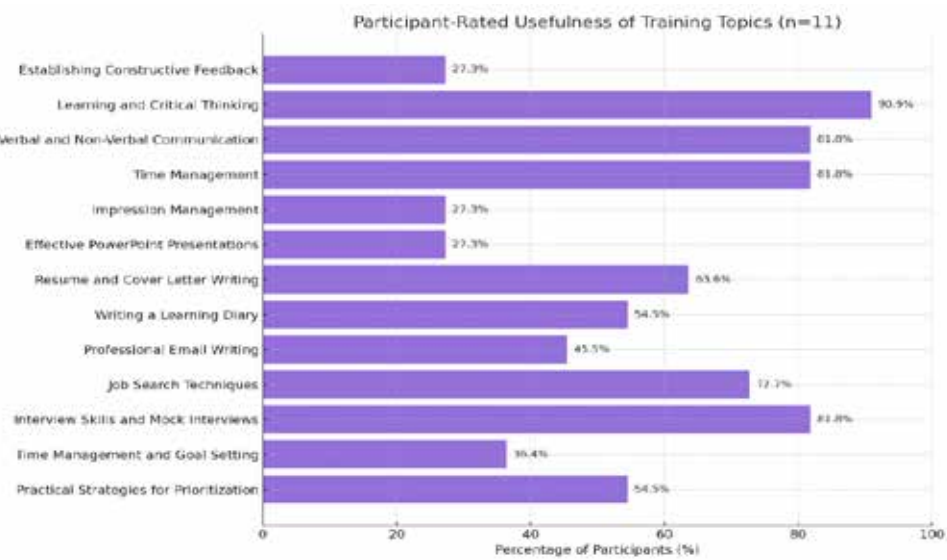
### *Results*

The project “Soft and Professional Skills Development for the Displaced Armenians” had a truly transformational and layered effect on the project participants, with high levels of engagement and personal development, and evident skills development. The combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative stories allows us to see how the program has not only achieved but also exceeded its goals in empowering displaced youth through comprehensive training on both soft and professional skills.

*Participant Experience and Feedback:* The participants' retrospectives demonstrated a strong feeling of reliance on the professional design of the training and inclusivity. Many of them characterised it as “all I needed” and the “best days of my life” with the professionalism of the trainer being a particular element, followed by the quality of the fodder, and the warm atmosphere. One sense of connectedness that ran through the feedback was the sense of belonging and emotional guidance the sessions fostered, which solidified a crucial element for anyone who has experienced trauma and displacement.

The interactive and non-formal design of the program is a notable highlight. The role-plays, group discussions, and practical exercises helped the participants not only gain knowledge of new concepts but also apply them in a realistic environment. Communication, teamwork, and time management sessions were especially influential, providing participants with the means to develop personal agency and readiness to work. Some explained that the training provided them with direction for the future, which enabled them to gain confidence in setting targets and making informed decisions.

This is supported by the numerical evidence gathered during the survey regarding the usefulness of specific training topics. According to the survey, the sessions, which were rated as the best, were: (Figure 3):



**Figure 3.** Most Useful Training Topics as Rated by Participants

The findings provide a case in point of why it is necessary to integrate early-level thinking techniques with practical job skills. These high ratings in practical and reflective areas define the significance and correspondence of the training program to the immediate and long-term needs of the participants.

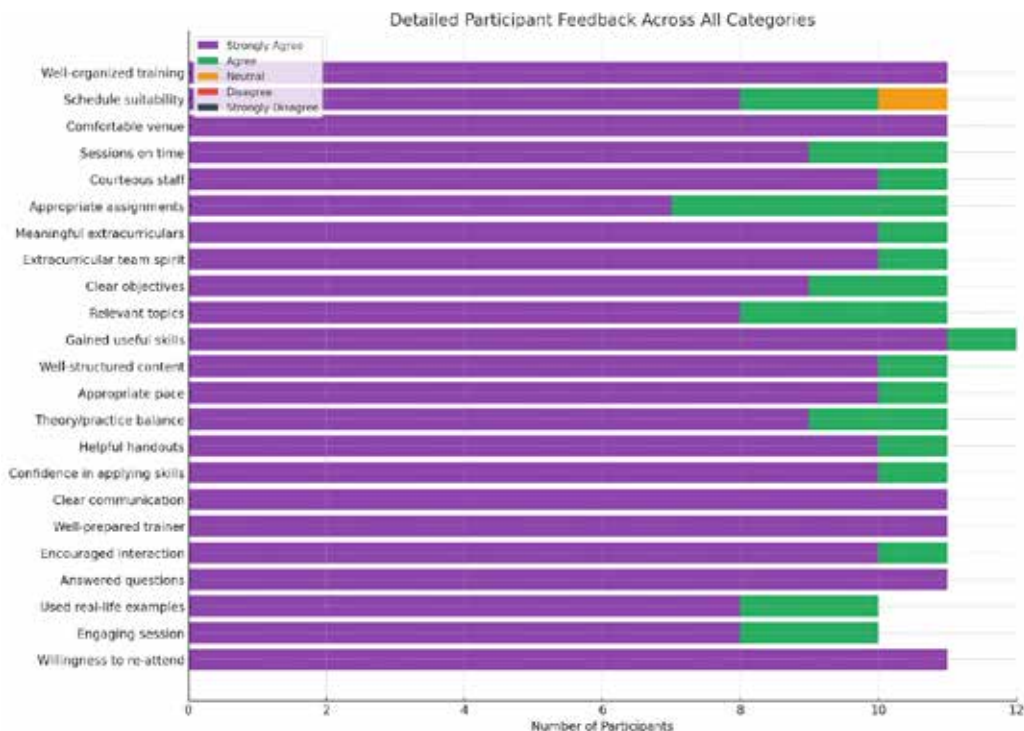
Along with their topic preferences, the participants also commented on their favourite aspect of the training, highlighting several aspects they enjoyed most.

Many underlined the “professional atmosphere” and the “amazing expertise that we received from our trainer.” Others mentioned the innovative format, saying that “The thing that I valued the most was the non-formal format of the courses,” and several respondents noted that “Everything” with the program was good. The non-formal format of the courses, and several respondents stated that “Everything” with the program was good. The supportive environment was mentioned several times, with one participant saying, “In a single word, I would say Environment,” and another expressing great enjoyment of the learning environment with their peers. Among the most striking observations was the one that highlighted, “What I enjoyed most about the training was the opportunity to enhance both my soft and professional skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.” The individual answers indicate that the subjects were happy with the experience, which was enriching both personally and professionally.

The effects of the training also touched upon formal feedback systems.

The survey evaluations covered essential elements, including the organisation of training, the easy comprehensibility of material, the results of learning, the effectiveness of the trainer, and the general climate of learning. These tools provided the possibility to evaluate the program reception as a whole.

The more compelling scores, as administered by the participants, pertained to the professional nature of the sessions held, their punctuality, and logistics, including the suitability of the location facilities and the availability of support staff. These seemingly incidental factors played significant roles in comfort and a decent level of trust that the participants had in the program. In addition to the logistics, there was an impressive consensus that the materials were useful, the content was relevant, and the learning environment fostered confidence and collaboration.



**Figure 4.** Detailed Participant Feedback Across All Evaluation Points

This holistic chart presents the comprehensive responses of all participants related to several key points, including details of the training logistics, the relevance of the content, and the trainer’s performance. Data analysis show high ratings across the board, particularly in areas such as the training organisation, content structure, development of practical skills, and

communication with the trainer. The prevalence of responses associated with the ‘Strongly Agree’ option, combined with the insufficient proportion of neutral and negative feedback, indicates the program’s superiority in meeting the needs and requirements of the target audience. These findings confirm the success of the training and reveal the high level of enthusiasm and satisfaction of the respondents regarding all the significant parts of the program.

### *Suggestions for Improvement*

Although it was positive in the vast majority of cases, constructive recommendations for future improvement were also given. A significant number of participants expressed a desire to see the training last longer and focus on higher levels of engagement and continuity. There were also requests for follow-up events, mentoring, and further practical case studies to reinforce learning. Such observations support the idea that there is a significant need of longer-term initiatives, which can follow the steps of this training.

### *Outcomes and Transformational Indicators*

*Short-Term Impact:* All 13 of the selected candidates attended the 4-day, 28-hour training event, exceeding expectations and demonstrating a firm commitment. Pre- and post-measures confirmed significant growth in the following competencies, including writing a resume, writing professional emails, conducting interviews, and using problem-solving strategies. The usefulness of these skills was confirmed directly by the participants, many of whom stated that they now feel confident in applying for jobs or seeking further education.

*Long-Term Impact:* A compelling example of the program’s effectiveness is that participants have taken it upon themselves to replicate the core lessons of the program. The graduates of the first training, organised as the Soft Skills Laboratory: Youth of Artsakh to the Youth of the Regions, conducted training sessions with 25 young people in Echmiadzin. The fact that they can transfer knowledge and assume leadership roles is a demonstration of sustaining the intervention and its spill-over to the broader communities. The outcomes of this initiative are not only the implementation of a training course but also the establishment of a youth leadership platform, fostering resilience and driving change. The project has laid the groundwork for a replicable and scalable model in post-conflict rehabilitation and youth empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

The project “Soft and Professional Skills Development for the Displaced Armenians” arises as a necessary response to the socio-professional challenges faced by young adults displaced due to conflict. The training empowered participants with a sense of agency, confidence, and community by enabling



them to communicate more effectively, think more critically, emotionally strengthen, and be more job-ready.

Project success is reflected in positive feedback from participants, as evidenced by enthusiastic reviews and their active participation in subsequent programs. Not only did it result in short-term skills training, but it also spurred peer-to-peer, long-term outreach, which has placed displaced youth in both learning and leadership roles.

The thoughtful design of the curriculum, together with inclusive pedagogy, comprehensive assessment, and learner-centred methods, makes a potent model that can be used in the future to conduct another intervention in the same context. The results indicate that even the institutionalisation and scale-up of such projects would be effective in integrating vulnerable groups into the economic and social life of the host community.

To sum up, this project supports the notion that education, combined with empathy, order, and possibilities, is an effective way to overcome and rebuild post-conflict societies.

### **Acknowledgement**

The project was funded by the DAAD from European Union funds, within the framework of the EU4Dialogue project – Component 3. ENI/202 1/423–479

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*The article has been submitted for publication: 03.07.2025*

*Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է տպագրության. 03.07.2025*

*The article is sent for review: 03.08.2025*

*Հոդվածն ուղարկվել է գրախոսության. 03.08.2025*

*The article is accepted for publication: 28.08.2025*

*Հոդվածն ընդունվել է տպագրության. 28.08.2025*