



PIN's child-friendly space

Armenia

**Country Programme
Strategy
2024—2027**



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Our mandate and added value

Our Global Vision: We strive for a world in which people can fulfil their potential and live in inclusive, sustainable societies.

At the global level, our work supports the development of free and responsible people. We want them to be able to approach information and opinions openly and critically and to shape the world around them positively. We work through the experiences of the people we serve. Together, we address global topics such as climate change, sustainable development, the struggle for freedom and human rights, social inequality, and the position of minority groups. Over the past 30 years, we are proud that PIN has evolved into the largest NGO in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, we provide multisectoral development and humanitarian programming in **24 countries** across the globe.

Our Relief and Development Department (RDD) works together with local actors to alleviate poverty and exclusion and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

Our mandate in Armenia is to empower and uplift local communities. We want to strengthen Armenian civil society and support authorities in becoming effective and transparent actors to improve socioeconomic development. Our approach is to respond promptly, effectively and with sufficient scope to emergencies. We always prioritise those who need us the most. We are able to target our support to the most vulnerable thanks to our persistent presence, understanding of the context, and our local networks. We provide access to social services and economic opportunities and mitigate suffering during humanitarian crises. Our mandate emphasises transparency, innovation, and inclusivity as fundamental principles to ensure the creation of a resilient and equitable society in Armenia.

Our added value:

In **two decades** in Armenia, we have achieved several **successes and systemic achievements** for those most in need. As an international NGO, we bring resources and experience gained in our other country programmes. We bring further value in our direct and close work with remote communities, which is possible through our persistent presence in their regions.



Since 2020, we have contributed significantly **to the Armenian emergency sector**. We have added significant value to disaster response and preparedness efforts. One of our key contributions lies in our ability to mobilise resources and expertise swiftly. We often bridge gaps where government authorities may face bureaucratic and other challenges. We bring a local, grassroots perspective based on working closely with affected communities to understand their unique needs and vulnerabilities. We have built upon our position as an emergency leader by being represented in most of the important emergency platforms, fora and clusters. We also collaborate directly with the most significant emergency donors. Funding from these agencies enabled us to implement large-scale multisectoral interventions in food security, WASH, shelter, financial assistance, protection, and support to child-friendly spaces (CFS).



To foster democratic change and socioeconomic growth in Armenia, we put significant effort into supporting **the development of civil society actors** as drivers of change. One of our key added values is that we target a wide range of civil society actors, including well-established organisations, grassroots initiatives, and activists. We support their activities and efforts to help the most vulnerable. Their support is vital for refugees and forcibly displaced persons, older persons, women, youth and children, as well as people with special needs. To support meaningful change, we use our in-house experience and methodologies (Empowerment of Civil Society Actors, Youth Civic Engagement, Participatory Policy Development). We also share transitional experiences and best practices from the Czech Republic (policy and services levels). And we facilitate dialogue within civil society in countries of the Eastern Partnership through our regional activities. For sectoral actions and interventions implemented in remote communities, we foster partnerships with respected local CSOs that have a solid field-oriented profile.



In Armenia, we have created **an extensive network of partners** across civil society and the public and private sectors—they have been instrumental in improving the quality of our work. Our key partners in Armenia are the National Government,

including its ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Territorial Administration) and their affiliated agencies (Migration and Citizenship Service of Armenia), regional governments (Syunik Regional Government) and municipal administrations.

Recently, our most prominent collaborators have been Mission Armenia, Caritas Armenia, and the Women's Resource Development Centre, Goris. We are working to empower Armenian civil society, build meaningful and effective partnerships with organisations with similar values and visions, and support them in addressing the barriers they face. Finally, engagement of the private sector has been crucial for our work in Armenia. This engagement is necessary to stimulate socioeconomic development in the country. Many of these stakeholders have already joined us in consortia or expressed interest in doing so. We will continue seeking new opportunities for partnerships, especially with the local CSOs, to leverage their potential and help them access external funding. Building on our current and past partnerships, we will continue to diversify our partnership portfolio and develop strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations and institutions for sustained impact.



Presence in country

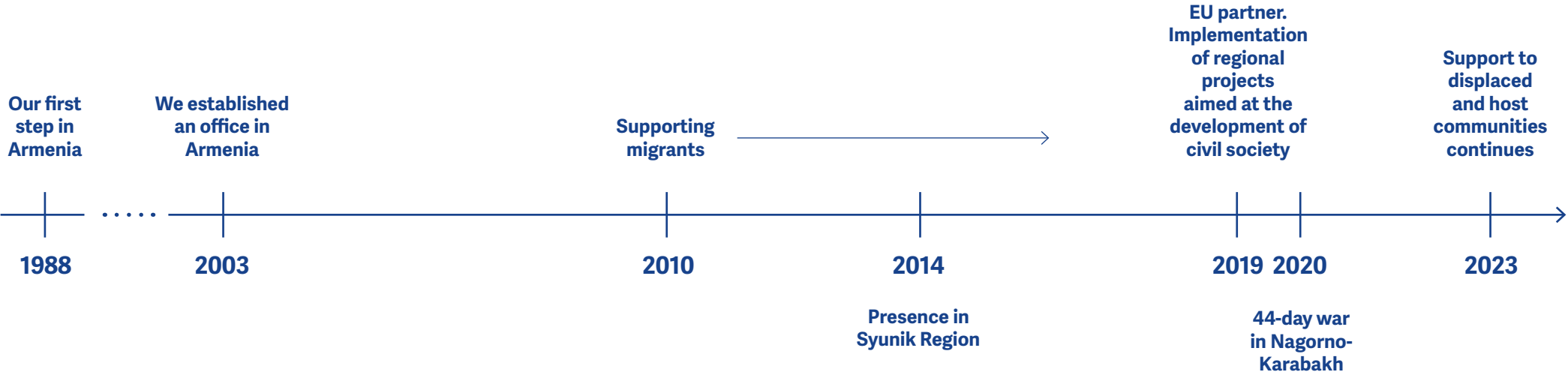
Our **first step in Armenia** occurred in 1988, several years before the People in Need had been founded. A group of students and journalists—who later became the founders of People in Need—set out to deliver humanitarian assistance to Armenia in the aftermath of the Spitak earthquake. This earthquake caused an immense humanitarian catastrophe. This first initiative became a forerunner of our global work. Naturally, this gives Armenia a special significance for the entire organisation.

In **2003**, we established an office in Armenia. Since then, our team has implemented dozens of projects and initiatives to support development in communities in areas such as rural tourism, civic education and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and promotion of human rights. Since **2010**, we have been involved in supporting migrant groups via cooperation with local government and CSOs in policy making and service delivery. In **2019**, we became an EU-Framework partner; since then, we have been implementing regional projects focused on the development of civil society actors across the Eastern Partnership countries. A significant turning point for us was the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh in September **2020**.

Immediately following the conflict, we launched a massive emergency programme to help people fleeing from the fighting and to provide humanitarian aid to host communities. In **2023**, we continued to support both displaced and host communities with a complex portfolio of interventions to increase their emergency preparedness and resilience to become empowered citizens.

Currently, we have two offices: The head office in Yerevan administers activities in the north of the country, and our field office in Goris, Syunik Region, manages all activities in the centre and south of the country. Our presence in Syunik dates back to **2014** and has a strategic meaning for us. Our presence in Syunik enables us to respond swiftly to any potential emergency crises in the bordering communities of this remote region.

After two decades of continuous work in Armenia, we have built a reputation of trust, reliability, and professionalism. We are seen as an actor who puts vulnerable communities and those who were left behind at the forefront of their work.



Country context

Conflict and security



Since gaining independence from the USSR in 1991, Armenia's context has been marked by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with neighbouring Azerbaijan. The first war over NK lasted between 1988–1994. It remained unresolved with no formal peace accord following the ceasefire of 1994, which led to extensive isolation by its neighbours.

In 2020, Armenia was severely impacted by the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh that resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian disaster that forced over 90,000 ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, where many of them continue to remain today.

On September 19, 2023, the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), inhabited by ethnic Armenians, was struck by a full-scale military attack by Azeri military forces. This violence was the culmination of long-term tensions in the region caused by the blockade of the Lachin corridor at the end of December 2022. The blockade entirely prevented essential supplies, including food and medicine, from reaching the region. The blockade also prevented population movement to and from the region as well. Although a ceasefire was reached within hours, a massive displacement of the population from NK to Armenia followed. In less than a week, more than 100,520 individuals (almost the entire Armenian population of NK) fled to Armenia, resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis.

Migration



Even after three decades of independence, Armenia is still experiencing challenges with adopting and implementing important migration policies. For years, the country has experienced an outflow of its citizens to Russia, the EU, and the USA. Recently, this has started to change because of ongoing conflicts and tensions in the neighbouring countries, as well as relative improvement in socioeconomic development. In recent years, Armenia has experienced an inflow of people. Arrivees include ethnic Armenians from Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, Armenian returnees from Western Europe and Russia, and Armenian refugees from Ukraine.

In 2022, Armenia absorbed a significant inflow of migrants, businesses, and capital following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These fueled domestic demand led to an appreciation of the Armenian Dram. In bigger cities, prices for accommodation, food as well as other services skyrocketed. Despite the positive aspects of this migration, this event underscored the low levels of preparedness and the gaps in the Armenian legislation regarding the arriving migrants from abroad. Following the 2023 displacement from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia will need to cope with the integration of tens of thousands of newcomers. This will present one of the most challenging issues for the upcoming years.

Economic conditions



From the beginning of the new millennium, Armenia experienced rapid and promising economic growth, most notably in agribusiness, information and communication technologies, and tourism sectors. In terms of energy, Armenia is heavily dependent on the imports of fuel from the Russian Federation, including gas and fuel for the nuclear power plant in Metsamor. Despite all the shocks in the recent year, Armenia's economy is performing well. However, structural issues persist, including low investment rates, weak attraction of foreign direct investment, lack of human capital, low diversification of economic structures, and narrow export base. These factors combine to cause weak productivity. Similarly, as in other countries, Armenia has been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which paralysed the country's healthcare system and caused a significant hit to Armenia's economy.

Armenia is both a member of the Eurasian Economic Union and a partner of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy. The national economy is also heavily subsidised by the remittances generated by the Armenian diaspora. In 2022, the World Bank reported that 10.4% of GDP came from personal remittances from abroad, and the diaspora is influential in many sectors of society.

Democracy and governance



In 2018, the country went through a peaceful democratisation transformation known as the Velvet Revolution, which brought

former civil society leaders to power. The commitments of the new Government have been set up in order to fight corruption, establish the rule of law and implement essential reforms in the judicial system. Despite significant changes, Armenia is still far from achieving most of its objectives. In March 2021, the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) entered into force, representing an important milestone for EU-Armenia relations. For both sides, CEPA provides a framework for collaboration in strengthening democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. CEPA also aims to stimulate more opportunities in business, create new jobs, improve legislation and public safety, and create a cleaner environment, as well as support opportunities in education and research.

Climate change/resilience



Armenia is considered one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. According to the statistics available, Armenia ranks regularly among the 60 most at-risk countries in the world. It is extremely vulnerable to a number of natural hazards. It is in the “high and increasing” risk category, according to INFORM Risk Index 2022. This index measures hazard and exposure, vulnerability and coping capacity dimensions. Seismic risks are of particular concern as they create a serious hazard for the country’s population and economy. Frequent landslides, the increased likelihood of which is attributed to the loss of 20% of the country’s forest cover between 1990–2005, also affect the country significantly. Other natural hazards include floods, hail storms, droughts, and strong winds. These hazards threaten human safety, causing significant damage and hindering the sustainable development of the country. Almost half a million people are exposed to the hazards mentioned above. Average annual damages from landslides alone amount to \$ 10 million.

Gender equality



In 2023, Armenia ranked 61st of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report, illustrating important gains in terms of gender equality in recent years (89th in 2022, 114th in 2021) However, challenges remain in the area of health, women’s economic empowerment, women’s political participation, and women’s unpaid, unsupported care work in the home.

Armenia’s legislative frameworks in support of ensuring gender equality and advancing women’s empowerment are relatively

strong. The Women’s Global SDG Database scores Armenia at 81.8% for overall legislative frameworks on gender equality and women’s empowerment. While there is no stand-alone law on non-discrimination, the National Constitution prohibits discrimination of any kind. An important step was taken in 2013 with the adoption of the Law on Guaranteeing Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men. However, women are still significantly underrepresented in the spheres, including politics, business and civil service leadership posts. In reality, this demonstrates that women in Armenia do not always have equal opportunities. This lack of opportunity stems from Armenia’s traditionally paternalistic society, which continues to prescribe women’s role as, first and foremost, wives and mothers.

Armenia’s Development Framework

In the long-term, the Government of Armenia is committed to the “Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050 (ATS)” as well as the “Strategic Programme of Prospective Development” for the 2014–2025 period. The ATS strategy’s priorities were formulated as follows:

1. **Growth of employment**
2. **Development of human capital**
3. **Improvement of social protection system**
4. **Institutional modernisation of the public administration and governance.**

In recent years, the international community and institutional donors have prioritised support for human rights and gender equality, democracy, more effective and participatory governance, and sustainable economic growth. However, the political changes of 2018 enabled new levels of cooperation with the EU within the longstanding Eastern Partnership. In 2021, the long-awaited EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) entered into effect. The four main areas of cooperation and engagement between the EU and Armenia have been identified as:

1. **Strengthening institutions and good governance;**
2. **Economic development and market opportunities;**
3. **Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate action;**
4. **Mobility and people-to-people contacts.**

Programmatic Priorities

During the period of transformation, major international stakeholders apart from the EU, the Council of Europe, and USAID approached the Government of Armenia to review the priorities and adapt their support correlating with new internal and external political climates. We will closely observe the process, participate in the discussions alongside other civil society organisations, and monitor the progress of the development and implementation of new policies. We will also support the Government in areas of programmatic priorities elaborated below.

Building on three pillars defined in our Global RDD strategy (see below), we have carefully shaped our programmatic priorities for Armenia for the period 2024–2027. Our priorities are based on analysis conducted at the preparatory stage of this strategy development.

We have considered the following criteria: our current activities and projects, previous track record, existing sectorial partnerships and perspectives for future funding. All our activities in Armenia in the upcoming years will fit at least one of these strategic pillars, which will help us to keep focus and improve the quality of our work.

For us, migration is a **central theme of our work** in Armenia. Having extensive direct experience with displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh, returnees from Western Europe and Armenians leaving Ukraine following Russia's invasion, as well as other nationals coming from the Middle East. We will continue to support these groups.

PIN programmatic pillars are as follows:

- **Emergency Response and Recovery (ERR)**
- **Climate Resilience (CR)**
- **Civil Society and Inclusive Governance (CSIG)**

1. Emergency Response and Recovery



Since 2020, we have mobilised resources from most **major emergency donor agencies**, including BHA, ECHO and the START Fund. We have provided **immediate humanitarian assistance to more than 70,000 individuals**. With emergency funding exceeding **€ 11 million**, we have helped to mitigate the suffering of thousands of individuals in life-threatening circumstances. We have worked primarily on the following sectors: food security (in-kind food assistance), WASH (hygiene kits), shelter (beds, mattresses, blankets, briquettes, utility payments, repair kits) and protection (psychosocial support and child-friendly spaces). We are a leading actor in the provision of emergency **multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) and multipurpose vouchers** and, jointly with the MoLSA, developed a **utility payment modality** for gas and electricity.



Open-air concert in Goris, Syunik Region, Armenia

2. Climate Resilience



We will continue assisting those who are most affected by these events. Our approach is to provide immediate lifesaving assistance when a crisis first hits. Afterwards, we utilise the potential and talent of the people we serve by providing them with support through soft and vocational skills development, continuous mentorship, and financial support for family businesses and start-ups. Through developing vulnerable people, we improve their socioeconomic situation and strengthen their resilience.

Building on our previous experience and evaluating lessons learned and gained in the emergency response, we emphasise the achievement of the following goals under this pillar:

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| Coordination | Strengthen collaboration with national, regional and local stakeholders, including administrative bodies, CSOs and private sector representatives, to deliver timely, targeted humanitarian assistance to affected populations. |
| Relevance of modalities | Promote and implement Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) and multipurpose vouchers to enable communities to address their immediate needs in times of crisis. |
| Focus on children | Enhance existing Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) and develop new ones to cultivate the social, emotional, and cognitive skills of children while fostering social cohesion between host communities and displaced people. |
| Emergency preparedness | Implement customised plans in remote communities to enhance their readiness for emergencies. |
| Economic opportunities | Enable vulnerable and displaced populations to secure improved access to employment and economic opportunities by tailoring our support to their needs. |

In addressing climate change, we work to enhance the resilience of people vulnerable to the adverse effects of a changing climate and environmental degradation. We try to maximise efforts in line with green growth and circular economy principles, to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sequester/stock carbon. In Armenia, we strive to integrate mitigation and **adaptation actions into our project portfolio. Our efforts are grounded by extensive experience with local CSOs and providing support and livelihoods to the most vulnerable populations in both urban and rural areas.**

We are focused on farmers, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs (incl. those working in the tourism sector), and rural communities bearing the brunt of the negative impacts of climate change.

A climate change agenda is incorporated into our long-term programming with the following:

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| Assessment | Conduct comprehensive climate change vulnerability assessments in regions and communities selected for intervention. We will identify areas most susceptible to climate change impacts. |
| Support of local CSOs in their agenda | Enhance the capacities of local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and networks engaged in climate change-related work, with a specific emphasis on enhancing their ability to advocate for climate change action and increase awareness within their local communities. |
| Resilience of communities | Strengthen the ability of remote communities to withstand and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. We will achieve this by integrating locally-driven mitigation and adaptation measures into the tourism and livelihood sectors. |
| Climate sensitive programming | Implement initiatives that prioritise climate-sensitive programming by integrating circular economy principles and improved waste management practices. |

3. Civil Society and Inclusive Governance (CSIG)



In 20 years, we have achieved a number of successes in working with civil society actors. Since 2019, PIN in Armenia awarded **more than 80 grants** to local CSOs, informal civic groups and independent activists for realising local change initiatives. In total, we have supported **more than 40 local civil society actors** with comprehensive organisational and technical support. Through our actions under the CSIG pillar, we have granted more than **€ 600,000** to CSOs in Armenia.

We support civil society playing a pivotal role in social, economic and democratic development in our target communities in Armenia. In line with our Civil Society & Inclusive Governance pillar, we provide **opportunities for civil society actors**. This enables them to strengthen their technical skills, as well as improve their operational, collaborative, and adaptive capacities to become more effective governance and development actors. It also enables them to represent the voice of citizens better and serve as primary liaison between governments and their constituencies. We hold a broader view of Civic Society Actors (CSAs), extending beyond registered, formal non-governmental organisations in order to acknowledge and enhance the potential of this diverse civic ecosystem. Therefore, we work closely with emerging initiatives, grassroots organisations, well-established CSOs, networks, local governments, and communities. Together, we advance participatory democratic processes and develop inclusive public services with a particular focus on women, youth, and marginalised groups.

We work with relevant actors as an interconnected system; thus, we will support governments in developing more accountable, transparent, and participatory mechanisms for planning, delivering, and monitoring policies and public services. Additionally, we focus on the active engagement of communities in equitable decision-making processes and practical cooperation and collaboration among civil society, governments, and communities to achieve sustainable outcomes at scale.

We believe that the future of international development in Armenia must be achieved by supporting local action led by Armenian CSAs alongside strengthening government systems. Hence, we are focused on amplifying Armenian CSAs roles as drivers of local development and change rooted in their communities, deciding and performing their role from the context, mandate, and ambitions of their own development identity.

With our current experience and expertise in Armenia, we focus on three main directions of support under this thematic priority, namely on **organisation and technical capacity development of local civil society actors, increase of transparency and accountability of local governance and identification of opportunities for collaboration and networking among local CSOs**. With these types of support, we aim to contribute to the achievement of the following goals:

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| CSOs capacities | Empower local civil society to collaboratively develop sustainable community solutions and provide comprehensive assistance to displaced individuals, refugees, and returning populations by enhancing their capacities, strategic thinking, adaptability, and partnerships. |
| Support to authorities in improved service delivery | Enhance capacities and accountability of local, regional and national authorities towards communities, enabling them to effectively employ inclusive, participatory, and evidence-based decision-making processes and developing sustainable mechanisms in delivering need-based services to vulnerable groups with the engagement of local CSOs. |
| Policy work | Collaborate with governmental entities and relevant stakeholders to establish effective legislation within the social and migration sectors. We will ensure this legislation aligns with the goals and needs of the industry while addressing its challenges and opportunities. |
| Empowerment of communities | Motivate and encourage communities to be a part of the decision-making dialogue with the local governments and civil society actors. |

Cross-cutting topics

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and protection mainstreaming



Women's leadership roles are hindered by the challenges they face in accessing support for unpaid care work in the home. Access to quality and affordable childcare outside the three main cities remains a challenge, as does accessing necessary support services for older persons. Gender-based approaches are deemed crucial not only to assess how vulnerable groups are impacted differently but also to adopt transformative mechanisms to address gender inequities and support social justice.

We have incorporated Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in all of our provisions. Where the context allows—and it enables us to reach impact—we apply a Human Rights Based Approach, in line with internal guidance, to support people in addressing duty bearers and realising their rights.

Market Systems Development (MSD)



Improving the livelihoods of people with a particular focus on vulnerable groups (refugees, migrants, people living in remote areas) is a priority for us. We support SMEs in the creation of new employment opportunities, the development of both practical and theoretical skills of employees, and the higher viability of the small and medium-sized enterprises SME. According to our analysis from 2012–2022, we have supported more than 100 SMEs, and about 71% of these enterprises continue to survive and generate income to this day.

Building on this experience and our MSD expertise, we prioritise a market-based approach and provide holistic support to selected value chains/sectors. We aim to achieve greater sustainability and impact for the most vulnerable population. Our approach is based on the premise that even the most vulnerable populations and remote communities are reliant on markets—as producers (smallholder farmers, micro-entrepreneurs) and employees—but that these markets do not provide enough job opportunities for them. We facilitate practical cooperation between market actors and government institutions and work to transform the behaviours and practices of market actors, to influence how markets work.

Commitments to Environment



We are focused on reducing the environmental footprint of operations and promoting best practices to help partners and other local CSOs with greening their operations. PIN green operation tackles procurement, transportation and general office maintenance-related actions. Such actions include but are not limited to having a waste management system on our premises, behavioural change promotion for reducing the use of plastic and turning to more reusable options. Energy and water-saving mechanisms and tools are regularly introduced and followed.



Training for the displaced people

Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of our operations, we apply strategic planning, community engagement, capacity building, and partnerships. When working with communities, we engage them in all project phases, including planning, implementing and evaluation. This ensures we include their needs, priorities, and existing capacities. To strengthen the capacity of local CSOs and community leaders, we empower them to take leadership roles in the implementation of projects and provide tailor-made training to be able to address the needs of the communities they serve. When developing new projects, we prioritise the long-term perspective, considering the sustainability of outcomes beyond the project implementation period. In this regard, we will develop a clear exit strategy at the beginning of each project, outlining how the project will be sustained after our involvement ends.

In our work, we collaborate with local governments, international and local CSOs and private sector entities to leverage resources and expertise. We prioritise local institutions and CSOs when building partnerships to ensure a coordinated approach and local ownership. In our work, we advocate for policies and practices that support community resilience, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. We document lessons learned for every action and disseminate information to contribute to broader learning within the sector. Finally, we are committed to being culturally sensitive and respecting local traditions, customs, and systems in the planning and implementation of projects.

Annexes

- **CP Checklist**
- **Risk register**
- **Fundraising strategy**
- **Emergency Preparedness Plan**
- **MEAL Framework**



Open-air concert in Goris,
Syunik Region, Armenia

People in Need is a Czech non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has been providing aid in troubled regions and supporting human rights since 1992. Since then, People in Need has grown into one of the largest NGOs in Central Europe. Today, its work focuses on humanitarian and development aid, advocacy for human rights and democratic freedom, field social work, and education, awareness and information.

peopleinneed.net

Alliance2015 is a strategic partnership of eight European NGOs engaged in humanitarian and development activities. Besides People in Need (Czech Republic), Alliance2015 members are ACTED (France), Cesvi (Italy), Concern Worldwide (Ireland), HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (Switzerland), Hivos (The Netherlands), Welthungerhilfe (Germany) and Ayuda en Acción (Spain).

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