



## **Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement**

### **Brief Quarterly Overview**

*January – March 2011*

Over the winter and spring of 2011, the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement process was marked by lack of breakthrough. As forecasted by many political analysts in both countries, no changes were expected in the following quarter given the usual increase in mutual hostile rhetoric around April 24, and the internally important political processes such as the upcoming parliamentary elections in Turkey in June 2011. A number of other factors, both domestic and external, such as the constitutional reforms in Turkey and uprisings in the Arab world, tend to push down the issue of Armenia-Turkey rapprochement in Turkey's priority list.

Meanwhile, given the political challenges and constraints that the current status of the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement process has created, the Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement project started looking at ways to adjust its planned approach to ensure the effectiveness of activities. The Consortium considers various scenarios of future developments, as well as interests and priorities of political, business, and civil society stakeholders in Armenia and Turkey that might affect the environment in which the project will operate in the next quarters.

Over the second quarter, progress was made in a number of activities planned under each strand of the project. The list of activities includes but is not limited to the following. The survey component of the Business Opinion Leaders Research is completed both in Turkey and Armenia. It is expected that business communities in Armenia and Turkey, as well as other local and international stakeholders, will be able to use the research result for their strategic planning of cooperation. YPC and Izmir University research teams are about to complete the first draft of the media bias research, which will increase the opportunity for the media stakeholders to focus on achievements and shortcomings in mutual coverage over 2008-2010. In January 2011, a Facebook page entitled "4th Wave: Armenia-Turkey" was launched and now has more than 160 members. It aims at providing the Internet savvy public interested in the issue of Armenia-Turkey rapprochement with an opportunity to access pluralistic information on the topic, as well as with a platform to engage in open discussion. The more than 20 open-door inquiries and proposals received under the Armenia-Turkey open-door grants scheme increase the opportunity that the Armenia-Turkey dialogue will be promoted through innovative approaches proposed by Armenian and Turkish stakeholders from civil society, media, and business community. The first TV talk show with participation of a Turkish guest was shot in Armenia on in March 2011 and broadcast by Yerkir Media TV network, through which the Armenian public has a better opportunity to be informed about the Turkish side. Three pilot youth banks were set up: two in Istanbul, one in

Samsun, Turkey, which was the first step to the establishment of a dialogue between Armenian and Turkish young people to share experience and best practices on youth-led development in Armenia and Turkey. Policy briefs based on the results of expert discussions, a series of town hall meetings, and the piloting of video-conferences involving Armenian and Turkish policy analysts increases the opportunity for the experts and political actors to positively engage in the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement processes.

Specific steps were taken to fill in the gap identified over the past quarter of the project implementation: a comprehensive database of currently implemented or recently concluded Armenian-Turkish projects progressed. The roster of the projects and organizations will be analyzed to identify synergy opportunities, gaps and overlaps, sent around to all the stakeholders, put on a website, and expanded further. In April 2011, a meeting will be convened in Yerevan with an aim to bring together all Armenian organizations engaged in promoting the Armenia-Turkey dialogue. Based on the outcome of the meeting in Yerevan, actions will be taken to organize a similar meeting in Istanbul for Turkish organizations and a coordination meeting for donors interested in Armenia-Turkey rapprochement. Some preparatory work was completed to arrange a series of interviews with key Armenian and Turkish stakeholders involved in the dialogue processes. The goal of the consultancy, conducted by Sven Behrendt, an international consultant, is to help EPF and the Consortium to explore new opportunities for Armenia-Turkey dialogue, identify joint project ideas, and formulate advocacy messages to the stakeholders in the dialogue process.

As the Project progresses, concrete steps are taken to ensure linkages within the activities of different strands of the project. The Consortium members make considerable efforts to coordinate activities with and between other actors engaged in Armenia-Turkey initiative. For instance, effective coordination has been established between the USAID-funded Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement project and the “Dialogue Building between Armenia and Turkey” project led by Internews Network and supported by the US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). This is further facilitated by the fact that one of the Consortium member organizations, Yerevan Press Club, and one of the Project’s key partners in Turkey, Global Political Trends Center, are engaged as implementing partners in the DRL-supported project.

Apart from maximizing the value of the Project’s inputs and resources, linking the activities and participants across all Armenia-Turkey initiatives helps to synergize and expand the impact beyond the boundaries set by individual projects. The aim is to carve out a larger space of interaction and mutual effect that can bring Armenia-Turkey initiatives to a qualitatively different level.

---

*USAID and the Consortium Members support Armenia-Turkey rapprochement by facilitating engagement between civil society groups, establishment and development of business partnerships and regional professional networks, and enhanced understanding between the people, for peace and economic integration in the region.*

*The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the Consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*