



**PROFESSIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED
MEDIA PROFESSIONALS FROM NAGORNO KARABAKH**

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INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the “Professional Media and Civil Society Join Forces for Dialogue”¹ project, the Public Journalism Club conducted an assessment of the professional needs of media professionals who were forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh (NK) and took refuge in Armenia. The primary goal of the project is to support and empower forcibly displaced NK media professionals and to facilitate their active involvement in the Armenian media ecosystem. By assessing their needs, the program also aims to highlight directions for capacity development, which can be a guide for the implementation of other support projects.

In 2023, after the September events², more than 100,000 people were displaced from Nagorno Karabakh³ and found refuge in Armenia. Among them were many employees of the media sector: editors, journalists, photographers, operators, presenters, and others.

The urgency and necessity of assessing the professional needs of NK media workers displaced to Armenia stems from the imperative to help them adapt to a new environment.

This research aims to highlight their professional needs and develop needs-based programs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to identify the professional and capacity development needs of media workers displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia, and to outline and identify the main directions of training. In particular:

- to identify professional challenges that media workers face in their new work environment
- to identify the resources, abilities, and skills that they should develop to increase their competitiveness in the Armenian media field

¹ “Professional Media and Civil Society Join Forces for Dialogue”, Public Journalism Club, 2024, <https://pjc.am/portfolio/profesional-median-yev-qaghhasarakutyun/>

² As a result of the Azerbaijani aggression on September 19–20, at least 223 Karabakh Armenians were killed, Radio Liberty, 2024, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32761668.html>

³ According to the latest data, the number of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh is 100,625, RA Government, 2023, <https://www.gov.am/am/news/item/15659/>

- to identify their professional goals.

In addition, the research seeks to reveal the perceptions and ideas of NK media workers regarding conflict resolution, taking into account their possible involvement in the coverage of post-war developments, as well as their possible participation in regional programs.

METHODOLOGY

Identification of the professional needs of forcibly displaced NK media workers was carried out using a qualitative and quantitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews and online surveys.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 media workers in an online format (Zoom platform), each lasting an average of 20–30 minutes. The interviews were conducted using a previously developed questionnaire (Appendix 1). In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with two editors working with NK media workers regarding the capabilities and skills the latter need to develop for their professional activities.

For the semi-structured interview, representatives were selected from media professionals displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia who are currently working in Armenian mass media. The data of these professionals was taken from the database created by the Public Journalism Club and the Center for Media Initiatives within the framework of the project “Support to Media Content Creators Forcefully Displaced from Nagorno Karabakh”⁴, which was further adjusted and completed before the start of the research.

NK media workers were selected for the interviews according to the criteria presented in the following table.

Gender/Age	Professional group	Type of media	Work experience
Male, female/20–60 years	Reporter Editor Freelancer	Radio Television Website Podcast	2 or more years

⁴ “Support to Media Content Creators Forcefully Displaced from Nagorno Karabakh”, Public Journalism Club, 2024, <https://pjc.am/portfolio/13383/>

		Print media	
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Before starting the interview, the participants signed and/or were sent a consent form in advance, which detailed the purpose of the study, the conditions of the interview, and the risks and benefits associated with it (Appendix 2).

The research included a telephone interview with two editors selected from media outlets that received a sub-grant to involve displaced NK media professionals in the work of their media outlet within the framework of Public Journalism Club's “Professional Media and Political Society Join Forces for Dialogue”⁵ project.

As part of the research, an online survey was also conducted using a specially developed questionnaire (Appendix 3). This questionnaire was placed on Google Forms and sent to the e-mail addresses of almost 100 NK media professionals. The list was taken from the database compiled by the Public Journalism Club and the Center for Media Initiatives within the framework of the program “Support to Media Content Creators Forcefully Displaced from Nagorno Karabakh”.

The following types of questions were asked in the questionnaire sent to the research participants, as well as during the online interviews:

- a) Questions about the participant: work experience, sector, main functions, skills
- b) Questions about displacement: its impact on professional activities, connections, resources
- c) Questions about professional skills and abilities: what they lack, what they would like to develop
- d) Question about dialogue: willingness/desire to engage in dialogue projects as a media professional.

⁵ “Professional Media and Political Society Join Forces for Dialogue”, Public Journalism Club, 2024, <https://pjc.am/portfolio/profesional-median-yev-qaghhasarakutyun/>

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Analysis of online interviews

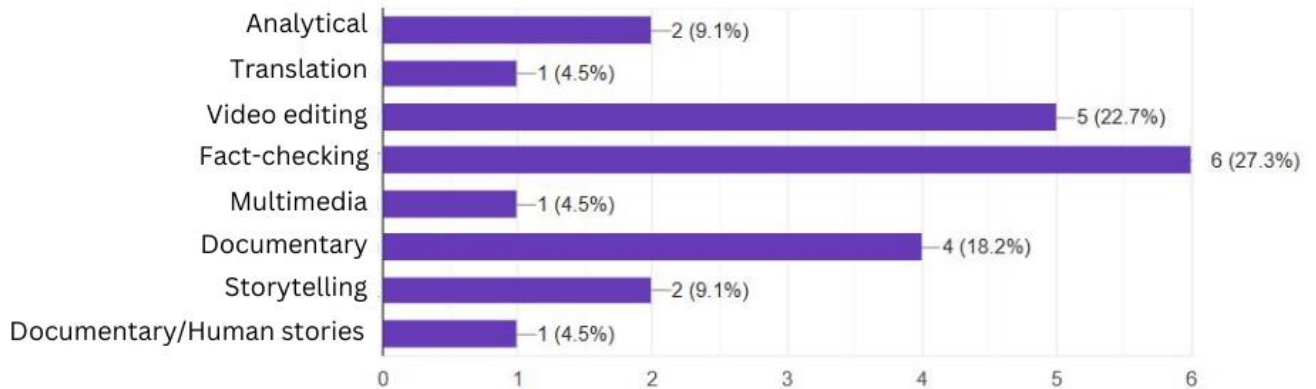
In order to assess the professional needs of displaced NK media workers, an online personal interview was conducted with 18 NK media professionals currently working in Armenian mass media.

Table 1. Profile of professional interviewees

Gender of participants		Number of participants
Male		3
Female		15
Work experience		
2–3 years		10
4–5 years		2
6–10 years		1
10 years and more		5
Current occupation		
Journalist		12
Freelancer		5
Editor		1

As a result of the interviews, it became clear what professional skills the NK media workers have (Graph 1).

Graph 1: What skills do the interviewees have to a greater or lesser extent?



The interviews highlighted the significant psychological impact of displacement on NK media professionals. As a result of the displacement, most of them had been depressed and did not want to continue their work, but, with the support and encouragement of Armenian media organizations and individual journalists, they had resumed professional activities. During the displacement they had to leave their professional equipment (photo and video cameras, computers, printers, tripods, etc.) in Nagorno Karabakh. After moving to Armenia, the lack of necessary equipment hampered NK media representatives from continuing their professional activities. Some of the interviewees answered that they would have continued their work more confidently if they had taken the necessary equipment and devices with them.

The interviews highlighted challenges with the formal, written format of communication usual for contacts with officials, spokespersons, and other officials in Armenia. Participants said that they are not used to this communication method and culture, and it prevents them from working smoothly and quickly in the Armenian media field. In contrast, working contacts with local officials in Nagorno Karabakh were described as much faster and more direct. Participants said that while carrying out professional activities in Nagorno Karabakh, they established personal contacts with high-ranking officials, as a result of which they were able to quickly receive the necessary information.

The interviewees also pointed out the following challenges in dealing with the Armenian media sector:

- Differences in the quality and professionalism of the Armenian and NK media sectors. It was difficult for the interview participants to adapt and learn the processes of creating materials for the Armenian mass media and the quality expected.

- Problems with receiving information. Interview participants said they encountered difficulties in the process of obtaining information in Armenia because they did not know which structure to apply to, or how to prepare a written request.
- Lack of complete and in-depth awareness of Armenian socio-political developments. This challenge hindered the production of urgent and quality materials.

The participants also noted that in Nagorno Karabakh, they mostly prepared articles and reports; they have limited knowledge about fact-checking tools; and few are familiar with multimedia formats.

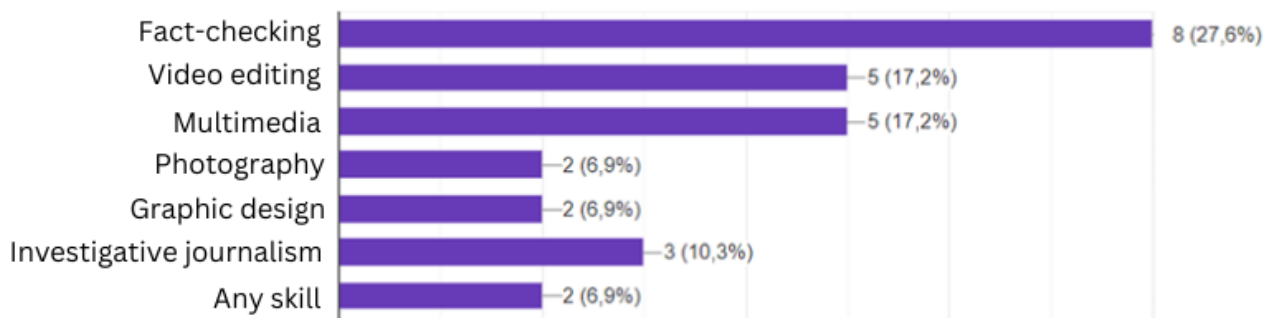
The majority of interviewees indicated that they see a need for training in fact- and data-checking skills as part of developing their professional skills. (Graph 2).

The need for video editing training was mentioned most often. A majority of the participants indicated that they would like to participate in video editing training, as well as deepen their knowledge in graphic design, in particular Photoshop (Graph 2).

The need for training in video editing and multimedia journalism was also mentioned most often. The majority of the participants indicated that they want to be trained in video-editing, as well as to enhance their multimedia skills.

In general, the professional skills that the NK media professionals want to develop can be summarized as follows (Graph 2):

Graph 2: What professional skills do interviewees want to improve?



There were other answers to the question as well: improving English, interviewing skills, conflict reporting skills, and courses/masterclasses by international experts.

According to the two editors collaborating with NK media workers, the latter need to develop skills in working with data and sources, preparing multimedia materials, and social media management. In addition, the editors emphasized the importance of information security, noting that, for example, their NK colleagues sometimes left the workplace without logging off social network accounts.

The most frequently cited impediment to attending professional development courses is respondents' work schedules. If the courses and trainings are held outside working hours or on weekends, there is a high probability that NK media professionals will participate.

Analysis of Online Questionnaire Responses

As part of the research, an online survey was also conducted using a specially developed questionnaire (Appendix 3), which was placed on Google Forms and sent to the e-mail addresses of almost 100 NK media professionals. 18 responses were received.

Table 2. Professional data of the persons who completed the questionnaire

Work experience	Number of participants
2–5 years	4
5–10 years	3
10 years and more	11
Media type	
Broadcasting (TV/Radio)	10
Print (daily, weekly, magazine)	7
Online (website)	1

As for the gender ratio in the NK media field, according to the respondents, women constituted the majority.

When asked why more women were working in NK media than men, the majority of the media professionals stated that they did not know. Some suggested that the field was

unattractive because of the low salaries, while others have noted that men tended to work more in industrial sectors or the armed forces.

Graph 3: What was the gender ratio in the NK media field?



The majority of survey participants said that media representatives from Nagorno-Karabakh faced difficulties in continuing their professional activities after the 2023 displacement. 56.3 percent of those who completed the questionnaire said “yes.”

Graph 4. Have you faced difficulties and/or challenges in continuing your media work after displacement?



The answers also included general employment issues. The participants mentioned that they could not find even a non-professional job. Lack of adequate financial and technical resources also hindered their professional engagement.

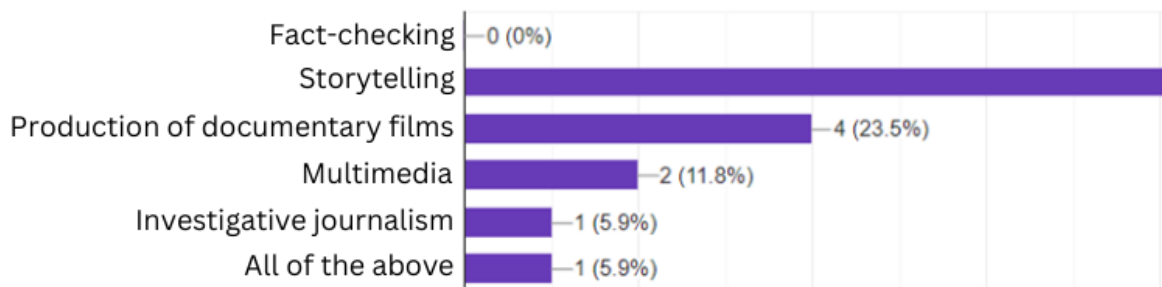
According to 50 percent of survey respondents, these difficulties and challenges did not differ based on gender, age, or experience (Graph 5).

Graph 5. According to you, do these challenges differ from person to person, woman to man, young professional to experienced specialist?



As for their best professional skills and abilities, 52.9 percent of the survey participants mentioned storytelling and 23.5 percent - documentary skills. The full picture is represented in Graph 6.

Graph 6: What skills are the survey participants most proficient in?



11.1 percent of those who completed the online questionnaire did not want to develop any skills or participate in training, 50 percent expressed a desire to do so, and 38.9 percent had difficulty answering the question (Graph 7).

Graph 7: Are there certain areas or skills in media production or journalism in which you feel you need further training or development?



Survey respondents identified **fact-checking** and **multimedia journalism** as top areas for training and capacity-building (Figure 8).

Graph 8: What professional skills do the respondents want to improve?



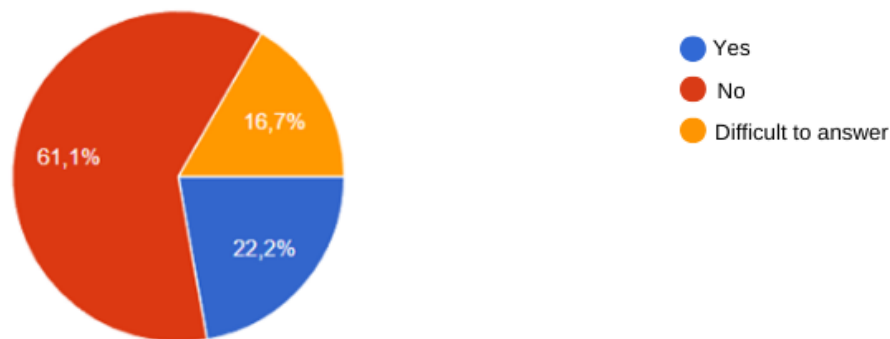
Other answers were also given, particularly social media management skills.

Evaluating the willingness of media workers forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to participate in dialogue-oriented programs

Media workers displaced from Nagorno Karabakh could be involved in covering post-war developments, as well as possibly participating in regional programs. It was therefore important, in the context of assessing their professional needs, to understand how willing they are to be involved, for example, in regional dialogue-oriented programs. For this purpose, a question was included in the questionnaire (Appendix 1): do they imagine themselves participating/want to participate in such programs and/or meetings?

Most of the interviewees gave a negative answer. 11 out of 18 people said that they do not see themselves in dialogue-oriented programs (Graph 9).

Graph 9: Do you see yourself in dialogue-oriented programs (interviews)?



Some participants said their ideas about dialogue had changed: until September 2023 (before forced displacement), they might have expressed a desire to participate in similar projects, but at the moment, they do not see “any sense” in it. Participants expressed opinions such as “It's psychologically difficult,” “It's futile, pointless, especially now,” and “We're mentally exhausted now.”

Some mentioned that they had participated in similar meetings in the past, but these had been followed by the brutal war of 2020, which they thought proved that such meetings were ineffective. Several of the participants found it difficult to answer the question, stressing that in order to participate in such meetings, it was necessary to have considerable knowledge and experience in order to avoid “manipulators from the other side.” Those who

answered “yes” noted that they had a lot to say to representatives of Azerbaijan and also wanted to listen to them. Some participants noted that it would be preferable first to participate in capacity-building programs without Azerbaijanis to get relevant knowledge, experience, and skills.

Questions regarding meetings aimed at regional dialogue were also included in the online questionnaire.

To the question regarding the willingness/desire to be involved in dialogue-oriented projects as a media professional, 33.3% answered “Yes”, 44.4% answered “No”, and 22.2% of participants found it difficult to answer the question (Graph 10).

Graph 10: Do you see yourself in dialogue-oriented programs (online survey)?



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research provides some insight into the capacity-building needs of forcibly displaced media professionals from Nagorno Karabakh and the challenges for them in adapting to work in the Armenian media environment.

Analyzing the data from the interviews conducted with NK media workers and the online questionnaire, we conclude that, after being forcibly displaced and taking refuge in Armenia, they could not work for a long time due to their psychological condition. However, the environment, the reaction of the media community, the active involvement of some structures of civil society, and support mechanisms contributed to the fact that many of them started working in Armenian mass media or carrying out their professional activities.

Armenian media professionals helped their colleagues displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to adapt to the new workplace, offered help in completing assignments, and editors treated absences considerately and gave them time to adapt psychologically. However, many NK media professionals continue to suffer from depression, which also affects their professional activity and motivation. Some of them noted that they often focus on materials about the problems of those displaced from Nagorno Karabakh, which they find easier to prepare. At the same time, they relive the trauma of the displacement with every story.

In addition to psychological difficulties, a lack of professional self-confidence prevents many NK media professionals from working in the Armenian media field, where they face different work rhythms and professional expectations.

The research showed that although many NK media workers have basic journalistic skills, they have not yet established sufficient professional contacts and have a limited level of knowledge about the media in Armenia, as well as the situation in other spheres – legal, social, economic, foreign political, internal political. They also lack expertise, especially in data- and fact-checking and multimedia journalism.

Although NK media workers receive significant support from their Armenian counterparts, who help with issues such as submitting requests to government agencies, verifying data, and performing other professional duties, the media workers who participated in the study still feel the need for professional development and want to participate in training.

In conclusion, we would like to suggest the following actions.

- Capacity-building interventions to mitigate the professional challenges of NK media workers.
- Training on fact-checking, media literacy, and multimedia journalism, which will not only increase their professionalism but will also positively affect their involvement in the Armenian media sector.
- A series of meetings on social, political, and economic issues, helping NK media workers to better understand events and their context in Armenia.

In addition, we propose to hold a series of meetings on the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and EU-Armenia relations, which will explain the context of relations and reforms, help NK media workers to better understand the value of and expected developments in EU-Armenia relations, as well as their impact on reforms in different fields.

Additionally, related topics that can enhance the capacity of NK media workers could include courses in investigative journalism, video editing, storytelling, photography, and graphic design.

To help NK media workers establish contacts with Armenian media professionals and better understand social and political developments, we suggest the following initiatives:

- **Closed meetings** with experts, representatives of civil society, analysts, politicians, and officials, during which topics related to various fields and current developments can be discussed
- **Mentorship programs** through which experienced journalists and industry experts provide guidance, feedback, and support to NK media professionals
- **Development of technical skills**, including digital literacy, a course on the latest digital tools and technologies used in journalism, including social media management, content management systems, and data journalism
- **Cybersecurity**: workshops on information security and cybersecurity practices to protect their work and personal information from digital threats.

SUGGESTIONS

We propose to initiate seminars and training courses on the following main topics: **fact-checking, media literacy, multimedia journalism, conflict and post-conflict coverage, and video editing.**

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Key questions:

1. Please briefly present your experience as a media professional in Nagorno Karabakh.
2. What types of media have you worked in (e.g., print, broadcast, online)?
3. How long were you engaged in media work in Nagorno Karabakh?
4. What was the gender ratio in the Nagorno Karabakh media field? What effect did it have on your work?
5. Was it difficult to work in the media field as a parent?
6. How has displacement affected your work as a media professional?
7. After being displaced from Nagorno Karabakh, what challenges did you face in terms of continuing your media work?
8. In your opinion, do these challenges of the media field differ from person to person, from woman to man, from young specialist to experienced professional?
9. How has the displacement affected your access to resources and human networks related to your media work?
10. How has the transition to a new environment affected your ability to continue your media work?
11. List the tools and skills you have in media production (e.g., fact-checking).
12. Are there specific areas in journalism that you want to specialize in?
13. Are there certain areas or skills in media production or journalism in which you feel you need further training or development?
14. What type of training or workshops do you think would be most beneficial for improving your media skills?
15. Are there any difficulties that prevent you from participating in such training?
16. Are there areas of media production or journalism where you would like to be mentored by experienced professionals?
17. Are there any difficulties you face in obtaining reliable information related to your media work?
18. What special skills and experience do you currently have as a media professional?
19. Armenian media representatives often participate in regional meetings dedicated to the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and the implementation of joint projects. Can you imagine yourself in similar projects?

MUTUAL CONSENT FORM

Research title: Assessment of professional needs of forcibly displaced media professionals from Nagorno Karabakh

Researchers: Shushan Shatikyan and Lilit Hovhannisyan (Public Journalism Club)

Introduction:

Dear participant,

I invite you to participate in the research carried out within the framework of the “Professional Media and Civil Society Join Forces for Dialogue” project of the Public Journalism Club, which aims to understand the professional needs of media workers who were forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and took refuge in Armenia, as well as their perceptions, wishes, and ideas regarding regional dialogue.

Before deciding to participate, it is important that you understand the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the expectations and potential risks.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to highlight the professional needs, abilities, and skills of forcibly displaced media workers from Nagorno Karabakh in the context of combating disinformation, fact-checking, and also trying to understand what ideas, wishes, and expectations there are regarding regional dialogue.

The purpose of this research is to identify the professional and capacity development needs of media workers displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia, and to outline and identify the main directions of training. In particular:

- to identify professional challenges that media workers face in their new work environment

- to identify the resources, abilities, and skills that they should develop to increase their competitiveness in the Armenian media field
- to identify their professional goals.

In addition, the research seeks to reveal the perceptions and ideas of NK media workers regarding conflict resolution, taking into account their possible involvement in the coverage of post-war developments, as well as their possible participation in regional programs.

Procedure

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be invited to an individual interview in online format, and you will receive an online questionnaire. Your participation in the interview and completing the questionnaire is voluntary.

Risks and benefits

Participating in this research involves minimal risk. However, it can cause emotional discomfort when discussing topics related to displacement, conflict, and building dialogue. A positive consequence of participation is that your responses will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced by Nagorno Karabakh media professionals and may inform actors planning future initiatives in this area.

Privacy

Your answers will be recorded during the interview but will remain confidential. No identifying information will be disclosed in reports or publications resulting from the research. All data, including interview recordings and completed questionnaires, will be stored securely and will only be accessible to the research team. Audio/video recordings will be transcribed for analysis, and any quotes used in reports will be made anonymous to ensure your privacy. The recordings will be deleted after the research is completed.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time during the interview without giving a reason. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the Public Journalism Club.

Agreement

By participating in the survey, you are giving your informed consent to be part of this research.



Participant's first and last name

Participant's signature

Date:

REQUEST

Dear participant,

In the framework of its “Professional Media and Civil Society Join Forces for Dialogue” project, the Public Journalism Club is conducting an assessment of the professional needs of displaced media professionals from Nagorno Karabakh.

We invite you to participate in this survey, the purpose of which is to highlight the professional needs of media workers displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia, in particular, what professional challenges they face in the new work environment, what resources, abilities, and skills they need to develop to become more competitive in the Armenian media field, as well as what ideas they have in the context of conflict settlement as displaced media workers who may be involved in conflict coverage and/or related programs and courses.

Note that the survey is anonymous. This means that it will not be possible to identify you without your consent.

You have the right to stop the survey at any time or not to answer certain questions if you do not want to.

The results of the survey will be used exclusively for general analyses that will serve the effective implementation of the above project.

If you agree to participate, please click “I agree” below.
If you choose not to participate, select the “I do not agree” option.

- I agree.

- I do not agree.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions marked with an asterisk () indicate that a response is required.*

1. Please indicate in which media you worked in Nagorno Karabakh.*
 - print (newspaper, daily newspaper, magazine)
 - broadcast (television, radio)
 - online (website)
 - other (please specify)

2. How long were you engaged in media work in Nagorno Karabakh?*

 - 1–5 years
 - 5–10 years
 - 10 years and more

3. According to you, what was the gender ratio in the Nagorno Karabakh media field?*

 - women were the majority
 - men were the majority
 - evenly distributed

4. Did it affect your work?*

 - Yes
 - No
 - Difficult to answer

5. If yes, how did it affect it? Please give more details.

6. Has displacement affected your work as a media professional?*

 - Yes
 - No
 - Difficult to answer

7. Has displacement affected your access to resources and human networks related to your media work?

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

8. Have you faced difficulties and/or challenges in continuing your media work after displacement?

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

9. If so, please name some of them.

10. In your opinion, do these challenges differ from person to person, woman to man, young specialist to experienced professional?

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

11. Which of the below-mentioned media skills do you have?*

- Fact-checking
- Storytelling
- Production of documentaries
- Multimedia
- Investigation/research skills
- Other (please detail)

12. Are there certain areas or skills in media production or journalism in which you feel you need further training or development?*

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

13. If yes, please name them.

14. Are there any difficulties that could prevent you from participating in projects aimed at developing abilities and skills (courses, seminars, etc.)?

- Yes

- No
- Difficult to answer

15. Armenian media representatives often participate in regional meetings dedicated to normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and implementation of joint projects. Can you imagine yourself in similar programs?

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

List of links *

1. Public Journalism Club. (2024). *Professional media and civil society join forces for dialogue*. <https://pjc.am/portfolio/profesional-median-yev-qaghasarakutyun/>
2. Radio Liberty. (2024). *As a result of the Azerbaijani aggression on September 19–20, at least 223 Karabakh Armenians were killed*. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32761668.html>
3. RA Government. (2023). *According to the latest data, the number of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh is 100,625*. <https://www.gov.am/am/news/item/15659/>
4. Public Journalism Club. (2024). *Support to media content creators forcefully displaced from Nagorno Karabakh*. <https://pjc.am/portfolio/13383/>
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