
UDC 001.32:314.151.3-054.73(479.243)

D. Galoyan, D.Sc. in Economics, Prof. (*ASUE, Yerevan, Armenia*)

H. Mkrtchyan, PhD Student (*ASUE, Yerevan, Armenia*)

DISPLACED RESEARCHERS AND SCIENTISTS FROM NAGORNO-KARABAKH: RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Wars, political instability, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters have forced numerous researchers and scientists to become displaced, threatening both their careers and the scientific endeavors they represent. In fragile research environments, such instability damages the continuity of scientific work and can destroy burgeoning scientific communities, resulting in a considerable loss of intellectual capital and institutional development. This grant proposal seeks to support displaced researchers from Nagorno-Karabakh by addressing their specific needs, including barriers to employment, limited grant opportunities, and lack of access to professional networks, underscoring the urgent need for national and international intervention to provide a sustainable support framework for these at-risk scientific professionals.

In the contemporary world, the forced displacement of individuals due to war, political unrest, and natural or man-made catastrophes has emerged as a significant global issue. Among the affected are researchers and scientists who lose their homes, and the infrastructure required for their intellectual pursuits. These crises severely disrupt their research careers and deprive affected regions of invaluable academic and scientific talent. Scientific institutions in developing regions are often at an early stage of development and are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of such displacements.

Conflicts, especially in countries with fragile scientific infrastructures, dismantle years of academic growth and hinder potential advancements. In the context of post-Soviet conflicts, such as those between Russia and Ukraine and Armenia and Azerbaijan, the consequences for research communities have been profound, with researchers often unable to continue their academic work and forced into migration.

The longstanding Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, spanning over three decades, has resulted in multiple waves of displacement, culminating in the exodus of more than 120,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia in the latest escalation. Among the displaced are approximately 700 researchers and scientists who, upon arriving in Armenia, encountered significant challenges in resuming their professional activities. These individuals have faced the trauma of

displacement and the precariousness of an uncertain future regarding their careers in science and research.

Prior to the recent conflict, Nagorno-Karabakh had four functioning higher educational institutions that housed a small yet vibrant research community. However, upon their forced relocation, these researchers were confronted with the problem of securing employment. With its relatively small and underfunded labor market, Armenia struggled to accommodate these displaced scholars. The limited availability of positions in universities and research institutes resulted in many talented professionals being left unemployed, exacerbating both their personal hardships and the overall academic losses for the nation.

Challenges Faced by Displaced Researchers

The problems displaced researchers face from Nagorno-Karabakh are multifaceted and interlinked, encompassing economic, professional, and social dimensions. The key challenges include:

1. Employment Challenges

The most pressing issue for displaced researchers is the lack of employment opportunities in Armenia. With an already constrained academic labor market, Armenia's institutions are unable to absorb the sudden influx of highly qualified personnel. This problem is further compounded by systemic issues in the Armenian education and research sectors, such as limited funding and a lack of strategic human resource planning to integrate displaced talent. Many researchers are left either unemployed or forced to work outside of their area of expertise, which results in the underutilization of human capital.

2. Limited Access to Grants and Research Funding

Displaced researchers also face significant challenges in securing funding for their scientific projects. Armenia's scientific resources are limited, and the national grant-making landscape is insufficient to meet the needs of the local academic community, let alone those of newly displaced researchers. Without access to adequate funding, these scholars are unable to continue their research, leading to a decline in both individual academic productivity and the broader advancement of scientific knowledge in Armenia and the South Caucasus. International funding opportunities, which could provide an alternative, are often inaccessible due to bureaucratic challenges, language barriers, and the lack of established institutional networks to guide displaced researchers in accessing these opportunities.

3. Lack of Integration into Local Scientific Ecosystems

Successful integration into Armenia's scientific community is essential for displaced researchers to resume their professional lives. However, they face numerous barriers to this integration, including

difficulties adapting to a new socio-cultural environment and limited access to local academic networks. Establishing connections with local scholars, accessing laboratory facilities, and gaining entry into collaborative research projects are particularly challenging due to the absence of formal integration programs and limited local capacity to absorb these researchers.

4. Isolation from the International Scientific Community

Another significant challenge is the isolation of displaced researchers from the international scientific community. Due to their displacement, many researchers lose access to important networks, international conferences, and collaborative research projects. This isolation diminishes their professional opportunities and limits Armenia's visibility and participation in global scientific endeavors. Furthermore, displaced researchers often lack access to essential research tools, such as scientific databases and modern equipment, which are crucial for conducting high-quality research.

The current situation requires urgent support measures. The first step is establishing integration programs for displaced researchers to facilitate assimilation into Armenia's academic environment. These programs would include creating specialized employment positions, organizing workshops and seminars to foster local networking, and providing language training to ease cultural adaptation. Expanding the availability of research grants is also crucial to supporting displaced researchers.

Developing targeted support programs for young researchers is essential to ensure they are not left behind. To help young researchers continue their academic journey, scholarships, mentorship programs involving senior scientists from Armenia and abroad, and access to research resources will be provided.

Partnerships with international organizations are key to addressing the isolation displaced researchers face. Special efforts will be made to establish connections with international research institutions, enabling displaced researchers to participate in international conferences, collaborative projects, and workshops. This will help them maintain their professional networks and contribute to global scientific research.

Access to research infrastructure is a critical element of successful scientific work. Armenian universities and research institutes will be encouraged to share their facilities with displaced researchers.

By acting decisively, Armenia and the international community can ensure that displaced researchers are not left behind but empowered to continue contributing to the scientific advancements vital for regional stability and development.