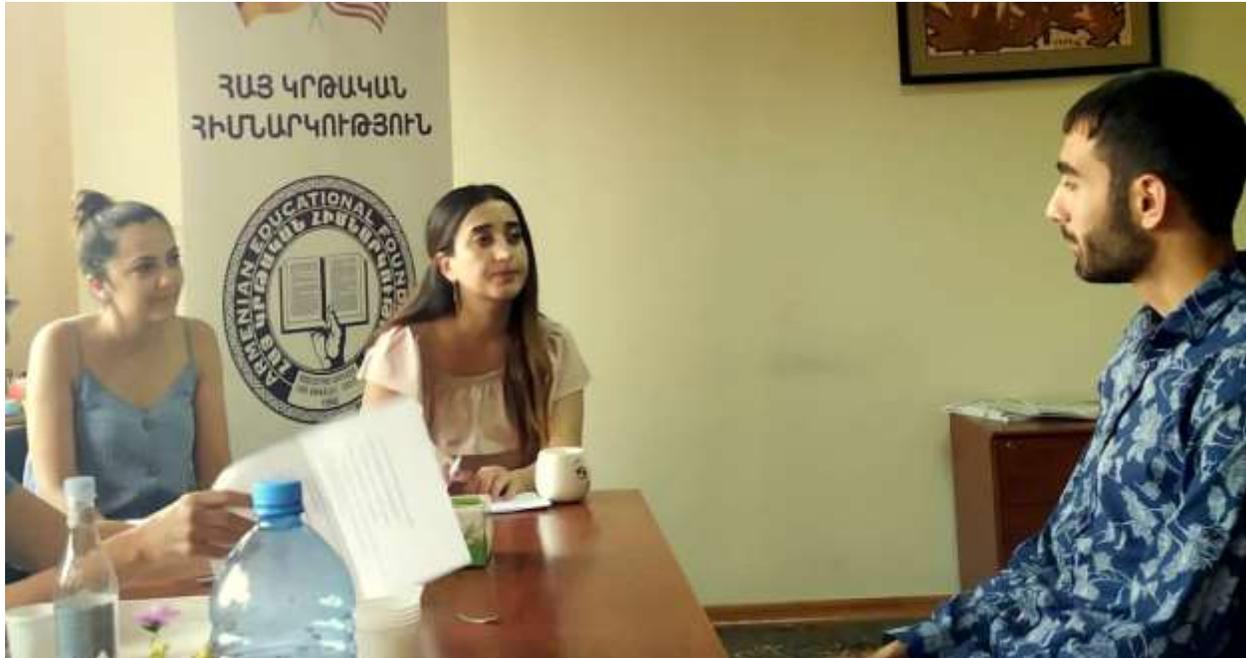


Interviewing Armenia

A Firsthand Experience of an AEF Scholarship Program Interview Panelist



Sela Khachikyan (left) and Armine Haroyan (Executive Director of AEF Armenia) interviewing a student.

Armenian Educational Foundation's scholarship program started with 21 scholarships in 2007. This year, AEF has granted \$320,000 in scholarships to 317 students in Armenia, Artsakh and Javakhk, including 124 new students. AEF's Yerevan Office received 700 qualified scholarship applications and the Scholarship Committee has now completed its difficult task of screening, interviewing and selecting the recipients. AEF encourages members and sponsors to participate in the interview process when in Armenia and play a role in the decisions shaping its future.

Sela Khachikyan, a UCLA graduate and Birthright volunteer, continuing her studies in medicine at the Pace University in New York this coming Fall, was traveling throughout Armenia when she chose to take part in the interview process, as a panelist, and witness for herself, the bright and vibrant future of Armenia.

It was an absolute honor to be a part of the interview panel for the AEF scholarship interviews and an experience I'll never forget. Each day we would listen to a variety of university students share stories about themselves and their families. They would tell us where they saw themselves in the future and how they planned on contributing to the future of Armenia after graduating. I was honestly surprised and amazed at the wealth of talent, knowledge and resilience these students demonstrated throughout their interviews. The interviews were a definite confirmation that the future of Armenia looks bright. I understood that investing in their future is an integral part of securing a positive future for Armenia.

When we asked one medical student where she saw herself in five to ten years, she stated she wanted to go back to her village and provide medical care there. She could have very easily said she wanted to leave the country or work in Yerevan, where conditions and pay are much better. However, she pointed out the struggles and shortcomings that needed to be fixed. She was a leader who was ready to work with others in order to improve healthcare in Armenia.

A student from Javakhk told us about her poor living conditions and how she did everything she could to get accepted to her school of choice without paying. She knew how difficult it would be for her family to come up with the money needed for her to attend a university and it was inspiring to hear about how she achieved her goals. Her story demonstrated hard work, dedication and resilience. Seeing these qualities in our youth was inspiring because we know how difficult life is for some of them.

Another student that stood out to me was a young girl who taught herself Chinese without taking any language classes. She spoke multiple languages and had recently started working with Chinese students online. It was amazing to see that the current youth is taking advantage of all the resources available to them.

Overall, the interviews were a confirmation that AEF is empowering a new generation of young leaders who will be shaping the future of Armenia. AEF is doing an honorable job and I cannot wait to become a sponsor once I finish school myself.

Sela Khachikyan,
USA



From left: Mimi Zarookian, Flora Wieggers, Seda Davidian, Sela Khachikyan, Armine Haroyan