



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE ASSISTANCE
FOUNDATION-ARMENIA

Activity Highlights

PARTNERSHIP FOR OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE

N 2

January 2010 - March 2010

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HUMAN RIGHTS

NGOs Present Accomplishments of Three-Year Program

Over 120 people representing the government, embassies, religious organizations, national and international organizations and media participated in the "Human Rights Strengthening through Capacity Building of Selected NGOs" conference to find out the accomplishments of the three-year funding to six human rights NGOs. The main goal of the three-year program, co-funded by the government of The Netherlands was to improve the human rights situation in Armenia through strengthening the institutional and advocacy capacities of the targeted NGOs (for more information on activities of each NGO see the first issue of *Activity Highlights*, available on http://www.osi.am/newsletters/Nov2009-Jan2010_ENG.pdf). ■

Civil Society Presents Report on ENP Implementation

In March 2010 the Partnership for Open Society Initiative (Partnership) presented its views on implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in Armenia in 2009 to a large audience. Government officials, ambassadors of EU countries to Armenia, international organizations, civil society and media were invited to attend the presentation and participate in the discussion that followed it. Representatives of civil society and international organizations engaged in a lively discussion especially over developments in media and judiciary. The government was unfortunately underrepresented, and the event that was meant to present an opportunity for civil society to have a dialogue with government representatives on ENP implementation, problems pertaining to human rights and fundamental freedoms prevailing in the country and civil society recommendations in view of the above failed in that respect.

The report was earlier presented in Brussels, Belgium in meetings with European diplomats (for more details see the first issue of *Activity Highlights*, available on http://www.osi.am/newsletters/Nov2009-Jan2010_ENG.pdf)

The Partnership promoted and supported the ENP process in Armenia since its early stages. This was the third annual report on the country's Action Plan implementation by the Partnership members and experts with the foundation's support. ■



NGOs presenting accomplishments of the three-year program, funded by the foundation and The Netherlands government, February 19, 2010.



Interactive Ranked Among 10 Most Popular Programs on Public TV

Interactive, a TV program on ICT technologies, produced by the Banadzev Production Company with the foundation's support, was ranked among the 10 most popular TV programs on the Public Television of Armenia. It is a unique program that covers important topics in the area, such as Armenian web presence, know-how and IT news in Armenia and worldwide. The program started only in January 2010 and has already attracted a large viewership. The program is aired every Saturday at 4:30 p.m. on the Public Television of Armenia. ■



Manu Iritsyan and Artyom Levonyan, *Interactive* Hosts

Study Assesses Impact of Financial Crisis on Media

In January 2010, the OSI Media Program finalized the results of the study assessing the impact of the financial crisis on media and news delivery to citizens in 18 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The study of the situation in Armenia was conducted by the Association of Investigative Journalists of Armenia NGO.

“Owing to the crisis-related scarcity of advertising and diminished disposable income of media consumers, mass media have become more sensationalist, more superficial and more susceptible to political influences,” said Rita Rudusa, media consultant, OSI Media Program, summarizing the results of the study. “Even though the maturity of the media market in the surveyed countries differs as does the severity of the crisis, the main trends are similar across the region: the weakened media are less likely to perform their democratic function and keep a watchful eye on the politicians and officials entrusted with governing the country,” she added.

The individual country reports, including the one on Armenia can be found on http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/financial-crisis-media-20091201. ■

Research to Assess Digitalization Risks and Opportunities

Media around the world are witnessing and undergoing global changes: switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting, emergence and growth of new media platforms and the ever-closer convergence of traditional broadcasting with telecommunications. The OSI Media Program in cooperation with the Information Program developed a methodology to assess the global opportunities and risks that are being created for media around the world due to these developments. The project is already underway with national experts and partner organizations in Armenia, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Romania, Serbia and Thailand. The country reports will be published in July 2010 and be available online on www.mediapolicy.org. The same methodology will be applied to conduct research in 40 other countries. ■

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

AAWUE Participates in 54th Session on Status of Women in New York

The foundation's support made it possible for Jemma Hasratyan, the President of the Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE) and Vladimir Osipov, an expert at the AAWUE Center for Gender Studies to participate in the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010. Participants from Yerevan were among the government ministers and activists that gathered at UN Headquarters in New York to examine the progress made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, which remains the most comprehensive global policy framework to achieve the goals of gender equality, development and peace.

Government officials and representatives of civil society and the private sector shared experiences and good

practices, and discussed priority actions to deal with persistent obstacles and new challenges.

“Ten days of participation in plenary sessions and roundtables at the 54th session enabled us to learn about the problems of women's role in the processes of sustainable development and achieving gender equality worldwide. It was also a unique opportunity to see where our country is in the Beijing +15 process,” said Hasratyan, “It was of course distressing that compared to countries not only in Europe, but also in Asia, Latin America and Africa our success is very modest, and only a targeted, gender-balanced policy can help us appear among developed nations.”

Upon return, Hasratyan and Osipov organized roundtable discussions in Vanadzor and Gyumri and presented the results of 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to a wide range of NGOs and other stakeholders.■



Jemma Hasratyan, AAWUE President at 54th Session on Status of Women in New York, March 2010.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Methadone Substitution Believed to be Best Choice for Recovery from Addiction

“Methadone substitution treatment is the best choice for pain relief and recovery,” says Artur Potosyan from the Anti-Drug Civil Union NGO. A recent example is a 38-year old man who enrolled in the methadone substitution treatment in November 2009 and has been receiving daily methadone substitution treatment along with psychosocial counseling.

At the time of inclusion into the program, he had a severe opioid dependence. Several attempts to get rid of opioid drugs were not successful. As a result of his 7-year addiction he was infected with Hepatitis C and HIV. He had lost his job, confidence of his family and friends and had isolated himself from others.

Inclusion of this person into the program brought about positive change in his behavior and life. Both physical
▶ see p. 4

►cont. from p. 3

and social functioning of the patient have significantly improved. Moreover, when his mental health stabilized, he started taking care of his other health problems. He is now thinking of acquiring new skills to get a job.

The Methadone Substitution Clinic was opened at the Narcological Clinic of the Psychiatric Medical Centre of the Ministry of Healthcare on September 29, 2009 with support of the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation-Armenia and the International Harm Reduction Development Program.■

NGOs Present International Standards on Patients' Rights to Health and HR Professionals

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor (HCAV), Patients' Rights, Scientific and Practical Center of Protection of Public Health and Social Rights and Anti Drug Civil Union NGOs completed in March 2010 a series of training sessions on “International Standards of Patients' Rights” based on the OSI Resource Guide. The training sessions were organized for professionals in the fields of health and human rights in Yerevan, Shirak, Lori, Kotayk and Tavush regions of Armenia. The goal of the training sessions was to raise the awareness of specialists on

patients' rights and on possible mechanisms of rights protection.

The training sessions helped define a number of problems existing in the healthcare sector, which were then classified by the rights presented in the European Charter of Patients' Rights. As a follow up activity, it is planned to monitor the situation of patients' human rights in Armenia with the involvement of the trained specialists. The recommendations developed as a result of this monitoring activity will be presented to the Ministry of Healthcare.■



Training session for public defenders on law and health conducted by HCAV, Vanadzor, March 7, 2010.

STRATEGIC LITIGATION

The Strategic Litigation Program, the foundation's operational program since 2008, strives to channel the efforts of lawyers and civil society in addressing rights violations. The Program has handled cases at all levels – Civil and Criminal Courts of Appeal, Constitutional Court and ECHR.

Constitutional Court Rules in Favor of Meltex Ltd.

On February 23, 2010 the Constitutional Court upheld its ruling about the unconstitutionality of section 1 of Article 204²⁸ of the Civil Procedure Code, which served as basis for the Cassation Court to deny the admissibility of the application submitted by Meltex Ltd. The Court stressed that all the decisions where unconstitutional norms were applied must be revoked and revision proceedings must be instituted. The Court reinstated that the company and other citizens affected by the flawed decisions of the Cassation Court must regain their rights of bringing revision applications to the Cassation Court.

Moreover, the Court stated that the National Assembly (NA) had consistently failed to follow the directions of the Constitutional Court by not making amendments in



relevant laws. Instead, in some cases NA had made amendments in the laws declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.

Meltex Ltd. took the ECHR decision to the Court of Cassation for the Court to reopen the proceedings and review the former decisions when in July 2008 the ECHR ruled in favor of the company in its suit against the Republic of Armenia. ►see p. 5

► cont. from p. 4

In particular, the ECHR had ruled that the National Television and Radio Commission (NTRC) had violated the company's rights under Article 10 of the European Convention by failing to reason its decisions on denial of applications of the company for broadcasting license in seven licensing competitions. The court ruled that the manner in which the competitions were held by NTRC did not meet the requirements of the principle of "lawfulness" under part 2 of Article 10 of the Convention.

Armenia accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court in April 2002. Since then the Constitutional Court has made around 40 decisions declaring several legislative norms unconstitutional.

“With an exception of few decisions in which the domestic courts admitted that fair trial rights were violated under the European Convention or the Constitution, in the vast majority of cases the decisions of the European Court or the Constitutional Court were not executed,” said Ara Ghazaryan, the lawyer representing Meltex Ltd. since 2002. “The execution process was mostly blocked by the Court of Cassation, the highest court of general jurisdiction, which effectively denied the admissibility of the applications. Moreover, the National Assembly consistently failed to make relevant changes or abolish the relevant provisions found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, as a result of which the decisions of the Constitutional Court and the European Court remained ineffective,” added the lawyer. ■

Criminal Charges against Mariam Sukhudyán Dropped

Criminal charges against Mariam Sukhudyán, an environmental activist, were dropped after a year-long pre-trial investigation. Sukhudyán was one of the activists who publicized the issue of alleged case of child abuse and mistreatment in Boarding School N11 for children with special needs in the Yerevan suburb of Nubarashen. Sukhudyán was charged with "false denunciation," a crime punishable by up to five years in prison. The charge was then reduced to "slander," which carries heavy fines and a prison sentence of up to three years.

The team of lawyers supported by the strategic litigation program worked hard to ensure that charges against the activist were dropped altogether and that impartial and objective pre-trial investigation of the case was carried out. After nearly one year since information about child abuse in the school was first publicized, proceedings/investigation started against the alleged perpetrator (former teacher of the special school). ■



Mariam Sukhudyán after the interrogation at the Erebuni District Police, August 2009.

EDUCATION

Raising Community's Awareness of Children's Rights

In March, the European Club in school 198 in Yerevan conducted an informal survey to find out whether the schoolchildren and community members in general were informed about children's rights. “Most of the people answered most of the questions correctly,” said Liana Papazyan, who coordinates the activities of the Club, “However many admitted that very often they did not

even suspect that by certain actions they were violating the rights of their own children.” The schoolchildren involved in the activities of the Club also prepared and disseminated leaflets on children's rights.

European Clubs were established with the foundation's support in 2007 in eight schools in Yerevan, Ijevan, Surenavan, Metsamor, Hrazdan, Gyumri and Vanadzor. The foundation has been supporting these schools since then. Initiatives supported by the Clubs attach special importance to civic and human rights education and increasing civic activism. ► see p. 6

►cont. from p. 5

The foundation acknowledges the importance of European integration and strives to bring the Armenian general education system closer to the European education system through supporting a number of activities such as raising awareness on Europe, its values and structures, history and culture. ■



Schoolchildren conducting a survey on children's rights, March 2010.

Towards Designing Better Curricula

A handbook on “Design and Implementation of the Competency-based Study Programs” for universities was developed as a result of the project on “Development of Methodology for Designing Multi-cycle Competency-based Course Programs,” supported by the foundation and implemented by the National Center for Strategic Research in Higher Education NGO.

During the implementation of the project, the methodology for developing outcome-based programs was presented in four universities of Armenia: the Yerevan State University, the Yerevan State Linguistic University, the Vanadzor State Pedagogic Institute and the Gyumri State Pedagogic Institute.

The handbook was approved by the Ministry of Science and Education and the National Institute of Education and was recommended to be used as a guide for universities of Armenia. The handbook will be published with funding from the National Tempus office. ■

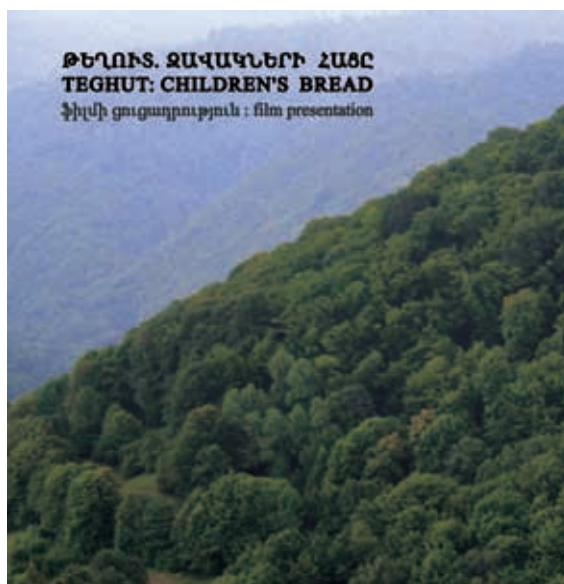


Samvel Karabekyan and Armen Budaghyan, National Center for Strategic Research in Higher Education NGO, making a presentation the Methodology for Competency-based Study Programs in Gyumri, December 2009.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Presentation of *Teghut: Children's Bread*

The presentation of the *Teghut: Children's Bread*, directed by Tigran Paskevichyan, took place on February 20, 2010 in the Small Theatre hall. The film was prepared with the support of the foundation as part of a bigger project, implemented by Eco Era NGO, which aimed to raise the awareness of citizens of the ecological situation in Armenia and their right to live in a clean environment. The film aimed to raise the awareness of the public of Teghut deforestation and ecological dangers stemming from it. ■



Return to Europe Series Aired on Yerkir Media

In February 2010, the foundation supported the translation of *Return to Europe* film series. The films are aired on Yerkir Media every Friday at 9:15 p.m. TV discussions reflecting on films and the issues raised in the films, with participation of relevant experts, are broadcast every week on Saturday at 10:00 p.m on the same channel.

Return to Europe film series were produced in 2008 by the European Stability Initiative with the Austrian ORF TV and ERSTE Stiftung. These are films on the South

East Europe (Greece, Turkey, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia), their political, social, economic life, democratization and Europeanization progress over the last decade or so.

The series got Erasmus Euro Media Award in 2008. Giuliano Amato, former prime minister of Italy, said, "These are documentaries all citizens of the European Union should have the opportunity to see." Olli Rehn, European Commissioner for Enlargement added that these are "compelling documentary series about the Balkans and Turkey, capturing the essence of a fast-changing region central to Europe's future." ■

EMERGENCY FUND

Beneficiaries of Lernagog Clean Village Streets

The Emergency Fund provided \$24,500 in assistance to socially vulnerable villagers in Armavir and Aragatsotn marzes for basic nourishment and medication (for more details see the first issue of *Activity Highlights*, available on http://www.osi.am/newsletters/Nov2009-Jan2010_ENG.pdf). In Lernagog, the Mayor welcomed the implementation of the project in the village on the condition that the project beneficiaries do something good in their turn to the benefit of the community. The Mayor announced March 3 a Community Day in the village. The beneficiary families came together to clean the village streets. The activity had a snowball effect. Community members not involved in the project joined the beneficiary families to clean their village from garbage. ■



Community Day in Lernagog, March 3, 2010



Beneficiaries receiving food in Myasnikyan village, February 2010.

Fellowships for Vocational Education

The Emergency Fund made it possible for UNDP to expand provision of educational fellowships for vocational education. This particular project targets 50 vulnerable students with high academic achievements of six vocational schools of Tavush Marz. The fellowships will enable the targeted students to acquire vocational specialty as a shortcut to further employment and income generation. The project is jointly funded by the foundation and UNDP, with contributions of \$13,108 and \$7,705 respectively. ■

Small Grants to Farmers' Cooperatives

As a result of the Anticrisis Grant Competition announced by the foundation and the Jinishian Memorial Foundation to support projects dealing with problems that have arisen in the agricultural sector as a result of the financial crisis, 10 farmers' cooperatives will be provided with small grants. Around 500 farmers and their families will benefit from the project. The total project cost is \$50,000 with equal contributions from the JMF and the foundation. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Applications for Human Rights NGOs

The Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Armenia (OSIAF-Armenia) within its Civil Society Program announces a call for applications for non-governmental organizations (NGO) working in the area of human rights in Armenia. The aim of the competition is to strengthen their human rights protection capacity.

NGOs should submit a letter of interest, which should not exceed three pages and describe the organization's activities and experience, the issues the organization would like to address and a clear description of the methodology to address these issues. The organization should also indicate what it anticipates to achieve as a result of the project, should funding be provided. NGOs are also asked to include information about their future plans.

The project proposal can focus on (1) contributing to promoting of human rights principles in the society; (2) raising awareness of human rights problems and human rights protection; (3) strengthening the cooperation between regional and Yerevan-based NGOs.

The problems detailed out in the letter of interest may include but not be limited to protection of rights of children, people with special needs, national minorities, women and other vulnerable groups of society.

Preference will be given to young organizations that collaborate with other NGOs, have co-funding, include young people in their activities, and propose innovative approaches in their methodology.

NGOs selected in the initial stage will be offered to submit a full-fledged project proposal for a project with a timeframe for up to one year, for the total amount of 8,000 - 10,000 USD.

The initial letters of interest should be submitted to OSIAF-Armenia office either in Armenian, English or Russian in electronic and hard copies form *before April 30, 5p.m.*

Contact person: Laura Gevorgyan, tel.: +37410 53 38 62, 53 67 58, email: laura@osi.am, register@osi.am.

Call for Applications Global Supplementary Grant Program (GSGP 2010 -2011)

The Open Society Institute's Network Scholarship Programs (NSP) is pleased to announce the Global Supplementary Grant Program (GSGP) for academic year 2010-2011. GSGP offers supplementary grants to students from selected countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia. The purpose of the program is to enable qualified students to pursue doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at accredited universities. GSGP grants are for students pursuing doctorate degrees only. This is a supplementary program not intended for full funding. Applicants must be able to demonstrate additional support from other sources.

Details regarding the program and application guidelines can be found in the application forms for GSGP 2010-2011. Paper applications can be accessed via the OSI website at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas. Applicants may also apply online using the Online Application System (OAS) at <http://www.soros.org/grants/oas>.

The deadline for students pursuing PhD in Europe is June 10, 2010. For more information visit the websites above or contact OSIAF-Armenia. Contact person: Anna Gevorgyan, tel: +37410 53 38 62, email: anna@osi.am, address: 2nd cul-de-sac of Tumanyan St, house 7/1, Yerevan 0002, Armenia.

