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School Minibus to Help Maintain Contact between School and Communities

The Emergency Fund allocated 20,000 USD to the Armavir Special School #1, serving 29 communities of the marz, to purchase a minibus for the school. Children have been unable to attend classes due to lack of transportation. The school minibus will help maintain regular contact between the school and the communities, and recruit and integrate an additional 30-40 schoolchildren currently deprived of the right to education since they are home-bound or are from comparatively isolated communities. Eighty-five children with special educational needs are also enrolled in the school.

The school teachers had previously made contributions from their salaries to cover transportation expenses to and from school for these children. However, this was not a viable method to ensure the children’s transportation, especially since the recent economic crisis has hit teachers and their families as well. This foundation project has come to the rescue of the school and the community by making it possible for the school to have its own vehicle. The grant will also enable the school to establish a pottery workshop that will introduce them to the art of pottery and will provide the children with a creative space to interact with each other. ■

► see p. 7

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Public Monitoring Group on Detention Facilities of RA Police Presents Annual Report for 2009

On June 23, 2010, the Public Monitoring Group on Detention Facilities of RA Police presented the annual report of its activities in 2009 at the Ball Room of the Congress Hotel. The presentation was attended by representatives of international and national organizations, the Police and media. Throughout the discussion, a number of important questions were raised and discussed, including the conditions of detention facilities (health checks and availability of medication in the facilities), access to information, police actions and impunity. High-ranking officials from the RA Police actively participated in the discussion, taking questions from the participants. ► see p. 2



◀ Presenting monitoring results to the Police, June 23, 2010

Foundation Capitalizes on Engaging Youth

The foundation is looking for new ways to engage with young people to increase their civic activism. With this in mind, the foundation would like to bring in the expertise and resources of the OSI Youth Initiative to promote a more active engagement and participation of youth in the foundation's work. Noel Selegzi, the Program Director of Youth Initiative, visited Armenia in early May in order to meet with potential partners for the Youth Initiative. In addition, Mr. Selegzi helped map-out the foundation's potential areas of engagement for the Program: "Youth are a vitally important constituency for the Open Society foundations, and nowhere is that more evident than in Armenia, and I am very pleased that the Youth Initiative and the foundation in Armenia will be working together in the coming years."

The Youth Initiative is based at OSI-New York and includes the Network Debate Program, which supports youth engagement in critical discussion of issues that affect their communities and a Youth Action Fund, a small grants program to fund youth-designed and youth-run projects. For more information on the Youth Initiative, see www.soros.org/initiatives/youth. ■

Dialogue between Candidates and Constituency during Goris Municipal Elections

As Goris was preparing to elect a new Mayor in June, 2010, the Goris Press Club NGO, with the support of the foundation, implemented a project to establish a dialogue between the candidates and the constituency. As part of the project the organization conducted a survey to find out the issues that people are most worried about and would like to see the future mayor address. The survey revealed that 38% of the respondents mentioned unemployment as a primary concern, followed by youth issues (22%) and healthcare (13.3%).



TV talk show on Last TV, March 13, 2010 ▲

MySociety Founder Presents MySociety Projects in Yerevan

In April 2010, at the foundation's invitation, Tony Bowden, one of the founders of mySociety web project, visited Yerevan to present mySociety projects, to meet with Armenian NGOs and to discuss how some of the projects can be used in Armenia to promote citizen engagement in the country.

Projects like FixMyStreet or WhatDoTheyKnow have provided models for citizen engagement through new technologies with both individuals and societal benefits and have been successfully adopted in many countries. The Open Society Institute Information Program, in partnership with mySociety, launched a joint project in Central and Eastern Europe. The project aims to help individuals and organizations use the Internet to increase transparency and accountability in their countries.

A UK-based NGO, mySociety is referred to as UK Citizens' online democracy that aims to build "socially focused tools with off-line impacts." The foundation's Information Program plans to cooperate with mySociety to implement various project ideas based on mySociety platform in Armenia. ■



▲ Mayor of Goris Nelson Voskanyan filling out a questionnaire, February 24, 2010

Interest in the survey increased because participants knew that mayoral candidates would directly address issues raised by them. "We would get phone calls, asking when they could anticipate the candidates' responses. I also think the survey itself raised the population's interest towards the elections," said Lena Hovsepyan, the Project Coordinator. TV debates before and after the elections were organized on election-related topics. The Goris Press Club plans to monitor how the promises on the most important issues to the population are fulfilled by the elected Mayor in an effort to increase the accountability of the local authorities to the population.

Huridocs Representatives Come to Armenia

In May 2010 a group of experts from Hurridocs, a Swiss NGO, visited Yerevan to meet with a number of Armenian NGOs to gain first-hand knowledge about their Information Communication Technologies (ICT) use on day-to-day basis in Armenian NGOs, their data gathering and processing methodology.

The Foundation's Information Program, in cooperation with the Network Information Program, plans to initiate a project with Hurridocs to develop necessary ICT tools that would make ICT an inseparable part of the work of the NGOs and greatly improve their human rights data gathering, processing and reporting experience.

Huridocs, Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, established in 1982, is a global network of organizations concerned with human rights. ■



Photo Exhibition at the Lovers' Park, April 14, 2010 ►

Photo Exhibition Featuring Life in “Domiks” 22 Years after the Earthquake

On April 14, the “Third Nature” NGO organized a photo-exhibition called Everyone Shall Have the Right to Housing in Lovers' Park, featuring photos by Anush Babajanyan. The foundation supported both the photographer and the organization of the exhibition. The theme of the exhibition was the living conditions of people in Gyumri residing in “domiks,” 22 years after the earthquake.

Through these photos the project aimed to raise the voices of thousands of people and draw the attention of state authorities and relevant stakeholders to the problems of the people still suffering after 22 years from the consequences of the earthquake. The exhibition was widely attended by many people, including representatives of national and international organizations and mass media. The photos can be viewed online at <http://anushbabajanyan.com/2010/03/19/living-in-gyumri-domiks/> and <http://anushbabajanyan.com/2010/03/22/photoalbum/> ■



Photo Exhibition at the Lovers' Park, April 14, 2010 ▲

FREEDOM OF MEDIA

Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression Presents Quarterly Report and New Website

On April 8 the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE) presented its quarterly report on the media situation in the country and cases of violence against journalists and violation of journalists' rights in the first quarter of 2010. “The negative trends that we noticed in 2009 continued into 2010,” said Ashot Melikyan, the head of the organization. “Cases of physical violence against journalists were on the increase compared to the same period in 2009 and we attribute it to the elections in the 10th precinct on January 10.” The organization will present the second quarterly report, covering April-June, 2010 on July 18.

The organization also presented its new website www.khosq.am. The website contains information about CPFE activities, their reports and analytical materials

produced by the organization. It also makes it possible for media organizations and reporters to direct legal inquiries to the organization's lawyer.

The monitoring and publication of reports and the creation of the website was possible as part of a bigger project supported by the foundation and the Government of The Netherlands. ■



▲ Ashot Melikyan, Olga Safaryan from the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression and Mesrop Movsisyan from Meltex Ltd., at the Partnership discussion, May 14, 2010

Partnership Critical of the Amendments to Law on TV and Radio, Critical of “Self-regulation” Initiative of Public Council

On June 10 the National Assembly passed amendments to the Law on TV and Radio despite strong criticism by professional organizations in the national media and the strong condemnation of international organizations. The OSCE/RFOM issued a very critical statement shortly before the amendments were adopted and yet another one after their adoption. Statements critical of the amendments were also issued by the European Commission and the US delegation to the OSCE.

On May 14 the foundation, with its media partners initiated a discussion on Media Legislation and Self-Regulation Initiatives to reflect on the draft law TV and Radio and the Public Council’s new media self-regulation initiative. The new Draft Law on TV and Radio was introduced by the Ministry of Economy in view of the pending switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting, to be completed by 2015. It entered the agenda of the National Assembly without any public hearing, and without a discussion in the relevant parliamentary committee.

Since no public hearings were convened and civil society, including the professional media organizations, were not involved in the process, the Partnership quickly mobilized to convene a discussion on the draft law to raise what it saw as problematic provisions in the draft law. Government officials, representatives of international and national organizations and media were invited.

According to media professionals, this draft law added to the flaws in the existing law, which only served to strengthen government control over broadcasting companies. The media professionals found the provisions in the new draft law incompatible with freedom of expression, market economy and other democratic principles. Unfortunately, the representative technical of the Ministry of Economy could only elaborate on

the aspects of digitalization and would not comment on other aspects of the draft. The representative of the team responsible for the elaboration of the draft, despite the earlier confirmation about his participation, did not attend the discussion.

Following the event, the Yerevan Press Club, joined by the Internews Media Support NGO, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE) and Asparez Journalists’ Club, issued a joint statement reflecting on the problematic provisions in the draft law, as well as the non-transparent and the non-participatory way it was formulated. The text of the statement can be found on www.partnership.am/Statements.

The participants of the event also reflected on the “self-regulation” initiative of the Public Council of the Republic of Armenia, joined by 11 Armenian television companies. Ironically, the real self-regulation initiative started by media organizations was not joined by any of these television companies. The media professionals criticized the Public Council for carrying out activities beyond its mandate and authority. “Media self-regulation is an area the journalistic community should deal with, and journalists themselves should initiate and implement it. Clearly, this is another attempt to bring media under government control,” said Ashot Melikyan, Chairman of CPFE. All media organizations have been critical of this latest initiative of the Public Council. ■



▲ Levon Barseghyan, Asparez Journalists’ Club, and Hovhannes Hovhannesian from the Public Council at the Partnership discussion, May 14, 2010

PUBLIC HEALTH

Task Force Formed to Draft Policy Paper and Action Plan to Improve Palliative Care

The Foundation provided technical support to the Ministry of Health in forming a task force to draft a policy paper and an action plan for the country in order to promote the development of palliative care in Armenia. The policy paper will explore how to achieve measurable quality improvements in palliative care provided by palliative care specialists, nursing professionals, hospices, inten-

sive care units and other health services. It will address the development of standards and licensing to elevate palliative care to a recognized specialty in Armenia.

“Integration of palliative care in Armenia will help prevail over a fundamental barrier in assuring quality care at the end of life in the country,” said Suren Krmoyan, Adviser to the Minister of Health of Armenia on legal issues, underlying the importance of palliative care.

Palliative care is the active holistic care of patients with progressive illness. Management of pain and other symptoms and provision of psychological, social and spiritual support is crucial to enhance the quality of life of patients with a life-threatening illness and that of their families. ■



▲ Meeting of Palliative Care Task Force in the MoH, 2010

Monitoring of CCM Activities Presented to CCM Members

On July 8 monitoring results of Civil Society Participation in the Country Coordination Mechanism (hereinafter CCM) on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria Issues in the Republic of Armenia, conducted by VISTAA Expert Center, were presented to the CCM members. The monitoring and the discussion were supported by OSI.

The purpose of the monitoring was to examine how CCM fulfills its responsibilities, highlight the challenges and major constraints to increased civil society participation in CCM and propose best practices in developing solutions for supporting greater involvement of civil society in the CCM.

Some of the key recommendations are widely shared by all stakeholders and specifically relate to the efficiency of the current CCM structure, policy on conflict of interest, transparency of CCM and the role of NGOs in the oversight and transparency of CCM election processes.

“Several recommendations proposed as a result of the monitoring will advance civil society participation in the CCM activities, particularly its involvement in the process for advancing provision of health services and oversight,” said Lilit Hovhannisyanyan, VISTAA Expert Center.

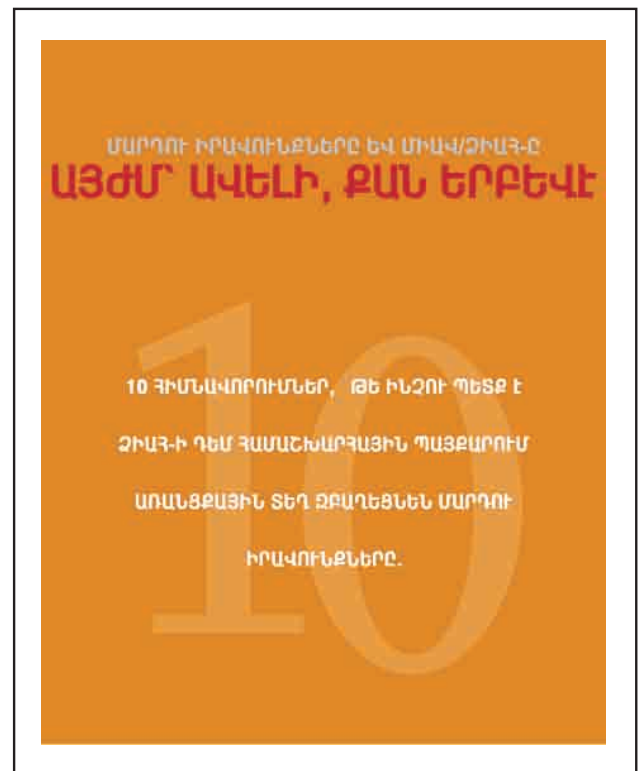
CCM on HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Republic of Armenia was established in 2002. While its scope at the beginning was to determine the current priority strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention and continuously monitor the allocation of Global Fund resources, in 2005 it enlarged its remit to embrace issues of tuberculosis and malaria. It is now operating as the CCM on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the Republic of Armenia. ■

Declaration “Now More than Ever” Available in Armenian

The Declaration “Now More than Ever,” developed and produced with support of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and endorsed by 24 nongovernmental organizations and networks around the world, is now available in Armenian. The translated version of the Declaration is available on the foundation’s Law and Health Initiative website www.healthrights.am.

“The Declaration is a great resource for people living with HIV and will help them consider their problems not only from the health but also from the human rights perspective,” said a prominent human rights activist Artur Sakunts, who heads the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Vanadzor Office, which provides legal aid for intravenous drug users.

The Declaration highlights 10 reasons affirming that, now more than ever, human rights should occupy the center of the global struggle against HIV and AIDS. ■



▲ Armenian edition of Now More Than ever Declaration, 2010

Quality Assurance Higher Education Systems: Guidebook Presentation

The Yerevan State University and the Yerevan State Engineering University presented a guidebook on Quality Assurance Higher Education Systems on April 6, 2010, at the American University Business Center. The Guidebook was developed within the “Framework Model of Internal Quality Assurance System on University Consortium Example” project, funded by the foundation and implemented by four universities--Yerevan State University, Yerevan State Engineering University, Yerevan State Medical University and Vanadzor State Pedagogical University.

The implementation of the project allowed the four universities to conduct a self-analysis of the situation with regard to the internal quality of their respective universities and to highlight the milestones for the universities to ensure that internal quality assurance models and mechanisms are in compliance with European standards. In the course of the implementation of the project, two of the four universities – the Yerevan State University and the Yerevan State Engineering University- teamed up to develop a guidebook on quality assurance.



▲ Larisa Minasyan, Executive director of OSI, making a welcome speech at the QA Guidebook presentation, 2010

The Guidebook was approved by the Armenian National Quality Assurance Agency as a guide for institutes of higher education in the country to implement internal quality assurance mechanisms compliant with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education standards. The presentation was well-attended by the representatives of most state and private Armenian universities, Ministry of Education and Science, Armenian National Quality Assurance Agency, National Institute of Education, as well as other interested organizations, institutions and donor organizations. The electronic version of the Guidebook is available at <http://www.osi.am/links.asp>. ■

Renowned Dr. Malofeev Trains Special Educators in Armenia

The Psycho-medical and Pedagogical Assessment Center (former special school #5) that provides assessment and methodological support services to special and inclusive schools invited a renowned specialist from Russia, Dr. Nikolay Malofeev, to improve the skills and knowledge of specialists educating children with special educational needs. Dr. Malofeev has authored many books such as Special Education in Russia, Quality Education for All, etc. Over a 5-day training session he trained 30 Armenian specialists from various institutions on using new approaches to special and inclusive education. These 30 specialists, that mainly include those dealing with children with speech, hearing and mental issues, will then train teachers and psychologists of inclusive schools to improve the quality of services provided to children.

The foundation has supported three special schools, including the center mentioned above, for almost five years to improve the services for children with special educational needs. During these years, the participating schools have established game libraries, developed methodological materials and trained students, parents and teachers of inclusive schools to provide better services to children with special educational needs in these schools. ■



▲ Expert Malofeev training special educators, April, 2010

Gyumri School Recognized the Most Active in Competition Testing Knowledge on Europe

The school from Gyumri took the first prize for theoretical knowledge on the European Union on April 28, organized by the new Network of European Clubs, established with the Foundation's support. All eight schools that have had a European Club since 2007 took part in the competition. This was the first ever competition among the schools to test their knowledge and creativity. The event was useful for all schools as they could evaluate themselves in comparison to others and think of real life situations. Similar quizzes are planned in the future.



▲ Listening to peer presentations at the competition among European Clubs, April 28, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

The foundation has been supporting eight mainstream schools to create European clubs at schools since 2007. The aim has been to inform teenage students, their parents and community members about European ideas and values, educate them about tolerance, equality, human rights and enhance civic activeness. ■



▲ Competition among European Clubs, April 28, 2010, Yerevan, Armenia

EMERGENCY FUND

100 Kids in Amasya Region will Learn Vocational Skills

Huysi Kamar NGO, with a 24,670 USD contribution from the Emergency Fund, will equip 100 young boys and girls, aged 12-18 and from socially vulnerable families of Amasya region, with vocational skills in three different vocational fields: sewing, cooking and bookbinding. Thirty-four children will be taught basic computer and internet skills.

The funding will help enrich community organizations, such as the library and vocational training center, with equipment and necessary materials. A bookbinding workshop will also be opened in the local public library, creating new job opportunities.

The project envisions establishing an ongoing collaboration between the community organizations and local businesses to identify the needs of the job market and prepare specialists accordingly. ■

Soup Kitchens Feed 3000 Elderly Across 8 Marzes

Mission Armenia NGO, a key player in the field of social service delivery in Armenia, was granted \$199,000 as co-funding for a nationwide project providing a hot meal 5 days a week to 3,000 beneficiaries (432,960 USD was funded by USAID and the Ministry of Social Affairs). This is made possible through 25 Mission Armenia service centers in 20 towns in 8 regions.



▲ Hot meal served in Vanadzor soup kitchen, Lori region, 2010

The project also makes social and healthcare services available to an increasing number of beneficiaries; their number is set to reach 6000 towards the end of the project.



▲ Hot meal flavored with hot discussion in Shengavit soup kitchen, Yerevan 2010

In addition, the grant will help maintain the operation of 21 soup kitchens that were at a risk of closing down. The soup kitchens are a great opportunity for the lonely elderly to socialize, including the occasional birthday celebration among friends. ■

“Zangakatun” Instills Sense of Belonging in Children

The “Zangakatun” project of the Tufenkian Foundation, with co-funding from the Emergency Fund, continues providing comprehensive rehabilitative services to impoverished, marginalized and other vulnerable families through its Yerevan and Vanadzor Centers. Each “Zangakatun” center offers a hot-meal program to 50 children in Yerevan and 75 children in Vanadzor. For many of these children it is the only substantial meal they get during the day. During this meal period “Zangakatun” also celebrates various holidays and children’s birthdays. Celebrating important holidays together instills a sense of family and belonging in the children. Social workers help feed the children and they deliver food to the children’s homes when somebody is sick or unable to come.

The foundation supported the Zangakatun project in December, 2009, and allocated 90,478 USD towards its activities. In-kind contribution from Tufenkian Foundation was 98,650 USD. ■



▲ Zangakatun providing a hot meal for children, 2010

