



NGO Coalition Building

Summer 2008



NGO Coalition Building Project Launched

In July, the League of Women Voters (LWV), the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly), and the NGO Center Civil Society Development NGO (NGOC) launched a project in Armenia that will provide NGOs with the skills necessary to successfully build and maintain coalitions. The program is implemented in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) which provides technical support for program implementation.



Nearly 5,000 registered NGOs exist in Armenia, working in a variety of sectors and working on issues such as those facing children, youth, women, as well as on issues such as the environment, human rights, conflict resolution, anti-corruption, the disabled, and more.

LWV Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas (l) and AAA Country Director Arpi Vartanian discuss program ideas during a May 2008 meeting in Yerevan, Armenia

Speaking at a conference in Armenia last year, LWV Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas stated that "Working in coalitions is not easy. It requires a lot of discipline and clear internal rules and if successful, coalitions are the most effective tool to effective advocacy."

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NGOs Selected

In September, the League of Women Voters (LWV), the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) and the NGO Center Civil Society Development Organization NGO (NGOC) announced the selection of the six NGOs which will participate in a new Coalition Building educational program for local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in southern Armenia.

The goal of this program is to provide and expand on existing skill sets for effective coalition and cross-sector coalition building. Through a series of focused coaching sessions, homework assignments, and team-building exercises, NGOs will learn how to build and maintain coalitions and work together to effectively advocate for positive change in their communities.

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Coalition Building Program Launched



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LWV Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas discussing Advocacy concepts with NGO Participants during Educational Session I, in September

This concept builds on the work the Assembly's NGO Center program (launched in 1994) has done to strengthen the Armenian NGO sector. Assembly Country Director for Armenia and Karabakh Arpi Vartanian said, "The NGO sector in Armenia has become a lively and vital part of Armenian society. Imagine the synergy that could develop if NGOs united in coalitions, or even cross-sector coalitions, to address those issues which are important to the people they represent!"

"Both organizations have a strong commitment to help advance and strengthen democratic principles and the rule of law, said co-funder Charles Talanian. "I am confident that this new initiative will help foster and build upon existing structures already in place," Talanian added.

Co-funder and Assembly Board of Trustees Member Peter Vosbikian stated, "The Armenian Assembly is committed to ensuring a secure, prosperous and democratic Armenia, and by partnering with the League of Women Voters, we have taken another important step forward. I am excited about this project and commend the League of Women Voters for their enthusiasm and commitment to making this a great success," added Vosbikian.

Vosbikian and Talanian are Armenian Assembly members and private donors to this project. The program provides educational opportunities for NGOs to learn and practice coalition building techniques, skills necessary for successful NGO and coalition management, networking opportunities and more.

"We met with many people in Armenia representing local and international NGOs and structures. All welcomed this initiative, agreeing that coalition building would benefit the NGO sector, and offered their assistance to help it succeed. The Armenian Assembly looks forward to working with the League of Women Voters, benefiting from its decades of experience, to further strengthen Armenia's NGO sector," concluded Vartanian.

The Armenian Assembly is committed to ensuring a secure, prosperous and democratic Armenia, and by partnering with the League of Women Voters, we have taken another important step forward. I am excited about this project and commend the League of Women Voters for their enthusiasm and commitment to making this a great success.

*—Co-funder
Peter Vosbikian*

Working in coalitions is not easy. It requires a lot of discipline and clear internal rules and if successful, coalitions are the most effective tool to effective advocacy.

*—Zaida Arguedas
League of Women Voters*

NGOs Selected

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Selection Committee members met in early September to review applications. Six NGOs were selected; two representatives from each NGO are participating in the three, two-week sessions which began in September in Yeghegnadzor, in Armenia's Vayots Dzor Region. LWV Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas, Assembly Country Director Arpi Vartanian and NGOC Trainer/Consultant and Program Coordinator Hripsime Nazaretyan, extended their thanks to fellow Selection Committee Members from the Armenian Young Women's Association/Yerevan, Counterpart International, National Democratic Institute and OSCE/Yerevan, for their active participation and support.



(l-r): Selection Committee members: Alex Sardar, Counterpart International; Lilit Asatryan, Armenian Young Women's Association; Tsovinar Harutyunyan, OSCE; Hripsime Nazaretyan, NGOC; Inga Kirakosyan, National Democratic Institute, and Arpi Vartanian, Armenian Assembly of America

Of the six NGOs selected, four are from the Vayots Dzor Region and two are from the Syunik Region. Within their own communities, all of the NGOs selected have specific areas of concern, ranging from health and social issues to education and cultural issues, to human rights, to overcoming stereotypes, to garbage collection, to issues of the disabled, and more. By forming coalitions, NGOs can work with each other and their local communities to overcome these issues.

Vartanian extended thanks to the Selection Committee "for its valuable input and support, which helped this project move forward." She added, "Each of the participating NGOs has something important to offer to the program. Upon successfully graduating this course, they will be part of a core group of NGOs that will lay the foundations in southern Armenia for effective cross-sector coalitions and partnerships."

The NGOs selected are listed on pages 6-7.

Nazaretyan, long-time Trainer and Consultant with the NGO Center, is the Program Coordinator for this program. As a Trainer with the NGOC since its establishment in 1994 as a project of the Assembly, she brings a wealth of experience to this project. The NGOC's goal is to promote democracy through civil society development. In 2005, the NGOC registered as a separate, local entity, and continues to work with NGOs and other elements of civil society.

Arguedas also thanked "all those who joined us to make this project a possibility. We look forward to all its success to the region and Armenia."

Both organizations [LWV and AAA] have a strong commitment to help advance and strengthen democratic principles and the rule of law. I am confident that this new initiative will help foster and build upon existing structures already in place.

*—Co-funder
Charles Talanian*



Site Visits to Syunik-Based NGOs



September 26, at the office of the Women's Association of Kapan (WAK).

Standing (l-r): Arine Harutyunyan (WAK), Varduhie Sahakyan (WAK), Kamo Davtyan (Voghji);

Seated (l-r): Svetlana Gevorgyan (WAK), Zaida Arguedas (LWV), Sarah Diefendorf (LWV), Susanna Martiosyan (WAK), and a WAK board member

On September 22, the League of Women Voters (LWV), Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) and the NGO Center Civil Society Development Organization (NGOC) **NGO Coalition Building Project** in southern Armenia kicked off. Throughout the program, a training team conducts site visits to the offices of each of the participating NGOs. Site visits are one of the commitments agreed to by the participating NGOs to bring the current training to their boards and membership, thereby expanding the reach and impact of the program.

The first site visit was made to two Syunik-based NGOs. On September 26, Zaida Arguedas and Sarah Diefendorf, League members and also trainers of the Coaching NGOs in Armenia program, traveled to Kapan to meet with the leaders of the two participating NGOs in the Syunik region: the Women's Association of Kapan Region and Syunik Disabled People Support Organization, Voghji.

Diefendorf and Arguedas were hosted by Susanna Martiosyan, Co-Director and Program Manager, and by Svetlana Gevorgyan, Co-Director, of the Women's Association of Kapan Region. Two board members also participated. Kamo Davtyan and Meline Astsatryan, two participants from the Syunik Disabled People Support Organization, Voghji, joined the meeting.

The mission of the Women's Association of Kapan is to support the inclusion of women in the public, political, economic and social spheres, to provide gender balance in the region, and to establish stronger ties with other NGOs in the region. The Women's Association of Kapan is the largest women's organization in the Syunik region. The municipality of Kapan donates the office space occupied by the Women's Association, while a large percentage of their funding is from international donors.

Both Martiosyan and Gevorgyan received very positive feedback on the training, expressed by their two participants, Program Manager Arine Harutyunyan and Coordinator Varduhie Sahakyan.

Harutyunyan and Sahakyan are already planning to share with their members the topics they have identified as of key importance for their organization. Harutyunyan, who has several years of experience, indicated that "what we are learning are things that we should know, but that for the first time are being presented to us in a different and interactive way."

Later, Arguedas and Diefendorf met with the Syunik Disabled People Support Organization, Voghji. The goals and objectives of Voghji are to support the rights of persons with disabilities, to facilitate their integration into society,

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NGOs clearly demonstrate their belief in this program, which requires a 6 week commitment.

2008 Program Dates:

Sept. 22-Oct 3

Oct. 20-31

Nov. 17-28

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Kamo Davtyan, President of the Syunik Disabled People Support Organization Voghji, after winning a ping pong championship in Germany

to create employment opportunities, and to propose and support legislative initiatives in support of the disabled.

Voghji president Kamo Davtyan is one of the program participants. He is a disabled person himself with amazing drive and charisma. Voghji currently has two paid employees and 20 unpaid volunteers and is entirely funded by Kapan's business community. One recent achievement is a decree enacted by the mayor of Kapan that states "no new construction will be approved in Kapan if it does not include plans for ramps for the disabled." The challenge for Davtyan's NGO is to ensure that this decree is properly enforced. Davtyan stated that the Coaching NGOs in Armenia program has been "more positive than you can imagine."

Voghji's short term plans include refurbishing an old house that will be a center for disabled people, similar to a one stop shop for services, information, and other activities. Midterm plans include

obtaining a vehicle to travel from village to village and acquiring technical support on issues relating to legislation and best practices. LWV has offered to connect Voghji with U.S.-based NGOs working with disabled populations.

The Coaching NGOs in Armenia program has been "more positive than you can imagine."
—Kamo Davtyan
Syunik Disabled People Support Organization, Voghji



NGO Participants work on an in-class exercise during Week I of the Educational Program.

TRAINING TEAM

Zaida Arguedas
 Deputy Executive Director;
 and Senior Director of
 Global Democracy
 Programs, LWV/USA

Barbara Bartoletti
 Legislative Director, LWV/
 New York State

Sarah Diefendorf
 International Trainer,
 LWV/USA; and
 Faculty Dominican
 University of California

Ellen Olson
 Board Member of the LWV
 of the Piedmont Triad,
 North Carolina

Hripsime Nazaretyan
 Trainer/Consultant and
 Board Member, NGOC-
 CSDO; and
 Project Coordinator, NGO
 Coalition Building Project



Participating NGOs



The participation of NGOs from two different *marzes* is very important and effective. It helps us understand the similarities and differences of problems in our *marzes* and find solutions to them.

—Anna Markosyan
AYWA, Yeghegnadzor

Armenian Young Women's Association, Yeghegnadzor Branch, focuses on advocacy service delivery, education and overcoming stereotypes. AYWA's mission is to enhance the status of and encourage the participation of young women in public, political, economic, educational, cultural and other fields, by working with young women and men.

Trainees: Anna Hovhannisyan, Program Officer
Anna Markosyan, Coordinator

Contact: Lilit Asatryan, President
info@aywa.am ♦ (+374-91) 41-79-12 ♦ www.aywa.am

Huys-98 (Hope-98) NGO, from Vayk, concentrates primarily on issues in the social, cultural, health and education sectors by providing consultations on social, psychological, and legal issues and organizing community development activities.

Trainees: Haykuhi Israelyan, Volunteer
Vahagn Vardanyan, Volunteer

Contact: Almast Safaryan, President
arminemsk@yahoo.com ♦ (+374-94) 12-13-05



Vahagn Vardanyan,
Huys-98, practicing his
meeting facilitation
skills during Session I

Fund Against Violation of Law, Vayk Branch, works primarily in the legal sector, supporting the establishment of democracy and peace building initiatives, through community development, to victims of war and violence, in particular, refugees, former hostages, prisoners of war, etc.

Trainees: Mane Avagyan, Herher Community Coordinator
Karine Mushkambaryan, Martiros Community Coordinator

Contact: Norayr Hovakimyan, Coordinator
(+374-91) 74-50-84

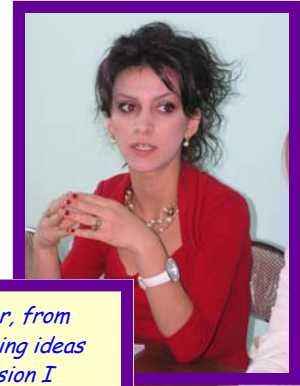


Mane Avagyan, FAVL, Vayk, making a
presentation during Session I

Fund Against Violation of Law, Yeghegnadzor Branch, working in the Vayots Dzor, Syunik, and Gegharkunik regions of Armenia, addresses legal, community development, health, and youth issues. Services are provided to victims of war, ethnic minorities, and others whose rights have been violated.

Trainees: Tigranuhi Asatryan, Volunteer
Varditer Khachatryan, Sally Community Coordinator

Contact: Arthur Harutyunyan, Branch Head
arthar71@mail.ru ♦ (+374-93) 41-92-92



Tigranuhi Asatryan, Volunteer, from FAVL/Yeghegnadzor, discussing ideas with fellow NGOs during Session I

Syunik Disabled People Support Organization, Voghji, advocates for the rights of those with special needs, and assists the integration of the disabled into society by addressing their social, legal, education, and health related issues.

Trainees: Kamo Davtyan, President
Meline Astsatryan, Secretary (Week I)
Nune Astsatryan, Volunteer (Week II)

Contact: Kamo Davtyan, President
voghji@rambler.ru ♦ (+374-94) 62-52-89

We had knowledge, but did not know how to apply it. We learned here how to create a mission, see its perspective. We acquired public presentation skills. In fact, for some of us, this training was our first-ever chance to publicly express our opinions.



*—Arine Harutyunyan
Women's Association of Kapan*

Women's Association of Kapan, promotes gender equality and the active participation of women in the public, political, economic and social issues in the Syunik Region.

Trainees: Arine Harutyunyan, Program Manager
Varduhie Sahakyan, Coordinator

Contact: Susanna Martirosyan, President
susmartiros@rambler.ru ♦ (+374-93) 36-24-83

NGO Representatives and September Training Team:
(l-r): Vahagn Vardanyan, Hope 98; Kamo Davtyan, Voghji; Varduhie Sahakyan, Women's Association of Kapan; Mane Avagyan, FAVL/Vayk; Karine Mushkambaryan, FAVL/Vayk; Arine Harutyunyan, Women's Association of Kapan; Tigranuhi Astsatryan, FAVL/Yeghegnadzor; Anna Hovhannisyanyan, AYWA; Anna Markosyan, AYWA; Nune Astsatryan, Voghji; Zaida Arguedas, LWV; Varditer Khachatryan, FAVL/Yeghegnadzor; Sarah Diefendorf, LWV; Hripsime Nazaretyan, NGO CSDO



About Vayots Dzor and Syunik Regions

The NGO Coalition Building project educational sessions take place in picturesque Yeghegnadzor, the capital of the Vayots Dzor *Marz* (or region) in

southern Armenia. Participating NGOs are based in both the Vayots Dzor and Syunik Regions.

Vayots Dzor Region

Area: 2,308 square km / about 891 square miles

Population: 69,400

Capital/Administrative Center: Yeghegnadzor

Distance from Yeghegnadzor to Yerevan: approx. 120 km (about 75 miles)

For more information, visit:

www.armeniainfo.am/sites/?section=regions_desc&site_id=9

The Vayots Dzor region is nestled between the Ararat, Gegharkunik, and Syunik regions of Armenia. To the south, it is bordered by

Nakhichevan. Numerous lakes, rivers, mountains, mountain ranges and passes form the wild beauty of this region. Churches, monasteries and fortresses delight history buffs and tourists alike. Areni, in the western part of the region, is known for its delicious wines. Some local wineries provide tours. Jermuk, known for its sanatoriums and healing waters, and located in Vayots Dzor, is a popular vacation destination.

The Syunik region, also known as Zangezur, is Armenia's largest and southern-

Syunik Region

Area: 4,506 square km / about 1,740 square miles

Population: 164,000

Capital/Administrative Center: Kapan

Distance from Yeghegnadzor to Yerevan: approx. 315 km (about 196 miles)

For more information, visit: www.syunik.am/english/sbos

most region, and borders only one other region in Armenia—Vayots Dzor. It

also borders Nakhichevan and Iran. In addition, it is through Syunik that one can travel to Nagorno Karabakh, via the Lachin Corridor. In Syunik, there are numerous churches, monasteries, fortresses, mountains, lakes, and rivers, as well as national parks, including the Shikahogh Forest Reserve. Syunik is quite possibly most famous for the ancient observatory near Sissian: *Karahunj*, or *Zorats Kar*, is likened to England's Stonehenge. Some ascribe mystical, cosmic, and fertility powers to the more than 200 stones arranged here.

For more information about Armenia, visit Tour Armenia Central.

www.TACentral.com

What People Are Saying

Thanks to the League of Women Voters, the Armenian Assembly of America, Peter Vosbikian and Charles Talanian, 12 bright individuals from 6 NGOs are learning about coalition building. I hope they will be supported as they strive to build coalitions and teach others how valuable coalition building is if they are to succeed in their goals.



—Gail O'Reilly

League of Women Voters, Armenian Assembly of America

We find the program very productive and useful. It activates people in the region and provides them with leadership skills necessary to achieve various goals. We also receive feedback from our partners in Vayots Dzor who are so satisfied and thankful for the training sessions.

—Gegham Sargsyan

National Democratic Institute

This program is of critical importance to Armenia's civil society. Despite all the strengths and potential in Armenia, insufficient levels of skills, knowledge and experience in forming coalitions pose serious threats to the sustainable development of Armenian civil society. This beautiful initiative is working towards filling those gaps. It helps people develop a shared vision and win-win strategies to achieve common goals. I strongly believe in the success of this program and sincerely hope that the instilled skills will soon bear fruit.



—Margarit Piliposyan

NGO Center Civil Society Development NGO



Armenia's democracy is merely 17 years old...to sustain it over many years into the future, we need individuals and organizations, like AAA, the League, NGOC, NDI and other partners, who believe in the democratic process and are willing to lend a hand to work with committed Armenians to see it through.

—Zaida Arguedas

League of Women Voters

The NGO sector is a lively and vital part of Armenian society. Imagine the synergy that could develop if NGOs united in coalitions, or even cross-sector coalitions, to address those issues which are important to the people they represent!



—Arpi Vartanian

Armenian Assembly of America





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The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. With more than 88 years of experience and 850 local and state affiliates, the League is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations.

The NGOC was established in 1994, as a project of the Armenian Assembly of America to promote democracy through civil society development. In 2005, it registered as a separate, local entity in Armenia. Targeting NGOs, community based organizations (CBOs), civic action groups (CAGs) and other elements of civil society, the NGO Center continues to help them in their efforts to develop a strong NGO sector in Armenia.

Established in 1972, the Armenian Assembly is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. It is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-partisan, membership organization.

This project is made possible through the collective efforts of the League of Women Voters of the United States, the Armenian Assembly of America and the NGO Center Civil Society Development NGO.

Funding to implement the **NGO Coalition Building** project is provided in the form of a grant to the League of Women Voters by generous benefactors Messrs. Charles Talanian and Peter Vosbikian.

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www.lwv.org



www.aaainc.org



www.ngoc.am