

**Name of Exercise:** NGO Management Advanced Training Program for the environmental NGO subsector

**Location:** Yerevan, Armenia. Spring of 1999.

**Participation Exercise under which Article?** *Capacity Building*

**Purpose of Participation Exercise:**

*The goal of the program was to contribute to the institutional development of Armenian environmental NGOs through a capacity building program.*

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**Background:**

The NGO Training and Resource Centre is a project of the Armenian Assembly of America supported through the US Agency for International Development since 1994.

Prior to starting the courses, the NGO Centre carried out a survey among environmental NGOs in order to identify their needs. The results of the survey highlighted the need for training, financial resources, dialogue and partnership between different development players. Taking these results into consideration, along with the NGO Centre's capacities and existing services and programs, the Advanced Training Program was announced as a more comprehensive approach to meet the needs of NGO's in this sector. To apply, NGOs were asked to fill in application forms available at the NGO Centre after the Program was announced. Selection was made based on the criteria defined in the application form and the NGOs were then informed in writing about the decision made by the Review Board.

**Capacity Building Techniques used:**

1. Classroom training sessions: Topics covered were civil society, sustainable NGOs and NGOs dealing with diverse constituencies.
2. On site consultancy: Through Strategic Planning consultancy sessions, provided by the staff of the NGO resource centre, participating NGOs developed two to three-year strategic plans.
3. Open discussion: A representative of the Mayor's Office was invited to meet with NGOs to discuss the problem of green zones in the city of Yerevan. The theme of the discussion was chosen by participating NGOs. State Programs designed to address the problem of the green zones were discussed. NGOs offered their expertise and assistance in both design and execution of the programs. Both parties expressed interest and readiness for co-operation.
4. Executive study retreat: The retreat aimed at strengthening links between the trainee NGOs and promoting co-operation. The following issues were raised by the NGOs;
  - brief information on activities of each participating NGO,
  - the Lake Sevan problem and legal aspects of water usage, resort zone programs and poaching
  - development prospects of the Environmental NGO subsector.
5. Graduation Ceremony and homework presentations: The Graduation ceremony, which is part of the Program, was extended from awarding certificates to the presentation of homework assignments prepared by the graduates on the following topics:
  - The Environmental NGO Sector, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow; and
  - The Urgent Environmental Problems of Armenia: Potential solutions from the perspective of and with participation of Environmental NGOs.

The intention of the presentation was to create an opportunity for the NGOs to present their visions, perspectives and roles in addressing environmental problems. A diverse audience of important development players within Armenian society was present since the event aimed to enhance their

interaction and to improve the consultation process with Armenian environmental groups. Also present were representatives of the Armenian Government, mass media, United Nations, World Bank, Armenia Tree Project, Peace Corps, and local environmental NGOs.

**Grant component:**

At the end of the Program NGOC provided funding to participating environmental NGOs to build on their capacities based on the analyses of their internal strengths, weaknesses and their long-term strategies.

**Who participated?**

The following Armenian environmental NGOs took part in the Program: The Armenian Botanical Society, Ecoteam, The Environmental Public Advocacy Centre, The Environmental Survival Union, The Union of Armenian Ecologists, The Ecotourism Association and Eco-Club Tapan.

**What information was made available?**

To publicise the Program, the NGO Centre invited environmental NGOs to a meeting where information kits were distributed including a description of the Program: purpose, objectives, components, target group, curriculum and the application form. An announcement was also posted on the NGO Centre bulletin board in the reception area, to inform a wider audience. During the courses, handouts on each training topic and other supplementary material were supplied.

**What was the outcome of the capacity building exercise?**

Capacities of environmental NGOs were strengthened through the advanced training program, strategic planning consultancy sessions and direct financial support. Preconditions were set for social partnerships between and amongst local NGOs, other stakeholders and the media.

Anticipated Impact: The effectiveness of indigenous environmental NGOs will increase, which will contribute to better solutions to environmental problems in Armenia. The participation of civic groups in environmental decision making, program design and implementation will increase.

**Comments of participants in process:**

The evaluation results of the Program prove that the expectations of the trainees from the Program were met. Suggestions were made to have more in-depth training on some of the training topics and to organise meetings with representatives of international organisations. In response, the NGO Centre will apply these proposals to its training and open dialogue programs. Trainees also expressed gratitude and the intention to continue their relationship with the Centre.

**Other comments or lessons learned:**

There is growing recognition of the NGO role in public life and NGOs are usually represented in interdepartmental structures or at multisectoral round tables. There is still, however, a need for mutual education to increase trust and credibility between the sectors.

Interaction between sectors, which nowadays takes place more frequently, helps, but it needs to be institutionalised to offer ongoing discussions. This will lead to a clearer understanding of each other's resources and restrictions and more realistic expectations from one another, which in turn will catalyse the process of establishing social partnerships between the sectors.

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<b>Contacts:</b>	Mrs Knarik Arabyan	Gumri branch of the NGO Training and Resource
	NGO Training & Resource Centre	Centre:
Address:	23 Sevastopolian Str, Yerevan	Address: 52 Roustavelli St., Gyumri
	375033	Tel.: 8 269 243 85
Tel:	+ 37 42 27 4266	Fax: 3742 151-196
Fax:	+ 37 42 151795	E-mail: <a href="mailto:ngoc@shirak.am">ngoc@shirak.am</a>
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:knarik@ngoc.am">knarik@ngoc.am</a>	
Website:	<a href="http://www.ngoc.am">http://www.ngoc.am</a>	