

Relationships of environmental NGOs with state authorities and experience of cooperation with local non-state actors in Armenia

Public administrations are reluctant to enter into business relations with those NGOs that do not approve of the actions and inactions of state bodies responsible for nature protection. At best, such relationships are imitative, especially when it comes to participation in managerial decision-making.

Public hearings and discussions are organized with little difficulty, but the opinions of NGOs, if they differ or contradict the positions of these state bodies, are usually ignored.

Unlike relationships with government agencies, relationships with local non-state actors, in particular, with local rural communities, provide a chance to establish and develop cooperation on the ground.

The RA Law on Local Self-Government sharply reduces the level of local self-government. Especially this decline became evident as a result of the so-called. “enlargement” of communities, the meaning of which lies in the fact that self-government at the level of individual villages is abolished and instead of them clusters of 15-20 or more villages with centralized management are formed. It is especially symptomatic that the elections to the Council of Elders of such an “enlarged community” are carried out according to a proportional scheme, that is, according to party lists. That is, it can be argued that local self-government has been transformed into inter-party administration of a group of villages (settlements).

It should be added here that the former rural communal property belonging to the residents of the rural community is also confiscated and centralized, as a result of which the residents of a particular village are deprived of the right to dispose of their former property (pastures, hayfields, public buildings and other property).

Against the backdrop of what is happening, our NGO “Khazer” has taken actions that are aimed at compensating for the loss of local government powers and has proposed actions related to solving climate change problems as an area for application of these actions.

In rural communities that have lost the powers of self-government, “Climate Civil Revolving Investment Funds” are created, the beneficiaries of which are all residents of the community who elect the Board of Trustees of the fund and the executive body (director, accountant, etc.).

The turnover (revolving) of investments ensures the stability of this structure and gives a chance for the permanent participation of residents in the activities of the fund, which is, in essence, an institution of alternative self-government, as well as financing projects and programs of socio-economic development with an environmental focus. Currently, climate civil revolving investment funds have been established in 10 villages and 11 investment projects are being implemented with a total investment package of 107 thousand US dollars. “Khazer” Ecological and Cultural NGO

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