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MAAC Mobilizing Action Against Corruption

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TWENTY-FOUR ARMENIAN ORGANIZATIONS SELL THEIR ANTI-CORRUPTION PROPOSALS TO THE PUBLIC

On 22 April, 24 organizations from across Armenia participated in a unique competition called the NGO Marketplace. MAAC organized the event to encourage NGOs and other interested organizations from all regions and sectors of Armenia to join in the fight against corruption. The NGO Marketplace was designed as an open and competitive whole-day event during which participating organizations were given an opportunity to "market" their ideas and "sell" their proposed projects to the general public, a panel of judges, and MAAC for possible grant funding. This one-time-only event was a highly transparent and open process for awarding grants to NGOs and other organizations. The Marketplace also served as an opportunity for networking and exchanging ideas on the proposed themes. Each organization had a booth and was given an opportunity to present its proposal while answering questions from interested parties.



Public at the registration desk -more than 1700 signed up to attend the Marketplace



US Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch awards the director of Banadzev studio Artak Aleksanyan an NGO Marketplace Winner's Certificate

The panel of judges was composed of six well-known figures selected for their integrity and contribution to Armenia. The Marketplace took place at the Tigran Mets Hall of the Armenia Marriott Hotel. More than 1700 guests had the opportunity to evaluate the presented projects and vote for their three favorites. The public vote comprised 30% of each organization's overall score, the panel of judges' vote stood for 50%, while MAAC's assessment comprised 20% of the score. While the votes were tallied and the winners identified, the renowned band Art Voices gave a concert at the Marketplace. Once the votes were tallied, U.S. Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch announced the winners, whose projects are listed below.

Armavir Development Center, NGO

Proposed Project Title: "Let's Enjoy Our Rights"

The NGO will implement anti-corruption participatory monitoring at four polyclinics in Armavir marz. The project will educate the public and raise awareness about medicines available free of charge or on the basis of privilege.

Young Doctors of Syunik, NGO

Proposed Project Title: "Accountable Medical Institutions - Healthy Communities"

The NGO will increase public awareness about corruption in the primary healthcare services of urban and rural communities in order to increase public intolerance of it. The project also plans to increase the accountability and transparency of Syunik's healthcare providers by developing a package of recommendations and submitting it to the Ministry of Health.

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USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) Activity

105/1 Teryan Street,
Suite 804

Yerevan, Republic of
Armenia, 0009

Phone: +374 10 5835
Fax: +374 10 514836



Casals & Associates, Inc.

1199 North Fairfax St., Third
Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314, USA

Phone: 703 920 1234
Fax: 703 920 5750

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Support to Communities, Benevolent NGO

Proposed Project Title: "Reducing Corruption Risks in Rural Communities"

The NGO will reduce corruption risks in the provision of state-guaranteed free ambulant-policlinic healthcare services to 20 communities in Tavush marz. The project will develop and implement new approaches to raising awareness and mobilizing the public.

Armenian Public Relations Association, NGO

Proposed Project Title: "Channel Corruption Away"

The NGO will conduct a media campaign that presents success stories stemming from the enforcement of citizens' rights in court. The project will raise awareness among members of society, businesses, and the media through public discourse.

"Banadzev" (Formula) LLC

Proposed Project Title: "Special Reportage"

The NGO will prepare and broadcast eight investigative journalism programs about corruption cases.

Young Family Support Center, NGO

"Astghik" Disabled Children's Parents' Association, NGO

Proposed Project Title: "Custody"

The NGO will reduce corruption risks in child-custody-related bodies and raise awareness about custody issues in 12 Yerevan communities. The project will create a guidebook about custody, a web-site, and a list of disabled children.

Yerevan Medical University after M. Heratsi, State Non-Commercial Organization

Proposed Project Title: "Defending the Hippocratic Oath"

The organization will research corruption risks in various medical establishments and develop clear mechanisms for their prevention. It will conduct market research on the actual expense of medical services and calculate a market-appropriate price. The organization will conduct a survey to study how medical care is provided to patients. Finally, the project will analyze and evaluate current mechanisms for calculating the salaries of medical workers and develop new mechanisms of paying for medical services and salaries.



US Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch and MAAC Chief of Party François Vézina with the 'Young Doctors of Syunik' NGO representatives

IJEVAN AND VANADZOR AACs HOST ARMENIA'S PROSECUTOR GENERAL

From the outset, Armenia's Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepyan has shown great interest in working with the Advocacy and Assistance Centers on corruption cases. During a series of public hearings on combating corruption organized by the Prosecutor General's office, Mr. Hovsepyan encouraged prosecutors in a number of marzes and Yerevan to cooperate closely with the AACs. To support their emerging cooperation, Mr. Hovsepyan joined the head of the Anti-Corruption unit of the Prosecutor General's Office Armen Ashrafyan and the Public Relations head Shahan Tonoyan on a May 15th visit to the

AACs in Vanadzor and Ijevan. During his visit to Vanadzor, Mr. Hovsepyan familiarized himself with the AAC's caseload and spoke with the center's staff. Mr. Hovsepyan acknowledged the lack of public trust in public institutions and stressed the relevance of the AAC's work in bridging the gap between the public and the prosecutors' offices.

In Ijevan, Mr. Hovsepyan held friendly talks with three local citizens who had submitted grievances to the Tavush AAC. The Prosecutor General reviewed the citizens' complaints, asked for clarifications, and instructed his staff to take action in relation to their complaints.

Mr. Hovsepyan once again publicly instructed the local prosecutors to work closely with the AACs. MAAC welcomes the Prosecutor General's request to visit AACs in the other marzes.

MAAC-SUPPORTED ADVOCACY AND ASSISTANCE CENTERS NOW OPEN ACROSS ARMENIA



Chairman of the 'Armavir Development Center' NGO Naira Arakelyan, USAID/Armenia Deputy Mission Director Cynthia Pruett, the prosecutor of Armavir marz Hakob Gharakhanyan, and the Bishop of Armavir Diocese Sion Adamyan at the opening of Armavir AAC

Over the past few months, MAAC completed a nationwide network of Advocacy and Assistance Centers (AACs) with the addition of six new centers in Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk and Vayots Dzor. The Armavir Development Center NGO and the Gegharkunik Chamber of Commerce and Industry operate the centers in Armavir and Gegharkunik respectively, while the Armenian Young Lawyers Association runs the centers in Ararat, Aragatsotn, Kotayk, and Vayots Dzor. These ACCs join centers in Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush and Yerevan to help citizens throughout Armenia resolve their corruption-related problems. The AACs give citizens opportunities to report corruption and help them direct complaints to government agencies. ACC staff provide citizens with legal advice and assistance with processing their complaints. The centers also stimulate reforms by recommending systems-level changes to the Government of Armenia.

Local and regional government officials including governors, prosecutors, police chiefs, and judges attended the opening ceremonies of many of the six new AACs along with

representatives from USAID, the international community, local NGOs, and citizens.

In her remarks at the opening ceremony of the Armavir AAC, USAID/Armenia Deputy Mission Director Cynthia Pruett reiterated the U.S. Government's commitment to democratic reform and good governance in Armenia: "This center is expected to provide a key public service to the people of Armavir who will find here a close ally in the fight against corrupt practices in their communities." Ms. Pruett also noted the importance of civil society institutions and independent media in bringing corruption problems to light.

The nature and extent of corruption in Armenia, as noted by local and international studies, highlights the need for decisive action. Not only do citizens need to get involved in the fight against corruption, but government reforms are necessary to make corrupt practices more detectable and more difficult to engage in. The AACs are an important component of MAAC Activity's effort to support civil society and the Government of Armenia in their fight against corruption. USAID will continue to provide the centers with technical and financial support as part of its continued commitment to that partnership.

MAAC HOUSEHOLD CORRUPTION SURVEY FINDINGS ARE PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC

In September-October 2008 MAAC, supported by IFES and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRRC) Armenia, conducted its first National Corruption Survey of Households. The survey was designed to gauge how Armenians perceive corruption, the nature of their personal experiences with corruption, their level of awareness of anti-corruption initiatives, and the impact of media and other information sources on teaching citizens about corruption. In order to make the findings of the survey accessible to the widest audience possible, MAAC awarded a grant to CRRRC on 20 April to publicize the survey findings both in Yerevan and the marzes.

The core of CRRRC's project is public presentations and seminars exploring the survey dataset. CRRRC is presenting the survey findings to civil society, youth, academia, and other interested parties throughout Armenia. On 4 June more than 35 youths from Yerevan attended a presentation by Dr. Heghine Manasyan, the country director of CRRRC Armenia. On 16 June

the dataset was presented in Gyumri and then in Goris on 26 June, attracting more than 50 participants. CRRRC presentations will continue through July.

CRRRC also organized three training sessions in May and June to help researchers apply the unique data collected by the survey to their own research on corruption in Armenia. The trainings were delivered by Dr. Ashot Kakosyan and Dr. Ruben Gevorgyan, leading specialists in the fields of analysis of quantitative data. The specialists showed participants how to utilize the survey dataset with SPSS software, a computer program for statistical analysis. More than 30 participants from academia, civil society, and state institutions attended.

Finally, CRRRC selected six researchers for a fellowship to conduct research based on the survey dataset. The researchers will analyze the public's perception of corruption and its impact on human development, the institutional sources of corruption, and the role of opinion leaders and civil society in combating corruption.

COMBATING BRIBERY IN HOSPITALS ALLOWS FAMILY TO STAY TOGETHER

When a couple recently brought their newborn child to Yerevan for medical treatment, they had no idea they would be denied the right to stay by their daughter's side. The family, residents of Gegharkunik marz, had traveled to a Yerevan hospital so their one-month-old baby girl could receive medical care. Much to their surprise, the hospital staff demanded a bribe in exchange for allowing the parents to remain overnight with the baby and threatened to remove them from the

premises if they did not oblige. Refusing to be extorted, the father came to the Advocacy and Assistance Center (AAC) of Yerevan for help. Noting the urgency of the matter, the AAC immediately contacted the Ministry of Health, as well as the hospital's chief doctor. As a result, the chief doctor ordered his staff to provide the baby girl's parents with accommodations at the hospital without delay, as required under the law.

The AAC followed up with the baby's father to confirm that the doctor's orders had been carried out. "I can't thank the Yerevan AAC enough for the prompt assistance they provided me and my family,"

expressed the relieved father. "In fact, I believe you saved my daughter's life, since she needed her parents' constant presence, as she is only a one-month old infant." Noting how effective the AAC's intervention had been, the happy father concluded by saying, "I encourage others to apply to the AAC if they have similar problems."

Acts of corruption, such as requests for unofficial payments, are a recurring problem in the provision of public health care services in Armenia. AACs stand ready to help victims of healthcare corruption and have begun to identify regulatory reforms and other preventive measures to fight it.

MAAC TRAINS AAC LEGAL EXPERTS ON PROCESSING CORRUPTION GRIEVANCES



MAAC Grievance Expert Anna Margaryan trains AAC legal experts

The Advocacy and Assistance Centers (AACs) network, which now covers all of Armenia, handles cases involving all forms of corruption. It is necessary for AAC legal experts to be trained to process corruption grievances at the highest level of legal expertise. With this vision in mind, MAAC organized a two-day training program in June for its legal experts on processing corruption grievances based on Armenia's criminal, civil, labor, and administrative law. MAAC grievance experts Anna Margaryan, Vahe Rafaelyan, and Hovik Vardanyan delivered the training in Yerevan. The training started by examining corruption crimes outlined in the Criminal Code and the legal procedures linked to them. Participants reviewed legislation on criminal corruption and

analyzed three case studies on the subject matter. They also learned about regulations relevant to corruption offences in the civil, labor, and administrative sectors and analyzed case studies on those topics as well.

The training equipped AAC legal experts with the most up-to-date knowledge on the legal side of processing corruption grievances. MAAC will support AACs by providing continuous legal training over the next year .

“HUMAN RIGHTS AND CORRUPTION: MAKING THE CONNECTION” REPORT PUBLISHED IN ARMENIAN

In order to help institutionalize the anti-corruption agenda in the office of Armenia's Human Rights Defender (HRD) and to increase awareness about the links between corruption and human rights, MAAC works closely with the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP). ICHRP is an international non-profit organization located in Geneva that conducts applied research into current human rights issues. In July 2008 an ICHRP trainer led an introductory training workshop for HRD staff on the links between corruption and human rights.

This year, MAAC and ICHRP co-published the Armenian version of a

report titled “Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection,” which had been previously released in English by ICHRP. The report discusses the impact that corruption has on the realization of human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights. It also addresses situations where human rights principles and tools can help to curb and prevent corruption. The foreword of the report was authored by the Human Rights Defender of Armenia Mr. Armen Harutyunyan. Mr. Harutyunyan will announce the publication of the report along with MAAC and ICHRP and disseminate 300 copies to members of the government, civil society, and media.

“In recent years, governments, NGOs and international organizations have taken many initiatives to fight corruption. However, these efforts have rarely been analyzed from the point of view of human rights, despite their potential and relevance. Using a conceptual framework for assessing when particular acts of corruption violate human rights, this report shows how organizations can promote human rights while working to end corruption,” argues the report.

This report and subsequent joint efforts by MAAC and ICHRP will substantially enhance the capacity of the Human Rights Defender's office and civil society organizations to tackle corruption.

MAAC GRANTEE “NGO CENTER OF VANADZOR” PROMOTES ANTI-CORRUPTION IN THE NORTHERN MARZES

The northern marzes of Armenia have traditionally had a very active civil society community. The NGO Center of Vanadzor is a perfect example of this community activism. The NGO is implementing a youth-based media programming grant project to foster civic activism and anti-corruption attitudes among youth. Since February, project

staff have worked to increase public awareness among youth, to mobilize youth against corruption, and to develop the media skills of active youth in the region.

In order to achieve its goals, NGO Center of Vanadzor organized six live 'Corruption Today' talk shows this April-June, aired on local television stations in Noyemberan, Vanadzor, Alaverdi, Stepanavan, and Gyumri. Independent experts participated in the shows and covered topics such as corruption in education, the youth's role in GOAM's Anti-Corruption Strategy, student rights

and obligations in anti-corruption, and corruption in the workplace.

NGO Center of Vanadzor also organized a two-day professional retreat for youth and mass media in Dilijan. Seventeen youths and five journalists from Lori TV, Tsaig TV, Radio Hay, and online publications Hetq and ArmeniaNow discussed the potential for youth and media to collaborate in the fight against corruption. The retreat resulted in three press releases which were disseminated to the media.

MAAC GRANTEES TO TARGET CORRUPTION AFFECTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, WOMEN, AND SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES

On 26 June, MAAC awarded three anti-corruption grants to NGOs under MAAC's Annual Program Statement.

In the area of local self-governance, MAAC awarded a grant to Harmony NGO for a project entitled: "Transparent Community Budgets." This project will decrease the level of corruption in local self-governing bodies by increasing the transparency and accountability of city councils as they prepare and implement budgets. The nine-month project will take place in the towns of Goris, Kapan and Sisian. Harmony NGO is based in Goris and focuses on community development and local self-governance.

MAAC awarded a grant to the Martuni Women Community Council NGO to address corruption affecting women in the healthcare sector. This eight-month project will focus on

preventing pre- and postnatal corruption risks through monitoring obstetric care, raising awareness, and organizing activities to protect women's rights. The project will take place in the towns of Martuni, Vardenis, Sevan, and Gavar in Gegharkunik marz.

In Yerevan, MAAC awarded a grant to the Foundation for Small and Medium Business NGO to monitor the implementation of recent tax reforms affecting Armenia's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The six-month project will monitor, assess, and evaluate the enforcement of tax reform policies and will develop a series of recommendations on how to improve tax regulations. The project will also implement a public awareness campaign to highlight corruption risks for SMEs in their relationship with the tax authorities.

FOUR GRANT PROJECTS THRIVE THIS SPRING

In April-June, four MAAC grantees successfully completed their respective grant projects, combating corruption in the areas of customs, traffic police, healthcare, education, public services, local governance, social assistance, and state-guaranteed free obstetric services.

The seven-month project by the Union of Information Technology Enterprises (UITE) reached an agreement with the State Revenue Committee regarding a new mechanism to increase transparency and reduce the risk of corruption in federal customs services. The mechanism will determine the prices of imported IT goods and the taxes required for customs clearance. Moving forward, UITE will work with a special committee on a monthly basis to develop pricelists for IT products.

Achilles NGO implemented a five-month project to combat traffic police-related corruption. The project provided advice to 955 drivers, of which 259 reported situations involving corruption and another 218 reported conflicts between themselves and a police officer. Achilles won thirty-five cases in the Administrative Court and one case in the Court of Appeals.

MAAC grantee ALT TV used television programs to carry out a six-month public awareness campaign on corruption issues in healthcare, education, public services, local governance, and social assistance. The project, based in Armavir, received high visibility: ALT TV received 432 calls and 68 visits about corruption during the awareness campaign. The television programs even affected corruption at the local level in Armavir. For example, it was reported that informal money collection at local schools stopped, five school directors were found responsible for the collections, and a school director was dismissed. In an attempt to increase transparency, Armavir municipality installed three information boards to post decisions issued by the mayor and councilor. Finally, ALT TV reported that two water supply companies withdrew a total of 440 legal claims against the recipients of irrigation water.

More than 500 women received information about free obstetric services and the State Obstetrics Certificate system thanks to the Armavir Development Center NGO's eight-month project funded by MAAC. The Armavir Development Center organized community meetings in 24 remote communities of Armavir to spread awareness about the free services and certificate system. The NGO also spent three months monitoring maternity wards in four major cities in Armavir – Echmiadzin, Armavir, Metsamor, and Baghramyan. Local civil society activists conducted the monitoring and developed ten recommendations to reduce corruption. The NGO shared their results with local and national authorities, health establishments, and local civil society organizations.

MAAC AWARDS GRANT TO DEVELOP ANTI-CORRUPTION EDUCATION COURSE FOR ARMENIAN SCHOOLS

Anti-corruption education is a key initiative of the Government of Armenia. In 2008 the Prosecutor General recommended that the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) develop and introduce anti-corruption education in secondary schools and institutions of higher education. The state educational standards now call for corruption-related courses in schools and this initiative is even included in the draft of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2009-2012 and its corresponding Action Plan.

MAAC has chosen to support the government's anti-corruption education initiative. On 15 April MAAC awarded a grant to "The Future is Yours" (FIY) Charitable Social NGO to implement the "Education Against Corruption" project, aimed at developing an anti-corruption curriculum for 9th and 10th grade students in Armenia. The project will prepare and publish a teacher's guidebook on anti-corruption courses and will organize several

teacher-training workshops to build the capacity of schools to deliver anti-corruption courses. The goal of the project is to support the introduction of anti-corruption courses, raise awareness about corruption and anti-corruption in Armenia's public schools, and increase intolerance towards corruption.

MAAC has recruited the Lithuanian organization Modern Didactics Center (MDC) to ensure the success of the grant project. MDC will support MAAC grantee FIY and the MES/National Institute of Education by providing the "Training of Trainers" course and by ensuring the guidebook for teachers on anti-corruption education reflects international best practices. MDC has vast experience in this area in Lithuania and elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union.

The project will run until 15 May 2010 and plans to train more than 1000 public school teachers. After this project is implemented, schools will be better equipped to deliver anti-corruption courses and awareness of corruption and anti-corruption in schools will increase.

MAAC SUPPORTS ARMENIA'S STATE REVENUE COMMITTEE

Working with government agencies is an important component of MAAC Activity. MAAC's work with the State Revenue Committee is one example of this collaboration. MAAC is supporting the Committee by training Armenian tax examiners to detect and report corruption they encounter on the job. To help them achieve this goal, MAAC is providing technical assistance to the State Revenue Committee as they develop guidelines for examiners to use in order to detect corruption and report their findings to the authorities.

The need for this cooperation dates back to Armenia's first Anti-Corruption Strategy Action Plan of 2003-

2007, when the government implemented a number of measures to prevent corruption. At that time, Armenia signed and ratified agreements and conventions pertaining to corruption and joined many international organizations. One such organization was the Council of Europe Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO). GRECO produced a list of 24 recommendations to improve Armenia's anti-corruption situation and Armenia adopted the recommendations on 13 June 2008. The most recent GRECO report, *Compliance Report on Armenia*, describes Armenia's implementation of the recommendations.

Early this year, MAAC received a request from the State Revenue Committee for support implementing a GRECO recommendation that had not been fully realized, recommendation xxiii: "to establish guidelines and provide special training for the tax authorities concerning the detection of corruption offences and their reporting to the competent law enforcement agencies." In the *Compliance Report on Armenia*, GRECO concluded that recommendation xxiii had been only "partly implemented." The State Revenue Committee inquired about assistance preparing such guidelines and training and MAAC was pleased to accept and provide assistance.

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MAAC specialist Van Carlton, a former IRS tax inspector, drafted guidelines based on the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development Bribery Awareness Handbook for Tax Examiners and in consultation with local tax examiners and other stakeholders. The draft was translated into Armenian

and submitted to the State Revenue Committee for consideration. In July, MAAC and the State Revenue Committee will design and run a training program for tax examiners. MAAC specialist Carlton will first deliver the training of trainers for a team of six trainers from the State Revenue

Committee before training the first group of 100 inspectors. The other 300 will be trained by the new trainers in August. The program will teach tax examiners how to detect corruption and how to report it to the proper law enforcement agencies. The program will also expose tax examiners to the drafted guidelines. MAAC anticipates that over 400 tax

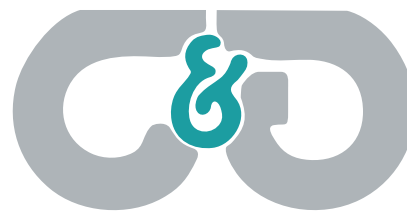
MAAC TO CONDUCT THREE CORRUPTION SURVEYS

Gauging how much citizens understand corruption and are aware of corruption-related issues is an important aspect of MAAC's work. MAAC started conducting annual corruption surveys of households in 2008, and bi-annual corruption surveys of business owners and public officials in 2009. This fall, three new surveys will measure perceptions of corruption and victimization by corruption in the area of public services. The goal of the surveys is to develop empirical information that can be discussed, analyzed, and used to help the government, private sector, civil society, and MAAC Activity formulate and implement policies and programs to improve governance and thereby reduce the risk of corrupt practices. The surveys will also serve as benchmark indicators so that elements of governance and the extent of corrupt practices can be compared to follow-up surveys in one to two years. The surveys are expected to be conducted in September-October 2009.

In the Next Issue...

- Anti-Corruption Forum on human rights and corruption takes place on 22 July
- MAAC trains 100 tax inspectors from the State Revenue Committee in bribery awareness

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