

UNHCR-KASA project

“Refugee Integration through Education and Self-Reliance Opportunities”

Newsletter

June-August 2019

‘Join-the-Community’ or Good Words for Great Souls



Nowadays, one cannot imagine the world without humanitarian workers and volunteers! The people's sufferings would not be mitigated and their needs would go unanswered without their great help. Good words aren't enough to show all our gratitude to the volunteers and supporters who stand and step together with refugees. The UNHCR-KASA's Join-the-Community project's volunteers walk hand-in-hand with asylum-seekers and refugees: they share with them their knowledge and skills, guide them and educate and

they learn from them, too. This project grants the asylum-seekers the opportunity to get to know Armenia and its people, study the Armenian language, learn about the country's customs and traditions. On their turn, the volunteers benefit from the multicultural environment where they can meet with new people, participate in the cross-cultural exchange, socialise and make friends.

The ‘Join-the-Community’ project includes 3 components: 1) **Two Creativity clubs** aimed at: (i) **Awareness-raising on and exposure to culture and traditions**, (ii) **Skills Development**, 2) **Armenian language courses** and 3) **Individual consultations**.

The above mentioned activities are aimed for the residents of the Reception Centre and Integration House and are run by 13 volunteers.

For the period of June - August 2019, around 340 persons benefited from the club activities, among them asylum-seekers and refugees from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, Yemen,



Jordan, Pakistan and Cuba. In addition, some 30 asylum-seekers were enrolled in the Armenian language courses organised at KASA's Espaces youth training centre.

During the same period, a series of club activities took place at the Reception Centre: 4 times a week - Armenian language classes with two levels, once a week - Creativity club (handicrafts), twice a month - Cultural club (Armenian dances, music, songs and recitation), and twice a month - Skills Development club (soft skills, time management skills, oral communication skills, presentation skills and orientation skills).

On 14 July, The projects volunteers (both, the first and second groups) organised an open-air event at TUMO Park in Yerevan for a group of 50 asylum-seekers and refugees (mainly the residents of the Reception Centre and Integration House, as well as some vulnerable children of concern living at the FAR Children's Support Centre). The TUMO Park offered the participants recreational, social and cultural activities, *i.e.* football and basketball games, handicraft by children and women, a picnic, music and dance. The event also helped UNHCR and KASA to raise the awareness of the general public, *i.e.* the visitors of the Park who got to know that Armenia was hosting refugees and asylum-seekers of different nationalities who had various interests and skills.



"We have composed this group in order to befriend and help each other, to learn and develop. We want to engage in volunteer work and initiate useful activities in our host and neighboring communities"

Youth Coalition member

In August, the club activities took place on weekly basis with the series of activities for the residents of the Reception Centre aimed to promote tolerance, peaceful co-existence and respect towards each other.

Youth Coalition

The Youth Advisory Group was reborn as Youth Coalition, a group of active young people seeking positive change in themselves, in the group and in their communities. Nowadays, Youth Coalition comprises of some 30 active boys and girls, among them refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced youth from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Afghanistan and Jordan, as well as local youth. The Youth Coalition's activities include introductory meetings, 'getting to know each other' activities and team-building, as



well as brainstorming on priority needs of the group members and their communities with suggestions on possible solutions. With the guidance from UNHCR and KASA, the Youth Coalition engages in various activities, community work and educational/cultural events. Youth Coalition members plan and implement community activities, social and educational events.

The summer¹ was rich in targeted activities, study visits, meetings with opinion leaders, campaigns, educational and public activities:

- 21 May: visit to the Yerevan Mayor's Office –meeting with decision-makers/community leader
 - 18 and 24 May: "Radio Activité" workshop with 'Hear my Voice' activity – inclusion
 - 20 June: World Refugee Day commemoration through #stepwithrefugees march in Yerevan – a large-scale public event aimed at awareness-raising and engagement
 - 20 June: Youth Coalition's TV interview in the frame of WRD – awareness-raising, public awareness raising
 - Mid-June: Erebuni and Shengavit Museums – meeting with and cooperation with opinion leaders
 - 14 July: Tumo event – recreation, sports and cultural activity - cohesion, integration
 - 25 July – 3 August: volunteering at YMCA camp – youth empowerment, volunteer work
 - 12 August: International Youth Day in Vanadzor – community activity
 - 16 August: 'Mosaïques of Ancient Rome' exhibition presented by the Italian Ambassador to Armenia - cultural integration and meeting with opinion leader/diplomat
 - 17 August: Evolution of Youth Coalition's presentation for the Unity-in-Diversity campers – community mobilisation and inclusion
 - 22 August: Dialogue with the EU Ambassador – meeting with opinion leader/diplomat
- In addition, Youth Coalition's some members were invited to participate and contribute to local, regional and international youth summer camp programmes and youth projects by various agencies, e.g.: OSCE, Armenian Caritas, Aleppo CCO, YMCA, AMAA, Democracy Today, and other.



participated in the **International Youth Day** celebration in the capital of youth in Armenia this year,

¹although this brief was elaborated for the period of June-August, some major activities since May 2019 are mentioned here, as well.

Vanadzor. The town gathered some 500 local and international students and youth, as well as government, civil society and community representatives. Youth Coalition contributed to the event by organising 'Unity-in-Diversity' and 'Einstein was a refugee' interactive games, as well as 'My input in SDGs' activities during the Educational Expo event at the Technological Centre of Vanadzor. Their creative techniques for promoting cultural diversity and raising the public awareness on the plight of refugees and the SDGs gained the highest attention of the visitors, the UN and government officials who talked to the youth and photographed with them during the event.

Acquiring a new profession is important for Syrian-Armenians



For the period of June-August, some twenty participants (displaced persons from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, NK, and Azerbaijan) benefitted from the cooking classes. It is of great importance to mention about the collaboration with "Sedrak Mamulyan" cooking studio. Besides providing high quality cooking classes, the partner also involves the participants in

different cooking events (exhibitions, festivals, etc). The organisers exposed the participants to a network of restaurant business employers opening doors for the participants to the labour and business markets. As a positive outcome to those activities, some business fields invited on board displaced Syrians to refresh their business and ensure better quality and variety of food.

In addition, some 20 persons improved their skills on developing self-employment skills and increasing their competitiveness in business field. During the training, they obtained knowledge on labour market and skills in Social Media Marketing, presentation and verbal communication.

"As a middle-aged woman, I had to take a long and difficult path for my new business, but owing to the training on the Social Media Marketing skills, I have now moved a few steps forward."

Skills Development training participant

Educational Camp for teenagers

During June-July, a two-shift camp project was implemented for 40 participants (17 girls and 23 boys aged between 13 and 18) at KASA's educational centre in Gyumri. With its first shift held on 28 June-01 July and the second one on 04-07 July, the teenagers' camp ensured participation of 14 teenagers from Syria, 2 – from Iraq and 4 displaced children from Nagorno-



Karabakh, as well as 20 vulnerable local children residing in 'Family House' in



Vanadzor.

The camp programme ensured creation of team spirit and promotion of synergies and cooperation which was realised through teambuilding games and reflection sessions.

The participants also played "What? Where? When?" game and participated in other various indoor and outdoor activities.

"In camp I learned how to live a healthy and organized life, when you sleep and get up early, eat periodically and only healthy food, and of course, use mobile and internet only when it is necessary."

"I learnt how to engage in active listening".

"The genuine and motivating environment in the camp helped me open up, give and share, build long-lasting friendships and new networks".

"Unity-in-Diversity" Intercultural Camp



From 12 to 17 August, 24 young people displaced from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan and local Armenians participated in the Intercultural Camp project aimed at social integration, intercultural learning and dialogue skills development of the youth. The camp programme included "Conflict-Dialogue-Peace" Land Art activity session, "World Faces" interactive game with cards and the world map, introduction of concept of culture in

intercultural dialogue and preparation on research groups for Azatan Village Yezidi community.



All above mentioned sessions gave the youth the opportunity to become aware of cultural differences, develop their communication skills and intercultural sensitivity, as well as reveal their skills and capacities. There were participants in the camp who played on various musical instruments, which served a basis for formulating a small music band.

"I want to join Youth Coalition right away! I cannot miss any event, and I want to contribute, too."

*"Unity-in-Diversity" Intercultural
Camp participant about Youth
Coalition*

On the last day of the camp, a group of Youth Coalition members visited the campers to introduce themselves, get to know and invite other young people into their group. After the 'Evolution of Youth Coalition' presentation followed by teambuilding games and energisers, many campers wished to be part of the Youth Coalition. They gladly joined the group and prepared for the forthcoming meetings and activities.

This newsletter was prepared by KASA in partnership with UNHCR

September 2019