

Editorial
by Annette obolensky,
consultant for young citizens project

YOUNG CITIZENS

May 2013- n° 2

NEWSLETTER THE NEWSLETTER THE NEWSLETTER



The pursuit of happiness?

Hi, my name is Annette Obolensky. I'm 43 years old, I'm Swiss and my favorite activities are political discussions, hiking, singing and laughing. I'm happily married with children. We have books, we can travel. I'm happy.

Is that it? Is that what keeps me going? What keeps me alive? What differentiates me from an ant, a mouse? Is this what gives life meaning? What makes me fly, cry, be desperate and really happy?

The difference between an ant and a human being

If I think about it, what really thrills and captivates me is the feeling to have understood something that before was not even interesting to me, to hear about something new, about which I have not spent a thought before. To be surrounded by people that have to say something and that are talking to me not because they want to convince me of their way of thinking, but because they want to exchange ideas and views in order to learn and understand more. And to be surrounded by people who have understood that intellectual reflection is very important, but words without action remain void. For me, there is nothing more exciting than being in an environment where people are seriously trying to find solutions to problems without being afraid that their analyses are wrong or someone else's are better, and where people are continuously trying to find new, better methods or approaches.

The platform of Young Citizens

This is what I hope the Young Citizens project offers to its participants. There is action, because the clubs need to be prepared, led and reflected on. There is an environment of trial-and-error, try-and-succeed, because one activity might have worked very well on one evening, but not on the other. There is learning because the animators prepare their clubs on subjects that might not have been in the center of their interest before. And there is open discussion and exchange of ideas, because the participants express themselves and discuss various topics as group.

If you, the participants of Young Citizens, feel inspired by the activities of the clubs, with the company of like-minded people, by the discussions you had in the clubs, if the project helps you to understand your environment better, your society, and if then – on top of everything – you start to feel more engaged in your society, then the "makers" of the project have succeeded.

I hope being part of Young Citizens makes you happy, REALLY happy.

The monthly theme: environment
next month's theme: art and power

YOUNG CITIZENS

May 2013- n° 2

NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER

NEWS



Keyrings free election in Yerevan

In the run up to the May 5th municipal elections in Yerevan, and given the problems with the presidential elections, our volunteers decided to make keyrings promoting free and fair elections and distributed them around Yerevan.

900
Keyrings
distributed



Theatre for changes

Our animators and participants attended and participated in performances in Yerevan's 'Theatre for Changes', performances which addressed the themes of the population problem and gendered violence.



Animators and pensioners

On the 14th of May, the animators of the Cine Club visited a care home to project an Armenian movie. The residents were very happy to watch this movie and to be visited by young people.

Tuesday

English Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA Gumri

English Club: 6pm-7.30pm, KASA EspaceS

Wednesday

French Club: 6pm-7.30pm, KASA EspaceS

Thursday

French Club: 2pm-3.30pm, KASA Gumri

Art Club: 6.30pm-8pm, KASA EspaceS

Intercultural Club: 6pm-7pm, Kasa EspaceS

Friday

Cine Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA Gumri

Psy Club: 6pm-8pm, KASA EspaceS

Saturday

English Club: 1pm-2.30pm, KASA Gumri

Debates Club: 3pm-5pm, KASA Gumri

Human Rights Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA EspaceS

Cine Club: 5pm-7pm, KASA EspaceS



A word from our Animators Lusine Aghabekyan

What club do you animate and how did you come to animate this particular club?

At first, when I was studying psychology at University, I came to the club as a participant and was really interested in the meetings and the subjects which were discussed. Later, I became the animator of the club, because I wanted to do more for the club.

How has the young citizens project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?

Thanks to KASA, I have gained both professional and personal experience, learned to communicate and cooperate with people from different cultures,

discussed important issues with many people, ect. Also this project changed the way of my thinking and my perception of different things, helped me to concentrate my attention on the problems which currently exist in Armenia. Due to this project I really understood, that I want to be an active citizen.

If you could change one thing about Armenian society, what would it be?

The most important thing for me is that many Armenians don't believe that they can have a great future in Armenia. I would like to invest my knowledge, professional skills and abilities into developing confidence among Armenians.

Artur Grigoryan talks about the monthly theme...



YOUNG CITIZENS

May 2013- n° 2

THE NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER

You are a lawyer, Civil activist and Environmentalist. Why and when did your interest in environmentalism begin?

It started 2 years ago. I don't know exactly why. But, I guess, now environmental issues are the most important in Armenia mainly because of the amount of mining that is going on in Armenia is completely unsustainable, yet 60% of exports from Armenia are raw materials. Mining brings a huge amount of pollution to Armenia; causing health problems; environmental devastation and natural catastrophe. And, moreover, contrary to popular belief, economically it is not profitable to exploit raw materials. We don't receive as much income from raw materials as we could from, for example, agriculture, livestock, and the export of ready goods.

So, for you, mining is the worst environment problem in Armenia?

Yes. And I justify my opinion in terms of economical development. Mining provides only 3% of GDP in Armenia, whereas agriculture could contribute ten times as much. But mining is taking place instead of agriculture.

I heard most of Armenian mines are owned by foreign companies. Is it true?

Yes. Almost all of them. And not only foreign companies but companies registered in off-shore zones. This brings problems of transparency in terms of monetary flows, and knowing who is the real owner of the company. Of course, we know that our officials actually own those companies and they adopt the laws to benefit their own

Who is Artur Grigoryan?

Artur Grigoryan is a lawyer, civil activist and environmentalist who has been instrumental in the Teghut Civic Movement, which has been prominent in protesting the opening of mines in the Teghut region of Armenia.

business: the mines. This does not contribute to the economic development of the country.

What is Teghut?

Teghut is a virgin forest in the north of Armenia. It is a place with little mining, unlike the south of Armenia. But, they want to expand mining into Teghut. We are against this. In Teghut there is huge potential for economic development in terms of green economics; agriculture, tourism etc. And after the mining in Teghut, there will be 500 million tonnes of pollution, in particular heavy metals which exist in the environment forever and this will stop the development of the Teghut region economically. When we assess the economic situation of the mining industry, its income is miserable; almost nothing. And the cost is the complete destruction of the economic development of this territory, the pollution of Teghut and social and demographic problems.

What do the activists do to protect Teghut?

Well, we have a website and a facebook group where we post a lot of information. Plus, we do physical activity; we got to villages, we speak to journalists, we spoke to people during the protests in Mashtots park, we do non-formal education activities. We try to make people understand that it is not just a problem of pretty flowers and trees, but much deeper. Now when people hear the word Teghut, they think of long term economic, social and political issues and problems.

Contacts

KASA-CH (bureau central)

7, Rosière street, CH 1012, Lausanne
+ 41 21 728 50 78
kasa@kasa.am

KASA-FHS

24, Toumanian street, apt 5, 0001 Yerevan, Armenia
+ 374 10 58 40 32
kasaam@kasa.am

KASA Gumri

69, Chahoumian street, 3101 Gyumri, Armenia
+ 0312 5 65 28
kasa.gumri@kasa.am

KASA EspaceS

29, Nalbandian street, 0001 Yerevan, Armenia
+ 374 10 54 18 44
espaces@kasa.am

www.kasa.am



 Open Society Foundations - Armenia