

YCA encourages autonomy, initiative taking and critical thinking of young people within the over-arching goal of creating a participative and democratic society in Armenia

YOUNG CITIZENS OF ARMENIA

May 2014- n °7

NEWSLETTER

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YCA's NEWS

Conflict...კონფლიქტი... gwrthdaro... kunflitt... whichever the language is, however it is pronounced, the essence is the same, a clash of opposite goals, viewpoints, aspirations, trends, causes. The month of April was full of discussions in our clubs on the conflict origins, development and its different expressions, as well as conflict resolution techniques.

The topic for May derives from the words ‘kir’ /krel/ meaning order, rule, faith in English according to dictionary by Hrachya Acharyan. As you understood the May discussions in our clubs were devoted to the topic of ‘Religion’ with very informative meetings on the peculiarities of world religions.

The comprehensive discussions held at our clubs weren't an obstacle for us to organize other activities as well. We organized a meeting devoted to the Syrian-Armenian culture in the frames of our Intercultural club, as well as a number of interesting initiatives which will be thoroughly presented to you in this newsletter.



“Anyone who thinks sitting in church can make you a Christian must also think that sitting in a garage can make you a car.”
Garrison Keillor

“Right to Hang Laundry” initiative



“Right to Hang Laundry” initiative was organized on 10th April in Gyumri. At the first glance it's a very strange title: “How can I not have the right to hang laundry in my own land, in front of my own house?” or “How come there is a certain right about which I'm unaware?”. These were the first impressions of the passengers who would see the “Right to Hang Laundry” poster followed by rows of “laundry”. The “laundry” had the following message: “Promote awareness of the society about their civic rights, their protection and promotion”. The idea of this youth initiative was generated by the animators of the “Young Citizens of Armenia” project based on the need of the society to get informed of their own civic rights. Those active young people being the leaders of positive change in the society.

So what was hung on the laundry ropes? The ropes had T-shirts with articles from “Constitution of Republic of Armenia”, “The European Convention on Human Rights”, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. The passers-by had the chance to not only become aware of their civic rights, but also get the answers to many questions as there were “information corners” placed under the laundry ropes. Most of the participants actively took part in the initiative while writing down a right on colorful piece of cloth and hanging it on the rope: “I have a right of ... as a citizen of the Republic of Armenia”. Moreover, the participants of the initiative were able to pin red and blue ribbons on the most often violated and most important rights respectively, to their opinion. You could see 2 boxes of two-colored ribbons were placed- red and blue, which signified broken and substantial rights respectively. Dozens of red and blue ones were pinned on those T-shirts with different rights, including the “Right to Hang Laundry”. How you would explain that? We leave it up to you, dear reader, the citizen of the Republic of Armenia.

Tuesday

Human Rights Club, 18:00, Yerevan
English Club, 18:00, Yerevan

Wednesday

French Club, 18:00, Yerevan
Art Club, 15:00, Gyumri

Thursday

Intercultural Club, 18:00, Yerevan
Art Club, 18:00, Yerevan
Human Rights Club, 15:00 Gyumri

Friday

Psychological Club, 18:00, Yerevan
Cinema Club, 15:00, Gyumri

Saturday

Cinema Club, 17:00, Yerevan
French Club, 13:00, Gyumri
English Club, 14:30, Gyumri

On 5th and 20th of each month

Cartoon club, Gyumri

“Conflict is
very much a state
of mind. If you are not
in that state of mind, it
doesn't bother you”.
Yotam Ottolenghi

“Living Library“ initiative

On 18th April the Komitas park of Yerevan hosted an open-air event called ‘Living library’. The initiative aimed to create a dialogue platform between the society and those people whose lifestyle or life story was standing out with certain uniqueness, speak about stereotypes and encourage mutual understanding. The open-air library which lasted 4 hours hosted 112 readers. The living library made it possible for its readers to talk or ‘read’ 8 ‘books’ which were real people with real stories. Below we present some of them:

- Hovik Keshishian, a Syrian Armenian who was forced to leave Syria because of the conflict. His book was titled “Two homelands, two foreign countries”. He was telling about the efforts to stay an Armenian in Syria and about the struggle of being a Syrian in Armenia.
- Khdr Hajoyan, a yezidi representative, a minority in Armenia. His book had the following title: “Who are the Yezidis?” Khdr was telling to his readers about the unique culture of Yezidis and breaking stereotypes about a number of traditions existent at Yezidi culture.
- Hiksos Artur, a Gentile who would cost you an effort to meet nowadays. This book enlightened the readers about the Paganism and its peculiarities, the main practices, especially in modern world.
- Arevik Melkonyan, a disabled youth activist. This book was titled “Disability and society”. This bright girl conveyed to the readers her story which was about a struggle against the life and herself, against the mentality and attitude of the society, the stereotypes that do not allow to live a full life, and finally, about victories and achievements.



Series of meetings with role-model young Armenians



‘Young Citizens of Armenia’ project has been organizing a series of meetings with role-model young armenians aiming to encourage the initiative of young Armenians and belief in their untapped potential. The first meeting was held on 29th April. DJ Vakcina, designer Faina and photographer Arthur Lumen were among the role-model young Armenians who came to share the story of their success, challenges and the efforts they put in to address them. The 21st May meeting was devoted to the discovery of the secret of doing a business. The guest speakers were young entrepreneurs Manushak Vahramyan, the Co-founder and CEO of ‘Eon’ club, Viktor Yengibaryan, the Founder and CEO of ‘Global Trade’ LLC, and Diran Baghdadyan, the Founder and CEO of ‘Gourmet Dourme’ Chocolate House.

The guests shared their experience of all the peculiarities of starting a business in Armenia and advised not to be afraid of any challenges on the way. It was obvious, all the young people got very inspired while hearing the stories, calls to action and advice of their peers. And it surely won’t be a surprise if one day we hear about the success of one more young person who had got inspired and initiated something very interesting just after attending our event.

Youth exchange “A Caucasian perspective to gender equality”

From 22nd April till 2nd May Nane Norekyan, Piruze Sahakyan, Andranik Gharakeshishyan, the animators of the ‘Young Citizens of Armenia’ project and Felomine Davtyan, the YCA club participant attended the ‘A Caucasian perspective to gender equality’ youth exchange in Georgia. Representatives from 7 countries /Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Ukraine, Portugal/ were participating in the project. The project was initiated by ‘Academy for peace and development’ NGO.

The event aimed to create an atmosphere enabling the participants to discuss the gender roles, stereotypes and gender discrimination cases from their societies and present it through photos, videos and interactive theatre.



The project was a unique opportunity for the participants to live and learn in an intercultural environment. The participants were able to learn about different cultures and the gender roles in those cultures, as well as to present their own culture.

Discovery of values through non-formal education

From 23rd April till 2nd May “Nectarum” NGO hosted the “Discovery of values through non-formal education” training course in Lithuania. Artsrun Pivazyan, the participant of The “Young Citizens of Armenia” project of KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation also attended the training. The training aimed to raise those values serving as a basis for decision-making among youth. The training lasted 10 days presenting the prerequisites and conditions of the establishment and development of non-formal education, as well as the options of speaking about the values through non-formal education methods. The participants presented their organizations and initiatives, shared their experience in the field of non-formal education.

Each of us is developing a certain type of value system. The latter defines the process of our decision-making and smoothens our life path. Talking about ourselves is difficult, even more difficult is to talk about our own value system. The participants with different country and nation backgrounds first tried to present their own self through exercises and then discovered one another, and tried to understand which values unite or separate them.

In general, the international trainings give more opportunities to exchange ideas, opinions and viewpoints. And this training was also full of such opportunities.



Vahan Tovmasyan, Club participant



1. Which clubs do you attend? Why?

I started attending the clubs 3-4 weeks ago. I have so far attended the Intercultural and French clubs. I got attracted to the clubs because I am not often in Yerevan and don't have many friends here, while I want

to communicate with people, and get this chance at the clubs. I have got to know about the clubs very accidentally while walking down the Nalbandyan street where I saw the announcement about the clubs. I got interested and got to know that the clubs have very interesting discussion topics. I liked the idea of clubs very much and decided to attend.

2. Has the "Young citizens of Armenia" project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?*

My perception of the civil society in Armenia hasn't changed much. What I have learned while attending the clubs of the "Young citizens of Armenia" project has helped me to approve for myself my own ideas.

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

Good question... The first idea that comes to my mind is that it would be very difficult to change anything. Very idealistic. But maybe I would change the way of communication in Armenia. Very often people are not careful while expressing themselves and can be offensive, especially if the person represents a different culture.

Anna Hakobyan, English club animator in Gyumri

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

I am one of the animators of English Club in Gyumri. I used to attend a Pack English course and time to time. I was taking part in some activities organized in and by "KASA". Although the way I was integrated there as an animator was rather strange as I went there to gain nothing but experience.

I had failed a project because of not having voluntary experience, a project that was my dream, my future and in general I thought that my life would depend on it. Anyway, I still regret that it didn't happen, as I could study in the USA, but I am happy that failure of mine became a beginning of a quite new life full of knowledge, adventures, friends and perspectives that are more than a practical experience the necessity of which has brought me to "KASA". Those four years that I spent in "KASA" I remember with special emotions. Being a linguist I preferred to animate English Club as initially I didn't have any other preferences. Later I realized that if one wants to give a message s/he has to do that in any way and in this case doesn't matter what way s/he will choose. English Club was a means for me to get and to give that message.

2. Has the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?

To be frank, it didn't impact, it "created" a perception of civil society in me. Before becoming English Club animator I remember the meeting with Mme Monique Bondolfi /President of "KASA" Foundation/ about Civil Society, when I had searched lots of information about it in the Internet as I was not well informed. Before I was not aware of so many issues: now it is quite different as I consciously understand and imagine the real situation. "Young Citizens of Armenia" project was a source of information for me and at the same time the tool of getting that information. It helped me to understand what I wanted and it gave me the freedom to speak, to think, to create in all spheres inside and outside "KASA". I have obtained lots of qualities due to this project and discovered other interests for me.

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

I would like to add colors so that the eyes of people can see them. I realize that there is too much poverty in my country and that the majority of population does not trust the Government. But the problem becomes serious and lacks solution if there is no hope and right actions. I want people to understand that life is not that bad and good things happen, too and if they believe and take steps they will surely get to what they dream of.



Youth Events, Grants, Scholarships Examples Of Civic Activism

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“European Citizenship in Youth Work” Training course in France by SALTO. Deadline to [apply](#) is 15th June. ([salto-youth.net](#))

BarCamp Yerevan14, unconference for geeks. Join BarCamp on May 31 - June 1 at AUA! The [REGISTRATION](#) is open. ([barcamp.am](#))

Civil Leadership Academy Training Course in Hungary by SALTO. Deadline to [apply](#) is 30th May. ([salto-youth.net](#))

“Minority youth against gender inequality” training course in Macedonia. Deadline to [apply](#) is 6th June. ([salto-youth.net](#))

Awards for Courageous Reporting. Entrants must submit three articles each published between June 1, 2013 and May 31, this year. The [deadline](#) for entries is May 31st ([trust.org](#))

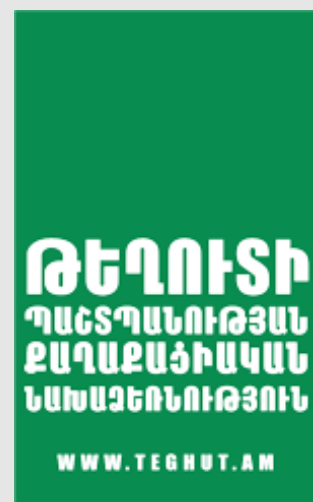
“Work Right” call for entries now open. The [deadline](#) to enter and submit your poster entries is 10th July. ([posterfortomorrow.org](#))

Save Teghut Civic Initiative is an independent and voluntary network of free and concerned people from Armenia, Diaspora and various parts of the world who believe and fight for healthy and dignified human livelihood. The initiative was founded in 2007.

The goal of Save Teghut Initiative is to stop, by means of a strong civic engagement, execution of the unlawful decision adopted in 2001 by the Armenian Government commissioning exploitation of a copper-molybdenum mine in Teghut. Save Teghut aims at defending the rights of Shnogh and Teghut communities to their property, healthy environment and dignified work.

The initiative members have so far organized a number of activities and campaigns in order to achieve the annulment of the illegitimate decision on Teghut copper-molybdenum mine exploitation, and, lawfully prosecute officials responsible for the adoption of the disastrous decision, as well as reverse the mining-focused policy of the Government of Armenia.

Source: [www.teghut.am](#)



The photo on 2nd page by Araxia Haroutunian

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the articles and interviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of “Young Citizens of Armenia” project.

Our supporters



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