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Anti-Corruption Forum and Report Link Corruption to Human Rights

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Corruption violates human rights in direct and indirect ways; however, the connection between corruption and human rights is underutilized in the fight against corruption. To start integrating these areas of activism, MAAC made the relationship between corruption and human rights the focus of its 4th Anti-Corruption Forum. The forum was co-sponsored by the International Center on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), an international non-governmental organization that specializes in applied research on human rights. Over 60 representatives from state agencies, civil society organizations, universities, international organizations, the public, and the media participated in the July forum.

At the press conference preceding the forum, Armenia's Human Rights Defender Armen Harutyunyan, ICHRP Executive Director Robert Archer, and MAAC Chief of Party

François Vézina announced the release of the Armenian translation of the ICHRP report, *Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection*. The report was first published in English in early 2009 and Armenian is the first language the report has been translated into. The Armenian version is a ICHRP-MAAC co-publication that discusses the impact of corruption on human rights around the world. Armenia's Human Rights Defender, Armen Harutyunyan, wrote the ICHRP report foreword and delivered opening remarks at the forum. Copies of the report were distributed during the forum and the report has also been made available to government officials.

The Forum comprised four sessions: *Determining When Human Rights are Violated by Corruption; Institution of Human Rights Defender and the Fight Against Corruption; Linking Acts of Corruption with Specific Human Rights; and Protecting the Rights of Those Investigating Corruption and Preventing Abuses of Anticorruption Campaigns*. The forum highlighted ways in which corrupt practices violate human rights and discussed operational frameworks for applying human rights principles to anti-corruption initiatives.

"The importance of the link between the human rights cause and anti-corruption initiatives cannot be stressed enough," said USAID Mission Director Dr. Jatinder Cheema. "This forum, and the release of the report in Armenian, represent two major accomplishments in bringing these very important issues to the attention of Armenian society."



MAAC COP Francois Vezina, Human Rights Defender Armen Harutyunyan, and ICHRP Executive Director Robert Archer (right to left) at the press conference

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MAAC Trains Tax Examiners



MAAC advisor Van Carlton trains NGOs on tax reform

Since April 2009, MAAC and the State Revenue Committee (SRC) of Armenia have been working together to develop guidelines and train Armenian tax examiners to better detect and report corruption by taxpayers. Through technical assistance, MAAC is helping the SRC comply with Armenia's international obligations while strengthening the tax system and increasing employee knowledge and efficiency.

During the previous quarter, MAAC international advisor Van Carlton consulted tax examiners and other stakeholders to develop a corruption detection handbook for SRC officials. Carlton used the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development Bribery Awareness Handbook for Tax Examiners as a model to draft guidelines specifically suited for the needs of Armenia's SRC. The SRC officially adopted the Carlton handbook on 10 July and announced its adoption at a press conference organized by the SRC. The handbook also is now posted on the SRC's website, www.taxservice.am, under the Tax Reform section.

In July MAAC continued to support the SRC by designing and running a training program for tax officials. The program used the handbook to train examiners how to detect corruption and report it to the proper law enforcement entities. Mr. Carlton delivered five, one-day training seminars to 112 tax examiners on 15-18 and 21 July. Throughout the training sessions, participants were eager to discuss the detection techniques and frequently offered their comments, opinions, and advice. Carlton also delivered a three-day "train the trainers" seminar on 10, 13, and 14 July. During these intensive sessions, six senior tax officials were taught techniques for training others to detect corruption. Since July, these six officials have trained an additional 300 tax examiners throughout Armenia, bringing the total number of tax examiners trained to 418.

After the sessions were completed, Carlton presented recommendations to the SRC to help them properly address fraud and corruption. For example, the SRC should establish a formal fraud referral program to fully implement the training. Carlton also recommended for the SRC to improve detection of corruption by streamlining their organizational structure and establishing formal objective criteria for auditing taxpayers. Mr. Carlton also provided training to 22 NGO representatives on reforms designed to reduce corruption in the State Revenue Committee.

MAAC Awards Grants to Fight Corruption in Schools, Medical Institutions, and Certification Bodies



CPDD Director Lilit Bleyan and MAAC COP Francois Vezina after the grant award ceremony

On 24 August, MAAC awarded three grants to fight corruption in schools, medical institutions, and certification bodies.

In order to bring children into the fight against corruption, MAAC awarded a grant to the Center of Public Dialogue and Development (CPDD) NGO to organize a festival of student films and photography on the topic of corruption. The "SHADOW" festival is aimed at creating a forum where the ideas of honesty, fair play, and living a fair lifestyle will be discussed by children themselves. The festival will take place in November.

To combat corruption in Armenia's hospitals, MAAC awarded a grant to the

Armavir Development Center NGO. This NGO was one of the winners of MAAC's NGO Marketplace, a one day event where non-governmental organizations gathered as vendors to promote their projects and sell their ideas to marketplace attendees and judges, whose votes determined which projects were awarded funding. The Armavir Development Center NGO will monitor corruption in four outpatient medical institutions in the Armavir region. The project will also conduct an awareness campaign of medical rights in rural and urban communities of the region.

To promote anti-corruption in certification bodies, MAAC awarded a grant to the Protection of Consumers' Rights NGO. This project will increase transparency and decrease the risk of corruption at certification offices. The project will also work with the State Quality Inspectorate to regulate the procedure for importing, taxing, and monitoring of the sale of inedible products in Armenia. The project will last for nine months.

2009 Corruption Surveys Underway

Gauging how citizens understand corruption, its effects, and ways of fighting it is an important prerequisite for effectively combating corruption. MAAC uses annual corruption surveys to gain information about general attitudes toward corruption, including the degree of acceptance of corruption, corruption victimization, and the public's awareness of anti-corruption initiatives in Armenia. The first household corruption survey was conducted in 2008.

In order to have the most accurate data possible about corruption perceptions in Armenia, MAAC will be surveying enterprises and public officials in addition to households this year. The results of the surveys will be triangulated. Triangulation is a method developed by the World Bank Institute to diagnose the sources of institutional corruption and quantify the extent of institutional dysfunction. Triangulation quantifies the economic and social costs of corruption, and helps set reform priorities and shape policy dialogue by bolstering arguments for increased reforms to reduce corruption.

MAAC has recruited the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRR) Armenia, a program of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, to conduct the survey. The fieldwork will take place in October and November and MAAC expects to publish the survey findings in December.

AACs Discuss Cooperation Mechanisms with Government Bodies

Between retreats, roundtables, workshops, and group discussions, the staff of Armenia's Advocacy and Assistance Centers (AACs) have been hard at work coordinating their efforts with government agencies to combat corruption.

On 26 September, AAC coordinators participated in a workshop to examine the links between human rights and corruption. The workshop was designed to follow-up MAAC's fourth anti-corruption forum with guided practice in applying the strategies discussed. Julio Bacio Terracino, an expert from the Geneva-based International Center on Human Rights Policy, delivered a presentation after which Human Rights Defender (HRD) employees facilitated group discussions. AAC and HRD staff came prepared with case studies based on their most common cases and the groups analyzed how the corruption and human rights cases overlapped. Each HRD facilitator presented his or her group's findings to everyone in attendance. More detailed discussion sessions were held later on specific areas for cooperation between the HRD and AACs.



Mr. Terracino delivers a presentation to the workshop participants

On 27-28 September MAAC conducted its fourth-quarterly AAC retreat in Aghveran. At the event, representatives from all eleven AACs shared their experiences on how to improve and expand their operations. Participants also identified concrete actions to advocate for the adoption of key anti-corruption reforms.

During the retreat, AAC staff held a special roundtable session with high-level officials from the Prosecutor General's Office, including the Deputy Prosecutor General, the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor, regional prosecutors, and the head of the Public Outreach Unit. AAC staff presented suggestions to streamline their interactions with these offices. The roundtable was the AACs' first step towards developing concrete coordination mechanisms with the Prosecutor General's Office and its regional units to ensure that all complaints referred for prosecution are addressed properly and expeditiously.

MAAC Grantee Banadzev Broadcasts Anti-Corruption Reality Show

Changing the mindset of youth before corruption becomes fully ingrained in their way of life is one of MAAC's priorities. In order to mobilize youth to combat corruption, MAAC awarded the Banadzev production company a grant to inform youth about corruption in a dynamic and attractive way. This fall, Banadzev debuted *Witness: The Real Stories*, a reality show in which young Armenians discuss corruption and film how it effects their daily lives.

Banadzev equipped fifteen young people from different walks of life with video cameras and taught them the basics of film production.

After the amateur filmmakers gathered material, Banadzev helped them edit and finish their films. The final products each last twenty minutes.

The series debuted on Armenia Public Television (H1 TV) at the very beginning of the season, 26 September 2009. The first two programs received such a high ratings that Banadzev is already considering making the project permanent. The series airs every Saturday at 4.30pm on H1 TV. The shows are available at Youtube (http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Akanates+Banadzev&search_type=).

2008 Household Corruption Survey Goes Public

In the fall of 2008, over 1500 residents participated in a nationwide survey organized by MAAC with the support of IFES and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) Armenia. The 2008 survey was the first in a series of annual household corruption surveys. Participants answered questions about their perceptions of corruption, their personal experiences with corruption, the extent to which they feel victimized by corruption, and their awareness of governmental and civil society anti-corruption initiatives.

To make the survey results available to the public as quickly and widespread as possible, MAAC awarded a grant to CRRC Armenia in April 2009 to widely publicize the survey findings. Through a series of public presentations and educational events running from April to August, CRRC used the survey to spark a nationwide public discussion about corruption. Presentations were conducted in Yerevan and four marzes for audiences of civil society members, students, academics, public officials, and the media.

The survey reports were also sent to more than 900 recipients including civil society organizations, local governments, academics, libraries, universities, think tanks, the international community, the donor community, and the media. The report was also sent to multiple government institutions and to all of the members of Armenia's parliament. The survey report generated valuable feedback from governmental and civil society organizations, which will be incorporated into MAAC's 2009 household corruption survey.

CRRC also conducted methodological training on how to interpret the survey dataset. Renowned experts in the field of quantitative data analysis, Dr. Ashot Kakosyan and Dr. Ruben Gevorgyan, delivered three training sessions on how to analyze the dataset with binary and multiple choice models. In total, 33 participants from political parties, academia, civil society organizations, private companies, and medical institutions participated in the trainings.

Finally, the CRRC awarded six research grants to social scientists to use the survey dataset as the basis for academic studies about corruption-related issues in Armenia. The researchers studied the institutional sources of corruption, corruption perceptions in Armenia, and perceptions of the anti-corruption activities of Armenian civil society organizations. During August and September, the researchers made public presentations on their findings; the presentations are available at <http://crrc.am/index.php/en/17/160>.

MAAC Enters its Third Year!

This quarter MAAC entered its third year of programming. Over the last year, MAAC worked closely with civil society organizations, governmental agencies, and the public at large to reduce the level of corruption in Armenia.

In the fall of 2008, MAAC started opening a nationwide network of Advocacy and Assistance Centers (AACs) in Yerevan and the largest city of each marz. Today the eleven AACs are operated by local NGOs and provide citizens throughout the country with free legal advice and assistance with corruption-related issues. The centers also stimulate reforms by recommending systems-level changes to the government of Armenia.

MAAC also organized several anti-corruption forums and public presentations over the past year. The forums addressed Armenia's international anti-corruption obligations, the drafting of the government's anti-corruption strategy, the monitoring of state-guaranteed free obstetrical services, and the connection between corruption and human rights. MAAC also presented the results of its first-annual household corruption survey to the public to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. Representatives from civil society organizations, governmental agencies, academia, the international community, and the press participated in all of the events.

On 22 April 2009, MAAC organized Armenia's first ever NGO Marketplace – a unique competition to encourage NGOs throughout the country to join the fight against corruption. For one day only, NGOs gathered as vendors to promote their projects and sell their ideas to marketplace attendees and judges, whose votes determined which projects would be awarded funding. Out of the 24 participating organizations, eight were selected as winners at the marketplace and MAAC has since negotiated grant agreements with six of them. The winning projects will fight corruption in hospitals, local governments, rural communities, and will raise people's awareness of the anti-corruption movement through mass media.

In all, MAAC awarded 23 grants to Armenian organizations over the past year to fight corruption in spheres ranging from customs to rural community budgets. MAAC will continue to support Armenia's civil society and government throughout Year Three in their pursuit to rid Armenia of corruption.

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