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**MAAC CELEBRATES ITS 3RD ANNIVERSARY WITH A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION**

Before getting to the 2012 extension, it's time to reminisce: When MAAC first set up office in August 2007, Armenia was without a citizen-driven mechanism to support those victimized by corruption. By 2008, MAAC's local non-governmental organization partners had begun providing free legal assistance, a program that would soon aid more than five thousand citizen customers throughout Armenia. The capacity of the NGOs to run the 11 Advocacy and Assistance Center has steadily increased, and as a result citizens and businesses have started to trust civil society's capacity to combat corruption.

MAAC's efforts at mobilizing civil society have taken many forms. It has funded almost 30 grant

projects aimed at fighting corruption in many areas of public life. MAAC has supported innovative anti-corruption programs to improve healthcare, gender equality, social security administration, traffic police conduct, care of disabled children, education, and state revenue generation. MAAC brought together NGOs to share their ideas for the future at the NGO Marketplace, an open competition during which civil society organizations presented and marketed innovative anti-corruption ideas to more than 1700 members of the voting public; it then supported the projects of the eight winning organizations.

Open and public communication has been an important aspect of MAAC's work to date. MAAC has organized seven major forums about such issues as Armenia's compliance with its international anti-corruption commitments, the role of both education and the private sector in fighting corruption, monitoring corruption in obstetrical services, and the link between corruption and human rights. MAAC assisted Armenia in marking 9 December, International Anti-Corruption Day, by promoting a number of public events throughout the country, including forums where the findings of the annual household corruption survey of households were presented.

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Against Corruption  
(MAAC) Activity

105/1 Teryan Street, Suite 804  
Yerevan, Republic of Armenia, 0009  
Phone: +374 10 514835  
Fax: +374 10 514836  
E-mail: maac@casals.com  
www.maac.am

99 Canal Center Plaza,  
Suite 300  
Alexandria, Va.  
22314 USA



Phone: 703 920 1234  
Fax: 703 920 5750  
E-mail: info@casals.com  
www.casals.com

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MAAC has assisted the Government of Armenia in strengthening its internal and external communications capacity in order to combat corruption. In fact, MAAC has provided communication support for Armenian state institutions from its inception. Our first joint public event was the Launching of the Development of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and its Action Plan in November 2007. Immediately after, MAAC began guiding the Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission as it developed the Strategy and Action Plan for 2009-2012 while supporting the Commission's public consultation process in Yerevan and the marzes. Currently MAAC is providing technical assistance and training as the Commission prepares the first monitoring reports on the government's implementation of the Action Plan.

MAAC continues to press forward with a number of other initiatives aimed at promoting greater transparency and accountability. With MAAC assistance the State Revenue Committee adopted guidelines and trained more than 400 tax officials on the detection and reporting of fraud and corruption, helping the GOAM comply with the Council of Europe's GRECO recommendation xxiii. The work of The Future is Yours NGO, a MAAC grantee, has enabled the Ministry of Education and Science to adopt a teacher's manual on anti-corruption education in general schools across Armenia. As a result, almost 1400 teachers have been trained in anti-corruption education, which will enter the classroom this year. MAAC intends to continue its assistance to the Government, especially in the areas of government ethics.

Raising citizens' awareness about corruption and its detrimental effects is vital for breaking the cradle-to-grave cycle of corruption. MAAC has developed public awareness programs and provided media support to civil society organizations and professional media companies in order to create and broadcast special reports on corruption, several of which broke TV ratings records in Armenia. MAAC Corruption Surveys of Households and Enterprises inform the government and the general public on perceptions of corruption throughout Armenian society. This rich data informs anti-corruption policy, civil society initiatives, and corruption-related research.

This June, USAID officially extended support for MAAC for two additional years. We are honored to continue to support civil society and the government in their fight against corruption through July 2012.

## MAAC SUPPORTS WORKSHOPS ON MONITORING OF 2009-2012 ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN



MAAC monitoring experts outline the ACSAP monitoring system

The Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (ACSAP) for 2009-2012 is the central anti-corruption document in Armenia. The Action Plan identifies particular responsibilities of individual government ministries and agencies in fighting corruption. Monitoring the implementation of the ACSAP is an important component of the Action Plan itself.

In December 2009, the Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission (ACSMC), the agency responsible for the monitoring process, requested technical assistance and training from MAAC for monitoring operations. For this purpose, MAAC hired three local specialists to design and implement a streamlined monitoring plan for the 2009-2012 ACSAP and to train selected government staff in its use. The experts were engaged to build the institutional capacity for the ACSAP monitoring, establish standards and procedures for ACSAP performance reports, and produce ACSAP monitoring reports.

In order to complete the monitoring reports on ACSAP's implementation for 2009 and the first quarter of 2010, MAAC held two half-day training workshops for representatives of some 25 government entities. This process ensures that the monitoring counterparts in each government body understand and are capable of fulfilling their monitoring and evaluation tasks.

The first workshop covered the monitoring and evaluation system of the 2009-2012 ACSAP. The objectives of the seminar were to educate members of government bodies about the monitoring arrangement and to explain the specific requirements for each entity. As a result, participants now understand their monitoring tasks and possess the necessary materials to fulfill them. The second workshop covered the preparation of actual monitoring reports. The objective of this session was to help officials understand monitoring tools and templates, providing them with guidance on the completion of monitoring reports. Participants now possess all necessary information and tools for the preparation of monitoring reports in their respective sectors.

After these workshops the MAAC monitoring team and their counterparts in the government started the preparation of the two ACSAP monitoring reports for 2009 and for the first quarter of 2010. Both reports are expected to be finalized in July 2010.

## ANTI-CORRUPTION EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE INTRODUCED IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Engaging children and youth in anti-corruption activities is a key element in mobilizing society as a whole to combat corruption. When a deep understanding of corruption and its detrimental effects becomes a part of generation's formation, that generation is more predisposed against corruption. With this in mind, in April 2009 MAAC awarded a grant to The Future is Yours NGO to implement the "Education Against Corruption" project to introduce anti-corruption education programs into Armenia's secondary schools. As a result, anti-corruption education is poised to become an indispensable part of secondary education in Armenia.

To start, the Future is Yours NGO secured formal commitments from the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Institute of Education. A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed to ensure the full implementation of the anti-corruption education program. Then the NGO worked with National Institute of Education staff and teachers to develop a methodological guidebook to help teachers introduce anti-corruption topics in the classroom. The guidebook explains anti-corruption pedagogical methods and provides sample lesson plans, integrating anti-corruption lessons into subjects such as law and history.

After a successful pilot program tested the guidebook in nine public schools, the National Institute of Education officially recommended the guidebook for general use throughout Armenia. Two thousand copies of the guidebook have been published and distributed to trained teachers, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Institute for Education and its regional branches, the State Education Inspectorate, local education departments, public school libraries, the media, and civil society organizations.

Using this guidebook the NGO conducted three-day training courses for 1394 teachers in regional centers of the marzes. Representatives of education departments of marzpetarans and the National Institute of Education observed many of the training sessions. The teachers' feedback on both the quality of the guidebook and the delivery of the training course was overwhelmingly positive. Many enthusiastic teachers took the initiative to organize anti-corruption lessons and events after participating in the training course.

Reflecting on the Education Against Corruption project, Minister of Education and Science Armen Ashotyan stated, "Fighting corruption through education is effective throughout the world. The guidebook will be a serious asset for teachers in raising anti-corruption awareness among schoolchildren and in strengthening the capacity of future generations to protect their rights."

In order to sustain anti-corruption teaching in schools, the NGO submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Institute of Education to integrate questions concerning corruption into the Social Science textbook being developed for 11th grade pupils. The proposal has been accepted and corruption topics will be incorporated into the text.

## MAAC TRAINS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON ETHICS

Ethics is central to the creation of a corruption-free environment. In order to support civil society's fight against corruption, MAAC organized an anti-corruption training session on *The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Government Ethics* for grantees and other interested civil society organizations on June 15. The session was lead by MAAC consultant Michael Sears, a former Assistant Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The training highlighted ways in which civil society can promote ethical behavior while discouraging unethical behavior within the public sector. Nineteen civil society representatives participated. The training outlined how CSOs can ensure that laws promote the wishes and protect the rights of all citizens, efficient methods for government institutions to carry out their mandates, and proper ethical conduct for public officials. Lively discussions on politics and corruption ensued, with participation from all parties.

## MAAC SUPPORTS MONITORING OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN TAVUSH

Primary healthcare concerns the entire population. In Armenia primary healthcare services are supposed to be free of charge, which creates numerous opportunities for abuse. According to Support to Communities NGO, an organization working in primary healthcare, health promotion, and community development, there are three main causes of corruption in primary healthcare: low awareness of population on state-provided healthcare programs, indifference of citizens to the protection of their healthcare-related rights, and the absence of a mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability in the provision of primary healthcare services. In particular, doctors that were supposed to regularly provide free healthcare services presented visit reports, for which they would be paid, without visiting their assigned communities. In October 2009, MAAC awarded a grant to Support to Communities NGO to monitor the delivery of primary healthcare services and raise citizens' awareness about their healthcare-related rights in order to reduce corruption opportunities in 15 villages of Tavush marz.

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According to the Decree of the Minister of Healthcare of Armenia, therapists, pediatricians, family practitioners should visit villages and provide healthcare services according to a pre-approved timetable, while specialists with narrower specialization, such as surgeons, ophthalmologists, neuropathologists, otolaryngologists, and cardiologists, should do so twice a year. Support to Communities NGO monitored doctor visits to the villages in order to assess the visits and identify further corruption risks. The NGO identified the following trouble spots: doctor visits were not conducted according to the schedule, community members were not properly informed about their rights, and announcements of doctor visits were not available at health posts.

To improve the situation, Support to Communities NGO established community action groups in 15 communities in the region to monitor state-provided primary healthcare services at the village level. The NGO organized series of roundtable discussions which brought together community doctors, community action groups, and village mayors to develop a mechanism to report doctor visits. Announcements about the doctor visits were placed on the wall of health posts as well as in public places throughout the villages. Members of Community Health Committees, established in each community in Tavush marz, disseminated the information along with active villagers.

“Previously, a person having a health problem had to go to Ijevan or Yerevan to see a doctor and had to pay. But now everyone in the village knows that doctors will visit the village twice a year, and during these days all services will be free of charge,” says Rita Hovhannisyan from Hovq village.

## INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM SERIES ADDRESS CORRUPTION

Raising public awareness about corruption and its negative effects on society helps mobilize action against it. During past six months MAAC NGO Marketplace grantee Banadzev LLC broadcast seven “Special Reportage” programs about current Armenian corruption cases on H1, the county's most popular TV channel. The reports highlighted corruption in social services, environmental protection, customs, privatization, and higher education. More than 800,000 people across Armenia viewed the program, and it was broadcast in the US, Europe, and Russia where Public TV is accessible for the diaspora via satellite.

After the report about corruption in customs, the number of calls to the State Revenue Committee's hotline increased fivefold. Following another report on corruption in the process of real estate privatization in the Nerkin Charbakh community, officials from State Cadastre immediately called the Banadzev office and promised to quickly proceed with privatization in Nerqin Charbakh. The process has since resumed.

In order to mobilize citizens against corruption, they must know about abuses and how to stop them. The “Special Reportage” series have been instrumental in increasing people's awareness of corruption and empowering them to fight it.

## RAISING AWARENESS OF LORI MARZ CITIZENRY ABOUT CORRUPTION

One of the main impediments in fighting corruption is a simple lack of awareness. In October 2009 MAAC grantees Loru MIG TV and Lori TV started addressing this challenge in Lori marz by broadcasting anti-corruption TV programs addressing corruption in all areas of public life. Since the programs wrapped up last May, the citizens of Lori marz have become more knowledgeable about corruption, its causes, and ways of fighting it.

Talk shows by Loru MIG TV focused on corruption in healthcare, education, local self-government, social services, urban planning, and licensing. Talk show guests included relevant public officials, representatives of civil society, and lawyers specializing in corruption-related matters. Public service announcements, featuring different corruption-related articles from the Criminal Code of Armenia, accompanied each show.

The project by Lori TV consisted of 15 TV programs and 15 videos about corruption in the judiciary, law enforcement, traffic police, disaster zone recovery, environmental protection, and public education. The guests of the programs were municipal and marz-level officials, who answered phone inquiries live on the air.

These projects have increased knowledge of the effects of corruption amongst the citizens of Lori marz. However, increased knowledge is only part of successfully combatting corruption – knowledge must support informed action. Because of these programs, citizens of Lori and other marzes in Armenia are now equipped to convert their knowledge into concrete actions against corruption.

## YOUNG PEOPLE FIGHT CORRUPTION THROUGH MEDIA

Providing youth the opportunity to speak about corruption to wider audiences is an effective method of engaging young people in anti-corruption efforts. MAAC grantee NGO Center of Vanadzor utilized this strategy in its youth-oriented media broadcasting grant project, which started in February 2009. This project was aimed at educating youth about the meaning of corruption, its short- and long-term impact, and what young people can do to combat it. NGO Center organized 15 youth-centered TV talk shows on corruption in the northern regions of Shirak, Lori, and Tavush.

To continue the project's successes, MAAC extended NGO Center's grant from February to May 2010. During this extended period, NGO Center conducted a training program for a group of active youth on corruption and how to detect it. It also organized an internship program at the broadcast and print press offices and established an anti-corruption club of young journalists.

In March and April, 30 students from universities in the northern marzes participated in three training programs on the fundamental nature of corruption, tools for working with mass media, and methods of sociological research. From April through May, students interned at local TV companies, radio stations, and newspapers. Through these internships, students produced six anti-corruption public service announcements, three print articles, a radio report, and a press conference. The project concluded on 31 May.

"I have been very inspired and enriched by this project," says Anna Becenevskaya, a participant in her third year of undergraduate study at Vanadzor State Pedagogical University. "Before the training and the internship I had not been aware of the real nature of corruption and its effects. Now, by preparing special reports and informing the public about corruption I have gained deep knowledge of corruption, and I know how to fight it. Most importantly, I have found a network of young people who think alike, and we are happy to be the part of the anti-corruption club of young journalists."

## TAVUSH AAC HOSTS THE US AMBASSADOR

On 11 June the Advocacy and Assistance Center of Tavush Marz hosted the US Ambassador to Armenia Marie L. Yovanovitch and USAID/Armenia Director Dr. Jatinder Cheema. At the meeting representatives of the NGO community of Tavush marz provided snapshots of the state of civil society in the region. Civil society was represented by Mr. Ashot Hovhannisyan, President of "Dilnet Service" Educational NGO, and Mr. Armen Shahnazaryan, President of "Young Tavush" Youth NGO, along with the Tavush AAC. During the visit the AAC staff presented the activities and accomplishments of Tavush AAC, focusing particularly on the Memorandums of Understanding that Tavush AAC had signed with Tavush regional administration and local municipalities in 2009-2010. Tavush AAC staff also introduced the US Ambassador to the future directions of efforts to ensure the sustainability of the AAC.

Tavush AAC started its operations in November 2008, the first center in Armenia. It is run by the Armenian Young Lawyers' Association NGO.



Tavush CSO leaders meet the US Ambassador and USAID/Armenia Mission Director

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE COMBAT AGAINST CORRUPTION DISCUSSED IN HRAZDAN

On 14 May Kotayk Advocacy and Assistance Center, run by the Armenian Young Lawyers' Association NGO (AYLA), organized a series of events dedicated to the role of local self-government in the fight against corruption. The events started with a rally and tree-planting ceremony – now Hrazdan city has its own Anti-Corruption garden. A seminar followed during which AYLA president Karen Zadoyan delivered a presentation on procedural and systems-level reform as a means of combating corruption. At the end of the seminar the winners of the "Corruption is Evil" essay competition received prizes and diplomas. AAC volunteers also received honors for their contributions to anti-corruption efforts.

## MAAC GRANTEE INCREASES TRANSPARENCY IN CERTIFICATION BODIES

The importation, distribution and sale of inedible products in Armenia has experienced corruption risks. Monitoring conducted in 15 shops in Yerevan and 30 selling points in Hrazdan, Vanadzor and Armavir by MAAC grantee Protection of Consumers' Rights NGO revealed 229 inedible products without proper labeling. NGO experts suspected that the reason for the lack of proper labeling could be traced to corruption in certification and quality-assurance bodies. To reduce corruption risks in these situations the NGO drafted a decree outlining an obligatory stage-by-stage labeling process for inedible products in Armenia and lobbied for its adoption.

The NGO circulated the decree among the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance and the State Revenue Department. Currently the Ministry of Justice is examining the document, which the Protection of Consumers' Rights' NGO expects will be adopted by the end of the July. In order to inform citizens and pressure the government for action, the NGO held three press conferences, printed brochures, and published articles in newspapers.

According to the NGO's monitoring, these efforts have reduced the percentage of improperly labeled products circulating in Armenian markets from 90% to 60%. The Protection of Consumers' Rights NGO will continue its work to make the process of importation, distribution, and sale of inedible products more transparent and corruption-free.

## MAAC REQUESTS APPLICATIONS TO ESTABLISH AND/OR OPERATE ADVOCACY AND ASSISTANCE CENTERS

On 21 June, MAAC issued a Request for Applications from Armenian NGOs and other qualified organizations to establish and/or operate Advocacy and Assistance Centers and Reception Centers in eleven cities of Armenia.

The details of the RFA can be found at MAAC website at <http://www.maac.am/announcements.htm>

## MAAC SAYS GOODBYE TO THE MAAC NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After three years of valiant service, MAAC's Senior Media and Communications Specialist Arik Brutian is moving on. Arik has led MAAC's efforts in the area of public awareness and communications by contributing to the production of public service announcements for radio, television, and documentary DVDs. He has overseen the implementation of grants for television stations and production companies and has provided direction for all corruption surveys. We wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors.

### ABOUT CASALS & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Casals & Associates, Inc. (C&A) is an international management consulting and communications firm helping public and private clients promote ideas and create change in a variety of languages and cultural contexts. C&A's major areas of focus include democracy and good governance, health and nutrition, energy efficiency and the environment, immigration, housing and urban development, and international broadcasting and telecommunications. Since its establishment in 1986, C&A has worked all across the United States and with more than 30 countries around the world.

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