

Project Title:
“Evaluation of Activities of Armenian
Human Rights School and ACRPC for 2001-2005”

Prepared for:
Armenian Constitutional Right-Protective Centre (ACRPC)
and Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO)

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EVALUATION REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction to Evaluation

The Armenian Constitutional Right-Protective Centre (ACRPC) is an independent, non-profit organization based in Vanadzor, Armenia and serving educators, civil servants and the general public since its inception in 1988. The mission of the ACRPC is to contribute to the promotion of a legal culture in Armenian society through scientific activity, education, information dissemination and advocacy. In order to carry out this mission, the organization has carried out a range of educational activities, including the following:

- the training of Legal Specialists for schools in a one-year program at the Armenian Human Rights School (AHRS);¹
- the establishment of a Human Rights Library Network (HRLN), with six libraries located throughout the country;
- the training of community leaders in legal and human rights subjects;
- the organization of special community events, such as Human Rights Day;
- publication of a range of law-related journals, newsletters and teaching manuals that apply legal and human rights concepts to the Armenian context;
- ongoing information dissemination to improve legal awareness in Armenia.

In late 2005, the ACRPC and one of its funders, the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) agreed to carry out an independent evaluation of the educational activities of the ACRPC from 2001-5 and, in particular, the work of the AHRS. The intention of this evaluation is to assist in the internal learning of the organization, demonstrate impact to funders and stakeholders, and contribute to the development of the strategic plan for 2007-2010. The team retained was Felisa Tibbitts, International Evaluation Specialist, of Human Rights Education Associates, Inc. (HREA) and Zhirayr Edilyan, Local Evaluation Specialist. Mr. Edilyan is a native of Armenia with extensive experience in the NGO field. Ms. Tibbitts is an educational evaluator who has carried out human rights education-related project work in Armenia and the region.

¹ Between 2001 and 2005, nearly 220 educators have graduated from the Armenian Human Rights School, reaching an estimated 21,000 pupils.

Given the personal strengths of the evaluators and proximity to data sources, the responsibilities of the evaluation were split as follows: Mr. Edilyan focused on the collection of feedback from teachers attending the Armenian Human Rights School, the implementation of learning from the School and any impacts on the teachers and their classrooms. This data collection was constituted by interviews and surveys and centered on key evaluation questions negotiated with the ACRPC, which provided technical assistance to the evaluators. Ms. Tibbitts would carry out a stakeholders' analysis based on individual and focus group interviews. This data collection would center on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, accountability and gender relations. The evaluation took place between January and June 2006. Mr. Edilyan accompanied Ms. Tibbitts in her stakeholders' interviews, which occurred 27-31 March 2006.

The researchers prepared separate reports, which have been combined and presented to the ACRPC and ICCO. This Executive Summary overviews the key findings and recommendations prepared by the evaluators. For additional information, the reader may contact the ACRPC or the evaluators. These contact details are included at the end of the recommendations.

2. Key findings

2.1. Investments in the non-governmental (NGO) sector over the last 5-10 years have resulted in the emergence of several strong indigenous NGOs. The ACRPC was mentioned by stakeholders as one of the strongest in Armenian society, and certainly the strongest in the field in which it works (human rights and legal education). The ACRPC works in partnership with over 20 international and non-Armenian organizations, as well as numerous Armenian agencies.

2.2. The ACRPC is the only organization in Armenia carrying out long-term training of teachers in the legal services area, which appears to be its distinguishing feature. The value of such training is not to be underestimated, as one of the main explanations for the ineffectiveness of in-service trainings for changing classroom practice is their short duration.

2.3. Stakeholders appreciated that the organization involved teachers from throughout Armenia, and not just the larger cities. AHRS graduates come from all 11 marzes (regions), with a slight majority (53%) of those researched coming from rural areas. What is also rare about the ACRPC, and considered an asset, is its base in Vanadzor as opposed to the capitol city of Yerevan.

2.4. AHRS graduates express high satisfaction with most elements of the school's organization. At least 75% of those surveyed were satisfied with the efficiency of the school's overall conditions, the approach to the learner, the materials provided, the context and logic of the learning sessions and the process of the final examination. Graduates nearly unanimously indicated that the knowledge gained at the sessions were relevant to their teaching needs. There were lower satisfaction levels with the efficiency duration of the school (52%) and the distance learning component (43%). Current course participants rated the distance learning component even lower in efficiency. These areas warrant further exploration by the leaders of the AHRS.

2.5. Educators attending the AHRS must pass knowledge-based oral exams in order to graduate. A follow-up content-survey on legal and human rights knowledge administered as part of this

evaluation shows a retention rate of between 36% and 58%, depending upon the instrument used.² There is no comparison data for teachers who did not attend the AHRS.

2.6. Participation in the AHRS has an impact in supporting educators' interest in and motivation to become more active and responsible community members. In rural areas, specifically, graduates have become informally involved in providing legal consultations.

2.7. Over 80% of those educators involved in the study indicated that they used interactive teaching methodologies learned at the AHRS in their classroom. Educators indicated that they would use these methods more regularly if classroom and curricular conditions were more conducive.

2.8. Based on a content knowledge questionnaire administered to 9th and 10th grade pupils, there is no statistically significant difference in retention of legal subjects' content between pupils of graduates of the AHRS and pupils of teachers who had not attended the AHRS. It is possible that the instrument did not capture gains enjoyed by these students or that teachers have not been given the opportunity to apply the content learned in the AHRS in their classroom. This would be an area to explore in future research.

2.9. A very high percentage of AHRS learners and graduates (87%) expressed satisfaction with the resource materials provided by the ACRPC. The materials that were most popularly used in the classroom were the Human Rights Manual for Teachers (95% of respondents indicated use) and "For the Sake of Justice" journal (with 85% use). Other ACRPC publications – including those with small print runs - were used by less than half of the graduates participating in the study, although use was somewhat higher for current participants. Three-quarters of the respondents expressed an interest in receiving more materials.

2.10. There is shortage of access to books in the country, as local budget problems have forced the closing of over 80 municipal libraries during 2001-2005. This problem is especially acute in villages. Stakeholders have the impression that the libraries are well used and they appreciate that they are based in locations throughout the country. According to statistics provided by the ACRPC, there were 3,600 users of the HRLN in 2005, with 10% of these graduates of the AHRS. 80 percent of the educators surveyed indicated that they made use of the Library Network.

2.11. As the libraries' collections, services and users increase, there will be increased efficiencies in the systems currently in place. Materials are added through the donations of other organizations, thus increasing the richness of the collections without additional investment on the part of ACRPC. The ACRPC has concentrated on enhancing the utility of the existing system through the online search function planned for 2006 and by continuing to expand into regions where there are requests from teachers and a physical space where the library can be set up.

2.12. Stakeholders in the Lori region were familiar with ACRPC's recent efforts to train community leaders and were highly supportive of these activities. Some were aware that the organization had trained journalists and representatives of other non-educational sector members

² Content survey questions administered in writing yielded correct answers for 58% of the items whereas questions administered orally during interviews yielded 36% correct answers.

in the past. Stakeholders, upon hearing that the ACRPC had embarked upon a program to train community leaders, strongly encouraged the organization to continue this effort. According to the OSCE and the UNDP1, there is a great need to educate community leaders about human rights and rule of law, and currently there is no other organization involved in this effort. The Council of Europe also encouraged the ACRPC to get involved in preparing communities for the upcoming elections.

2.13. Stakeholders who have visited the ACRPC and know something about its operation commented upon the strong management and organizational skills of the staff. They noted that the existence of public relations and fundraising departments were unusual for an NGO and thought this was an indication of the organization's healthiness. The organization has mechanisms that help to ensure transparency of management and program procedures.

2.14. The ACRPC is highly regarded among all stakeholders interviewed. Each interviewee expressed high approval for the work of the organization. Stakeholders consistently advised further activities. Those stakeholders carrying out related programming expressed an interest in ongoing cooperation (OSCE, UNDP1, UNDP, Council of Europe). Organizations are happy to cooperate and continue to provide in-kind support through the donation of materials and the provision of trainers. These in-kind donations should be factored into considerations related to the overall efficiency of the organization.

3. Recommendations

These recommendations are made jointly by both evaluators and are also reflected in the individual reports. Additional recommendations related to the operation of the AHRS are contained in Mr. Edilyan's report.

3.1. The demand for ACRPC services will be higher and the organization, in addition to continuing to offer the AHRS, might think about ways in which it can actively develop "multipliers" in the schools. For example, the ACRPC could think more about developing and supporting a network of local trainers, instead of carrying out all trainings personally. This shift in the work would require the organization to think about developing an area of work related to "training of trainers" and require ACRPC staff to spend more time in schools carrying out support and monitoring.

3.2. Graduates have requested follow-up support from the ACRPC in the school setting in order to refresh their knowledge and the activation of a communication network among AHRS graduates. The ACRPC should explore how such a network might be realistically established and maintained.

3.3. The ACRPC, which already has a positive cooperation with the NIE/Ministry of Education, educational administrators in the Lori region, and teachers and principals throughout the country, might more aggressively forge relationships with institutions that should ultimately take greater responsibility for pre-service and in-service education of teachers in "Human Rights", "Civic Education" and "State and Law" subjects. The ACRPC might try to involve NIE staff directly in the writing of materials and could establish relationships with faculty members in pedagogical

universities who are associated with the teaching of civics. The organization might try to forge a closer working relationship with the Centre for Educational Projects specifically as this is the unit that is most influential in guiding Armenian school reform.

3.4. A consideration for sustainability is a diversification of training activities by the ACRPC, activities that might be paid for by local government (and, perhaps some time in the future, by the Ministry of Education itself). Assuming that the ACRPC would be able to charge fees for services, and given the great need for legal education in the country, the organization could explore offering certain trainings for which city and regional government institutions could contribute payments.

3.5. The ability to offer additional trainings in Vanadzor is one of the rationales for the physical construction of an Armenian Human Rights School building. We recommend that a separate business plan be developed for this venture, as even with the building of this building, there will be ongoing operation and maintenance costs that will need to be factored in against the ability of the organization to generate new revenues through an increase in trainings and rental of the facility.

3.6. ACRPC graduates make use of interactive methodologies but expressed an interest in more support and techniques. The ACRPC might refresh the methodologies used to promote knowledge acquisition by teachers during their training process with the pedagogical approaches that would be even better suited for the classroom and consistent with imminent reforms in the Legal Subjects curriculum.

3.7. The ACRPC should further explore the explanations for the finding that pupils of AHRS graduates do not demonstrate higher levels of content learning in the legal and human rights subjects than their peers in classrooms of non-graduates. This further exploration might involve (a) use of alternative data collection instruments, especially those involving skill and attitude development; (b) matching of classroom curriculum against that taught at the AHRS; and (c) classroom culture, including use of dialog and democratic teaching methods.

3.8. Based on the feedback given by Armenian teachers, the distance learning component of the AHRS should be revisited and possibly re-conceptualized so that it effectively supports teachers in their learning process.

3.9. The ACRPC might consider developing additional and ongoing feedback mechanisms on their programming using some of the instruments developed as part of this evaluation. Insofar as the ACRPC publications are intended to support teachers in their work, it might be wise to involve teachers directly in giving input regarding the kinds of publications they need. Armenian educators have indicated that they would like teaching materials that use case studies and local examples, with related questions they can use for discussion.

3.10 Given that the ACRPC libraries –like the AHRS trainings – appear to be fulfilling a role that municipal libraries were intended to fill, it might be interesting for the organization to explore possible collaborations with public libraries (so that the ACRPC is responsible for their section on human rights and the law, for example). In this way, the organization might even have

enhanced access to the public and also help to support a public function. However, such a step would need to be taken cautiously, as it would be disadvantageous to merge with a municipality and then discover that it is closed two years later for lack of resources.

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