

CASE STUDIES



CSO ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY-MAKING:

ARMENIA

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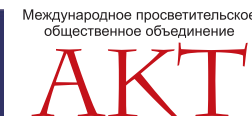
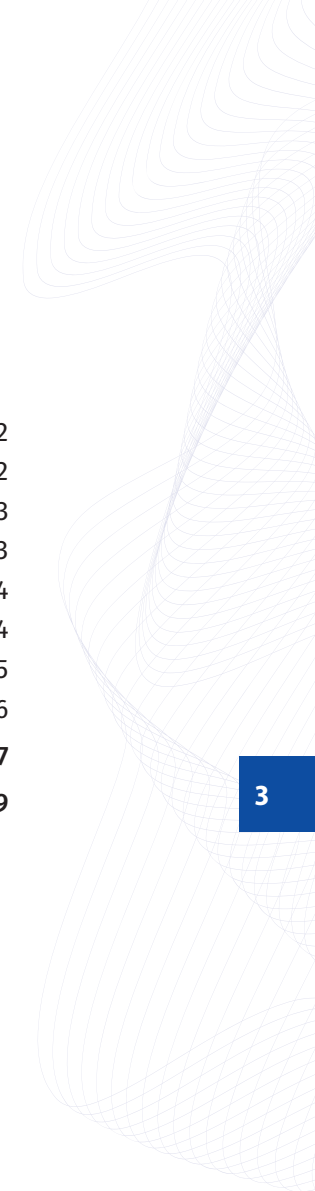


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMD	Armenian Drams	MCH	Mother and Child Health
CCMS	Centre for Community Mobilisation and Support	MEO	Media Ethics Observatory
CHN	Child Health Now	MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
CPFE	Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression	NA	National Assembly
IDC	Information Disputes Council	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
EU	European Union	ODP	Ore Dressing Plant
FY	Fiscal year	OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
HR	Human rights	PR	Public Relations
IBFAN	International Baby Food Action Network	RA	Republic of Armenia
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LAAD	Legislative Agenda Advocacy Days	USD	United States Dollars
LSGB	Local Self-Government Body	WVA	World Vision Armenia



INTRODUCTION

This study was produced within the framework of the EU-funded Technical Assistance project “Strengthening non-State actors’ Capacities to Promote Reform and increase Public Accountability”, implemented by a Consortium led by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. (KAS). The research was conducted by the Institute of New Social Studies NGO from September-November 2015.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the experience of civil society organisations (CSO) in trying to involve themselves in policy dialogue in Armenia. Although several research studies have been conducted in this area, including the project¹ “CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities, Armenia” produced in the framework of the “Strengthening non-State actors’ Capacities to Promote Reform and increase Public Accountability”, these case studies provide another format for presenting the CSOs’ accumulated experience. In particular, the case studies present the specific experience of CSOs in organising and implementing advocacy campaigns and the mechanisms they used, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the applied strategies.

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- 1) explore the strategies and tools that CSOs in Armenia use to influence policy-making processes, through descriptions of specific cases (that is, campaigns);
- 2) analyse the key factors (internal and external) that have positively contributed to the different advocacy campaigns and those that have served as obstacles, as well as the relationship between these factors;
- 3) compare applications of the same approaches and tools by different organisations in different contexts;

- 4) examine the impact that the selected campaigns have had in the relevant areas and the factors contributing to/ hindering the sustainability of the campaign outcomes.

The report aims to help other CSOs to better understand the various approaches and ways of participating, by describing advocacy strategies that work in different situations. It further aims to provide information for donor organisations for their funding strategies, by highlighting those approaches that have been more effective in particular contexts.

The research team extends its gratitude to all participants of the study for providing interviews, information and comments on the draft cases, for their input and for sharing their opinions and experience.

¹ <http://www.csdialogue.eu/research/armenia-mapping-research>

METHODOLOGY

The method of performing case studies in social research is aimed at understanding a complex issue or subject and can provide experience or add strength to what has already been uncovered through previous research. Case studies focus on contextual analysis of events or conditions and their relationships. According to Yin, a case study design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions and when contextual conditions need to be covered, as there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and context².

This case study research is based on qualitative methodologies, namely in-depth interviews. The heads of CSOs leading the selected cases, the key staff, partner organisations, as well as representatives of targeted decision-making bodies, donor organisations and beneficiaries were interviewed. Document analysis (reports, media publications, etc.) was also utilised as a supplementary tool.

Five case studies were selected, providing a diverse set of cases according to the following criteria:

- type of CSO leading the campaign (nation-level, community-level, non-formal)
- level of targeted decision-makers (local, central – legislative, executive and judiciary)
- coverage of the campaign (Yerevan, regional town, rural community, and nationwide)
- sphere of the cause researched (health, ecology, social, vulnerable groups, legal, etc.)

Resources for the cause (donor-funded, self-funded, volunteer campaigns) and level of reaching the target goal (fully, partially) were also taken into consideration.

Thus, the following cases were selected with the corresponding classification:

Campaign	CSO	Coverage	Sphere	Target authority
Campaign against the construction of tailings dump in the area of Mets Ayrum village	“Centre of Community Mobilisation and Support” NGO	Mets Ayrum village	ecological	local government and mining company
Advocacy for families living in temporary shelters	“Shirak Centre” NGO	Gyumri	social, urban planning	local government
Campaign against a government plan to cut the maternity benefits of employed women	“Stop Changes in Maternity Leave Law” informal movement	Yerevan, online platforms	social	government and parliament
Mobilising NGOs for changes in health policy through Mother and Child Health Alliance	“Mother and Child Health Alliance”, network of CSOs	nation-wide	health-care	government and parliament
Information Dispute Council serving as an alternative source of legal expertise	“Information Dispute Council” informal CSO	nation-wide	legal	media, court, legal professionals

² Yin, R. K.: Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003.



In each case, 3–6 interviews were conducted with leaders of the CSOs running the campaign, the state or local authorities involved, as well as donor organisations and beneficiaries.

The case studies are presented in the following structure:

- a. About the organisation
- b. Short description of the case
- c. Problem description and campaign initiation
- d. Coordination and management
- e. Strategies and methods applied
- f. Target group and beneficiaries
- g. Main resources and collaboration with others
- h. Results and impact
- i. Factors contributing to success
- j. Challenges and constraints
- k. Further steps
- l. Summary

The final chapter includes a comparative analysis of the key factors identified through the cases and general conclusions on the most effective strategies and methods applied in different contexts.

Before the description of the cases, definitions of several terms used throughout the case study report are presented below to introduce the theoretical basis of the study and avoid misunderstanding in the interpretation of terms.

Civil society is generally understood as an arena outside the family, government structures and for-profit areas, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to defend public interests³. According to EU Policy Documents, a **Civil Society Organisation** is any legal entity that is non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests and pursuing a common purpose in the public interest⁴. In this report, along with formal CSOs, non-formal groups and movements are also

considered as CSOs as long as they are formed as a collective effort to protect public interests.

The term **public policy** is used in this study for a system of regulatory measures, laws and other legal acts, as well as strategies and priorities that are adopted and/or discussed by the state. Inclusive public policy is aimed at ensuring that the interests of all sectors of society are considered. In Armenian, the same term is used for “policy” and “politics”. Though CSOs cannot participate in political processes as defined by law, they can participate in the formulation, discussion, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, as usually a CSO’s mission is closely related to specific sectorial policies.

Advocacy refers to non-violent activities designed to influence policies, practices and behaviour. It includes lobbying (non-violent by nature) and other activities that are not lobbying but are non-violent and considered legal⁵. An **advocacy campaign** is a time-bound initiative that involves a process of managing information and knowledge strategically to change and/or influence specific policies and practices. The primary purpose of an advocacy campaign is to influence the policies and practices of government and multilateral institutions on a specific issue that affects the lives of the most vulnerable. In the context of an advocacy campaign, the term **target group** in this report refers to the individuals, groups or organisations that can take (or overrule) decisions in relation to the policies and practices addressed by the campaign.

³ CIVICUS Rapid Assessment, 2014

⁴ ANNEX III SPECIFIC PROVISIONS related to “Research for the benefit of specific groups” http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/92973/annex3cso_en.pdf

⁵ Manual on Advocacy and Policy Influencing for Social Change, Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations – TACSO Regional Office, 2011

CASE STUDIES

The five case studies below present different campaigns and/or mechanisms for participating in policy-making. Each case study is presented in the same structure, allowing for systematic analysis and comparison. Based on the case studies, general conclusions on campaign similarities and differences and the main lessons learned will be drawn in the last chapter of the report.

Case No 1: Campaign against the construction of tailings dump in the area of Mets Ayrum village

Main implementing party – “Centre of Community Mobilisation and Support” (CCMS) NGO

Location of activities – Mets Ayrum village

Timeline – February – July 2015

Area of activities – ecological

About the organisation

The “Centre of Community Mobilisation and Support” (CCMS) NGO was registered in 2009. The organisation was established by active community groups formed in the framework of various programmes and has over 50 founding members made up of active citizens of the Alaverdi region. The organisation has multiple directions of activities, with the main goal to promote the development of communities in the Alaverdi and Stepanavan regions and empower initiatives by community members contributing to the development of civic activism. Since its establishment, the CCMS NGO has implemented several community development projects in partnership with World Vision and other organisations.

Short description of the case

The campaign started in February 2015, with a view to preventing the construction of the Nahatak tailings dump initiated by the Akhtala Mining Plant in the Mets Ayrum and Tchotchkan communities in the Lori Region. This would have been the second tailings dump in the village.

The primary reason for the initiative was the non-participatory decision by the local authorities of Mets Ayrum to permit building the new tailings. Based on the experience of current tailings dump operations, the local population was concerned about the possible improper management of the new tailings dump⁶. The preliminary aim of the campaign was to ensure the participation of the population in decisions regarding tailings dump construction and operation processes. However, after further analysis of the possible harmful effects of the operation of the designed tailings, the campaign adopted a stricter position, namely: “No to tailings”. The campaign lasted about six months until construction of the tailings dump was suspended. According to the community head, the reason for the suspension was financial difficulties suffered by the mining plant. The organisation that coordinated the campaign was later involved in follow-up process, promoting legislative changes related to the construction and operation of tailings, including the provision of compensation to communities located nearby the tailings dump area.

⁶ There are several researches, articles and videos about improper management of the current tailings dump, see, for example, Report on Shamlugh mining plant and tailings dam exploitation problems http://aarhus.am/Expert_2015/2-Expertise%20Akhtala.pdf, Civil Voice NGO states that there is an emergency situation in the Nahatak tailings dam of Akhtala Mining Plant <http://www.aravot.am/2015/10/19/620100/>, Tailings dams: expected disasters, <http://hetq.am/arm/news/42906/pochambarnerkankhateselioxetner.html> (in Armenian)



Problem description and campaign initiation

The campaign was initiated in February 2015, when the residents of Mets Ayrum were informed that community authorities planned to provide 12 hectares of Mets Ayrum territory to the “Akhtala Mining and Processing Enterprise” CJSC for the construction of a new tailings dump. This dump was intended to be an extension of the existing Nahatak dump. The construction of the Nahatak tailings had already been approved by the Governmental Commission on Temporary Schemes for Land Management. In order for construction to start, the status of the land provided needed to be changed from agricultural (the land had served mostly for pasture purposes) to industrial.

The population was not informed about the planned changes in the land status until the changes were discussed at a community council meeting. One of the members of the community council, serving as CCMS NGO President, initiated the information dissemination among villagers. Together with the most active residents of the village and the Alaverdi Aarhus Centre, CCMS staff prepared and distributed information leaflets to inform the population about the planned construction. On the insistence of the CCMS president, the local government organised a public community debate with the participation of the local population: *“Most of the villagers were present. There were of course also stakeholders who were in favour [of the tailings], but it was clear that the main population, about 80 percent, were against. They wanted to build a new tailings dump without stopping the existing one and failing to solve the current issues. While the present dump causes much damage to the people”* (resident of Mets Ayrum village). Another resident interviewed in the framework of the research stated that he supported the construction of the new dump as a replacement for the old one, which was in a very poor condition, because the new one would be both farther from the village and more secure. Other arguments voiced at the public debate in favour of the tailings construction were the addition of new workplaces due to the operation of the company, and the opportunity for more social programmes in the village provided by the Mining Plant as compensation for the environmental risks.

On February 26, the Mets Ayrum Community Council voted in favour of changing the land category to industrial. The Council of the neighbouring Tchochkan village had already voted affirmatively to change the status of 28 hectares of its territory to provide it for tailings dump construction purposes. The terri-

tory planned for the tailings dump construction included 12 hectares of Mets Ayrum and 28 hectares of Tchochkan communities- 40 hectares in total.

Though most of the area allocated for tailings formally belonged to the Tchochkan village, in terms of deployment it was closer to the settlement of Mets Ayrum, which meant that improper exploitation of the constructed tailings dump would have harmful effects above all for the inhabitants of Mets Ayrum. The population was concerned that if their opinion was not taken into consideration, the new tailings dam would not correspond to the safety norms in the way that the existing one did and would have an adverse impact on their and their future generations’ health. Furthermore, the villagers claimed that the existing tailings dump has already damaged them, as it is not fenced and there have been cases whereby cattle enter the area to drink water. The tailings also posed a threat to the river Debed, located close to the territory of the dump: *“In fact, the new tailings dump would be an extension of the existing one, and though its location was more distant from the village, it was closer to the river and thus needed serious consideration”* (representative of Aarhus Centre in Alaverdi).

The present Nahatak dump has been functioning on the territory of 20 hectares for the past five years. Environmentalists claim that this dump is in a visibly disgraceful and extremely dangerous condition and has not been used for a long period of time⁷. A specialist on water ecosystems, Seyran Minasyan, expressed his concerns during one of the public discussions: *“We don’t have Akhtala River, we have Akhtala tailings dump... None of the tailings and piles has been re-cultivated. Now they have approached Nahatak valley, filling the tailings dump, which is already close to the canyon height, and the pollution spreads through the wind or in other ways”*⁸.

In response to these concerns, the executive director of the Akhtala Mining Plant said in an interview with Radio Liberty that large projects are planned to neutralise the existing dump and build the new one using the latest technologies⁹.

⁷ See, for example, citations from Community public debate in Mets Ayrum over land-use change for tailings dump construction, http://aarhus.am/?page_id=8612&lang=en

⁸ Ayrum residents demand to suspend the construction of the new tailings dam scheme, 27.03.2015, <http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/26924122.html> (in Armenian)

⁹ *ibid.*



Community meeting (photo from www.hcav.am)

However, the residents did not trust the company, based on their previous experience: *“It’s true that they say it will be in line with the norms, but who can be sure? They do what they want”* (resident of Mets Ayrum village). The representative of the Aarhus Centre in Alaverdi confirmed that the tailings operated by the Akhtala Mining Plant do not comply with the safety norms: *“The company operates three tailings dumps, and all the three are in abandoned condition, we have raised our concerns multiple times”*.

Initially, the campaign was carried out without any plan, spontaneously. Various meetings and protest demonstrations by residents were held, however, after a detailed analysis of the consequences of the planned tailings was available. The spontaneous actions then transformed into a movement with the slogan “No tailings”, which has developed a more regular character.

Coordination and management

The process was coordinated by the “Community Mobilisation and Support Centre” NGO. The president of the NGO is a resident and council member of Mets Ayrum community, which made it easier to coordinate the process and communicate with residents. Most active residents of the village were also involved in the campaign initiative group: *“I’m not a member of any NGO, but together with several people actively involved in this process, we were probably*

the most caring people of the village” (resident of Mets Ayrum village). The meetings and discussions with residents were conducted based on needs, and non-formal communications often took place. The campaign coordination and division of responsibilities was conducted in the framework of the organisation’s day-to-day activities, whereby each staff member was assigned a task based on his/her skills and availability.

As the campaign was based on publicising the issue, a PR plan was developed and implemented with the collaboration of other organisations and the media. *“At first there was no need for planning, people raised their complaints wherever and whenever they wanted, but then we identified a need for a plan to understand who would speak out and where”* (CCMS leader). The plan was designed to regulate the issue outreach process, including target audience, responsible persons, and methods. It was periodically reviewed and modified to adapt to the changes of the people involved and the topics discussed. For an effective campaign strategy and plan, the staff studied various materials on effective advocacy campaigns available on the internet, as well as the principles and methods of PR campaigns: *“In short, we learned many things, and what is more important, we learned how to implement a competent campaign”* (CCMS leader).

Strategies and methods applied

At the start, the campaign aimed to raise awareness and mobilise the population to take part in the decision-making process. Further, when the decision to change the land status was made, there was a need to increase the publicity of the campaign and target higher levels of authorities through broad public outreach, letter campaigns and various discussion platforms.

- **Awareness-raising** among the population was achieved through information leaflets to ensure that all the villagers were aware of the problem and had the opportunity to attend community meetings.
- **Mobilising** the inhabitants was a focus of the campaign, as public interests were at the stake: *“The main approach was to rely on the population. The population was the bearer and implementer of this campaign, and we always tried to mobilise all stakeholders everywhere. This is a good working tool: to show that the problem is not the whim of this or that individual, but the entire population”* (CCMS leader). It is noteworthy that the party supporting the construction of the dump is under the impression that the



campaign against the tailings was not the will of the people, but a few individuals. *“It was not the residents’ demands that were put forth but individual ambitions. There was an instigator party, which did not allow people to bring forward their demands. Residents presented their demands publicly, and they took pictures and made a show”* (community head). However, the coordinator claimed that they tried to ensure that people are involved at every stage and step of the campaign as much as possible. Even when the decision-makers invited them for negotiations, NGO representatives refused to meet without a group of the population. The purpose of this was avoiding any speculation throughout the negotiations: *“When we were saying that we would come with a group of people, they refrained [the authorities] from negotiations and did not want to meet”* (CCMS leader).

- Quite a powerful tool was an **open letter** addressed to the decision-makers and signed by the population. The letter was signed by 195 residents of the community (there are around 900 inhabitants in Mets Ayrum). According to the coordinators, though not all structures sent responses to their letters, in some cases practical steps were taken such as inspections by the Ministry of Nature Protection.

Extract from the open letter addressed to officials, state bodies, state and international organisations:

WE, RESIDENTS OF METS AYRUM COMMUNITY, OPPOSE TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW TAILING DUMP and are demanding to stop this process unless:

1. Akhtala ODP solves the problems of reclaiming its old tailing dumps and compliance with safety standards,
2. Mets Ayrum community is proposed ways to compensate health and environmental problems of legislative mechanisms.

WE, RESIDENTS OF METS AYRUM COMMUNITY, ARE DEMANDING from Mets Ayrum local government bodies, members of Aldermen’s Council to respect the opinions of the community residents, participatory governance principles and to immediately annul resolution N 7- A on changing the status of land areas, which was adopted without taking into consideration the opinions of the resident, in a hastily manner and to return out pastures, for which we undersign.

- Among the instruments used that were deemed to be successful by the CCMS leader was a **photo campaign** launched across social networks. This action was initiated by Oleg Dulgaryan, CCMS leader, who called to join him and to support the action by taking a photo with a poster reading “I am against the construction of the tailings dump: S.O.S. Mets Ayrum” and sharing the photo on social media. In total, more than 200 people posted their photos. The campaign coordinator mentioned that a specific feature of the photo campaign was the symbolic involvement of the person taking the photo as a member of the movement, who felt a further responsibility to follow the campaign and spread the information. Moreover, if a respected member of society posted a photo then the public was more interested in the process and more people became involved in promoting the issue.



Photo from Oleg Dulgaryan Facebook page

Photo from ecolur.org website

- To involve national media, a field trip was initiated by the campaign organisers so that media representatives could receive first-hand information at the scene and from residents. This campaign was supported by the OSCE Yerevan office and attended by 10 journalists. This was crucial for disseminating unbiased information on the problem and increasing the scale of the outreach. In order to ensure the continuous involvement of the media, the CCMS developed a mass media contact list and updates were instantly delivered to all media outlets, thus providing constant coverage of the problem, according to campaign coordinators..
- Various **on-line and off-line platforms** were utilised as problem outreach tools. The CCMS leader mentioned that his contacts with other CSOs have been very helpful: he had numerous opportunities to present the problem at various events and meetings organised by other NGOs and covered by

media outlets. “We did not work hard to organise meetings in this regard. The problem was just to manage to attend everywhere” (CCMS leader).

- The issue was also presented in parliament during the event “**Civil Society Day in the RA National Assembly**”. During this event, the problem of a lack of public participation in local government decision-making on changing the category of the lands of Mets Ayrum was discussed with the NA Standing Committee on Agriculture and Environment, as well as legislative solutions proposed for improving tailings management. This event was perhaps not the most influential in terms of suspension of tailings construction, but provided an opportunity for cooperation towards developing a package of legislative proposals on tailings management.

Target group and beneficiaries

The initial targets of the campaign were local authorities and the “Akhtala Mining and Processing Enterprise”. Other targets were later identified, such as the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Ministry of Environment and the general public, who could put pressure on local authorities. The National Assembly was further targeted for legislative changes related to the status of communities where tailings dumps were located. The direct beneficiaries of the campaign were residents of Mets Ayrum and Tchochkan communities.

Main resources and collaboration with others

People were the most important resource in the campaign: that is, residents of the village that expressed their negative feelings about the construction of the tailings dump through events and letters.

The main partners throughout the campaign were civil society organisations working in various areas. Major support was provided by environmental NGOs, particularly the Aarhus Centre in Alaverdi, which provided environmental expertise and support in the form of messages and campaign strategies. Several CSOs provided various platforms for discussion and outreach, while others covered the campaign through news dissemination. The NGOs Civil Voice and Ecolur were particularly active in covering the problem of the Nahatak tailings. The Pan-Armenian Environmental Front and Greens Union also contributed by providing environmental expertise and publicising the problem through their social networks and the media.



Media field trip to Mets Ayrum (photo provided by CCMS)

For the mass media field trip to the village, support was received from the OSCE in recruiting members of the national media and providing a bus for the trip.

A number of media outlets covered the campaign and assisted in problem outreach, including Radio Liberty, Aravot daily, A1plus, and others.

Results and impact

As of today, the construction of the Nahatak tailings dump has been suspended. It is difficult to clearly state the level of the impact that the campaign had in this outcome. The community head stated that the suspension decision was due not to the campaign but to the financial difficulties of the Mining Plant following the decline in the price of copper. One of the residents mentioned: “We are too small to influence such decisions. They would construct if they wanted and would not if they did not want to”.

According to the campaign coordinator, the suspension of the new tailings dump construction is the – if not direct, then at least indirect – result of the campaign, which is supported by the following arguments:

- The construction of the new tailings dump appeared in the public spotlight, which means that it could no longer be constructed without obser-



Young people meet media representatives with posters “No to Nahatak tailings dam” (photo provided by CCMS)

vance of all norms and technologies, which in its turn requires considerable financial resources: “*What do they mean by “they don’t have enough financial means for the construction”? A few months ago had they had funds because they were not going to follow all the rules, while now they re-calculated the costs taking all these rules into account and found that it is too expensive*” (CCMS leader).

- The other factor is that immediately after the open letter from the residents was published, the Ministry of Nature Protection carried out inspections of the “Akhtala Mining Plant” activities, resulting in some pretty big fines to the enterprise. According to the campaign coordinator, these financial penalties dealt a major blow.

The representative of the Aarhus Centre in Alaverdi stated that suspending the decision was due to the financial problems of the enterprise. However, she claimed that the campaign had had its fair contribution to this decision: “*Due to the campaign, [the Plant] calculated the costs once again and then discovered that the ore resources and reserves are almost exhausted, so there is a need to revise the activities and re-cultivate tailings while no new tailings dump is needed*”.

In addition to addressing environmental problems, this campaign contributed to general awareness-raising among the local population, as well as to the realisation of their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Local authorities will probably be more vigilant in making decisions and agreements related to the community in the future and consider the necessity of public participation. In this regard, the sustainability of the campaign was reinforced by developing a participatory decision-making culture in the village.

Factors contributing to success

The campaign coordinator mentions that the cohesion of the villagers was the key to the campaign’s success. He claims about 80 percent of the village population was involved in the “No to Nahatak tailings” movement. This active attitude of inhabitants could be explained by the fact that the CCMS NGO had been working in the village for several years carrying out community development programmes, providing capacity-building and encouraging mobilisation to improve community life. The established culture of community meetings facilitated communication between residents and local authorities. Apart from that, as the village is mostly inhabited by refugees who fled from Azerbaijan in early 1990s, it can be assumed that they are not compromised by the typical village kinship relations whereby people usually refrain from opposing the local authority.

The campaign coordinator’s presence in the village was also an important factor, as people needed coordination to display discontent and organise the movement. Most importantly, the coordinator belonged to their community and shared the same identity.

The involvement of experts working in the environmental sector as well as collaborating effectively with the media and other NGOs contributed to attracting the attention of relevant state bodies and the broader public, which purportedly played a crucial role in outcome of the campaign.

Challenges and constraints

One of the most significant challenges for the campaign was opposing the community authorities. The local authorities were not much in favour of having the village dump: “*It’s ridiculous, who would want a dump next to their house*” (community head). However, the village head thought the suspension

of the new tailings would mean that the old one would continue to operate, which would mean much greater harm. In addition, there was a preliminary agreement with the mining plant that as compensation for constructing a tailings dump on village territory, they would implement a number of social and community developments in the village in upcoming years: “*They already carried out several small projects for the school, as well as pebbling the streets*” (community head). Thus, the local authorities were interested in the construction of the tailings dump and were able to convince part of the village population too, emphasising that suspension of the tailings dump’s construction would deprive the community of development programmes. They also spread the word that the campaign coordinator had initiated the whole process for his own publicity. As a result, tensions were raised in the village by dividing it into opposing parties. To overcome this problem, the CCMS leader tried to involve as many residents as possible to ensure an open discussion and public participation in the process.

Further steps

Due to wide discussions on the issue, the problems of tailings dumps in Armenia appeared in the public discourse. After the discussion of the problem in the framework of the “Civil Society Day in the RA National Assembly”, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Environment recognised the need for legislative regulations on health and environmental problem compensation for the communities where tailings dumps are allocated. Such legislation would allow communities such as Mets Ayrum to receive the status of “impacted community”, which signifies its potential ecological vulnerability. Usually, communities where mining plants are located receive this status but tailings are not normally considered as a justification for this classification. Apart from compensation aimed at the health and environmental protection of the communities, this status also allows for more extensive involvement of the community authorities and population in decision-making related to the operations of a mining plant.

Due to the knowledge and information gained on tailings management and environmental problems in general, the CCMS NGO has included environmental activities as one of its strategic directions and plans to establish an environmental working group within the organisation to pursue the identification and resolution of environmental problems in the area. As legislative

changes were initiated within the campaign, the organisation will follow up legislative changes related to the compensation of harm caused by tailings. For the currently operating tailings dump, a new campaign aimed at the re-cultivation of these tailings to minimise damage to the environment is considered in further planning.

Summary

To sum up, the following strategies can be deemed as effective throughout the whole cycle of the campaign.

- Mobilising the population was a pre-condition for a successful campaign and contributed not only to this particular case, but generally to the development of civic activism among the population. This strategy ensures the sustainability of the action, as it is expected that in future the population would be more involved in local decision-making.
- Broad public outreach, consistently raising the issue among all types of audience, and the involvement of many CSOs and media outlets contributed to the public importance the issue was afforded. The public reaction to environmental issues is quite sensitive nowadays and helped to increase public pressure on decision makers.
- Media field trips are an effective tool for the direct involvement of journalists as advocates of the issue and contributed to raising public awareness on the problem in a larger scope.
- The professional expertise involved due to the collaboration of environmental NGOs and professionals was crucial for the sound argumentation against the tailings construction and further initiation of relevant legislative changes.



Case No 2: Advocating for families living in temporary shelters

Main implementing party – “Shirak Centre” NGO

Location of activities – Gyumri city

Timeline – 2008 – present

Area of activities – social, urban planning

About the organisation

The “Shirak Centre” NGO (full name: “Shirak” Centre Of Political Culture and Agreements’ Development NGO) was established in 2005 with a mission to establish social justice and equality. The NGO’s activities are aimed at safeguarding social rights, protecting the rights of homeless people, crisis management and providing social benefits for vulnerable groups. The organisation is currently implementing the following projects, which are not specifically funded by any donor organisation but by volunteer resources and charitable contributions: “No child should be left out of school because of a lack of clothes or school supplies”, “Together we can free Gyumri from domiks a day earlier”, “Hygienic supplies and food for the homeless”, “Heating for families living in temporary shelters”. There are 4–5 permanent staff members, regularly involved experts and 100–150 volunteers working for the NGO.

Short description of the case

The campaign on advocating for families living in temporary shelters started in 2008 with a primary goal of drawing attention to the issue of homeless people in Gyumri city. An extensive letter-writing campaign was carried out, targeted at various state agencies such as local and regional authorities, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Prime Minister and the President. The letter-writing campaign aimed to remind people of the 1988 earthquake¹⁰ af-

¹⁰ The 1988 Armenian earthquake, also known as the Spitak earthquake, occurred in the northern region of Armenia on December 7, 1988. The earthquake hit 40 % of the territory of Armenia, 21 towns and 342 villages were destroyed, 514,000 people left without shelter, 25,000 people died. Gyumri was one of the worst affected cities with 15,000–17,000 victims (source: http://www.nssp-gov.am/spitak_eng.htm).

termath: temporary shelters (“domiks”)¹¹. In addition to raising awareness of the problem, the organisation later enlarged the scope of the campaign by presenting recommendations to the responsible authorities and discussing solutions. Furthermore, in cooperation with various international organisations and private philanthropists, they started to provide alternative social services to the beneficiaries of the campaign. As a result of the campaign, a long-term partnership with decision-makers was established, which contributed to continuous joint efforts towards resolving homelessness, particularly by providing alternative housing and social assistance. The campaign was transformed throughout its implementation and currently aims at securing further changes in legal provisions related to the housing and social problems of the homeless.

Problem description and campaign initiation

There are almost 3000 families living in extremely difficult conditions in temporary shelters in Gyumri, the second city of Armenia. As the leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO puts it, by the time the project was initiated, the authorities had stopped talking about the problem and “froze” it as there were not enough resources to solve it: “*Before us, no one would touch the topic for many years. The shelters were taken out of the city centre, accumulated in settlements and left to oblivion. The impression was that the problem is solved*” (leader of “Shirak Centre” NGO).

Among other NGOs, the “Shirak Centre” was involved in the Commission on providing state housing, established by the Ministry of Urban Development to implement the state housing programme. In order to ensure an effective and transparent housing allocation process, the Ministry invited civil society representatives, including the “Shirak Centre” as one of the NGOs active in Gyumri city, to participate in the work of the Commission. This allowed the “Shirak Centre” members to accumulate more knowledge on the situation of the homeless families in Gyumri, as they monitored the housing allocation in Gyumri and collected detailed information about each family on the distribution list. As a result of these monitoring reports, the Ministry of Urban Development changed its decisions on housing allocation. Decisions were cancelled for some families that were benefitting without grounds

¹¹ Small wagon-like shelters made of wood and metal and without basic amenities.

for it, and new families were included in the list: *“This was a tremendously difficult and risky task. Imagine people who were involved in the list and gave informal payments and then you’re saying that their apartment was not obtained legally or they have already received one and thus will not receive another”* (leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO).

Due to its involvement in the committee and its persistent hard work, the “Shirak Centre” amassed a database that – according to Mr. Tumasyan, – is not available in any other state agency. Instead of resolving the problem, this inspired the campaign to speak up for the homeless people living in the temporary dwellings of Gyumri. According to Mr. Tumasyan, *“the Armenian public and in particular the diaspora were pretty surprised to hear that the problem still exists, and there is a need to talk about that”*.

To raise funds for the initial phase of the campaign, the organisation collaborated with several international organisations, such as Counterpart International and the Open Society Foundation. The initial planning of the campaign was implemented in the framework of projects presented to the above-mentioned organisations. Further brainstorming was conducted with the organisation’s members to define the next steps. According to Mr. Tumasyan, *“We tried to plan a lot of work, but to do ten-fold of that. ... We deal with people’s destinies and need to do everything. Eventually, this is a situation when it depends on you whether a child will attend school or not...”*

Coordination and management

The campaign was coordinated by the “Shirak Centre” and implemented with the assistance of numerous volunteers and other NGOs. Decision-making within the organisation is made by five founding members, in consultation with other staff and experts from the organisation. Each project is coordinated by a manager and coordinator, ensuring the smooth implementation of the project.



Cover page of the Report on Monitoring of Housing Allocation

The organisation has a strategic plan and conducts annual planning each year. As Mr. Tumasyan puts it, the strategic plan is more for external communication purposes while the ongoing activities of the NGO are conducted more on an ad hoc basis, depending on needs, which are constantly changing.

Strategies and methods applied

Several strategies were employed throughout the campaign

- At the initial stage, **monitoring** served as a stimulus and basis for further campaigning. *“It all started with their involvement in the housing allocation process to stamp out corruption. They filmed all the families who received apartments. So the attitude of the state bodies changed: if previously they could give to anyone they wanted, now they knew that all the families were being filmed and presented to the public”* (representative of ‘Counterpart International Armenia’). Monitoring was an effective tool for influencing decisions on housing allocation. It also provided the basis for enhanced public awareness on the process: *“The lottery was video-recorded, with his [NGO leader’s] support, and further broadcast through local TV which had a great impact, contributing to public trust in the Commission’s work”* (a representative of the Ministry of Urban Development).
- Furthermore, the organisation launched an **information campaign** to publicise the problem and draw the attention of the authorities. First, the public was informed through articles in the media and a public debate. The organisation provided dozens of media stories and interviews, disseminated through various platforms including local and national TV channels, social networks (particularly the NGO’s Facebook page) and YouTube, which played an important role in publicising the problem in Diaspora¹². Second, letters were sent out to all relevant state agencies with a call to solve the problem of homeless people in Gyumri. The unique

¹² See, for example, interviews provided to Radio “Aspares” on housing distribution problems: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6Vtc_Sziss, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dF2A6JwYSJM>, discussion “The program of providing housing for people suffered from the earthquake in Gyumri and Spitak” in Media Centre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QdrN9Xs1Pk>, interview at “The Question of the Country” program on Yerkir Media TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OXqUR8PU5I>, discussion “Problems of housing distribution in the disaster zone” in Noyan Tapan news agency: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giVIVClvLEE> (all the videos are in Armenian)



A photo of a temporary shelter along with the slogan marking the project on temporary shelters (from shirakcentre.org)

approach of the letter-writing campaign was to send the same letter to officials of various agencies and levels, superior and subordinate to each other. Thus the state agencies that received the letters had to be more careful in their answers, as the superior authorities delegated the same letter to them and expected to receive the copy of the response: there was no chance of ignoring the letter. Letters weighing about 5–7 kg were sent out to various organisations over the course of a year. The letters were sent to the Gyumri municipality, the Shirak regional administration, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Prime Minister and the President. The content of the letters was tailored in accordance to the scope of activities of the targeted institutions. In addition to calling attention to the problem, a package of proposals was introduced on how to resolve the issue. The recommendations were related to the legislation or governmental decisions, including changes to the procedure for providing housing which were proposed to the Ministry of Urban Development, and alternative methods of housing proposed to local government. These included the introduction of social housing, donations of land to families to build houses instead of temporary shelters, or housing homeless people in nursing and foster homes. “There are many people that want to be housed in nursing homes and directors are ready [to host them], but regulation is needed” (leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO). These recommendations were generally accepted by the relevant decision-makers, with some amendments. For example, the local government began the process of donating the land where tem-

porary shelters are constructed to the resident families, adding mortgage loan acquisition possibilities for the construction of a house. Moreover, several apartments were allocated for social housing¹³ purposes. At the same time, transcripts of the letters addressed to authorities were sent to about 130 e-mail addresses of international organisations, embassies and Diaspora organisations to be published in their newsletters. This mechanism has contributed to a more careful attitude of the authorities as well as publicising the issue in the Diaspora and attracting individual donors. All letters were tailored to the target audience.

- Another important tool used in the campaign was short video clips¹⁴ the life and needs of a specific family. These were aimed at fundraising while in order to publicise the problem of temporary settlements, videos about the overall situation were used: “For example, when they say there are no temporary shelters, why Vahan is raising so much noise, we shoot these settlements and show the public that they are there” (leader of the “Shirak Centre”). Videos were later used throughout the campaign, while during the first year letters were mostly used. However when the first video was disseminated and gained a wide resonance, the organisation started to use them as a major campaign tool. It should also be noted that although the campaign was generally aimed at protection of the homeless, the beneficiaries were classified into various social groups: the elderly, single mothers, high-school drop-outs, etc., and for each beneficiary group a separate video recording was prepared to address different audiences. The representative of the donor organisation noted that these recordings had been used exclusively for the campaign purposes: “They never do PR for the organisation. They raise the problems of the families but one would never see them in the shot when they present a family case” (representative of Counterpart International Armenia).

Target group and beneficiaries

The public authorities were the primary target group of the campaign, including the Mayor of Gyumri, the Shirak regional administration, the Ministry

¹³ Social housing – housing owned and managed by the local authority with no or low rent provided temporarily to families on a needs-basis

¹⁴ See the Youtube channel of Shirak Centre NGO: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_PWSsLkNmJPh0HBwFfJvtQ

of Employment and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Urban Development. The information campaign was targeted at the general public, with the aim of raising awareness and drawing public attention to the issue. Private donors in Armenia and Diaspora were targeted for the fundraising campaign.

The direct beneficiaries of the campaign were the inhabitants of Gyumri temporary shelters, as well as Gyumri population in general. The campaign also influenced the attitude of Gyumri residents who were not aware of these problems for many years. Due to legislative amendments, residents of temporary shelters in other cities could also benefit from this campaign.

Main resources and collaboration with others

In the initial phase of the campaign, the organisation needed staff and experts, resources to make videos and funding for campaign expenses. Most of the funding was solicited through grant programmes funded by international organisations, including the Open Society Foundation and Counterpart International Armenia. The Open Society Foundation provided funding for monitoring activities, while the Counterpart International grant helped to raise awareness on the rights of people living in temporary shelters, the procedures for application of housing, etc. Moreover, in the framework of Counterpart International's grant programme, films about families living in temporary shelters were prepared. As a result many families received support from individual philanthropists: as of today, about 20 families have housing thanks to charitable donations. In parallel with this funding assistance, the international organisations also provided valuable consultancy on how to effectively organise and advocacy campaign.

Additional experts, including legal consultants and film editors, were involved with the greater scope of the project. Volunteers were also largely recruited from student groups. *“Distributing firewood among approximately 800 families is not easy and volunteers are needed for that. Therefore we involve a large number of volunteers. Now there are about 100 -150 of them”* (leader of “Shirak Centre” NGO). Local NGOs also provided volunteer assistance, for example Youth Initiative Centre staff and volunteers participated in the distribution of firewood to families in need.

Currently resources are needed for the provision of social services, and funding solicited through private donations provides the basis for the organisa-

tion's sustainable activities in this area. The core expenses of the organisation are also funded through private donation, which covers minimal costs for staff and the office to sustain day-to-day activities.

The organisation maintained close collaboration with local authorities through individual meetings and joint discussions. This collaboration is mutually evaluated as effective: *“When we organise discussions in the municipality, we invite NGOs and the general public. Mr. Tumasyan has a great role there as he closely communicates with people, knows the problems and is aware of the social conditions of each family. As a result, corresponding programmes are developed. [...] There is an effective co-operation, due to which valid ideas are born”* (representative of Gyumri Municipality). The leader of “Shirak Centre” NGO also values collaboration, however he still sees areas where improvement is needed.

The collaboration with the Ministry of Urban Development was developed by participating in the Commission on providing state housing. This collaboration was particularly instrumental at the initial stage, when the NGO involved in the monitoring of housing distribution suggested changes to the list of families to be provided with housing: *“Our collaboration was successful as Mr. Tumasyan is very concerned with the housing problems of Gyumri residents. He presented many suggestions, and in any case, all the suggestions were discussed at the Commission meetings”* (representative of the Ministry of Urban Development).

During the campaign, various NGOs and the media were involved in awareness-raising. Many media outlets disseminated videos and information received from the NGO. However, the organisation first of all targeted online media as a means to reach Diaspora people for charitable donations.

Results and impact

There are a number of campaign outcomes that are different in the scope and level of changes made.

1. A number of legal act amendments were approved by the Ministry of Urban Development. Government decisions were amended to propose and execute practical solutions for providing housing to homeless families in Gyumri, including facilitating access to privatisation, settlement of new



- residential districts, changes in inheritance procedures for lonely people and other measures besides.
2. The change in attitude of local government towards the problems of the homeless is visible. Local government has adopted several projects that were jointly developed with “Shirak Centre” NGO to solve the social problems of homeless families:
 - 130 children of poor families living in temporary shelter settlements currently attend kindergartens for free, as the local government made budget allocations for the reimbursement of kindergarten fees for these children, based on the proposal of the NGO.
 - Local government budget allocation was granted to 2000 families settled in temporary shelters on a monthly basis, in order to attend the hairdresser and bathing services once a week.
 - Firewood is provided to the residents of temporary shelter settlements not only from the contributions of individual philanthropists and organisations, but also from the allocations of the local government’s budget.
 3. So far, 3000 families have been assigned apartment documentation. Being involved in the commission of housing provision, the organisation was assigned the responsibility of providing these apartments. The NGO assumed the responsibility of establishing contact with the residents and inviting them to the organisation’s offices to check their documents, make additions and hand over the apartment documentation.
 4. The Gyumri municipality provided several apartments owned by local administration for social housing purposes. Social housing programmes are still in the process of development in Armenia and the first steps were made by the government in recent years by adopting a strategy on social housing and allocation of social houses in several areas. Though Gyumri is not involved in the programme, the experience of local government can be a good starting point for developing this initiative in Gyumri.
 5. Another important result is the “Free Gyumri from domiks” programme, started by NGOs and adopted by local government in 2015. For many years the issue of dismantling the shelters was not resolved; as there was no legislation regulating the issue, the families that acquired apartments and houses kept their temporary shelters to rent them out or provide to

another family for free. The “Shirak Centre” NGO suggested stricter regulations for families that received apartments: These families currently do not receive housing documentation until dismantling is completed. At the same time the most effective way to implement this process was to initiate the demolition of houses by the organisation itself. *“We have found the best approach. Since the shelter itself is a material resource, we just ask about its price, then buy and demolish it. The law says they have to be dismantled, but they would often move it from one place to another and the issue was not resolved. That is why we are destroying it completely. Incentive is the shortest way”* (leader of “Shirak Centre” NGO). As the Gyumri Municipality representative says, *“the main problem today in the city is the presence of temporary shelters, which are not the result of the earthquake anymore, as it has been re-settled multiple times. Our Mayor now says to people, ‘Dear residents, you have received the apartment, please demolish the shelter and deliver us the area in a clean condition... So they dismantle it, using the materials to sell or burn at their discretion”*. At the same time, the local government representative believes that the “Shirak Centre” NGO is doing an effective job in this regard, as they deconstruct a shelter down to the wood frame and give it to another family for firewood, thus serving two purposes at the same time: cleaning the city and solving the heating problems of vulnerable households.

6. An important achievement is the change of attitude of the Gyumri population towards the residents of temporary shelter settlements. Though small in scope, however they face the problem, step-by-step the change is visible: *“Something strange was going on in these settlements. There was a separate sub-culture. The young people of the district married each other and communicated only among themselves. The others were treated with hostility. Today they are friendlier”* (leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO).

As an indirect result of the campaign the organisation gained trust and publicity, from which huge volumes of private donations were raised to implement social programmes such as:

1. 44 families living in the shelters were provided housing in Gyumri thanks to private contributions, and about 20 families received a small monthly allowance from foreign sponsors. Private donations do not necessarily imply support for the family through the transfer to the organisation,

which serves as an intermediary between donors and the needy: “*We find the family, the flat, and leave all the rest to their discretion*” (NGO leader).

2. 208 drop-out children are now attending school. The organisation provided them with a complete package of school necessities.
3. A day care centre for children of single mothers was established by three organisations, including the “Shirak Centre” NGO and funded by the Paros Foundation (USA). The centre gives single mothers first of all the chance to find a job. The centre’s services include basic hygienic care and meals as well as education and development activities.

Thus, the awareness-raising and fundraising activities sustained the basis for improving living conditions for many families on a long-term basis.

All the results of the campaign are considered by the NGO leader as important achievements, as each small step meant a positive change in the life of the population living in extreme poverty and safeguarding their human rights.

Factors contributing to success

The campaign’s success lies primarily in having detailed and comprehensive information. NGO staff knows each beneficiary in detail, with all their family history, problems and resources. As the head of the organisation says: “*Many structures replicate these projects – such as local self-government and several international organisations – but we cannot be replaced because we alone have this huge database of information. And this is not a matter of information confidentiality or institutionalisation, it is simply impossible to transfer the information accumulated over eight years*”. The expertise and experience of the NGO leader is particularly helpful: “*He is well aware of the issues of the earthquake zone, of the problems of various social groups and people, yet at the same time he presents specific solutions. His recommendations are based on years of research and study and we benefit from that as well*” (representative of the Ministry of Urban Development). This citation also demonstrates the key importance of proposing specific, real-life solutions.

Another factor of success is the comprehensive approach to the problem. The campaign didn’t stop once it reached its initial goal, but rather continued to fill the gaps that came one after another, solving all those problems that were feasible to solve.

Finally, the key to success was the human resources devoted to the mission of the organisation and contributing to the solution of the problems of the homeless in Gyumri. The personality of the leader had a crucial role to play here, as his expertise, enthusiasm, involvement and persistence made the realisation of the goals set possible: “*He is the kind of person that would personally do every possible thing to help people*” (representative of the Ministry of Urban Development).



The president of the “Shirak Centre” NGO during his visit to a beneficiary family (photo from the NGO’s Facebook page)

Challenges and constraints

More resistance was visible from local authorities at the early stages of the campaign, which hindered collaboration with local government. The first major confrontation when the issue was raised by the organisation was the argument that this issue discredits the country. According to the NGO leader, the problem was that when films describing the life of families living in extreme poverty were posted on YouTube, Turkish newspapers and websites were the first to pick up on and disseminate them. However, all concerns were discussed and settled later through a debate on the advantages outweighing the disadvantages.

Another difficulty mentioned was the large amount of negative energy that the staff accumulated every day, communicating with families living in difficult conditions: “*It is very hard to bear it all, even to participate with friends at a party. We sometimes enter houses where no one has opened the door for years. We also provide psychological support just going there*” (leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO).



Further steps

Due to the intensive day-to-day communication with the inhabitants of the temporary shelter settlements, the organisation constantly monitors the implementation of legal regulations at the community level in the process of work. Based on the outcomes of the monitoring, the organisation initiates corresponding advocacy, social service provision or public policy monitoring activities.

The organisation will continue existing programmes, including social assistance, daycare centres and initiating advocacy campaigns for sustaining achievements. These advocacy campaigns are intended to institutionalise all the assistance programmes carried out by local government with NGO collaboration. The current advocacy campaign is aimed at legislative changes at the community level that will define the criteria of social privileges, in addition to those identified at the national level such as privileges for people living in temporary shelters: *“It is true that various types of assistance are provided to socially vulnerable groups, but this is optional and any regulation is not made there. Social benefits are needed at the local level for certain social groups. That aims not just at helping but at having a clear policy for helping at an institutional level”* (NGO leader).

Another planned project is the establishment and operation of social housing, as presently the local government has three buildings allocated for the provision of social housing on a temporary basis.

At the same time, since it is able to carry out large-scale fundraising, the organisation still sees its role in delivering services to socially vulnerable groups as an alternative service provider.

Summary

To sum up, it can be said that as in the classical approach, the collection of information was an important starting step in this campaign. A comprehensive study of the problem, with full information and a clear understanding of the real needs of the target group through direct communication, provides a stable foundation to build the entire campaign. Only in this case, the state considers the NGO as a partner and full party in negotiations: any discussion on the issue without NGO participation becomes impossible.

The tools utilised were different for each campaign element, but there are three essential approaches that proved effective:

1. Letters with the same content were sent simultaneously to several other inferior and superior agencies. This mechanism has proved to be very effective as it provides control of one body over the other.
2. Besides the statement contained in the letters, a package of recommendations made the campaign much more effective as it helped to better understand the expectations of each institution and provided the basis for constructive negotiations.
3. Video films tailored for different audiences were quite effective at presenting the specific needs of a particular group and included a message about how to solve it. Thus, each audience was able to figure out their possible role in the resolution of this problem.

Finally, the issues were settled through a systematic and thorough approach, and the campaign did not begin and end with just speaking out about the problem.

Case No 3: Campaign against a government plan to cut the maternity benefits of employed women

Main implementing party – informal group “Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law”

Location of activities – Yerevan and online platforms

Timeline – November-December 2014

Area of activities – social

About the organisation

“Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law” (also known as “Protection of Rights of Temporarily Unemployed People”) is a civic initiative formed in 2010 against changes to the law on maternity leave benefits. This initiative was formed through a Facebook group¹⁵, with over 2300 members involved at present. There are only loose personal connections among the members of the initiative, though many of them, besides membership in the Facebook group, have participated in various activities in the framework of the campaign. This initiative has implemented two campaigns: in 2010, against the new law on “Temporary Unemployment Benefits”, and in 2014 against changes to the same law. The initiative was often labelled by media and government representatives as the Struggle of Pregnant Women, as the main protesters were young women, including pregnant women. Currently the initiative exists only in the framework of the Facebook group, where members post some news and updates related to legislative changes or programmes in the area of maternity.

Short description of the case

The presented case describes the second campaign initiated by the “Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law” initiative. The changes to the law on “Temporary Unemployment Benefits” proposed by the government in November 2014 planned to cut the leave benefit for employed women by setting a threshold of the average salary (which served as a basis for calculation of the benefit) and directing the budgeted sums to the maternity allowance of non-working women. The initiative “Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law” launched an ad-

vocacy campaign to prevent the proposed legal amendment, using letters, petitions, street protests and participating in public hearings and press conferences. As a result, public attention was brought to the issue and many government members and parliamentarians supported the initiative. The draft of the law’s amendment was revised to include the most of the suggestions of the initiative and in December 2014 the new amendment was approved by the parliament.

Problem description and campaign initiation

The Law on “Temporary Unemployment Benefits” was adopted in 2010 to replace the Law on “Mandatory Social Insurance for Cases of Temporary Unemployment”. The latter offered compensation to the amount of 100% of the woman’s average salary from the three months of employment, without taxing or withholding, for a period of 140 days of pregnancy and maternity leave. According to the new draft law offered in 2010, 100% compensation was expedient only for women earning less than fivefold of RA minimum wage (at that time up to 150,000 AMD, equal to about 300 EUR), whereas those who earned more had to be compensated in the amount equal only to five times the minimum wage. Moreover, the law imposed an income tax on benefits provided for the maternity leave period. The new law was hastily adopted by the parliament in late November and entered into force starting December 1, 2010. The initiative “Stop Changes to Maternity Law” formed in November, shortly after the public was informed about the draft law. Due to the coordinated activities of the initiative, including protest campaigns, press conferences, letters and petitions addressed to representatives of government and parliament as well as broad public outreach involving the media and other active groups, an amendment to the law was adopted in early 2011. This restored the benefits of all temporarily unemployed people to the amount equal to those before December 1, 2010, though the clause on taxing benefits remained in force.

In November 2014 the government proposed another amendment to the law, again setting the same ceiling for compensation and, moreover, defining a connection between the amount of the benefit and the claimant’s work record with their current employer¹⁶. The draft also proposed the removal of mater-

¹⁶ Those who worked with the current employers for up to 1 year were to receive an amount based on 40% of their current wage, 1–3 years’ experience – 60% of their current wage, and 80% of the current average salary was to be taken for calculations if their work record with the current employer exceeded 3 years.

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/maternity/>



nity benefits for imprisoned women as well as several changes to cut benefits for sick leave.

Again, there was no public discussion initiated by the government on the new amendments. Nonetheless, by chance one of the members of the initiative formed in 2010 noticed the draft on the government's website, with a notification that it was approved by government and planned to be sent to parliament. The news was rapidly disseminated through the Facebook group and a new campaign started.

Coordination and management

As is often the case with civic initiatives, where the structure of the movement is horizontal and there is no defined leadership, the decision-making and activities in this group were conducted spontaneously, based on the suggestions of group members. There was therefore no clear-cut or written plan for the initiative's activities. Decisions on next steps were taken spontaneously, based on the situation: *"We initiated the movement and then the process ran by itself"* (member of the initiative).

After the initial stage of exchange of opinions, information and suggestions provided by the active members of the Facebook group, coordination of the movement was taken over by two people. One of them stated that it was difficult to make a change if no-one takes the role of coordination: *"It is very important that a thousand people can provide opinions and consultations, but someone has to undertake this responsibility. For instance, if a letter is to be written, someone has to write it, and someone has to call the media. Understanding that, I did the work so that we could move forward"* (member of the initiative). At the same time, the participation of different people in interviews with the media, meetings with the government and other activities was also important to show the diversity of people involved in the movement and reflect on the various aspects of the issue. The decision on who would present the initiative in interviews or public discussions was taken spontaneously, based on the availability and self-nomination of a competent member, usually through Facebook posts or during street protests.

Strategies and methods applied

Several methods usually used by informal civic initiatives were applied, including the following:

- **Awareness-raising and mobilisation** of supporters, started primarily through Facebook networks. A group initiated in 2010 on Facebook was involved and new members were recruited (there were over 5000 members in the group at the most active period of the initiative).
- A **letter** was sent to the government and parliament, with an appeal to cancel the legal amendment initiative. In addition to the demand to remove the provisions on the compensation ceiling, work record and limitations for imprisoned mothers, the letter also included a short analysis of related laws and provisions in international conventions concerning non-discrimination, women's rights, etc. It also referred to the economic, demographic and moral-psychological consequences of the proposed cuts to maternity leave benefits.
- The letter to the government was published on change.org and a **petition** was initiated, which collected 5128 signatures.
- A **protest** was organised in front of the governmental building, with the participation of mostly women holding posters and banners such as, "This law breaches the Constitution", "Don't deprive women of their earnings", "Why do you take diapers from my kid?", "I want my child to be born in Armenia", "It's a shame to fill the state budget from pregnant women's pockets", "Don't steal my Mummy's money, she works for me", as well as images of kids with similar messages.
- **Media coverage** raised public awareness on the issue, by publicising calls and letters, press releases and statements on behalf of the initiative. Due to the extensive public attention brought to the issue, at later stages of the campaign media outlets included the issue in their news releases, which helped to make the discussions in the government more transparent. A public hearing organised in parliament was **live broadcast** by several online media outlets. Further, **press conferences** were organised on the media's initiative, involving more active members of the movement. Members of the initiative were also invited on to TV programmes to share their views and opinions on the law.

Target group and beneficiaries

The government- in particular the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Prime Minister – were the main target of the campaign, together with the NA Standing Committee on Social Affairs which would further proceed the draft law to present it to members of parliament.

The beneficiaries of the campaign included all employed women of reproductive age as well as employed people in general, as the draft proposed cuts in benefits for temporary unemployment, i.e. sick leave. However, the focus of the campaign was primarily on the maternity leave benefits. More specifically, young women who were comparatively better-paid and better established professionally were the primary group which would be affected by changes to the law, as the setting of a ceiling meant a crucial cut of their income for the 140-day period of maternity leave.

Main resources and collaboration with others

The major resources of the initiative were people contributing their time and efforts. Though several thousand people were involved in the Facebook group, only dozens were participating in street protests: “*Most of them [members] are working mothers, they don’t have time: kids, home, work. They joined whenever possible*” (member of the initiative). Up to five core members were attending press conferences and public hearings. The representative of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the parliament describes the participants of the movement as “*free, uninhibited women, mostly working in international organisations*”. It is likely that many of participants had experience in civic activism, human rights, and/or worked in the civil society area, including CSOs and international organisations.



The members of the initiative presenting their concerns at the press conference (photo from aravot.am)

Key participants of the initiative provided legal and accounting expertise for better justification of the demands, while those connected with media outlets were especially important at the beginning of the movement. Online resources were mostly used for sending letters and publishing petitions, while the material resource most used throughout the campaign were posters that participants of protests printed or wrote in hand.

Though many members of the initiative were employed in various local and international NGOs, few NGOs themselves were directly involved in the movement. The “Society without violence” and “Women’s Resource Centres” NGOs provided legal expertise and supported the movement through collecting information, publishing statements through their websites and other public channels, printing posters and raising concerns in their public speeches at various events. In 2010, the movement was also supported by Oxfam Armenia, mainly with awareness-raising activities across the regions.

Results and impact

The major result of the campaign was a revision of the draft law amendment. The provisions linking the amount of the benefit to experience at their current workplace, as well as the article cancelling maternity benefits for imprisoned women, were taken out. The provision on the ceiling for a maximum amount of compensation was kept. However, the level of the ceiling was increased to up to fifteen-fold of the minimal wage (which concerns women receiving more than about 992,000 AMD or around 2000EUR monthly gross salary as of 2015 rates). The initiative continued to argue for the removal of the ceiling until the draft was approved in December 2014. In any case, the members of the initiative were positive in their assessments of the achievements of the campaign, since the majority of employed women still reserved the right to full compensation during their maternity leave period. This was an important achievement in terms of protecting women’s rights: women could now



The poster says: “I want to be born and live in Armenia. And what does the government want”



Women protesting in front of the government building (photo from aravot.am)

change their job without the risk of losing their income during maternity leave, and most of the employed women would be fully compensated for the period of their maternity leave and thus safeguarded against loss of income due to having a child (at least for the period defined by law, which is 140 days).

Apart from the immediate results of the campaign, the success of a spontaneous campaign based on the pure enthusiasm of members, without any direct access to decision-makers or support from state or international organisations, was a strong motivator for other civic activities: *“other movements acquired more spirit, belief that through mobilisation we can make a change”* (member of the initiative). Though this initiative was just one of the civic movements that have been increasingly active in Armenia in recent years, it has had a significant impact on the development of a culture of civic participation and pushing for transparent and accountable decision-making by state officials. The representative of the NA Standing Committee on Social Affairs, referring to the first stage of this initiative back in 2010, mentioned: *“I think that civic movements started to develop due to this pregnant women’s movement. Even the Electric Yerevan¹⁷ used the experience of the pregnant women’s movement”*. Besides, this movement was significant in terms of destroying stereotypes about women as not being capable of engaging in an active campaign to protect their interests.

Factors contributing to success

The major factor of success in this campaign was the topic itself: *“We did not try hard, did not plan, the topic just worked for itself”* (member of the initiative). The topic of children and motherhood is traditionally a sensitive one in Armenia, as it touches upon the basic values of family and children. The initiative’s members recognised this factor and tried to emphasise these val-

¹⁷ A large civic movement against electricity price hikes which took place in Yerevan in summer 2015

ues: *“It was important to cause a stir, especially taking into account that no-one likes publicising such issues, particularly the Prime Minister – no-one wanted his name associated with such an unpopular law”* (member of the initiative). Linking the issue with the poor demographic situation and high emigration rates added additional fuel to the fire.

Apart from the above, the provision of legal analysis and studying other countries’ experience was important for presenting a well-built justification and participating in discussions with state representatives on equal grounds (in terms of knowledge and expertise). Lawyers, accountants, human rights specialists involved in the initiative and other professional women delivered competent and impressive public speeches at media events, public hearings, as well as when interviewed during street protests, which also played an important role in the outcome of the campaign.

Challenges and constraints

The perception that this was a “campaign of pregnant women” gave the organisers an advantage in stressing the value of motherhood and family, encouraging compassion and sympathy. However, the initiation of the campaign by women – and particularly pregnant women – faced a stereotype that pregnant women and women in general tend to make emotional and irrational demands. The initiative’s members did their best to present weighty arguments and adopt a competent approach to the issue so that they were taken seriously.

Further, some patriarchal concepts were expressed in the media as well as by officials, such as “the men shall take care of the family and the women shall not worry about income”, or “Armenians worship family and our women do not have children just for money”. Besides, there is an ongoing negative public perception of women participating in street protests rather than displaying typically modest housewife behaviour. A couple of publications appeared to try to discredit the movement as an initiative by a few egotistical women worrying about their income instead of welcoming the “fair” approach of sharing benefits with non-working women. After reacting to some of these statements, the members of the movement changed their approach by neglecting such publications: *“We did not represent an organisation, so we did not have any image-related issues, so we preferred to ignore [these publications]”* (member of the initiative).

According to a representative of the State Social Security Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the major constraint in terms of reaching an agreement was the categorical approach of the initiative: *“CSOs are a bit maximalist and this is normal [...] Every civic movement I dealt with presented ‘all or nothing’ attitudes, and in this case I do not see any grounds for collaboration. This is not the right approach – speaking in the language of ultimatums will not bring any good, it will bring us to a dead end. Collaboration should be constructive”*. The members of the movement, however, preferred not to negotiate on any changes but rather to insist on not changing the law at all: *“Our recommendation is clear: take out these provisions from the law. The Ministry can either agree or not: there is no other point to discuss here”*¹⁸.

Further steps

Throughout the discussions on legal amendments, the members of the initiative stated multiple times that they were in favour of providing a maternity allowance to women who are not employed, but not at the expense of employed women’s income. In October 2015 the government adopted a new scheme providing maternity benefit to non-working women, starting in 2016. Thus, it could be stated that the campaign was successful in preserving the income of at least a majority of employed women, without this achievement putting any constraints on creating benefits for non-working women.

The Facebook group *“Stop changes to maternity leave law”* is still active and the members of the campaign share news and questions related to maternity leave legislation, as well as other programmes and initiatives of social importance. It is very likely that the group will be easily mobilised in case there is a need for further initiatives in this area.

As for further activities, the members of the initiative expressed an idea for a web platform that could provide screening of all new legal initiatives and disseminate information, as well as raise concerns if needed. This would be very useful for preventing cases of people learning about decisions at the last moment.

On the other hand, a parliamentary representative expressed the hope that civil society would be more responsive to new initiatives and supportive to providing justification for legal initiatives concerning the demography and welfare of the population: *“When we raise an issue and the government does not have enough budget [to address it] they ask for more justifications... Also, the parliament cannot influence the budget in a timely manner. There are many programmes that could be closed and others that could be initiated but the civic initiatives do not participate in these processes. They could be active in the budgeting process as well”* (representative of the NA Standing Committee on Social Affairs). Thus, there is a need for informal civic movements as well as NGOs to step out of the reactive approach and become more pro-active in pushing for legislative changes.

Summary

This campaign served as a successful example of non-formal civic activism that has influenced policy-making in a very short timeframe, basically through street protests and online platforms, combined with professionally presented statements in the media and public hearings. However, as compared to other informal movements, the cause addressed through this campaign was very specific and advantageous for the initiative, as it appealed to the values of family, motherhood and children and thus gained broad public attention.

At the same time, unlike NGOs working in a more systematic way and usually basing their strategy on collaboration and negotiations with state structures, this movement – as most civic initiatives – takes the ultimate position of excluding any trade-off or compromise solutions. The state representatives consider this position as blocking any win-win possibility. However, this approach could be explained by the fact that the initiative represents thousands of members, and trade-offs by representatives of the movement would mean short-selling the larger group of beneficiaries as unlike a limited number of NGO members, reaching consensus with all the members of such campaigns is practically impossible.

¹⁸ Pregnant women struggle for their rights, Radio Liberty, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aM2BViRygs> (in Armenian)

Case No 4: Mobilising NGOs for changes to health policy through the Mother and Child Health Alliance

Type of CSO – network of local and international NGOs

Scope of work – nation-wide

Timeline – 2012–2014

Area of activities – healthcare

About the organisation

The Mother and Child Health Alliance (hereinafter – MCH Alliance or Alliance) was initiated in 2010 as an association of international and local NGOs working in the area of healthcare. The Mission of MCH Alliance, as stated in its Charter, is to support the advancement of maternal and child health in Armenia. The idea of establishing an Alliance arose following several meetings of NGOs involved in the mother and child health (MCH) area, which were brought together by World Vision Armenia (WVA) in the framework of its Child Health Now Campaign. The organisations discussed the need to create an Alliance which would provide the possibility of uniting efforts in the area of maternal and child health advocacy and maximising the impact of these efforts. The official founding meeting of the Alliance was in August 2011, when a memorandum of cooperation was signed by 44 organisations and the Board and Coordination Body of the Alliance was elected. Currently the Alliance involves 47 international and local NGOs working at the national and regional level. Support for the development and implementation of national healthcare policies to improve maternal and child health in Armenia was the main goal set by the Alliance members. Throughout the four years of the Alliance's activities, several successes were achieved in the area of healthcare-related policy advocacy, including the allocation of a separate budget line in the state budget. This was aimed at health promotion starting in the budget for FY 2014, and adoption of the Law on “Breastfeeding Promotion and Regulation of Infant Food Marketing” (hereinafter – Law on breastfeeding promotion) in 2014.



MCH Alliance Logo

Short description of the case

Despite several international and national legal provisions and national programmes on breastfeeding promotion, there is still a widespread phenomenon in Armenia of giving children formula milk instead of breastfeeding¹⁹. The aggressive marketing provided by baby food companies as well as the neglectful approach of medical workers are just some of the factors contributing to this situation. The MCH Alliance, with the initiative of its member organisation the Confidence NGO, implemented a large advocacy campaign aimed at adopting a law on promoting breastfeeding in order to elevate the issue to legislation level and prevent aggressive marketing by companies producing and selling infant formulas. Among the strategies applied, meetings and round tables with the participation of relevant state officials, participation in parliamentary hearings, a presentation of suggestions on draft laws and calls and petitions to decision makers took place. As a result, the law was adopted in 2014 and entered into force in 2015.

Problem description and campaign initiation

Armenia has joined the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes²⁰ (hereinafter – the Code), initiated by World Health Organization in 1981 to promote safe and adequate nutrition for infants and young children by protecting breastfeeding and ensuring appropriate marketing of products under its scope. Though the advertisement of food for infants up to 6 months was banned in accordance with the Law on Advertisement adopted in 1998, research showed that there was a large scale promotion of breastmilk substitutes and complementary food through printed media, Russian TV channels widely accessible in Armenia and promotions in shops. Moreover, promotion of the formulas was uncovered in healthcare facilities including maternity hospitals, with the endorsement of particular brands through gifts, dissemination of promotional materials, supplies and formula samples²¹.

¹⁹ According to the Armenia Demographic and Health Survey (2010), only about a third of children (35 percent) under 6 months are exclusively breastfed, see <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR252/FR252.pdf>

²⁰ http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/code_english.pdf

²¹ IBFAN Code Violations in Armenia: How companies violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions, 2011 <http://www.ibfan.org/art/LWTD-Armenia-2011.pdf>

The content of the law on breastfeeding promotion was developed in 2004–2005 by the Confidence NGO, a member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), which was the main implementer of the Code's monitoring in Armenia. The law was in the process of discussion in the Ministry of Health since 2005. However, there was lack of civil society push and no initiative on the state bodies' side to promote the law, as many companies involved in the distribution of breastmilk substitutes are supposedly related to some members of parliament. The Confidence NGO continued periodical monitoring of infant food marketing, as well as following the rates of breastfeeding in Armenia. At the same time, WVA was involved in awareness-raising activities on the advantages of breastfeeding in the framework of Child Health Now (CHN) campaign. Through the initiative of WVA and the active participation of the Confidence NGO, legal advocacy elements were involved in the strategic plan of the Alliance. The process of promoting legislative changes started with personal meetings with the NA Standing Committee Head and further collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the National Assembly.

Coordination and management

World Vision led the activities of the MCH Alliance through its CHN campaign. The Coordinator of the Alliance was the Manager of the WVA Child Health Now campaign, which provided communication with Alliance members and served as a primary liaison with state institutions: *“She maintained continuous communication – this is the key, you have to communicate all the time, what happened, what is next. She was sending a letter, asking to comment and make additions, and then collected all the comments. She facilitated the whole process”* (representative of the Alliance). According to the respondents interviewed in the framework of this research, the energetic and determined approach of the coordinator played an important role in the active standing and image of the Alliance and the success of all its advocacy campaigns. Usually, the organisation of Alliance activities was based on a division of responsibilities among the most active NGOs working in the related field: *“When there is any topic for work, smaller groups are formed and the work is divided between the working group members”* (WVA representative). The Confidence NGO was particularly active in the campaign on adopting the law on breastfeeding promotion, as the president of this NGO was the initiator and author of the main content of the law. She provided expertise in presenting the prob-

lem, the necessary documentation and materials for its justification, facilitated the petition process and participated in meetings and public hearings as a key speaker.

Strategies and methods applied

Following the strategy of the Child Health Now campaign, the Alliance adopted a cooperative advocacy²² approach, supporting initiatives and reforms of the government and other partners that would advance the CHN goals. The activities and tools used by the Alliance throughout the campaign on the law on breastfeeding promotion included the following:



Breastfeeding Promotion Flashmob (photo from ibfan.org)

- **Case studies and monitoring analyses** related to infant feeding practices and factors influencing feeding decisions. Compliance with the Code and relevant resolutions were produced in the framework of various projects and presented to the relevant state bodies.
- **Calls and petitions** to the decision-makers were organised, calling for the adoption of measures to promote breastfeeding and regulate the marketing of baby food. The calls were signed by Alliance member NGOs and sent to all parliament members and the Prime Minister. On the Alliance's initiative, similar calls were sent from several international organisations. Furthermore, a petition was circulated among the general public and signed by NGOs, individuals, as well as several high-level officials.
- **Policy dialogue events** were organised with the participation of the Alliance and decision-makers, including the Ministry of Health, the National Healthcare Agency, the Standing Committee on Healthcare, Maternity

²² The term 'cooperative advocacy' is used in contrast to 'confrontational advocacy': in cooperative advocacy, a coalition of civil society groups engages decision-makers in a collaborative, outcome-oriented and sustained process to advance a specific agenda for social change (<http://www.partnersglobal.org/how/participatory-processes/cooperative-advocacy>).



and Childhood of the National Assembly, e.g. round table discussions and parliamentary hearings on breastfeeding promotion law. Other organisations, particularly UNICEF, international and local organisations involved in child health area, and medical practitioners were also invited to provide their views on the issue.

- A **position paper** entitled “Breastfeeding promotion is the guarantee for decreased child mortality in Armenia” was produced by Alliance to articulate its position related to the necessity of state policy on breastfeeding promotion. This paper was widely disseminated among the bodies concerned and contributed to awareness-raising and advocacy.
- A **flash-mob** on breastfeeding was organised on one of the central avenues of Yerevan, with the participation of artists who painted mothers breastfeeding infants. The flash-mob was also used as an opportunity to attract more supporters of the petition calling for the law.
- The subject was raised at the **Annual Alliance meetings**, where various issues related to maternal and child health, key policy gaps and challenges were discussed. Due to these meetings, an effective dialogue was established between NGOs and governmental agencies, particularly the Ministry of Health. Representatives of the NA Standing Committee on Healthcare, Maternity and Childhood issues were also often present at these meetings. The respondents of interviews conducted in the framework of this research mentioned that an appealing part of such meetings was that every participant could raise any issue considered problematic by the NGO; besides, this was a good platform for public dialogue and developing a participatory decision-making culture. Media representatives were also present at the Annual Meetings, which ensured that the issues raised and preliminary agreements set were broadcasted to the public and thus more pressure was put on the officials to fulfil the agreements discussed.
- **Legislative Agenda Advocacy Days (LAAD)** in parliament, implemented by Counterpart International Armenia within the framework of US-AID-supported Civil Society/Local Government Support Programme, also served as a channel for direct meetings with the relevant NA Standing Committee. In particular, on behalf of the Alliance, the president of Confidence NGO presented the problems related to the low rate of

breastfeeding and aggressive marketing of baby food companies and the need to adopt a law on breastfeeding promotion.

- A large **media campaign** was organised to raise awareness of the advantages of breastfeeding for child health and decreasing child mortality in Armenia, and to promote the idea that corresponding state policies are needed. Several topical TV-programmes and articles were produced, and representatives of the Alliance attended interviews and talk-shows to present the issue.

Target group and beneficiaries

The primary target structures for lobbying the law on breastfeeding promotion were the Ministry of Health, other ministries and National Assembly members. The beneficiaries of the campaign were young mothers and infants. The results of the breastfeeding promotion campaign carried out by the Child Health Now Campaign showed that in particular the regional populations were unaware of the benefits of breastfeeding, and young mothers easily replaced breast milk with infant milk formula which was often advertised in maternity hospitals. The new law puts an institutional basis for more awareness-building on breastfeeding benefits in state organisations and hospitals and bans the promotion of infant formula.

Main resources and collaboration with others

The campaign for the law on breastfeeding promotion, as well as other advocacy initiatives by Alliance, required quite a range of resources, including expert contributions, organisation of meetings, public outreach, publications, and human resources for organising and coordinating Alliance activities. The NGOs involved in the Alliance mostly represented doctors and medical workers who had significant expertise in health-related issues. However, most of the material and financial resources, as well as the coordinating activities, were provided by WVA. WVA sustained communication with Alliance members, organised the annual and thematic meetings with officials and invited the media to all MCH Alliance meetings and discussions with decision-makers. Moreover, the WVA supported the creation of the Alliance website – <http://mchealth.am/> – and facilitated public outreach through this and other online channels. The awareness-raising activities for breastfeeding promotion were implemented both by the WVA and the Confidence NGO.

The latter also implemented monitoring of the breastfeeding situation and provided publications of monitoring results (printed in the framework of various small programmes supported by Counterpart International Armenia and the USAID HS-STAR Programme).

Through its campaign on the law on breastfeeding promotion the Alliance closely collaborated with the Head of the Standing Committee on Healthcare, Maternity and Childhood. This collaboration was based on long-time collaborative relationships between Alliance members and the Committee Head, in the framework of other projects; moreover, the Committee Head had been one of the advocates of the law on breastfeeding promotion. The Ministry of Health also supported the law, and was open for collaboration in this and other initiatives of the Alliance. “They always came to the discussions: there was no single case when the Alliance sent an invitation and the Ministry refused to come” (WVA representative). The Alliance also collaborated with hospitals, and in fact many representatives of Alliance member NGOs work in hospitals as doctors, which facilitated their immediate communication with medical institutions. In particular, among the members of the Alliance are organisations uniting health workers, such as the health employees’ trade unions’ republican union and the Armenian Paediatric Association.

Collaboration with international organisations was also helpful for success, particularly UNICEF, which among other activities implements breastfeeding promotion, the USAID HS-STAR programme and Alliance member organisations Oxfam Armenia and Save the Children. The American University of Armenia and Armenian American Wellness Centre provided support through their space for large public meetings for the campaign.

Results and impact

The Law on “Breastfeeding Promotion and Regulation of Infant Food Marketing” was unanimously approved by Parliament in 2014 and entered into force in March 2015. Among other provisions, the law defines the main requirements for national programmes on breastfeeding promotion, as well as the responsibilities of medical workers and hospitals in this regard. All advertising and cross-promotion of the baby food and provider companies is banned, and

regulations in place on children’s food labels and other related items. The law also regulates penalties for breaching the provisions by provider companies²³.

The expected results of the implementation of this law are an increased understanding by the population on the advantages of breastfeeding and the health consequences of formula use. There is also an expectation of a decrease in the use of milk formula through the influence of companies’ marketing and formula feeding practices in maternity hospitals. In a long-term perspective, these results will contribute to the prevention of child diseases and thus decrease in child mortality in Armenia.

As an indirect result of this campaign and Alliance activities in general, Alliance member NGOs have developed their capacities in networking and advocacy, gained access to decision-makers, new partnerships and enhanced their experience in advocacy and media campaigns. “*They are involved, they have the information, whoever you ask from the Alliance they are aware. Further, they become part of this process, signing petitions, letters and understanding the process*” (representative of Alliance member NGO). By creating dialogue platforms and providing knowledge and skills on legislative mechanisms, the Alliance provided the member NGOs with additional resources and opportunities to engage in policy-making, both individually and in a network.

Due to the Alliance’s active communication and collaborative approach, state structures are becoming more open to civil society organisations as well as more accountable. A shift to participatory decision-making culture has been noticed: “*The approach [of the Ministry of Health] has changed, because there is a change in the culture, though still a long way to go, but yes, this culture is in development, meeting each other several times a year, so they see the possibility, it becomes a habit for them to answer questions, send information, etc.*” (WVA representative). As the Alliance members actively engaged their constituencies in discussions and policy-making, the Alliance’s activities contributed to the multi-stakeholder dialogue of the state, NGOs, medical institutions and the general public.

Though the impact of the law will only truly be felt with time, the impact of the Alliance’s activities is already visible through its presence in advocacy

23 RA Law on “Breastfeeding Promotion and Regulation of Infant Food Marketing”, 20.11.2014, <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=5097>



and policy-making in the MCH area. Previously, the NGOs involved in the Alliance had some experience in policy-making, but the Alliance has ensured a sustainable place for these NGOs in the agenda of policy-makers, as well as their recognition among decision-makers as full actors in the MCH field. The CHN Evaluation Report states, “Three consecutive Ministers of Healthcare know about the Alliance and recognise its individual members. They view the Alliance as a good partner and have confidence in its intentions and reasonable actions”²⁴.



MCH Alliance Meeting with participation of government officials (photo from www.aravot.am)

Factors contributing to success

There are several factors that made it possible for the Alliance to succeed in its advocacy initiatives, including the campaign for the law on breastfeeding promotion:

- The Alliance has become a recognised player in the MCH arena, due to its proper institutionalisation and the large number of organisations involved, most of them well-known and with good reputations among state structures and the public.
- A solid advocacy capacity – due to both the potential of several strong CSOs involved and the trainings and experience that individual NGOs and the Alliance gained through their involvement in advocacy activities – also contributed to the success. A competent approach to advocacy initiatives, including evidence-based justification of the problem, detailed and well-developed recommendations, lobbying individual officials and participation in public hearings, was key to the success. “To be successful, NGOs have to present high quality suggestions, which must then be justified and the problem thoroughly investigated. This is because it does happen that

NGOs present suggestions but are not quite familiar with the issue, have a superficial understanding...” (representative of NA commission).

- A collaborative approach and sustained collaborative relationships with state structures are other factors that ensure successful outcomes of advocacy initiatives: “The Alliance is a safe space for the government. The Minister attends the meetings as he sees it as a friendly platform where we move forward together. The platform is not critical in many questions, nor can it be, as it would not be heard. Only cooperative advocacy can work in Armenia, other approaches are not working. Criticism, declarations – these are not working, one will just not be listened to. You have to work with them [the government], do half their work, write the papers they want...” (representative of Alliance member NGO).
- Close collaboration with the Head of the Standing Committee on Healthcare, Maternity and Childhood, based on successful past experience, was key for reaching agreements and receiving support from the Committee in the process of drafting the law and presenting it to the parliament.
- Consistent campaigns and use of various advocacy and lobbying tools – letters, petitions, meetings, information campaigns, etc. – helped to put more pressure on members of parliament: “The continuous lobbying [was important]: I think all the deputies were already prepared to vote, I would even say we made them exhausted” (former coordinator of the Alliance).
- The resources provided by the WVA, including competent leadership and coordination, access to decision-makers, information and the media, partnerships established in CHN campaigns, were irreplaceable: “The role of World Vision is significant... Not only for the resources provided, but for the activeness, reputation and organisational work” (representative of WVA).
- Finally, the cohesion of member NGOs and joint work on the issues at stake provided the basis for successful initiatives. The mere fact of uniting efforts contributed to the success of individual NGOs’ initiatives, which became possible due to the Alliance: “Each organisation acquired new power due to the Alliance... We feel more comfortable when we represent the Alliance, sure, we have the experience, connections, parliament members we had been working with for long years, but is clear that when

24 CHN Final Evaluation Report, April 2015, World Vision Armenia

we present issues on behalf of the Alliance, it is a totally different impact and opportunity” (representative of Alliance member NGO).

Thus, due to its accumulated experience, reputation, and professionalism, the Alliance represents a powerful tool for making policy changes at the national level, which is especially important for NGOs working at local level and lacking access to decision-makers. At the same time, the area of mother and child health and the fact that Alliance priorities matched those of the government were crucial for successful collaboration and positive outcomes of advocacy initiatives.

Challenges and constraints

The main challenge in the framework of the campaign for the law on breastfeeding promotion was resistance on the side of some ministries: their endorsement was necessary for further proceedings with the draft law. Their main concerns were related to the economic consequences of limited marketing by baby food companies and the decline of infant food imports.

Though media collaboration was widely utilised through advocacy campaigns, a lack of professional media content-related input was still noted: *“Journalists tend to publish sensationalist stories and only one media group [...] provides analytical research, others are involved only if there is something hot... But there are issues that need [journalistic] research and their input could help the case a lot, so there is a problem here”* (WVA representative). In regard to the campaign on the breastfeeding law, according to WVA representatives some media outlets showed a tendency to highlight cases where the law failed and emphasised that the implementation of such a law would be unfeasible, rather than supporting the cause and raising awareness on the advantages of breastfeeding. Besides, the campaign faced resistance from some medical workers who expressed the opinion that the law is too strict in its provisions related to banning promotional gifts and products that serve as additional motivators for underpaid medical workers. However, suitable counter-arguments were provided and these provisions were involved in the final draft law.

The current major challenge for the Alliance is the sustainability of its activities since the CHN project providing coordination and resources for meetings came to an end. *“The issue of maintenance is a very serious one. Whether it is registered or not, someone will facilitate the meetings, otherwise there will be no meetings. I don’t remember any case when a local NGO or Alliance member*

organised a meeting” (representative of Alliance member NGO). The member NGOs that provided interviews in the framework of this research expect that WVA shall continue their coordination function, which is crucial for the continuation of Alliance.

The lack of a pro-active approach by member NGOs in Alliance initiatives is another constraint for the sustainability of the Alliance and the results achieved. As stated in the CHN Evaluation Report, *“representatives of member international NGOs observed that local NGOs first came to the Alliance with expectations about some kind of grants or projects, but eventually realised that this was something different – lobbying for laws, for changes in the laws and policies”*²⁵. Thus, the commitment of local NGOs has been developed through the activities of the Alliance while there is still a way to go for a more pro-active approach and ownership by local NGOs. The lack of sustainable financial resources is one of the factors that NGOs identify as a reason for a limited initiative: *“The Alliance could not be this strong without international support. None of the local NGOs is able to lead the Alliance like World Vision did”* (representative of Alliance member NGO).

Further steps

Monitoring of the decisions and programs adopted with participation of Alliance and in general related to MCH area, was mentioned as an important area of activities where Alliance needs to involve. The respondents particularly mentioned the monitoring of the law on breastfeeding promotion as well as awareness-raising activities as further activities deemed necessary: *“The Law on breastfeeding needs monitoring, [and] awareness-raising campaign. Only 40% of women breastfeed and there is a problem of awareness raising, [...] a doctor in a well-known hospital did not know about the law, though these institutions have to follow the ban of selling formulas”* (representative of Alliance member NGO). The leader of Confidence NGO mentions that the monitoring of the law is the weakest point for its implementation: *“If we solve the problem of monitoring, it would be an outstanding law and can be the best law on breastfeeding in the world”*.

Involvement in MCH policy-making was also considered important for the further activities of the Alliance by the participants of the study. Currently the

²⁵ CHN Final Evaluation Report, April 2015, World Vision Armenia



Alliance is promoting an amendment to the law on environmental charges paid by companies, aimed at directing the funds toward the healthcare needs of affected communities, and pushing for alternative funding options for the healthcare budget on the state agenda. Alliance members assure that they will contribute their efforts and possible resources to continue annual meetings and joint activities in the framework of the Alliance. *“It is very desirable that the Alliance continue its activities. Even if through nothing but sharing experience and challenges, it is very important to us, to all of us, as we work in our sphere only, and do not know many things... And as I said, the impact is more significant when we work through the Alliance. However, funding is needed, it is hardly possible to just meet without any basis, there is a need for coordination, for website maintenance, minimal funding is needed for sustainable activities”* (representative of Alliance member NGO). The continuation of the Alliance as an effective tool for mobilisation around and advocating for MCH related causes is considered critical by all Alliance members and other stakeholders²⁶.

Summary

The activities of the Alliance are a good illustration of successful collaboration between international organisations, local NGOs and state structures. The presence of strong and well-known organisations ensures a competent approach to any initiative taken, while their established reputation and large number of network members promotes the standing of the Alliance as considered by state and other players as a solid actor in the field.

The application of a collaborative advocacy approach is highly welcomed by state officials and provides a basis for joint efforts on MCH programmes and policies benefiting both sides. The NGOs involved also benefit individually, as membership helps them to promote their image, gain new skills and experience, and utilise their connections with other NGOs. Furthermore, the Alliance itself can thus publicise and advocate for the NGOs’ agendas, as their chances of reaching and influencing decision-makers individually are limited. At the same time, despite the huge potential of collective expertise, connections and advocacy, it is nearly impossible for such networks to succeed without professional and consistent coordination and allocation of resources.

²⁶ CHN Final Evaluation Report, April 2015, World Vision Armenia

Case No 5: Information Disputes Council serving as an alternative source of legal expertise

Type of CSO – informal group of experts

Scope of work – nation-wide

Timeline – 2011–present

Area of activities – legal

About the organisation

The Information Disputes Council (hereinafter – IDC or Council) is an informal group of experts established in May 2011 with an aim to protect freedom of expression and access to information, as well as the right to protecting honour and dignity and privacy²⁷. The main direction of IDC activities is publishing statements (referred as “opinions”) in cases where judicial disputes occur while exercising the above-mentioned rights²⁸. These statements are developed in line with Armenian legislation, international legal acts and ethical norms. Most of the IDC statements are related to defamation, private life protection and freedom of information. Apart from publication of opinions, the Council provides advice to lawyers, the media, state structures and local authorities on information disputes.

Currently there are five members involved in IDC as experts representing NGOs, legal consulting and media companies. According to the IDC Founding Memorandum, specialists in human rights, the media, legislation, media ethics, linguistics and other specialists related to information can be involved as Council members.

Short description of the case

This case does not represent a specific campaign but a mechanism of participation in decision-making in the judicial sphere. The Council indirectly influences court practice by publishing legal analysis of cases that can play a

role as a precedent, providing alternative opinions on judicial cases as well as awareness-raising and education activities in the area of freedom of expression, rights to dignity and privacy and related issues. It also influences the legislative agenda through highlighting legislative gaps and inconsistencies, raising concerns on interpretations of law and identifying new areas needing regulation.

Since its establishment, as of November 2015 the Council has published 47 opinions mostly concerning defamation court cases filed against media entities and journalists. These cases involved such areas as definitions of defamation, insult and public interest, scope of criticism against political and public figures, distinction between facts and value judgments, protection of journalistic sources, hate speech, journalistic ethics, responsible and good faith journalism, etc. Furthermore, the IDC conducts trainings and workshops on specific topics related to information disputes, thus raising awareness and developing media and legal practitioners’ capacities in the field.

The IDC resembles a professionals’ club, where experts gather to express their opinion on issues related to information disputes: *“The five of us have come together to make comments, whether people listen or not”* (IDC member). As time passed, due to the expertise of IDC members, professional analysis, discussions and trainings with the participation of primary beneficiaries of IDC – journalists and legal professionals – the Council succeeded in gaining recognition and credibility in the area of information disputes. The opinions produced by the IDC serve as a reference for judges, media representatives, lawyers and other interested stakeholders and it can be assumed that IDC statements are often taken into consideration in judicial proceedings related to similar cases. The members of the Council actively participate in various discussions organised by CSOs and state structures to provide their professional views on issues related to the right to information, freedom of expression, journalistic ethics, etc. The findings of the IDC serve as a basis for initiating new regulations and policies, while the trained professionals provide a more competent approach in further discussions on and application of these policies. Thus, it can be stated that the results of the IDC’s work shape the policy-making agenda in the area of information disputes.



**INFORMATION
DISPUTES COUNCIL**
IDC Logo

²⁷ Website of IDC Armenia: www.idcarmenia.am

²⁸ IDC Founding Memorandum



Problem description and initiation of the Council

In 2010 a package of draft laws on the decriminalisation of defamation and libel was approved in Armenia, which was a step forward in protecting the freedom of expression. At the same time, the decriminalisation of libel brought a considerable number of lawsuits against media companies. The courts have to deal with new legal concepts, such as balancing the freedom of speech with the right to privacy and the reputation of individuals, which had not been enforced by courts and judges before.

In 2011 the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Armenia initiated the establishment of the Information Dispute Council as a consulting body that would help stakeholders to better understand the new legal provisions and interpret defamation cases. *“That was his (HR Defender’s) initiative, as he understood that after decriminalisation a large flow of cases would go to the civil court, and neither the courts nor society are ready for that”* (IDC member).



IDC founding meeting: IDC Armenia members with Human Rights Defender of Armenia (photo from IDC Armenia website)

The Ombudsman invited several professionals in the field to form the Council. The founding memorandum of the IDC was developed at the first meeting of the members, and its activities were launched. After the IDC’s founding meeting, the Ombudsman did not have any formal connection with the Council or any further involvement in the Council’s activities.

At first the Council was received with scepticism on the side of media – as a body created by a state-assigned Ombudsman – nor on the side of state bodies – as an extra-judicial organisation with no delegated authority to make decisions on the disputes. However, as time passed and achievements were made, the Council gained more authority and become trusted by many media organisations as an independent and professional group of experts.

Coordination and management

The Council has a non-hierarchic structure and all members have equal authority, while the Secretary coordinates communication issues. The IDC members make collective decisions on the selection of new members as necessary, on statements to produce and on the further direction of activities. Administration of grant programmes funded by international organisations is conducted through the organisation “Freedom of Information Centre of Armenia” NGO, the head of which is represented in the IDC²⁹. At the same time, members are professionals in different areas, thus there is a natural division of work when the lawyers draft opinions based on legal analysis and media representatives provide their expertise in issues concerning media ethics: *“All drafts [statements] are discussed. In general, all of us agree on the final version, there was never a case when someone was against but we decided to disseminate [the statement]. We always try to understand the counter-arguments and come to a consensus”* (IDC member).

Strategies and methods applied

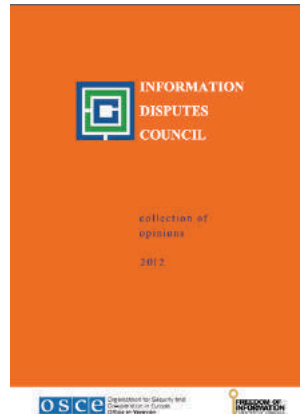
The main activity of the Council is producing and publishing opinions on information disputes, accompanied by the provision of consultancy to all interested individuals and organisations, awareness-raising and educational activities through trainings and discussions with interested parties, as well as strategic litigation through involvement in cases which are defined as having strategic importance to legal practice: *“Thus we provide opinions, publish them, disseminate them, train and are involved in the processes ourselves. There are few such [organisations] in Armenia or worldwide, especially in the West where everyone has a differentiated function, while in Armenia where the resources are limited people cover several types [of activities]”* (IDC member).

- The **opinions** are **published** through the www.idcarmenia.am website, mailing lists, Facebook, and printed publications of the collection of opinions. The issue selected for opinion is identified in two ways: first, any of the sides of a dispute can request an opinion from the IDC about the dispute; second, the Council members take any case that gained large

²⁹ By the time the report was prepared, the head of the “Freedom of Information Centre of Armenia” NGO resigned and was replaced in IDC by another expert from the same organisation.

publicity and has a strategic meaning in terms of legal practice. A legal analysis of relevant legal acts and cases is conducted, the details of the case discussed by Council members, and finally, the statement is produced. In particular, the statement (opinion) may provide an evaluation of the disputed media articles, expressions, or other disputable pieces of information, the context or relevant provisions of the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. It also often concludes whether the information disclosed indeed concerns public interest, and whether the disputable expressions are value judgments or statement of facts. The Council also provides an opinion on whether the amount demanded by the claimants (if any) meets the interference proportionality and necessity principles³⁰.

- One of the roles of the Council is to provide **consultancy, which may serve for extra-judicial dispute resolution**. The state representative – formerly working at the RA Judicial Department – sees this role as beneficial for all stakeholders: based on the conclusions of the Council, the parties can decide to settle the dispute without a lawsuit and without wasting time or money for court processes. On the other hand, the court burden will be relieved as there will be fewer court cases. Moreover, the state representative considers that corresponding legal reforms will help to set up the idea of a mediation court, which will serve as an alternative should the parties agree on the decision by the arbitrage: *“The Court of Cassation in its decision stating a legal precedent, has enforced the idea that parties try [to reach consensus with each other]... and in case they do not succeed, apply to a third party or power which will come to an unbiased conclusion. Afterwards, they can apply to court. Thus, on the basis of this decision the idea arose to decrease the number of court cases, which will raise the efficiency*



The cover of the first publication of IDC opinions

of judicial acts” (ex-representative of Judicial Department). Indeed, the IDC members recall cases when any party of a dispute requested their comment or opinion on a particular case and decided not to apply to court as a result.

- Discussions and trainings** have been conducted on various topics related to information disputes, such as freedom of information, defamation and libel, copyright, etc. Media representatives and legal practitioners involved in information disputes are the primary target audience of these events.
- A starting strategy of the Council is **lobbying for law enforcement**, aimed at the implementation of Constitutional Court decisions. For example, a need to define the terms “public statement” or “a publisher” was identified, as these can lead to different interpretations by the court and the media. The use of fake profiles is also gaining a growing importance in the context of defamation issues, requiring legal regulation and interpretation. The Council members attract the attention of relevant structures on these and other disputable issues and are actively involved in relevant discussions: *“The activities of IDC are especially important in terms of generating public debate about disputes featuring the media, as well as important developments with a potential impact on freedom of expression and keeping these issues high on the agenda”* (OSCE representative).

Target group and beneficiaries

The target groups of the Council are the media, legal practitioners and court representatives. Journalists and media outlets are at the same time the primary beneficiaries of the IDC, as they become more aware of their rights and responsibilities, more vigilant in their publications and less vulnerable for lawsuits and other forms of interference. *“Now no chance case enters the court, every decision is thought out. It is very difficult to defy the media in court, and even if the media loses, the fines are very low. However I cannot recall any court case after 2012 when the media lost the case and it affected its normal operation”* (IDC member). According to statistical data, in 2011 when defamation cases were first decriminalised, the number of court cases against the media was 37, while in the first half of 2015 only nine cases were registered³¹.

³⁰ The statements produced by the Council are available at <http://www.idcarmenia.am/en/conclusions>

³¹ Source: CPFE Reports on the Situation with Freedom of Expression and Violations of Rights of Journalists and Media in Armenia, <http://khosq.am/en/reports/>



Advocates involved in information dispute-related cases also benefit from IDC activities, as they are provided the opportunity of free consultation and trainings in relevant topics. *“We organise 2–3 workshops annually, with the participation of advocates that are engaged in defamation cases, advocating for either the media or the other party. Together with the media and IDC members, they have the opportunity to discuss various related issues, including confidentiality of information sources, private information, defamation, preliminary investigation, confidentiality, etc... Many advocates advanced professionally through these discussions”* (IDC member).

As mentioned above, though the court authorities at first indicated a sceptical view on the Council’s work so long as they had no delegated authority to make statements on court cases, over the years they have started to take notice of the Council’s opinions: *“They become convinced that we are right and we are unbiased, we don’t pursue anyone’s interest; we are a group of five independent experts and express our opinions based on the principles of international law”* (IDC member). The ex-representative of the RA Judicial Department confirms that judges are interested in the Council’s work and benefit from their statements providing expert views: *“I cannot deny the fact, and I would even confirm that, yes, the judges would definitely study these opinions, as for any specialist and particularly for a judge there is a need to analyse a variety of opinions. If I were a judge and needed to resolve a dispute, as a responsible judge I would seek opinions. Thus these [opinions] would definitely have a positive influence if they present non-biased conclusions of a high professional quality”*.

Main resources and collaboration with others

The major resources needed for the Council’s activities are human resources: professional expertise to draft opinions and provide consulting on information-related disputes. The Council members started their work without any funding, on a voluntary basis. In the second year of IDC activities, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office in Yerevan provided assistance in organising discussions, trainings, website design and administration and publication of opinions, as well as some funding for legal analysis, which significantly helped the Council to provide continuous work and publicise its activities among stakeholders. Currently, the activities of the IDC are funded by the US Embassy in Yerevan.

The Council largely collaborates with the Media Ethics Observatory (MEO), established by the Yerevan Press Club and involving 14 members representing media agencies. Thirty-nine media organisations signed the Code of Ethics developed by MEO, acknowledging the right of the MEO to examine the conformity of their acts and publications to the provisions of the Code. The mission of the MEO consists in consideration of complaints and appeals regarding the violations of the Code of Ethics and making judgments on them. Further, the Council collaborates with other NGOs where IDC members are involved, and joint discussions and initiatives are often organised on the premise of these NGOs.

Collaboration with state organisations is on an ad-hoc basis. Several meetings were held with the RA Judicial Department to discuss the ways of increasing the IDC’s effectiveness and ensuring its compliance with law, as well as possibilities for collaboration between the IDC and court structures.

Collaboration with the Prosecutor’s Office was in the framework of the issue on information source confidentiality. The Prosecutor’s Office suggested to the Yerevan Press Club (the head of this NGO is represented in IDC) that it should organise discussions on regulations related to the secrecy and disclosure of journalistic sources. After two related court cases, one of which involved an instituted criminal case against an editor of a news outlet for the refusal to disclose a source, lawyers (including one of the IDC members) applied to the Constitutional Court which confirmed the right for news outlets to protect their sources and identified the grounds for limitation of this right.

Apart from the RA Judicial Department and Prosecutor’s Office, as IDC members claim, many other state agencies are familiar with the IDC’s work and often read their statements.

Results and impact

The major results of IDC activities are the following:

1. Increased legal awareness is the overarching achievement mentioned by all the participants of the research. The statements produced have an educational role by identifying national and international norms and precedents related to a specific cause, and contributed to better awareness of the media, legal practitioners and court representatives on the specific details and interpretations of law. In some cases, judges cited extracts

from IDC opinions in the statement of facts, along with advocates using citations in their applications to courts. An illustration of the IDC's work results is the outcome of the case related to offending the honour and dignity of several persons by online news media. This media outlet published an article entitled "The black list of enemies of the people and the state" that, according to the publication, "serve the interest of international lobbying for homosexuals", and called for "zero tolerance" for the people included in the list. Two groups of people (whose names were included in the list) separately applied with two court cases, stating that the publication contained defamation and libel, and requesting a public apology and financial compensation. In one case, the court supported the media company, guided by the provision on the freedom of speech. In the second case, the attorneys were trained by IDC and linked their arguments not only with defamation norms, but also anti-discrimination principles. In this case, the Court supported the claimants and satisfied their claim partially (decreasing the amount claimed as moral compensation). Though the decision of the court was based on the legal provisions of defamation and libel, an extract of the IDC statement related to hate speech was cited in the statement of facts: "The Council finds that the article includes statements and appeals which are demonstrations of extremism and hate speech. It is undoubtable that with this article the author implemented their right to free expression. Nevertheless, no regulation of protection of free speech covers hate speech. It is necessary to differentiate between shocking, disturbing and even provoking critical speech from the kind of speech which is a demonstration of extremism and as such inculcates and advocates hate. The first one is protected with free speech, the second one is not. Hate speech is excluded by civilised nations without any exception. This position is also enshrined under international law, which gradually recognises hate speech as a customary norm of international law"³².

2. Due to the increased legal awareness of media representatives, there has been a change in the general media discourse. Experts note a positive shift in the general content and competence of media publications. Though the criticism is present and the media exercises its right to free

expression to attack political actors, celebrities or other public figures in the publications, many media outlets are more circumspect in terms of legal and ethical limitations. The IDC made a valuable contribution to this change, as many media companies are familiar with IDC statements and take into account the standards and regulations publicised through opinions on various cases. For example, if any hate speech is published the clear position of the IDC with analytical justification is to help others to define their position and indicate an intolerant approach to such publications: "*We mark some standards for discussions to be held in this area*" (IDC member).

3. The incidents of court cases related to insult and defamation decreased both due to a more conscious approach by the media and to a better understanding of freedom of speech and media principles by politicians, who were the most frequent claimants in these cases: "*The messages in our statements were very important for people to think whether there is a need to suit the media, as in that case they'd question important values recognised in the European Court interpretations and in the European Convention: this [the opinions] had a preventive function throughout those years*" (IDC member).
4. Strategic litigation has been an effective tool for setting precedents in the court. The very opinions of the Council serve in the role of precedent, which means that in similar cases judges would possibly take the opinions into consideration: "*IDC has many decisions today, encompassing opinions on almost all criteria*" (IDC member).
5. The Council's activities also contribute to policy-making. Firstly, IDC members participate in advocacy and lobbying campaigns related to the freedom of media issues. For instance, the decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the right of the media not to disclose their sources and parliamentary discussions on draft laws for blocking fake profiles had positive outcomes in terms of media freedom: IDC members made a contribution in these processes through participation in discussions and expressing their professional point of view. The discussions and workshops organised in the framework of IDC projects promote initiatives in legal and policy implementation fields: "*The discussions are held in a participatory format, with all parties involved in the process having a chance to provide their opinions. This contributes to the formulation of some new*

³² Court case No 2146/02/14, decision of 14.05.2015



concepts or legal changes, where necessary, and definitely has an impact on reforms in the area of freedom of expression/information” (OSCE representative). Finally, IDC members contribute to the development of law in general by interpreting concepts and terms, analysing relevant international standards and publishing handbooks and strategic litigations.

Factors contributing to success

The success of IDC activities is first of all due to the expertise and reputation of its members. *“I would like to emphasise the professionalism of IDC members. They are persons whom I very much respect, they are professionals in their field, [...] people that have a great contribution first of all in their area of work and particularly in the area of freedom of information, information disputes and protection of human dignity”* (ex-representative of Judicial Department).

The non-biased and independent approach of the Council also helped to gain the trust and earn a reputation among stakeholders: *“We provide a non-biased opinion, whether the party that requests it likes it or not, it doesn’t matter, we are not constrained, we are not paid for that, thus we have financial, political, all kinds of independence”* (IDC member).

The publication of opinions on the most burning issues and bringing them to discussion provided visibility for the Council and drew attention from the public and the state to its further activities.

The assistance of the OSCE in publicising the IDC’s work has also been important, especially at the beginning of IDC activities, helping to promote the Council and create a basis for multi-stakeholder dialogue. *“As an organisation supporting the IDC work, we were interested in establishing a platform for collaboration and dialogue between the media, lawyers, and court system; thus, in addition to IDC expert opinions, we also supported seminars with the participation of journalists and advocates and invited judicial department representatives. These series of seminars have helped to popularise the work of the IDC and help others to better understand its role”* (OSCE representative).

Challenges and constraints

As noted, in the beginning of IDC activities there was a low level of trust toward the Council. *“State structures were asking their usual questions: ‘Who authorised you to make conclusions?’, the media were also asking: who authorised*

you? It’s a Soviet-era legacy, as if someone should delegate us an authority. No, we use our constitutional right to express our opinion. [...] So now no-one asks such questions, they’ve accepted that, ok, let them talk. But people would listen to us indeed” (IDC member).

The Judicial Department was concerned that the IDC interfered in the judge’s decisions and advised the Council not to publish their statements until the court process was over: *“There could be problems related to our legislation; our concern was that this could be considered as a pressure upon – or if not pressing, directing – the court”* (ex-representative of Judicial Department). On the other hand, as a result of the discussions, the IDC changed the name of the statements produced from ‘decision’ to ‘opinion’, which sounds less binding. *“We try not to publicise our opinions before the court decision is made. However, we do that in exceptional cases, where we think it is important to make a statement.”* (IDC member)

Another constraint noticed by the state representative is that among five IDC members there are only two lawyers, while the others are editors/journalists which might lead to an imbalance of the journalist point of view over the legal approach. However, he mentioned that the lawyers are successful in formulating opinions in legal terms.

Further steps

The further development of IDC activities is seen first of all in the area of education. The new project funded by the US Embassy includes the implementation of Training of Trainers (ToT), which would allow to further disseminate knowledge among larger groups of the media and journalists. Involvement in policy-making is also planned, particularly with regard to providing strategic cases for the interpretation of law by the Constitutional Court and the Court of Cassation, as well as the further development of corresponding legal drafts.

The ex-representative of the Judicial Department finds that the IDC may have an important role to play as a mediator court. However, corresponding procedures and legal acts would be needed to grant that status to the IDC (currently there is no legal provision for mediator courts, though the institute of financial arbitration is functioning, which might be a good example for replicating the same institute in other areas). Another function that the IDC can potentially carry out is formally providing expert opinions to the court in the

course of court process, which also needs legal amendments in corresponding areas: *“I wished that there were constant collaboration with judges and that we could come to a situation when judges themselves apply to the IDC to provide a professional opinion”* (ex-representative of the Judicial Department).

The knowledge disseminated in the community of journalists and lawyers and its further application ensures the sustainability of the results of IDC activities: *“Even if the IDC were to stop its activities today, the 40-plus decisions are already there, the workshops with journalists and advocates: we see about 20–25 advocates specialised in this area, and journalists very competent in what is reproduction, what is the source of information, aware of all the protection systems, and the Council has had a great contribution to this”* (IDC member). The sustainability of the Council itself is closely linked with the commitment of Council members and their ability to further raise funds for providing intensive expert analysis, as well as for publications and educational activities. The financial support of donor organisations is considered vital for the continuous work of the Council: *“We understand that IDC members are very busy people and it is not always possible to react to all important issues without someone’s coordination and consistent work”* (OSCE representative).

Summary

To sum up the role of the IDC in the area of policy-making, several findings can be highlighted:

- Provision of a thorough legal analysis on specific information disputes, along with workshops and trainings in the related areas, contributes to a better legal awareness among the stakeholders involved and thus promotes better protection of the freedoms of expression, honour and dignity and other rights.
- Publication of opinions based on unbiased legal analysis and their wide dissemination serves as a specific oversight tool for the work of state judicial bodies, urging them to make more balanced and well thought out decisions.
- Generation of public discourse on issues in the area of information disputes and raising concerns on legal inconsistencies or gaps promotes corresponding policy changes in the field.

The experience of the Council indicates a high demand of professional legal expertise by CSOs, while the professional approach and reputation of newly formed organisations and groups are pre-conditions for becoming successful players in any area.



CONCLUSIONS

Though the cases included in this study present different experiences, strategies and levels of participation in policy-making and implementation, a range of common features can be identified for all of them. In particular, the following key factors were specific to all or most of the cases and contributed to the successful outcomes of the campaigns:

- professional expertise and evidence-based approach
- public outreach and visibility
- advocacy experience and capacity
- significance of the problem

At the same time, there were some differences in the approaches related to:

- engagement of beneficiaries
- relations with authorities
- support of international organisations
- advocacy tools

Further, these factors will be reviewed along with the “human factor”, which will be discussed to reflect upon the significance of the personality of a campaign leader and the personal attitudes of decision-makers.

Professional expertise and evidence-based approach

In all cases professionals in relevant fields were involved, which ensured a competent analysis of facts and grounded justifications for change in a specific policy or decision. The MCH Alliance – as a network of organisations with a proven reputation in the mother and child health area in Armenia – possesses vast experience and expertise in child health-related issues. The co-

ordinating organisation of the network, World Vision Armenia, has experience in the area of breastfeeding promotion and the leader of the Confidence NGO is also an internationally recognised expert in breastfeeding promotion law. Within the campaign of the Alliance, a large amount of research, monitoring reports and case studies on the advantages of breastfeeding and negative consequences of milk substitutes were conducted and used as evidence, which along with the application of other advocacy tools led to its success. In the Information Disputes Council, professional analysis of disputes is the primary tool for raising concerns and putting policy issues on the agenda. The success of the “Shirak Centre” NGO was first of all based on the detailed information collected, which showed that state structures cannot disregard such an approach. In all these cases, expertise and well-grounded argumentation not only helped to advocate for a specific cause, but also created a fruitful basis for further dialogue with decision-makers. The state authorities started to consider these organisations as valuable partners and/or as a source of reliable information in relevant areas.

In the case of the campaign against tailings dump in Mets Ayrum and the “Stop Changes in Maternity Law” initiative, the professional expertise of the initiators was not widely recognised and thus did not have a decisive role to play. However, the involvement of environmental professionals in the first case and of legal/human rights professionals in the second, along with relevant analysis of the problem, was crucial for a competent, well-reasoned position presented during meetings with authorities, and for successful media involvement.

Thus, professional analysis, evidence-based justification and competent verbal or written presentation of the issues served preconditions for successful advocacy in the cases described.

Public outreach and visibility

Public coverage of the problem was utilised in all the presented cases. Most of the campaigns, such as protests against the tailings dump in Mets Ayrum or the promotion of the law on breastfeeding by the MCH Alliance, specifically targeted the media as a tool to attract the attention of relevant state bodies and the broader public. The “Shirak Centre” NGO utilised the media at the first stages of their campaign in order to put the topic of temporary shelters on the agenda, and later to attract charitable contributions for the families. Public outreach had a decisive role to play in the campaign protesting against cuts to maternity benefits, as this initiative did not have any chance of reaching decision-makers through institutional platforms and could not otherwise have been heard. At the same time, it is notable that this initiative put little effort into reaching the media, as the topic of the campaign itself and the pickets of pregnant women attracted media attention themselves. The Information Dispute Council also did not aim at large public outreach, as it targeted specific groups. However, since some of the cases analysed were on the public agenda, again the media was interested in covering their opinions and often invited experts from the Councils to various debates and interviews.

Whether planned or not, media coverage and public visibility had a helpful role in attracting public attention and strengthening the public image of the organisations and the individuals involved, given that in all cases the latter were competent in the issue and provided well-articulated statements.

Advocacy experience and capacities

Since 2000, numerous programmes on the development of advocacy capacities have been implemented in Armenia, mostly with the support of international organisations. Due to these programmes, hundreds of NGOs were trained in advocacy and used the opportunity to implement grant programmes to advocate for policy changes on national and local levels. The USAID CSO Sustainability Index rates the advocacy dimension of Armenian CSOs’ sustainability as the highest among other dimensions and among the top three of CIS countries’ rating, which is due in particular to the scope of the advocacy initiatives by NGOs and informal movements, as well as platforms and mechanisms cre-

ated for their participation in policy-making³³. In the case of the campaign in Mets Ayrum, the trainings and capacity-building initiatives provided by the campaign leader NGO and the establishment of participatory-decision making culture in the village (in particular due to the NGO leader’s presence in the community council), provided a sound basis for initiating a competently organised advocacy campaign and mobilising residents of the community. In the movement against cuts to maternity leave benefits, the primary coordinator was an advocacy specialist with experience of working in local and international organisations. Many NGOs involved in the Alliance had long-standing experience in implementing advocacy programmes, while others were provided with training and experience exchange opportunities. Similarly, many of the IDC members represent organisations with strong advocacy experience, along with the “Shirak Centre” NGO which accumulated its experience through years of work with local and then national level authorities.

In sum, apart from professional expertise on the issue, the CSOs covered in the case studies possessed skills in organisation and implementation of competent advocacy campaigns, which led them towards achieving their goals.

The public significance of the problem

The scope of the campaign coverage by the media is usually contingent on the urgency and significance of the topic raised. Though public significance in its turn depends on a competent presentation of the issue, it is obvious that the topics that appealed to societal values – such as maternity and children – or to public sympathy and solidarity, as in the case about families suffering from earthquake consequences, tend to attract more attention and support. At the same time, governmental officials are more inclined to take into account public sentiments to sustain their public image. As for the case related to the tailings dump, this campaign was associated with the environmental issues widely discussed in recent public discourse, due to the very active activities of civic movements and alliances, some of them successful. The most notorious campaigns were, for example, the protection of Mashtots Park in Yerevan from construction and a protest against the construction of a small hydro-power station which would harm Trchkan waterfall.

33 The 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/EuropeEurasia_FY2014_CSOSI_Report.pdf



Apart from addressing urgent and popular issues, most of the described issues fell within the areas announced as national priorities. In the case of the “Shirak Centre” NGO and the MCH Alliance, the recommendations presented to the governmental bodies did not contradict but rather matched state policies, and the target structures were interested in effective collaboration. In other cases, more resistance was noticed on the side of the authorities, thus the other factors were more decisive for the successful outcomes of campaigns.

Engagement of beneficiaries

All the cases described had a large number of beneficiaries, however not all CSOs put efforts and/or succeeded in mobilising them. Mobilisation of the community population was the first step in the Mets Ayrum campaign, as without showing the support of the villagers it would hardly have been possible to attract attention and influence the decision regarding the construction of tailings dump. The campaign against the changes in maternity leave law did not gather a large number of followers from the street protests, but was successful in gaining supporters through petitions and online platforms. In the cases of the MCH Alliance and the “Shirak Centre” NGO, the beneficiaries were not participating in advocacy activities, but the evidence used by these campaigns involved the stories of beneficiaries. Films about families living in small shelters posted by the “Shirak Centre” attracted wide public attention not only in Armenia, but also Diaspora: the life stories of homeless families illustrated through videos were probably as influential as the statistical data on the number of such families. The messages of beneficiaries were also used in posters throughout the campaign against the changes to maternity leave law, illustrating the use of symbolic communication (images, mottos, word expressions) widely utilised through civic movements in online and offline platforms.³⁴

Relations with authorities

Each of the described cases illustrates a different strategy of collaboration with the authorities. The MCH Alliance secured the support of the main structures involved in the proposed law (the Ministry of Health and the relevant NA

Standing Commission) due to long-term collaboration at both personal and institutional level, and steadily worked towards reaching an agreement with other ministries and parliamentary members. The “Shirak Centre” NGO also collaborated with the government, first of all through the involvement in a joint commission and provision of expertise and recommendations package that benefited the work of the state structures. This NGO also provided services complementary to the social services provided by the state and local government, and thus the authorities saw the mutual benefit of their collaboration.

The Information Dispute Council has influenced the policy-making agenda mostly through indirect channels such as issuing statements, sharing their views through the media and engaging in discussions with the media and legal practitioners. Thus, they do not intensively collaborate with the authorities but indirectly engage in policy dialogue through their activities.

In contrast, initiatives against the adoption of new decisions and laws (e.g. construction of tailings dump in Mets Ayrum, changes to the provisions on maternity leave benefits) took more confronting positions as their primary aim was to reverse the processes already started on the government’s approval or initiative. The CCMS NGO mobilised village residents to oppose the decision of the local government, the initiative “Stop the Changes in Maternity Leave Law” recruited thousands of members to protest against the governmental decision. As already mentioned, most of the informal initiatives are not willing to accept compromises. Apart from other reasons, reaching an agreement with some of the initiative’s members would not necessarily mean all participants agree to the same terms (as the number of the participants is much larger than in the case of NGO members); besides, such initiatives do not have to care about sustaining connections or their image for future work, while NGOs have to consider their long-term perspectives. Accordingly, the initiative of women completed its activities at the moment the new law was adopted, while the CCMS NGO entered into a collaboration with the state to initiate legislative changes aimed at benefitting their and other communities.

Thus, if the protest actions often have to take confronting positions to remain faithful to the demands of their constituencies, then when an organisation proposes a policy change, a collaborative approach works best with the proper use of various advocacy tools.

³⁴ See more at: Aghasi Tadevosyan, *Civic Initiatives and New Technologies in Armenia*, Yerevan, 2013 (in Armenian)

Support of international organisations

As noted above, advocacy capacity is considered one of the strengths of Armenian CSOs. At the same time, Armenian CSOs owe most of their success in the area of policy-making to international organisations. Apart from the large amount of financial resources invested in grant programmes for advocacy initiatives, international organisations provide significant assistance in the very process of pushing for policy changes. The example of the MCH Alliance shows that international organisations provide their expertise, experience, reputation and financial resources, which ensure the strength and image of the Alliance as a full actor is taken into account by state bodies. In fact, many successful advocacy initiatives have taken place with the financial support and/or collaboration of international organisations³⁵ and several participants in case studies express their concern with the sustainability of initiatives in those instances where international organisations discontinue their support. At the same time, the examples of local NGOs such as the “Shirak Centre” NGO and the CCMS that initiated and/or extended their campaigns based on identified needs, without the expectation of financial support, offer hope that Armenian CSOs are able to extend their activities and mobilise resources based on needs, including funding, expertise, volunteers and other resources. Finally, the campaign against cuts to maternity leave benefits basically did not need any other resource than people, as it utilised a relatively new and totally free resource – online platforms that served excellently for the goals set.

Advocacy tools

The following range of advocacy tools was utilised in the campaigns described:

- monitoring and analysis,
- awareness-raising,
- street actions,
- statements, letters and petitions,
- policy dialogue events,
- online tools.

Monitoring and analysis of a problem was utilised in all the cases, however some campaigns included this activity in the initial stage in order to prepare evidence for further advocacy activities. Meanwhile others – namely protest movements that emerged spontaneously – used monitoring and information analysis to support their proposals to decision-makers. From the results of monitoring and problem analysis, it is also useful to raise public awareness on the problems and their potential negative consequences.

Awareness-raising activities usually aimed at mobilising public support to put pressure on the decision-makers. Moreover, enhanced public awareness ensures more control over the decision-makers, which cannot but provide transparency and publicity for further processes and decisions taken. In all case studies, the media was a major player in awareness-raising: street protests such as flash-mobs or demonstrations also contributed to a better outreach of the issue.

Street actions in the cases described included protests and flash-mobs. Street protests are used as a rapid response to decisions made by state officials and are the primary tool of informal initiatives, as they also serve as a place for recruitment of supporters and collective decision-making. Street flash-mobs attract public attention to an issue and are increasingly used by both NGOs and informal initiatives in Armenia. In general, street actions provide a fruitful opportunity for media coverage, especially when they are accompanied by posters, attractive apparel and other means of symbolic communication.

Several types of **statements** were used in studied cases, including press releases with brief information on the problems, campaigns, and goals set (e.g. Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law), as well as statements or opinions where organisations or individuals articulate their views on a specific issue without any expectation that the decision-makers will take them into account (IDC), and calls for actions where the concerns presented are followed by the urge for action by state structures and/or other stakeholders (CCMS, MCH Alliance). These calls could be transformed into **petitions**, where those who agree with the statement indicate their support through virtual or written signature and thus provide more power to the campaign, as well as **letters** signed by the initiator organisations and sent to relevant officials. A specific example is an **open letter** issued through the media to provide publicity. The use of letters was a key tool for most of the cases described in the study: most cam-

³⁵ CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2014



paings used letters not only to call attention to the issue, but also to provide background information, data analysis and specific recommendations on the solution of the issue, thus creating a platform for further collaboration. “Letter attack” was implemented by the MCH Alliance through addressing letters to all members of parliament individually and mobilising other organisations to do the same. The “Shirak Centre” NGO used the tactic of sending multiple letters to higher and lower levels of the same state structures, which called for more scrupulous responses from officials.

Policy dialogue events also served as an essential tool for all cases and were particularly important in those where consensus was necessary for the successful advancement of the campaign. These events provided a platform for the discussion of viewpoints, demands and recommendations, possible alternatives and their outcomes. Public dialogue events covered a wide range of events, from community meetings to public hearings in parliament. Specific examples include the Legislative Agenda Advocacy Days and the Civil Society Day in the National Assembly, which provided CSOs with an opportunity to express their concerns and suggestions on any topic and be heard by members of parliament. For an effective dialogue, competent and well-grounded speech is particularly important. As an outcome of these events, agreements can be reached and/or MoUs signed to reinforce collaboration around the issue discussed.

Online tools provide an opportunity for the wide dissemination of a cause, mobilisation of a large number of supporters and implementation of all the above-mentioned activities through online channels. In particular, online flash-mobs are organised on social networks to attract public attention to the issue, often through visual tools such as photo campaigns with posters, as was the case with Mets Ayrum. Facebook groups provide platforms for online discussions and information exchange, such as the Stop Changes to Maternity Law campaign. Youtube provides an opportunity to disseminate stories around the world, which helped the “Shirak Centre” NGO to gain significant financial support from Diaspora.

Thus, though the package of tools is similar for different cases, different use of the same tools is observed depending on the purpose, level, scope, and other features of the campaign.

The “human factor”

Taking all the factors of successful advocacy campaigns described above, it might be surprising that many of the study’s participants noted that in Armenia, the human factor is the most important prerequisite for successful advocacy. The personality of the campaign leader, as well as the personality of the authority targeted, is crucial for the outcome of a campaign.

In fact, this statement does not contradict the factors outlined above; indeed, the professionalism and competency of the leader and key people involved in any campaign are quite important. However, the case studies showed that apart from professional qualifications, the commitment of the leader, his/her ability to motivate and their personal skills are very important. In the case of the Mets Ayrum campaign, the coordinator had a long experience of promoting and training in community activism, and himself was part of the community that mobilised around the NGO. The leader of the “Shirak Centre” NGO is highly respected among the community, NGOs and state structures that worked with him as an extremely committed person ready to provide his time and efforts to help people. The coordinator of the Stop Changes to Maternity Leave Law initiative contributed her competence, time and enthusiasm, and the success of the campaign would hardly have been possible without her efforts. The members of the IDC are well-known and respected, which ensured the organisation’s reputation. And in the case of the MCH Alliance – a strong and institutionalised network with many developed organisations and the support of a large international organisation – the personality of the coordinator was highly appreciated, given her enthusiasm and persistence. According to the study’s participants, the sustainability of this network would very much depend on the further leadership.

In some cases, the personalities of the authorities targeted by the campaigns are also mentioned as decisive for the final outcome. Professional relationships in Armenian society are often based on personal connections, and collaboration with the government is not an exception. As shown in other research, though there are many institutional platforms initiated for strengthening CSO-government collaboration, the openness of a particular governmental body towards collaboration and CSO suggestions, as well as the process and outcome of an advocacy campaign, often depends on the discretion

of a particular official³⁶. Accordingly, all the representatives of Alliance member NGOs indicated that they apply face-to-face meetings for lobbying their initiatives, and contribute much time and effort to cultivating individual officials. This observation leads us to the conclusion that face-to-face lobbying initiatives can serve as an effective advocacy tool if competently organised, while a general recommendation to all the stakeholders would be to ensure institutional mechanisms for sustaining the achievements of campaigns.

Summary

The presented case studies illustrate strategies, tools and skills that can be effective or not in different contexts and areas of policy-making. Thus, it is expected that CSOs can make use of the provided examples and define their campaign strategies based on their knowledge, experience and specific situation. At the same time, some highlights of the report are summarised below, to be taken into account by CSOs in order to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns and by international organisations to help define their funding strategies and select projects to fund.

1. Collaboration with other organisations enhances the expertise of those serving the campaign, as it allows for the involvement of more professionals in related areas. Furthermore, due to the mobilisation of a larger group of supporters this collaboration gives additional weight to the campaign and thus to the chances of being heard by the decision-makers.
2. Extensive public outreach of the campaign, including public awareness-raising events and broad media coverage are all needed both for local and national level campaigns, as they help to increase the significance of the issue among the general public and thus contribute to greater pressure being placed on decision-makers, as well as increased control of the related decision-making processes.
3. The involvement of beneficiaries – whether directly or through collection of beneficiary stories – provides a more sound basis for the campaign and increases the likelihood of it being taken into account by the authorities.

The beneficiary's involvement is closely linked with needs assessment: a proper analysis of the problem and its formulation in terms of the needs of a specific social group ensure that the CSO and/or campaign gains more attention and positive perception by the public and decision-makers.

4. Linking the campaign issue to social values is one of the decisive factors for a campaign's success. Though the campaign's issues may not always be popular for society as a whole, it is useful to find these connections and construct the campaign on national priorities and/or social values.
5. Along with raising an issue and drawing attention to a problem, the formulation and presentation of specific recommendations for specific state agencies provides more chances for the campaign to succeed.
6. The personality of the campaign leader seems to be one of the keys to success; thus, CSOs can rely on the most committed, energetic and respected people in the organisation to lead the campaign.
7. The assistance of international organisations – not only through financial resources, but also expertise and support in negotiations with authorities – can be critical for CSOs to enhance the effectiveness of their work and achieve success.

³⁶ CSO Sustainability Index Armenia 2013, CDPF/USAID, June 2014; CSO Engagement in Policy-Making and Monitoring of Policy Implementation: Needs and Capacities, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2014



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LIST OF RESPONDENTS

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3. Gayane Vardanyan, Advocacy and Transparency Technical Adviser, Counterpart International Armenia
4. Yevgenia Atayan, Head of Housing and Communal Policy Department, RA Ministry of Urban Development
5. Anahit Yesayan, Press Secretary of the Minister, RA Ministry of Urban Development

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2. Smbat Sayan, the deputy chairman of the State Social Security Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
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