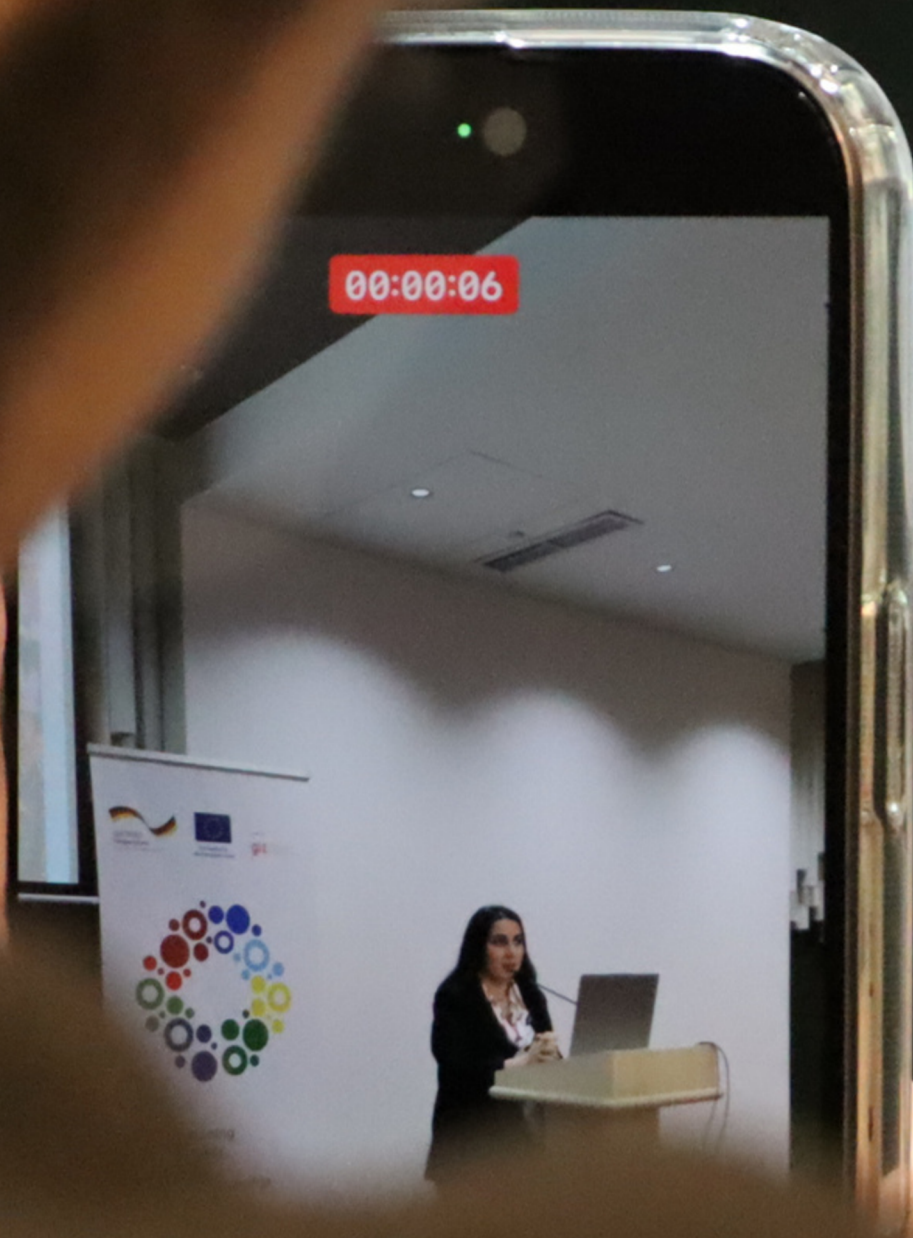


CSOs4SLD

Success Stories

CSOs for Sustainable Local
Development in Armenia





Success Stories

Welcome to the booklet summarizing the achievements and results of the "CSOs4SLD2: CSOs for Sustainable Local Development" project.

The primary objective of this project is to promote sustainable and inclusive local development across various regions of Armenia. We have specifically focused on enhancing the capacities and increasing the visibility of community-based CSOs by establishing close cooperation with local stakeholders.

This booklet showcases the projects of 10 community-based organizations that received grant support within the framework of CSOs4SLD2. Each page tells a new success story, highlighting both the personal and professional growth of the organizations, as well as the positive changes they have brought to their communities. We believe that the work of these grantees lays the foundation for a new culture of local development and the further empowerment of civil society.

This publication is produced with the financial support of the German Government and the European Union within the framework of «CSOs4SLD2. CSOs for Sustainable Local Development (Grant administration)» project implemented by "NGO Center" Civil Society Development NGO, as part of 'Strengthening Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries' project implemented by GIZ. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the "NGO Center" and do not necessarily reflect the views of the German Government, the EU or GIZ.

Success Story



From Silence to Solidarity: How Martha and women of Vanadzor rediscovered their voice and unity

For a long time, the daily lives of displaced women from Artsakh and local residents in Vanadzor were filled with trauma, isolation, and uncertainty. For Martha Poghosyan, who was displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, adapting to a new environment was a challenge not only socially but also psychologically. Initially, there was noticeable tension and disagreement between local and Artsakh women. They struggled to find common ground, remaining closed off within their own pain and problems.

Everything began to change for Martha thanks to the project "Rights, Voice, and Confidence for Women," implemented by the "Arpi" NGO. During psychological support groups, sand tray therapy, and handicraft sessions, the most important thing happened: the women began to share their emotions. At that moment, the barriers collapsed. They realized that their experiences were the same. The atmosphere of conflict transformed into empathy, and the women went from being strangers to supportive friends.

"At first, there was tension and disagreement between the local and Artsakh women, but during the psychological group sessions, when we started to share our emotions, everything changed. We realized that our pain is the same, and we began to support one another. Today, we are not just teammates, but friends who understand each other," notes Martha.

The project also brought unexpected positive changes. The involvement of children who attended the handicraft classes with their mothers turned into full-scale art therapy, which significantly improved and smoothed mother-child relationships.

This project also became a turning point for the "Arpi" NGO itself. With the expert's support, the organization's strategic plan was revised, allowing it to become more resilient and ready to respond to the new challenges faced by its beneficiaries.

Today, "Arpi" NGO is a platform where trauma is transformed into strength, and individual voices into collective confidence.



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Success Story



“HEBA” NGO

From Idea to Influence: How the “Resilient Alaverdi” Project Strengthened HEBA NGO and Its Community Role

Community development often begins with a simple idea but real impact emerges when that idea mobilizes people and builds lasting structures. The “Resilient Alaverdi” project is a powerful example of how targeted support can transform both a community and the organization working within it.

Through this grant, the “HEBA” Social-Educational NGO not only implemented a successful initiative but also significantly strengthened its institutional capacity and role in the Alaverdi community. The project enabled the organization to move beyond service delivery and position itself as a trusted facilitator of inclusive, community-driven development processes.

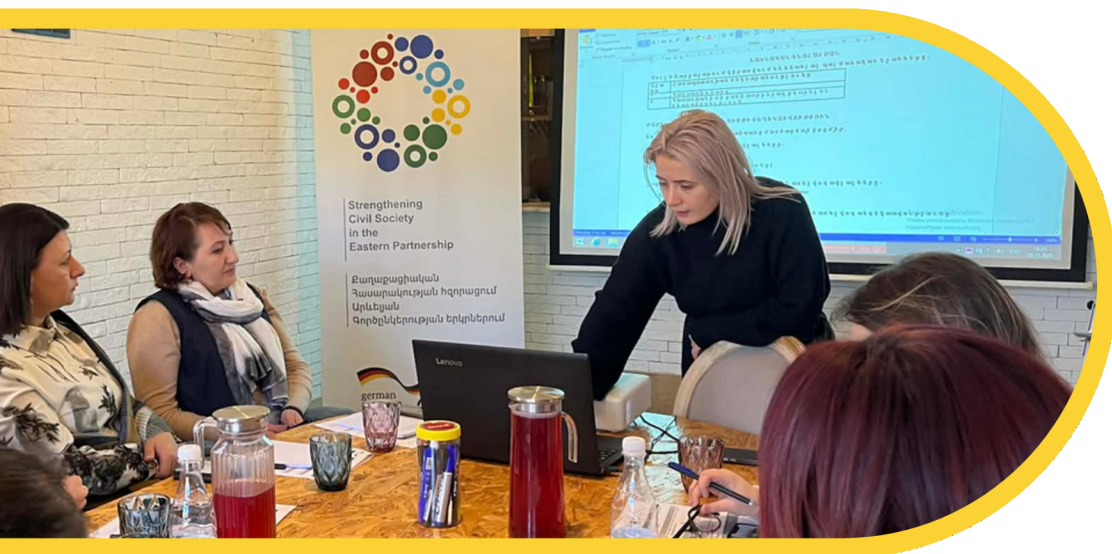
A key milestone of the project was the development of the Community Social Development Plan a strategic document grounded in real needs and shaped through broad participation. The process brought together 84 service providers and beneficiaries from four major settlements, creating a unique platform for dialogue, collaboration, and joint decision-making. This inclusive approach resulted in a shared vision for the community and clearly defined priorities for future social development.

For HEBA NGO, this process was transformative. The organization strengthened its competencies in participatory planning, stakeholder engagement, and facilitation of multi-actor processes. Managing such a complex, community-wide initiative enhanced the team’s project management, coordination, and communication skills key capacities for scaling future interventions.

At the same time, the project expanded HEBA’s network and credibility. By working closely with diverse community groups and stakeholders, the organization built stronger partnerships and reinforced its position as a reliable and relevant local actor. Many project participants transitioned from passive beneficiaries to active contributors, further deepening community ownership of development processes.

Beyond immediate results, the project contributed to creating a sustainable ecosystem for collaboration and growth where community members are better equipped to engage, voice their needs, and shape local development.

The “Resilient Alaverdi” experience demonstrates that when capacity building and community engagement go hand in hand, projects can achieve far more than short-term outcomes. They can strengthen organizations, empower communities, and lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable change.



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Success Story



Towards the Digital World: How Lori DMO helped Sona find her professional path

For years, Sona Saghatlyan struggled to find her place in the labor market. Although she was deeply interested in digital marketing, uncertainty, limited practical experience, and a lack of confidence held her back from taking the next step.

Everything changed when Sona joined the educational program of Lori DMO (Destination Management Organization). What began as a learning opportunity soon became a defining turning point in her professional journey.

The program offered more than just theory—it created a space where knowledge met practice. Through hands-on experience, Sona developed essential skills in strategic thinking, copywriting, and social media management. As she worked on real projects, her confidence grew, and the barriers that once held her back began to disappear.

Today, Sona is a digital marketing and content specialist at a leading marketing agency. She applies her expertise in storytelling, audience analysis, and data-driven strategies while working with well-known brands, delivering real impact through her work.

The impact of the program extended beyond employment. Alongside her full-time role, Sona began receiving collaboration offers from other organizations—clear evidence of the strong demand for her skills.

Sona's journey reflects the true power of targeted educational support. What once felt like uncertainty has transformed into confidence, opportunity, and professional growth. Her story stands as a compelling example of how the right guidance can turn potential into a thriving career in the digital world.

“This program was a key milestone in developing my practical skills. Today, I confidently apply everything I learned in a large marketing company and feel competitive in the field,” Sona shares.



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Success Story



“Lusastgh” NGO

From Participant to “Mini-Expert”:

Erik Asulyan’s Journey Toward Civic Voice

For a long time, Erik Asulyan, a young person with a disability from the Lori region, felt that local decision-making processes were distant and difficult to access. Discussions about municipal budgets and community priorities seemed complicated and reserved for specialists or officials. Like many other young people with disabilities, Erik rarely saw himself reflected in these processes or believed that his voice could make a difference.

Everything began to change when Erik joined an initiative supported through the “Participate, get involved” project. The project aimed to encourage youth with disabilities to participate in community decision-making, particularly by helping them understand and engage with local budget processes.

At first, the topic felt technical and intimidating. But through a series of interactive trainings, mentoring sessions, and practical exercises, Erik gradually began to understand how community budgets are formed, how spending priorities are decided, and how citizens can influence those decisions.

With growing confidence, Erik started to analyze local budget information together with other participants and develop practical proposals for more inclusive social programs in their community. For the first time, he was not just observing decisions being made - he was actively contributing ideas and engaging with local authorities.

This experience led to a profound personal shift. “The greatest revelation for me was that, as a young person with a disability, I can be a real participant in community reforms. Today, I feel like a ‘little expert’ because I already know how decisions are made and how I can influence my community’s budget to make it more inclusive.”

For Erik, the project was not only about learning technical skills. It was about discovering his own voice and realizing that his perspective matters. What once felt like a closed system has become a space where he can confidently participate and advocate for change.

Today, Erik represents a new generation of young civic actors in Lori young people who are not only included in conversations about their communities, but who actively help shape them. His journey shows how the right opportunities, knowledge, and encouragement can transform self-doubt into leadership and meaningful civic engagement.



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Success Story



"We" Youth NGO

When Sustainable Development Goals Become a Tool to Make Your Voice Heard: Nare's Civic Journey

For Nare Ohanyan, a young woman from the Gyulagarak community in Lori, engaging in local decision-making once felt distant and out of reach. Although she had attended various trainings, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seemed abstract important, but disconnected from her everyday reality.

That perspective changed when Nare joined the project "Sustainable Development Goals in Communities: Challenges and Solutions," implemented by the "We" Youth NGO in Lori. What began as a learning experience quickly evolved into a journey of discovery and empowerment.

Through the program, Nare came to understand that the SDGs are not just global commitments, but practical tools that shape daily life from environmental responsibility to community well-being. This understanding deepened during a participatory community mapping process, where she worked alongside women and girls to identify real local challenges.

The experience sparked a profound shift. Nare not only gained knowledge she gained confidence and a sense of agency.

Motivated to share what she had learned, Nare and her peers launched zero-budget awareness campaigns across Gyulagarak, Stepanavan, and Tashir. Using a peer-to-peer approach, they translated complex global goals into accessible messages through social media initiatives and interactive educational board games. Their work proved that meaningful impact does not always require significant resources only initiative and commitment.

A defining moment in Nare's journey came at the final forum in Stepanavan, where she stepped into the role of a public speaker for the first time. No longer just a participant, she confidently represented youth voices in a panel discussion, contributing her perspectives on community development and civic engagement.

"At first, I never imagined that the SDGs could be so closely connected to our daily lives. This experience gave me knowledge, but more importantly, it revealed my inner strength. Through our campaigns, I realized that even without large resources, young people can create real change in their communities."

Today, Nare's story is a powerful reminder that the SDGs are not distant global concepts they are practical tools for civic participation, leadership, and change. With the right support, young people like Nare can transform awareness into action and become active shapers of their communities.



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Strengthening Civil Society in the EaP Countries

CSOs4SLD

Success Story



From Awareness to Action: How the Grant Strengthened Youth for Change NGO

Before receiving this grant, Youth for Change NGO was actively engaged in promoting democracy, protecting human rights, and empowering young people - core pillars of its mission. However, moving from awareness-raising to direct involvement in participatory governance, particularly participatory budgeting, represented a new and ambitious step for the organization. Through the implementation of the project, Youth for Change underwent a significant transformation both in its programming and institutional capacity.

"We were able to move beyond simply raising awareness. We stepped into a much more practical and meaningful space, where ordinary citizens especially young people not only learned about their rights but actively participated in real decision-making processes that affect their daily lives," notes the head of the organization, Grigor Janikyan.

A key achievement of the project was the organization's expanded geographic reach. By working in multiple regions beyond Yerevan, Youth for Change strengthened its field presence and built direct relationships with diverse communities. This experience enhanced the team's ability to understand local needs, adapt approaches to different contexts, and foster trust-based engagement with community members. The grant played a critical role in strengthening the organization's internal capacities. Throughout the project, the team developed practical expertise in facilitation, participatory methodologies, and inclusive community engagement. They also gained hands-on experience in designing and implementing complex, community-driven initiatives - significantly improving their project management and operational skills.

As a result, Youth for Change is now better equipped to design impactful interventions, engage stakeholders effectively, and contribute to democratic governance processes at both local and national levels.

Beyond organizational growth, the project demonstrated the transformative power of participatory budgeting. It proved to be not only a governance tool but also a mechanism for youth empowerment, increased civic engagement, and rebuilding trust between citizens and local authorities. Young participants evolved from passive observers into active citizens who recognize the value and impact of their voices.

"This grant support did not just fund activities it strengthened our organization. It gave us the tools, knowledge, and confidence to grow and to create meaningful change in communities," the team reflects.

Today, Youth for Change NGO stands as a stronger, more resilient organization capable of scaling its work, building new partnerships, and advancing participatory practices across Armenia. The project has laid a solid foundation for future initiatives and reinforced the organization's role as an active contributor to democratic development in the country.



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Success Story



From First Steps to Real Impact: Zhanna's Journey into Civic Monitoring

When Zhanna Hakobyan first joined a training organized by the "Asparez" Journalists' Club, she had little idea that it would mark the beginning of her journey into civic engagement. Like many young people from the Kotayk region, she was eager to learn but had no prior experience in monitoring local governance or understanding how complex areas like community taxation actually work in practice.

That changed within the framework of pilot project focused on strengthening transparency and accountability in the Abovyan community.

Together with a group of motivated young people many of them young women from Artsakh Zhanna took part in specialized training on field monitoring. For the first time, she and her peers explored how local taxes and duties are calculated, collected, and managed, and how these processes directly affect community development.

"During the training, we gained the necessary knowledge. This was our first time conducting monitoring on this topic, and it was very interesting," Zhanna recalls.

Equipped with new skills, the group moved from learning to action. They conducted a detailed study of the community's taxation base and actual collections, comparing real data with municipal records. Their work uncovered important insights highlighting gaps, identifying opportunities to increase local revenues, and pointing to areas where systems could be improved.

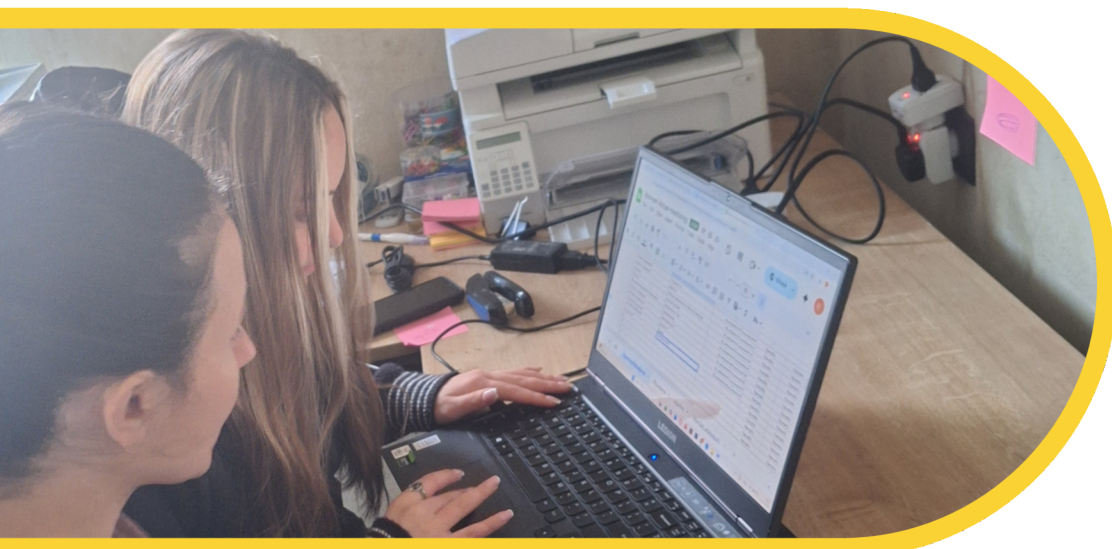
But the impact did not stop at data collection.

The findings were compiled into a comprehensive report, which was then presented to municipal officials, city council members, and civil society representatives. For Zhanna and her peers, this was a defining moment: their work was not just an exercise it was contributing to real discussions on improving local governance.

What began as a first experience soon turned into a pathway for continued engagement.

Building on the knowledge and confidence gained, Zhanna and her team are now involved in a new initiative by the "Asparez" Journalists' Club, conducting similar monitoring in three additional communities across Armenia. Their role has evolved from learners to practitioners actively contributing to transparency and accountability at the local level.

Zhanna's story shows how targeted support and hands-on experience can transform curiosity into capability. Today, she is not just a participant in a project she is part of a growing network of young civic actors shaping more transparent and responsive communities.



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Success Story

Nina, a young resident of Mets Mantash, once viewed the community budget as something distant, technical, and difficult to understand. Like many citizens, she saw it as a closed system numbers without meaning or relevance to her daily life.

This perspective began to change when she attended participatory budgeting information sessions organized by the "Compass" NGO. For the first time, Nina discovered that a community budget is not just a document to observe, but a tool to understand, question, and influence. This realization became a turning point, motivating her to take a more active role by joining the organization as an intern.

Through her involvement in the project, Nina participated in a series of targeted trainings designed to build practical skills in budget analysis. Step by step, she developed the ability to navigate budget structures, distinguish expenditure priorities, and understand the policy decisions behind financial allocations. More importantly, she learned how to apply analytical tools to interpret and communicate complex budget data.

"Before the project, the community budget was just a aggregation of numbers to me, but now I understand that it is the key to community development," says Nina.

Today, Nina is able to independently analyze budget data, simplify complex information, and present it in a clear and accessible way. What was once an abstract concept has become a practical tool she uses to contribute to her community.



From a Passive Citizen to a Budget Analyst: Nina Can Now Simplify and Analyze Community Budgets

"The most important thing is that I now know how to use this knowledge for the community, rather than just keeping it for myself," she notes.

Her journey did not stop with learning. Nina is already applying her skills in practice. She is currently engaged in another initiative as a participatory budgeting process assistant, working closely with local government representatives in Artik. In this role, she supports efforts to make budgeting processes more transparent, inclusive, and responsive to citizens' needs.

Nina's story illustrates how targeted capacity-building initiatives can transform passive citizens into active contributors. By equipping young people with practical skills and opportunities to engage, projects like this not only build individual competencies but also strengthen participatory governance at the local level.

"Every skill acquired in the participatory budgeting process brings me one step closer to bringing change to the community. I am glad I had the opportunity to take that step with the 'Compass' NGO team," Nina concludes.



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Success Story



Direct Democracy NGO

When Knowledge Turns into Action: Mkrtich's Journey Towards Preserving Lake Sevan

For Mkrtich, a resident of the Gegharkunik settlement in the Gavar community near the Gavaraget River, environmental protection has always been more than an abstract idea; it has been a personal commitment. For years, he actively participated in local initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the challenges facing Lake Sevan and advocating for solutions. Yet, despite his engagement, he had never fully understood the deeper, less visible causes of the lake's pollution.

This perspective changed when Mkrtich joined the project "SevanSan – Sevan: Sanitary Supervision," implemented by the "Direct Democracy" NGO. The program opened a new dimension of understanding for him, combining environmental education with legal knowledge and practical monitoring skills.

Through the training, Mkrtich began to see environmental protection not only as activism, but as a structured process requiring data, analysis, and informed action. One of the key insights that reshaped his understanding was the role of phosphorus outflow as one of the contributing factors to Lake Sevan's pollution, an issue he had not previously considered in depth.

Gradually, his perception shifted from general concern to focused, informed engagement. He began to analyze environmental challenges more systematically, understanding where intervention is most needed and how citizen action can be more effective.

"Before this project, I was active, but I didn't have enough knowledge to fully understand the depth of the problem. Now I know what to focus on and how I can contribute more meaningfully to the preservation of Sevan," Mkrtich reflects.

What began as a learning experience soon turned into a redefinition of his civic role. Equipped with new knowledge and practical skills, Mkrtich is now better prepared to engage in local environmental initiatives, contributing not only to the protection of Lake Sevan but also to improving the ecological condition of the Gavaraget River.

For the "Direct Democracy" NGO, the project also marked an important milestone: it was their first intervention in the Gegharkunik region. This experience expanded the organization's geographic reach and laid the groundwork for future initiatives in new communities.

Mkrtich's story demonstrates that when awareness is combined with practical skills and targeted capacity building, civic engagement becomes more focused, more informed, and significantly more impactful, transforming concerned citizens into effective environmental actors.



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Success Story

How do you make complex environmental issues understandable and even exciting for young people? For the team at “Pando” Community Development NGO in the Akhuryan community of Shirak region, this question became the starting point for innovation and change.

In response, the organization set out to develop its first-ever educational board game an interactive tool designed not only to educate, but also to actively engage rural youth in identifying and addressing environmental challenges in their communities.

This was more than a programmatic activity for “Pando.” It was a bold experiment in participatory education. With limited resources but strong ambition, the team aimed to create a locally relevant, youth co-designed learning tool that would transform environmental education into an interactive and meaningful experience.

A key element of the process was youth co-creation. During an environmental camp, young participants became directly involved in designing, testing, and shaping the game. Among them was Mariam from Akhuryan village, who played an active role in both development and piloting. For Mariam, the experience went far beyond game design. It became a space for civic discovery and empowerment.

“During the camp, I realized that we, the youth in the community, are not just observers we can become real participants by speaking up about community issues,” Mariam shares.

Through the process, she also gained experience in identifying environmental problems, discussing them openly, and using the www.teselem.am platform to raise issues and present them to local self-government bodies. This transformed her understanding of civic responsibility and participation.



“Pando” NGO

From Learning to Action: How “Pando” NGO Turned Environmental Education into an Engaging Youth Experience

“Bringing issues forward through the platform and presenting them to local self-government was an important experience that helped me become a more responsible citizen,” she adds.

For “Pando” NGO, the development of the educational game marked a significant institutional milestone. The organization successfully created its first interactive learning tool based on the peer-to-peer approach, turning environmental education into an engaging, youth-driven process.

Beyond the game itself, the project strengthened the ecological knowledge and practical skills of rural youth in Shirak. It also supported community-level environmental assessments, enabling young people to analyze local issues and communicate their findings to local self-government institutions bridging the gap between youth voices and decision-making processes.

Reflecting on the experience, project coordinator Shushanik emphasizes the broader organizational transformation:

“The process of creating our first educational game showed us that learning can be colorful, engaging, and impactful. We saw how youth move from passive observers to active participants and eventually become responsible, proactive citizens.”

Today, “Pando” NGO’s first educational game stands as more than a product it is a model of how innovative, participatory tools can strengthen environmental awareness, empower rural youth, and foster meaningful civic engagement at the local level.



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“NGO Center” Civil Society Development NGO

WEB SITE

www.ngoc.am

E-MAIL

info@ngoc.am

PHONE

+374 91743315

ADDRESS

6/1 Khorenatsi St.,
Vanadzor, Armenia