

LEADERSHIP CLUBS

Putting Democratic Principles Into Practice
Through Civic Education Among Armenia's Youth



Background

- Though Armenia is a sovereign state with a democratic constitution and institutions, there remains a significant gap between principles and practice. Many analysts attribute this disparity to the historical fact that Armenia, in particular, and the Armenian Nation, in general, have little or no direct experience with self-government and democratic processes. Simply put, as a people, we can “talk the talk” but not necessarily “walk the walk.”
- Nonetheless, the common response to this dilemma continues to suggest that putting the principles of democracy into practice will take several generations to accomplish and that democracy is an ongoing work in progress with no time limits.
- This begs the question: which generation of Armenia’s citizens will be the one to become politically mature enough to actually practice democracy in life rather than in theory? We believe that, after two decades, we must begin gathering such momentum with the current generation of Armenia’s youth.
- Since 1999, there has been a formal curriculum of social sciences for grades 8-9 in Armenia’ schools and civic education and human rights studies are a part of the curriculum. However, the current emphasis on political and social studies in the formal curriculum restricts opportunities for developing important skills and experiences that cultivate leadership, e.g. the ability to persuade, negotiate and provide constructive critical appraisals of issues and events that impact their lives, community and nation. (Poghosyan & Sargsyan, 2012)
- A study published by the Jefferson Institute notes that while there were changes in the education system of Armenia, skills like critical

thinking and cooperative interaction are sometimes taught and practiced in extracurricular projects created by non-governmental organizations. While citizenship education is included in the political science curriculum and is based heavily on theory, the study urges educators to equally focus on skills development.

- For the abovementioned reasons, we believe it is critically important to create and support solid extracurricular projects designed to enhance the civic education and skill development of Armenia's youth.



The Way We See Leadership

- Leadership doesn't necessarily mean to become a president. Leadership happens every day in large and small ways.
- Leadership requires a set of skills, methodologies, and ideas that can be taught, such as introspection, listening skills, sensitivity to cultural and personality differences, decision making, ethics, and social skills
- The Leadership Clubs will help youth understand that they can take the lead in many ways—at home, at school, and in the community. The Clubs will be designed to provide youth with experimental opportunities to create change in themselves and their communities.
- Since the capacity for constructive criticism is an essential requirement for civic engagement in a democratic society (W. Damon, 2011) our Leadership Clubs will heavily focus on developing critical thinking and constructive criticisms skills.



Developing Leadership and Citizenship Skills Among Armenia's Youth

- The Council of Europe has defined education for democratic citizenship as “a set of practices and principles aimed at making young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society.”
- The goal of this project is to provide Armenia's youth with the education and practical opportunities to help them become responsible leaders and/or citizens of their country.
- The Leadership Clubs will aim to establish a democratic culture among peers and adults within the schools.
- Youth will learn to value traits like cooperation, honesty, tolerance, and respect.
- Various Club projects and experiences will give them the opportunity to use these virtues for creating a positive change in their communities.



Leadership Clubs Teach

- Social skills and good communication techniques
- Planning and organizing self and others
- Managing multiple projects and deadlines
- Setting goals and making decisions that have positive effects
- Putting their unique skills to good work
- Motivating others
- Following through on a task when others are depending on them
- Working in teams, students will initiate and work on various projects in their communities that will require setting goals and identifying steps to reach them (example: community recycling program). They will write reports on the project and will discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Students will also be asked to outline the leadership skills they used or learned while working on the project.



Program Content Development

- In developing a leadership/civic education program customized to the needs and conditions in Armenia, we will be drawing upon the expertise of diverse professional consultants from the United States/Europe and Armenia. They will provide guidance and specific program activities in the areas of civic education, community organizing, organizational management and sensitivity training, involving listening, negotiating and communications skills.
- We will use a variety of multi-media content to support the programs including translated (either with subtitles or dubbing) of videos, documentaries and interviews showing how communities organize, how good leaders lead and manage, etc.
- There may also be translated feature films (fictional or based on true stories) that show how communities are inspired to lead and make positive change or biopics on famous inspirational leaders.
- The result will be a robust program of activities and exercises that will support the Leadership Club participants in pursuing their projects.

Program Implementation

- Facilitators will be recruited to participate in a 10 day intensive, paid training by professionals from NY and Yerevan.
- At the end of the training the trained Facilitators will have to pass a written test as well as an interview, if failed will have to retake the test after additional unpaid training.
- Trained Facilitators will be assigned to schools where they will start their clubs.
- The clubs will be open to all students ages 15 and up in each school.
- Facilitators will meet with their club once a week for two hours.
- Facilitators will submit written reports at the end of each month discussing their club's activities, accomplishments and challenges.
- Facilitator and student evaluation procedures will be developed to help measure the success of the Leadership Clubs.



Estimated Cost

- Curriculum development - \$10,000 (Four specialists in areas of community organizing, organizational management, civil education and sensitivity training will be hired to develop the curriculum)
- Instructor fees and training costs - \$10,000 (Instructors will train the Facilitators on the curriculum and how to operate the clubs)
- 10 days paid training per Facilitator - \$100 (20 Facilitators or more)
- Stipend per week, per Facilitator - \$25 (The clubs will meet once a week for a total of 32 meetings per year)
- Supplies and tools for each club - \$2,000 (Including a camera, projector & computer)
- Translation of training materials - \$10,000 (subtitles for videos, translation of texts)
- Total - \$88,000 (Based on training of 20 Facilitators and operation of 20 clubs for a year)

Note: After this initial funding each club will cost only \$1000 per year

If funds are raised this year the hiring and training could be conducted next spring/summer and the clubs will start in September of 2015.

Estimated costs are subject to incremental change based on currency exchange rates and availability of service suppliers at the time of purchase. Multiple bids will be solicited whenever possible.