

1. JOINT WORKSHOP OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS YOUTH BANKS



From October 23-25, 2010, young people from Armenian and Azerbaijani Youth Bank (YB) committees came together in Tbilisi to interact and overcome the barriers to communication in place for over two decades due to the unresolved conflict between the two countries. The Georgian YB members also joined them in the Regional Youth Bank meeting. This was a unique chance for YB members in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to meet and discuss their common community projects and learn from each other. Therese Svensson,

a research fellow at the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, conducted a session on "conflict transformation" and Vernon Ringland from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland introduced the principles of change-oriented thinking and sound judgment practices to young grant-makers. Youth Bankers also interacted with young journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan who were running their joint meeting in the scope of the Unbiased E-media program, another cross-border project implemented by EPF.

EPF's Youth Bank project is made possible by the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. The ambassador of Finland, Mr. Petri Salo, accompanied by a delegation from the Finnish Government and EPF President George Zarubin visited young Youth Bankers during the meeting, talked with them about the problems in the Caucasus and was impressed



by the positive atmosphere in the meeting. Novrasta Huseynova from Gyanja Youth Bank, Azerbaijan mentioned; "I never thought I would ever see a real Armenian and that they would be so much exactly the same as my friends..." The cooperation established during the meeting will continue in 2011 in the form of joint projects and other exchange visits.

2. NEW ROUND OF YOUTH-LED GRANTS LAUNCHED!



Youth Bank committees in Armenia continue to use grant-making to engage a broader group of young people in their communities. Nine Youth Bank committees of Armenia have launched a new mini-grants competition. Prior to dissemination of the application forms and promotional campaigns in the regions of Armenia, the Youth Banks prepared



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colorful posters to attract the interest of potential applicants and volunteers. The YB committees received 282 grant proposals, preselected 159, and the authors of 153 of these ideas were interviewed. EPF organized additional workshops for the young applicants to improve the quality of the proposals. The main topics of the pre-approved proposals are related to environmental protection, development of sports activities, human rights protection, blogging, handicrafts and souvenir making and others. After the scoring is finalized, each Youth Bank will finance between four and six community projects.

3. FOOD BOXES FOR FAMILIES LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

Between December 2010 and January 2011, the members of the Gyumri and Yeghegnadzor Youth Banks together with 50 volunteers from colleges and NGOs, initiated a charity collection of food in local supermarkets and shops to be donated to families in extreme poverty in their communities.



The YB members developed flyers describing the collection effort and distributed them to people shopping in the markets. The lists carried an appeal to donate so that their fellow citizens who do not have access to the minimum resources could buy food for the holidays. The charity action was a success for young people: they saw the readiness of local people to contribute and



took pride in being able to change the gloomy routine of the people in need living in their neighborhoods. Around 40 young volunteers participated in the charity event in Gyumri and 15 volunteers in Yeghegnadzor. They were able to collect 390,000 AMD worth of food items and distributed *Food Boxes* to 51 families in Gyumri and Yeghegnadzor.

4. A NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN YOUTH BANKS IN ARMENIA AND YOUTH IN TURKEY



In November 2010, representatives from the Istanbul, Turkey-based Toplum Gönüllüleri NGO and Hurriyet newspaper visited the Youth Bank project in Dilijan, Armenia. As part of EPF's *Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement Project*, three new Youth bank committees will be established in Turkey with the help of Armenian Youth Bank committees. In Dilijan, Turkish

guests met with the local youth, saw how the Youth Bank is working, and asked questions about the benefits and impact of youth projects. YB members were happy to have visitors from the neighboring country, they introduced their methodologies used in grant-making and also how the skills gained increase their chances of employment and their reputation among peers. Turkish partners were impressed by the visit in Armenia which was recorded in the article published in Turkish Hurriyet daily newspaper (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=armenian-youth-become-agents-of-change-2010-12-02>).



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