



“Equal Opportunities for National Minorities and Disadvantaged Groups in Realizing Cultural Rights: Richness through Diversity”

Community Experience Exchange Visit, Fourth Governmental Meeting, Yerevan

“Equal opportunities for national minorities and disadvantaged groups in realizing cultural rights: richness through diversity” project is implemented by Civic Development and Partnership Foundation (CDPF), “NGO Center” Civil Society Development Organization and Ukraine’s GURT Resource Center, with the financial support of the European Union.

The goal of the project is to ensure cultural diversity and support the preservation of national minorities’ cultures by building capacities of leaders of local governments, civil society organizations and cultural institutions in Ukraine and Armenia.

The objectives of the project include:

- Building capacities of leaders of local governments, civil society organizations and cultural institutions for the preservation of national minorities’ cultures in Ukraine and Armenia
- Draft cultural development projects, that will include the needs of national minorities and disadvantaged groups
- Present innovative services for national minorities and disadvantaged groups in the area of culture, based on the network of local community institutions, which was rebuilt by the support of the Social Investment Fund in Ukraine and Armenia
- Strengthen ties and dialogue between Ukraine, Armenia, and Poland in the area of cultural diversity preservation, and create ways of culture accessibility for disadvantaged groups

On April 24-27 of this year, the Ukrainian delegation visited Armenia with the aim of discussing project issues and the experience exchange visit envisaged during the project implementation. The delegation members included GURT Resource Center's Executive Director and Head of the Societal Information Department, Head of the Internal Policy Department of Kiev Regional State Administration, heads of Borodianka and Ivankiv communities and heads of "Doviria" centers located in these communities.

On April 25, the delegation members visited **Tchambarak** (Gegharkunik province) and **Azatan** (Shirak province) communities with the aim of experience exchange on community development, minority governance and cultural initiatives. The delegation met the heads of communities; information about the community, its achievements and challenges were presented. In Tchambarak, the guests became acquainted with the local fine arts and music schools, participated in the concert prepared by the children, met representatives of local organizations. The meetings were held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere; numerous common issues and landmarks of upcoming cooperation were discovered

Within the framework of "Equal opportunities for national minorities and disadvantaged groups in realizing cultural rights: richness through diversity" project, Civic Development and Partnership Foundation (CDPF) and "NGO Center" Civil Society Development Organization organized a round-table discussion on **"The Role of Cultural Initiatives in the Development of Armenia and Ukraine."**

The goal of the event was to discuss cultural initiatives implemented by different organizations in Ukraine and Armenia, the policy of state support in the two countries, national minorities' cultural heritage preservation and community cultural development initiatives, and try to find possibilities of cooperation between the organizations in the two countries. Among the participants of the discussion were GURT Resource Center representatives, Head of the Internal Policy Department of Kiev Regional State Administration, community heads and organization representatives from Ukraine, Assistant to the RA President Narine Gulyan, the RA Government Staff Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs specialist Shushanik Saratikyan, Inna Yerosyan from OSCE Office in Yerevan, national minority representatives Romania Nikolaevna ("Ukraine" Federation of the Ukrainians of Armenia), and Kuzminskaya Alla Bronislawovna ("Polonia" Alliance of the Poles Charity NGO) as well as representatives of different project communities: Vardges Davtyan – Lukashin/Armavir; Margarit Sedrakyan – Metsamor of Hope NGO, Metsamor/Armavir; Kyaram Sharoyan – Shamiram/Aragatsotn; Oleg Dulgaryan – Alaverdi/Lori.

President of “NGO Center” Civil Society Development Organization Margarit Piliposyan, Executive Director of GURT Resource Center Bogdan Maslich, and Head of the Internal Policy Department of Kiev Regional State Administration Petro Zakharchenko gave an opening speech for the event. CDPF Deputy Director Tatevik Margaryan and “NGO Center” Civil Society Development Organization representative Nora Minasyan then presented **“Equal opportunities for national minorities and disadvantaged groups in realizing cultural rights: richness through diversity”** project’s mission, objectives, steps already taken and expected activities. The project presentation was followed by a presentation by the RA Government Staff Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs specialist Shushanik Saratikyan on the policy towards preservation of national minorities cultural values.

During the discussion, special attention was paid to the role of NGOs working in the area of national minorities, the support they receive, existing problems. Among the issues raised were the necessity of capacity-building for organizations dealing with minority affairs, their active involvement in provincial community life. Community representatives expressed their gratitude for the support received through the project, and stressed the importance of capacity-building measures. Among their concerns were the poor condition or the lack of cultural infrastructure in communities, indifference to remote provincial communities by organizations in Yerevan.

Ukrainian community representatives shared their impressions of visits to Armenian communities, attaching great importance to the significance of interaction both in terms of experience exchange and establishing cooperation ties and getting to know the country and its inhabitants.

The event ended in a cordial atmosphere with the expectation of further meetings and cooperation. On the same day, a meeting was held at the office of Civic Development and Partnership Foundation on issues of project management whose agenda included:

- Community plan development, experience of **Borodianka** and **Ivankiv** communities – Lyudmila Boiko and Galina Babich
- A grant contest scheme designed for Ukraine – Bogdan Maslich
- Visibility recommendations – Taras Tymchuk