



Promoting Transparency and Inclusion in Extra-Budgetary Fund Collection and Expenditure Allocation by Schools in Armenia

CSO:	Partnership & Teaching NGO (P&T)
Years:	2010 - 2011
Country:	Six pilot schools in the Syuni and Vazor districts, Republic of Armenia
Amount:	\$32,000 USD
Sector:	1) Controlling Corruption in Delivery of Social Services - Education 2) Improving Governance at local, municipal, state and national levels - Budgeting

Corruption Problem:	Extra-budgetary collection of funds at school level is non-inclusive, lacks transparency and accountability mechanisms
Tools employed:	Survey, Advocacy, Capacity Building, Community Participation, Constructive Engagement, Coalition Building, Structured Consultation Process

Armenia’s secondary schools regularly collect extra-budgetary funds outside and in addition to the budget allocated to them by the government. Assessments of corruption vulnerabilities at this local level of resource generation encouraged the Partnership & Teaching NGO (P&T) to start the ‘Transparent and Accountable School’ project. P&T piloted good governance guidelines, introduced inclusive policies and built stakeholder coalitions to strengthen the education system’s use of funds.

P&T succeeded in testing, documenting and streamlining the process of extra-budgetary fund collection through stakeholder involvement and better governance procedures and was highly successful in advocating for national adoption of better policies. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) approved the proposed guidelines and put forward a plan to adopt the guidelines nation-wide.

Corruption Problem Addressed

Several studies, including a United Nations report from 2007/2008 have identified weaknesses in Armenia’s education system related to the

collection and use of extra-budgetary funds considered to provide additional educational value to students. P&T conducted a survey, documenting that 90% of the 30 schools in the Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions did not maintain basic accounting and cash-flow accounts of the fees collected. Funds are typically collected by school directors and teaching staff and purported to be used for items such as school equipment, repairs and extra-curricular activities such as financial assistance to student clubs.

Most schools had no official policies or procedures governing fund collection and disbursements prior to the intervention. School boards, teacher councils and parent councils were neither involved nor informed about the amount of funds collected and the allocation of funds spent. Existing legislation was insufficient, providing ample opportunity for the misappropriation of funds.

Actions Taken by P&T

Initially, P&T conducted a baseline survey to identify the depth and nature of the corruption vulnerabilities to be solved. Interviews were done

with representatives of the target schools, the MoES, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and other stakeholders involved. P&T started collaborating with existing Advocacy Assistance Centers, representatives of the NIE, the Armenian Finance Administration and other NGOs to develop inclusive good governance transparency procedures. The CSO started involving school boards, parents, teachers and student councils at the six pilot schools. Teachers at each school were invited to participate in three-day trainings on the theme of 'Schools without Corruption' and a variety of forums were held on the topic involving again all of the stakeholders concerned.



P&T has set up a variety of participatory learning and Training of Trainers events for all stakeholders involved.

P&T fostered community awareness through an information campaign, involved the media and was successful in securing television broadcasts explaining the problem and the supported procedures for remedy. Generating community awareness was an important prerequisite for both meaningful capacity building as well as coalition-building exercises between all stakeholders. P&T conducted post-intervention surveys to measure the impact of the different campaign elements.

The CSO was careful to build a highly constructive relationship with the MoES and other stakeholders such as the Armenian National Assembly Legal

Committee. The recommendation for approval of the guidelines through this committee contributed to the approval of the procedures by the Minister and the ministry's subsequent recommendation for implementing the procedures in schools nationwide.

Messages of support for the procedures were solicited from state educational institutions, national assembly members, regional educational departments, and educational NGOs. A legislative discussion day initiative was organized and the discussions centered around the proposed changes to legislation on secondary education.

Impact and Results Achieved

P&T has achieved notable – if not outstanding results – within a one-year time frame.

- ✓ The post-intervention survey revealed a significant increase in stakeholders' awareness of rights and procedures, as well as increased participation throughout the six pilot schools as well as important additional knowledge points now put to use by all stakeholders involved.
- ✓ The MoES has submitted its recommendation and approval of the proposed policy to the Ministry of Law – an important step required for the identified procedures to become law.
- ✓ World Vision, an International NGO, has agreed to scale up the project to 24 village schools.
- ✓ Both the MoES and the NIE have recommended and now support training for student and parent council members regarding statutory obligations on the process of extra-budgetary fund procedures throughout schools in Armenia.

Another indirect impact has been the systematic strengthening of a continued and constructive relationship between P&T and key officials in the MoES and the NIE. The continued collaboration has



led to the approval of new versions of student council charters, approved by MoES in April 2011.

While the project has been highly successful, a desirable next step would be the monitoring of the implementation progress of the new procedures regarding the extra-budgetary collection and use of funds throughout all schools in the Republic of Armenia.

Documentation

Project completion reports (PCRs) and Project completion assessments (PCAs) can be accessed at www.ptfund.org under the “Where-we-work” tab.

P&T’s website can be accessed at <http://www.gumiso.am/eng/transparent.html>

For more information, please contact info@gumiso.am

UNDP’s 2007/2008 report ‘Strengthening Awareness and Response in Exposure of Corruption in Armenia - Findings of the Anti-corruption Participatory Monitoring Conducted in Health and Education Sectors by Civil Society Anti-corruption Groups’ can be accessed at http://www.un.am/en/Publications_UNDP