



NGO STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

World Learning/Armenia

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WORLD LEARNING

**NGO STRENGTHENING PROGRAM
ARMENIA**

FINAL REPORT

August 2000 through December 2004

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CONTENTS

I.	Executive Summary	3
II.	Introduction	5
III.	The World Learning NGO Strengthening Program (WL/NSP) Program activities and results	
(A.)	Themes and Directions	5
(B)	Technical Program Components and Content	6
(B.i)	Support to NGOs in the Marzes beyond Yerevan	8
(B.ii)	Support to advanced NGOs throughout Armenia	9
(C)	Improving the general legal and regulatory framework for NGOs.....	11
(D)	Increased NGO networking and cooperation with other sectors	11
(E)	Exit and sustainability strategy.....	12
IV.	WL/NSP departmental activities and achievements made in collaboration with Armenian NGOs and USAID funded implementing partners	
(A)	Grant cycles and awards.....	12
(B)	Regulatory and legal framework in Armenia	16
(B.i)	Legislation	17
(B.ii)	Legal consultations	21
(B.iii)	Network of Lawyers	22
V.	Training and Technical Assistance	
(A)	Training and technical assistance provided through WL/NSP	22
(B)	Technical assistance to NGOs through the International Executive Service Corps (IESC).....	26
(C)	Recruitment of participants for training and consultations.....	26
(D)	Measuring the results, impact and successes	27
VI.	Advocacy: From lobbying to civic action through NGOs	
(A)	Introduction and perspectives on this long term and complex process	30
(B)	Results of WL/NSP assistance to advocacy NGOs	35
VII.	The Measure of NGO development and the Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI)	
(A)	The institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI): structure and application	38
(B)	Impact of WL/NSP assistance on grantees as indicated by IAI analyses	39
VIII.	Information and communications technology: Its role and impact on WL/NSP assistance to NGOs	
(A)	ICT capacity building at WL/NSP	40
(B)	Creating and further developing the WL/NSP website	40
(C)	A comprehensive data base on Armenian NGOs	42
(D)	Additional databases	42
(E)	Information and Public Relations at WL/NSP	43

I. Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the activities and achievements of the World Learning NGO Strengthening Program implemented in Armenia between August 2000 and December 2004. The goal was to assist Armenian WL/NSP NGOs to become broader based and more effective. This was achieved by providing assistance in the form of training, technical assistance and grant making to nascent NGOs in the Marzes and to more sophisticated entities, usually but not exclusively in Yerevan, for advocacy actions and other more specialized projects dealing with, for example, anti-corruption, national Presidential elections and domestic violence.

Over four years, 180 grants valued at \$2 million were awarded. This financial assistance resulted in measurable organizational development taking place among NGOs. For example, advocacy NGOs moved towards a "consolidated" stage of development in terms of their organizational maturity level. On the more technical advocacy level, NGOs moved to a "late developing" and "early consolidating" stage. In terms of NGO scores on the Institutional Analysis Instrument scale, a World Learning organizational development tool adapted by the project, these increased from around 2 to just above 2.5; this is quite a significant change in institutional sophistication and ability. The general conclusion which can be made is that the Armenian NGO sector, especially that part which received grant support, has demonstrated considerable positive development since 2001. Regarding advocacy, the WL/NSP second NGO sector assessment of 2004 which looked at the developmental changes which occurred over the project's last four years noted that:

"NGOs in 2001 generally had little idea about western style advocacy, although most NGO leaders reported frequent personal interaction with government, especially in the regions outside of Yerevan. In 2004, NGOs exhibit greater knowledge about advocacy and understanding of campaigns to promote legislative changes.

There have been a number of notable advocacy successes identified by Opinion Leaders; the most frequently mentioned was the Law on Mass Media, as well as different legislative regulations for disabled and handicapped. The Government at the national level and the National Assembly are starting to include NGOs in committees and task forces. Government at the local level is more responsive and positive to NGO suggestions and requests, especially in several Marzes such as Lori and Syunik."

Trainings and technical assistance were integral aspects of the project's assistance package. Sixty (60) technical interventions were provided by International Executive Service Corps Volunteer Executives (IESC VEs) to over 1,000 NGO representatives. The focus on generic training conducted by VEs shifted, with consultations and hands-on mentoring becoming the norm by the end of the program. Local trainers assumed total responsibility for generic training by the end of the program. Over 490 individual institutional applications were received for the trainings with 202 actually being fulfilled. The WL/NSP program delivered over 3,000 hours of training to 2,000 representatives of over 200 organizations. By supporting the four year WL/NSP strategy, USAID helped implementing organizations to move away from an exclusive reliance on predetermined class room training sessions, toward a combination of class room and a more continuous and individual NGO demand driven consultative relationship between the implementing agency and client NGOs.

Through its legal component WL/NSP provided over 60 legal clinics from which over 1,000 NGO personnel benefited by increasing their knowledge about the laws affecting their operations. Additionally, WL/NSP contributed significantly to the amendments made to the Law on Public Organizations, the Law on Charity and the Law on Foundations. At the close of the program the final changes were being concluded to a draft Law on Volunteerism and draft suggestions for laws

affecting the financial sustainability of NGOs. "Compared to 2001, NGOs are more trustful and report positive working relationships with government, especially at the local level. Government officials express greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution NGOs can and do make. Parliament is accessible to NGOs, and some Parliamentarians have established their own NGOs. Government at the local level is beginning to find ways to provide financial support to NGOs." (Source: NGO Sector Assessment 2004.)

During the course of conducting some 850 Institutional Analyses using World Learning's Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI) adapted by WL/NSP, evidence was gathered which clearly demonstrated that NGOs had progressed and developed to become better organized and better able to provide services to their increasing number of constituents. To better determine the effect of developmental assistance provided to advocacy NGOs, WL/NSP created a more specific and refined tool, the Advocacy Assessment Tool (AAT). Using this tool, WL/NSP determined that these NGOs had become more structured, focused, purposeful and better practitioners of advocacy campaigns involving supporters and constituents.

An important aspect of the program and with a prominence not originally anticipated was the role of information and communications technology. The WL/NSP created the largest NGO database in Armenia with over 1,000 subscribing entities by the end of the program. The importance of the WL/NSP website also grew from what started as an English language site providing basic information about the program to a bilingual resource housing an NGO NewsLine, public announcements, a location for online access to training manuals and a place where NGOs could read draft laws and post commentary. The site was rated, by an independent source, as the most visited and best of any created by the assistance provider and donor community in Armenia.

As was noted in the Armenia NGO Sector Assessment 2004, the following can be stated as a summary of the effects of WL/NSP work in connection with NGO Organizational Development, Effectiveness and Financial Viability:

"Since 2001, the Armenian NGO sector has progressed on many fronts, including its legal status, its professionalism, and a more favorable appreciation of the role of the sector by political and governmental leaders. The new legal framework for NGO registration has had positive effect. Nearly all NGOs are now registered. Boards of Directors appear to be playing a more important role. Mission statements have been developed. Overall, the level of formal organizational structure and professionalism has improved. National NGOs are beginning to develop "decentralized" confederation models of organizational development, thereby giving more autonomy to local offices. Core NGO staffs, largely still voluntary, nevertheless exhibit greater command of basic organizational skills, including financial and budget management. Participation by volunteers in NGO activity has increased, and volunteerism remains high among Armenians in general. They have also become much more skilled at finding grant resources in Armenia and increasingly abroad.

NGOs show greater awareness of the need for a media strategy and have become more adept at developing positive information materials; most NGOs reported good access to and responsiveness by media for coverage. Many NGOs have expanded outreach in terms of numbers of beneficiaries and geographic scope of activities. NGOs are demonstrating increasing technical competence, as more professionals become involved in NGO work.

The sector as a whole is exhibiting greater maturity and stability, with a number of NGOs established in the 1990s demonstrating continuous growth and capability."

Many donors and implementing partners have been, and continue to be, actively supporting and assisting NGOs in improving their structures and systems to be better representatives of civil society.

The role of World Learning in this activity was a significant contributing factor to helping NGOs become broader based and more effective.

II. Introduction

The USAID funded Armenian NGO assistance effort - the NGO Strengthening Program (WL/NSP) - was implemented by World Learning, under Cooperative Agreement No. III-A-00-00-00130-00. Program implementation commenced in August 2000 and closed, following two no-cost extensions granted by the USAID Mission in Armenia, on December 31, 2004.

The WL/NSP program constituted a core activity in USAID's Strategic Objective formulated by the USAID/Armenia Mission to achieve "More Transparent," accountable and Responsive Democratic Governance." The assistance activities of World Learning under a Cooperative Agreement with USAID have produced structural and behavioral changes within the NGO community which have led to the achievement of USAID's IR 1 - "Increased citizen participation in policy development and oversight of government." Also, at the lower level IR 1.2 - "More developed and broad based NGOs" measurable and objectively assessed changes have occurred in the way NGOs are structurally organized and function as entities, as well as the ways in which they interact with peer organizations and government and business. It is also apparent that positive changes are evident in the way that NGOs perceive themselves in relation to their legitimizing constituencies and as to their role in Armenian society transitioning towards more open democratic structures and systems.¹

As a result of the cooperative activities which Armenian NGOs engaged in with WL/NSP, the NGO sector has become noticeably more legitimate and more central to the functioning of civil society, as represented by the Republic's citizenry. Two, nation-wide, surveys (the First and Second NGO Sector Assessments) conducted by World Learning in cooperation with our contractor Management Systems International (MSI), during 2000 and 2004, reported on the basis of their comparative and, possibly quite unique, longitudinal study basis on the nature and dimensions of changes taking place in the NGO sector in Armenia over almost a four year period. The studies indicated that there have been significant and fundamentally irreversible developments in the third sector which bodes well for the transition of society and governance from Soviet centralism and command control towards open, representational and inclusive structures based on western values, standards and behaviors.

III. World Learning NGO Strengthening Program (WL/NSP)

Program activities and results

(A) Themes and Directions

World Learning, in partnership with the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), Management Systems International (MSI) and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) created and implemented a multi-faceted and inclusive approach to NGO strengthening in Armenia. This approach was "customer" driven, appreciative of the evolving and dynamic nature of the transitional socio-political and economic environments present in Armenia and sensitive to the USAID Mission's guidance and directives as these appeared under the terms and conditions of the Cooperative Agreement.

The WL/NSP program engaged with NGOs and other stakeholders including all levels of government, the media and business, and most importantly civil society and its constituent aggregations to increase

¹ World Learning/MSI. See the First and Second NGO Sector Assessments conducted respectively during 2001 and 2004 for more detailed descriptions and commentary as to the status and nature of developments which the sector has experienced during the four year period of the WL/NSP Program

awareness, in the first instance, of the fundamental role of NGOs in social, political and economic transformations. Subsequently, the NGOs as legitimate, representative and democratically structured and operating agents of change were provided by WL/NSP with opportunities through training, workshops, consultancies and one-on-one-mentoring assistance to:

- heighten awareness of their presence within the community they sought to represent and engage with; enhance their capabilities;
- to improve and make more efficient their organizational structures;
- and demonstrate through effecting change that they were successful and therefore worthy of further support and assistance from their constituencies, from government and from international donors.

A key goal of the NGO assistance effort was the creation of trust among its own membership leading towards the formation of a sense of common purpose and generally accepted and practiced action implemented in a cooperative fashion to achieve far reaching, long-term and sustainable effects and desirable change. Among NGOs, the benefits of trust, collaboration, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and legitimacy derived from grass-roots constituent support was emphasized, encouraged through the nature of assistance provided and ultimately institutionalized through the enactment of legislation and regulatory mechanisms favorable to the continued development of an NGO represented civil society.

At a more micro assistance level, WL/NSP provided sustained assistance in helping NGOs become more proficient in understanding their operating environments as defined by constituents, the Armenian Government and by the donors. This led to their better appreciation of how to identify root causes of social concerns and problems, on optimum ways and means of defining and structuring long-term goals and objectives based on these, and on best-practice and cost effective, locally supported ways of addressing these through appropriate and effective actions in all spheres be they service, representational, advocacy or informational and awareness raising.

WL/NSP assistance was contingent on NGOs accepting the value of an integrated and multifaceted approach to the task of helping them become stronger and more effective. Adherence to an as-yet informal code of conduct where ethical values and practices were paramount and that engendered respect for other members of the NGO community, was fundamentally stressed and required. All NGO entities, and particularly grant recipients, were requested and required to participate, in good faith, in all training, workshop, consulting and hands-on-mentoring interventions WL/NSP offered.

WL/NSP operated a comprehensive and geographically widespread NGO assistance initiative which reached and engaged NGOs across Armenia while especially targeting those functioning in the regions which were noticeably under-assisted by donors and the government. During the course of the NSP the focus shifted, under USAID guidance, to address the needs of those NGOs which were capable of utilizing the assistance offered, as it was realized that a significant number of the 3,000 entities registered with the Ministry of Justice as NGOs were failing to match the criteria required of genuine public organizations, instead being entities which provided income through donor funded salaries for the immediate and extended families of the founders and directors.

(B) Technical Program Components and Content

The WL/NSP program helped create, among the 3,000 legal entities registered as NGOs with the Ministry of Justice, a core of some 180 soundly organized and sustainably based entities which are legally registered and have popular support from their constituencies. They are also able to sustain themselves financially in terms of resources, both material and human, for sufficient periods of time so as to be positioned to: effectively address societal service needs, satisfy civil society demands for change and to promote and facilitate progress through advocacy actions and changes in the legal and regulatory environment.

These NGOs possess a number of common characteristics and traits which have been developed and enhanced from previous base levels by the assistance activities of WL/NSP. These valuable and positive NGO traits and characteristics are:

- (i) having good governance;
- (ii) effective internal management and control systems and policies;
- (iii) sufficiently well trained and committed staff to complete projects;
- (iv) adequate financial resources both in terms of quantity and their certainty of continuation;
- (v) ability to identify needs arising from constituents and ways to address and satisfy these;
- (vi) ability to effect strong relationships to stakeholders such as constituents, government, business and media thus reaching outside of the immediate NGO community.

Guided by the framework of goals and objectives defined by the USAID/Armenia Mission, World Learning and its NSP implementing partners, the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), Management Systems International (MSI) and the International Council for Not-for Profit Law (ICNL) developed and employed an assistance approach in close collaboration with selected members of the NGO community. This approach provided training, technical assistance, and grant funding for NGO projects, which became the means through which to affect the legal and regulatory environment as it applies to the functioning of the third sector, and the means to foster cross-sectoral partnerships.

The five main project components were:

- (i) Provision of support to NGOs based in the Marzes outside of Yerevan;
- (ii) Supporting more advanced NGOs, particularly those engaged in advocacy, throughout Armenia;
- (iii) Improving the legal and regulatory framework for NGOs through initially advocating and working closely with government representatives in an educational fashion, subsequently expanding to include grass-roots civic and civil advocacy movements involving NGO as representatives of constituencies and as expert witnesses before legislative committees;
- (iv) Developing mechanisms for increased NGO outreach and networking to the general public and to special interest lobbies and constituencies; included in this aspect was the development of NGO skills for working in coalitions and associations, such as the Southern Block and the various committees dealing with the specialized aspects of the Law on Public Organizations, the Law on Volunteerism, Law on Charitable Giving and the NGO Code of Standards;
- (v) Facilitating grant making to support nascent NGOs, promoting progress through advocacy and special initiatives grants supporting emerging issues such as elections, domestic violence and anti-corruption.

As a result of activities conducted within each one of the above components, NGOs became more appreciative of the benefits of openness and transparent operational practices in relation to constituents and peer organizations. They also gained a clearer and more pragmatic understanding that constructive dialogue and engagement yields greater rewards than confrontation when advocating for major changes. They also came to hold an increasingly genuine belief that economic and political benefits and easements granted to NGOs, following successful constituency-based and driven advocacy efforts, need to be respected as a privilege and responded to by responsible representative actions which further movement towards democracy rather than lead to sterile and counter-productive confrontation.

Concerted and serious involvement of the NGO community in crafting and operationalizing an NGO Code of Standards and a Law on Volunteerism and Volunteers reflects the first mentioned development, while work on the amendment to the Law on Public Organizations and their right to generate income, and the original work on a law which legalizes charitable giving (the so-called One Percent Law) and provides limited tax exemptions, defines the second.

NGOs were significantly involved in determining the direction, content and pace of the work of the NSP. This level of involvement was required because it was the goal of the program to help the NGO sector to develop and not to dictate to civil society representatives the what, how, when, where and how fast. The result of this cooperative approach is a community of NGOs which has a clearer

appreciation of the principles and essential elements of self-governance and the democratic values of openness, transparency, and accountability. As well, the NGOs value the institutional legitimacy gained from constituent and beneficiary-based support. There is also an appreciation that the most appropriate operational scenario is a win-win model rather than confrontation and strife leading to entrenchment and opposition rather than progress.

(B.1) Support to NGOs in the Marzes outside Yerevan

Program presence to outlying Marzes

Engagement with NGOs working in the regions and representing the interests of constituencies in those areas was an important mechanism through which to reach the NSP goal. To achieve this, WL/NSP established satellite representational offices in Vanadzor and Yeghgnadzor serving the north-western and south-central parts of Armenia. Additionally, regional sub-offices were functioning in Gyumri and Goris. Each location was staffed by a Program Officer with supporting technical and administrative personnel who assisted in the delivery of training and technical assistance and monitored grant funded projects. The locations served as bases for the operations of the IESC Volunteer Executives providing the sixty technical assistance interventions which were executed during the four years of the WL/NSP program.

Identification of partner NGOs and definition of needs: using the Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI)

Strengthening of nascent NGOs in the regions was an important component of the project and a major focus of activity. These organizations were provided with training, technical assistance and grants. Assistance focused on six main organizational areas: governance, operations and management systems, human resources, financial resources, service delivery and external relations. To determine which of these areas represented NGO needs and which NGOs would best benefit from participation in training, the Institutional Analysis Instrument² was applied to objectively assess NGO organizational status and capacity to benefit from training.

The IAI framework served as:

- (i) A tool to establish baselines for existing NGO structures and capabilities;
- (ii) A means through which to prioritize the needs of NGOs and to help them establish plans for their development through training and technical assistance;
- (iii) A means through which to inform NGO personnel about the components and attributes of effective and strong representational organizations.

Throughout the program, IAIs were conducted on all NGOs submitting Expressions of Intent (EOIs) – this included those entities which later became grantees. These were sampled again, following the completion of their grant funded projects. As a compendium of organizational developmental state data, the results of many IAIs, following collation and comparative analysis, demonstrated the changes which NGOs underwent during the four years of the WL/NSP program in terms of their development towards increased operational sophistication, improved sustainability, more meaningful roles as representatives of civil society and ability to garner a higher level of respect and partnership potential from all levels of elected government and its supporting bureaucracies and technocracies.

Overall, the IAI results allowed WL/NSP to develop appropriate technical assistance and support packages for the most viable and promising NGOs working in Armenia and to determine the scope of support which could most appropriately be offered NGOs. This facility was used to impactful effect in defining the content and modalities of trainings delivered by WL/NSP staff trainers, Armenian contract trainers arising often from the NGO community itself and, finally, from those trainers and consultants provided by IESC from an international pool of Volunteer Executives. WL/NSP

² The IAI posits six functional areas of organizational life and examines them on a continuum of institutional development that ranges from new, or start-up, to mature and sustainable organizations. The six functions are the six components of the technical assistance constituting the core of the NGO Strengthening Program.

successfully employed the IAI as a means of cooperatively, with NGO partners, defining needs and by extension informing the nature and the modalities of technical assistance delivered to the NGO community.

International consultants from the USA and Russia initially administered the IAI, by IESC VEs, Peace Corps Volunteers and direct hire program staff. Soon after the inception of this program twenty Armenian NGO specialists were trained to conduct the IAI process. The majority of these individuals remained as IAI Facilitators until the end of the WL/NSP program. Their commitment to the program created an extremely well practiced and trusted pool of professionals, originating significantly from regional society, which contributed very significantly to the development of the regional NGO communities' strengths and legitimacy as representatives of provincial needs and aspirations.

Technical Assistance and Training

Providing needs-based and appropriately presented training and technical assistance helped NGOs increase their awareness of concepts, strategies and modalities which over the course of the four years of the WL/NSP program significantly strengthened their abilities to be broad based, in terms of their constituent support, and more effective in their representational actions vis-à-vis the government and its implementing branches.

During the first two years of the program, WL/NSP provided basic concept orientation and fundamental skill training opportunities for interested NGOs. Large numbers of NGOs received basic tutoring in such areas as financial and organizational management, strategic and project planning, fundraising, and advocacy principles and techniques. Delivery of information was through traditional and classical group training techniques where information was passed on to audiences unaccustomed to participatory workshop or consultancy style interventions. The bulk of the NGO audience at that time lacked the orientation to benefit from forms of intervention other than the lecture/group training modality. In time, this form of training was used for very innovative topics such as, for example, Code of Conduct and advocacy on the basis of constituency needs where NGOs had no baseline on the topic. Increasingly, workshops, tutorials, individual consultancies and ultimately, hands-on mentoring became training modality standards.

(B.ii) Support to advanced NGOs throughout Armenia

The needs of more advanced NGOs throughout Armenia were also addressed during the WL/NSP program through the provision of training, technical assistance and grant funding for project implementation. This allowed NGOs to put into practice the knowledge and skills they had acquired through training, but for lack of funding, were never able to actualize and develop. In this group of NGOs were found entities which specialized in general advocacy work on behalf of beneficiaries irrespective of subject or theme, and those whose missions were highly specialized and narrowly focused, as in, for example, human rights, environment and domestic violence.

NGOs categorizing themselves such as those mentioned above were provided with opportunities to attend workshops with other NGOs at a similar level of institutional maturity and development. Here the essentials of democratic representativeness were discussed along with the need for accountability to supporters and constituents; the importance of openness of operations and transparency; and democratic, sustainable and responsible organizational and financial management. As a by-product of these sessions there was a desire, partially fulfilled in due course as the assistance effort itself increased in sophistication and maturity, that a sense of interdependence would form. This would come about as NGOs realized that there was strength in numbers both in terms of advocating for change and when entrenched and powerful oppositionist forces, feeling their position questioned, came on the offensive and threatened the existence of NGO activist groupings. The degree of formalism originally anticipated in which advanced NGOs – 12 in each of the 10 Marzes – would come together in issue focused and sustainable coalitions never materialized. NGOs were not trusting enough of each others' intentions and therefore unwilling to share information and contacts within the government which would enable the movement from individual lobbying towards civil, and then civic, advocacy. This stage has yet to come in Armenia.

Support for advocacy NGOs was a major focus for the WL/NSP program. The initial challenges which permeated the conceptualization and strategizing of programs and remained until the end of the WL/NSP program continued to be related to the fact that regional government officials are appointed by central authorities and do not feel themselves in the least accountable to local communities, constituencies, residents or the electorate. Through advocacy initiatives in which WL/NSP facilitated the mobilization of civic forces, for example in Goris during that community's discussion of its five year Municipal Development Plan which the city executive had expected to be "rubber-stamped," citizens made themselves aware of their rights and their responsibilities in this process. They then proceeded to insist that their voices were heard in the debate and that subsequently their community desires as democratically and consensually expressed were respected and acted upon. This was, however, a rare event and one not repeated during the last two years of the NSP program.

Advocacy training and workshops, coupled with an ever-increasing number of consultancies and hands-on mentoring, matured in content and specificity as needs became better voiced by NGOs. These focused more clearly on civic education which encouraged NGOs to be better informed about the theory and the practice of how best to approach government officials at all levels to ensure legitimate civil society representation and effective advocacy. WL/NSP also developed the concept and placed into practice Legal Clinics which significantly increased the average NGO activist awareness and specific knowledge of rights and responsibilities under existing Armenian laws. The greatest deficit made good was in the Marzes where information continues to be scarce and difficult to gather and where rumor and innuendo continue to suffice as solid knowledge.

The original technical approach to facilitating the development of broader based and more effective NGOs, especially among those engaged in advocacy activities, considered the formation of coalitions as important and possible. The role of WL/NSP was one of a close cooperating and mentoring partner which would help ensure that NGOs formed and remained in active coalitions. This was attempted twice: once with environmental NGOs and the second time with NGOs working on domestic violence issues under the umbrella of a Special Initiative Grant cycle. In both cases the functioning of the NGO coalitions, in retrospect, was largely driven by the presence of grant funds which paid for the implementation of the projects which, because of their common themes, held the coalition together. At that point in time, during 2001 and early 2002, the NGOs were simply not positioned well either philosophically or organizationally to remain in coalitions without intense pressure and facilitation from a donor and development assistance provider such as WL/NSP. Consensus and mutual trust were lacking, and an appreciation that advocacy action based on mass support and a common front was a more effective approach was shadowed by the fact that individual lobbying was still in its infancy.

However, by late 2003 and throughout 2004, in the southern part of the country, a coalition did form voluntarily which brought together some 150 NGOs. The focus of the coalition's attention was the resolution of social, economic and structural problems in the southern Marzes which were not being addressed either by central government directly or through its representatives in the Marzes. With significant but indirect assistance from WL/NSP the coalition formed standing committees, created a charter and conducted membership drives. In the final year of the program WL/NSP was also involved in assisting the coalition run its elections for President and Board and finalize its second action plan.

Advocacy by NGOs on behalf of constituencies and as a means for creating change in Armenian social and political life was a major focus of the program's effort to support advanced NGOs. The interventions were designed to enhance the knowledge and skills required by NGOs to initiate campaigns and, also, to create attitudes and perspectives needed to effect long-term change. NGOs were informed about the need for presenting a public image to constituents and opponents so that both groups were aware. The need for NGOs to be well informed about the facts of the issue and to appreciate the position of law makers and decision makers before entering into an advocacy campaign were stressed in trainings and other interventions provided by WL/NSP staff, contract training staff and IESC VEs. Advocacy workshops demonstrated how to analyze public policy, how to determine the effect of changes created by advocacy success on the NGOs themselves and their constituents, and

how to determine and implement actions which would serve their members' interests best. It was stressed that NGOs must be well educated about their specific advocacy issue before presenting it to the public, the media and the legislature. To do this they were informed about effective public speaking, letter writing, drafting press releases and organizing public forums.

(C) Improving the General Legal and Regulatory Framework for NGO Operations

From the start, World Learning involved in NSP the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) which designed and implemented activities that helped improve the general legal and regulatory framework for NGO operations and functioning.

The approach and strategies adopted consisted of the following:

- (i) Technical assistance in the drafting of major legislation affecting the legal status of entities in the non-for-profit sector;
- (ii) Technical assistance in developing fiscal and tax laws affecting the third sector, including tax benefits to enhance its sustainability;
- (iii) Assistance to promote fair implementation of laws affecting NGOs and civil society.

Significant energy was expended on working with NGOs in these areas with encouraging results. During the final year of the program the NGOs and WL/NSP worked together to bring to the foreground of perception the need for NGOs to be monitors of the implementation of Laws passed. Even good and the best intentioned laws can be worthless, or even counterproductive, unless honestly and properly implemented. It proved important to publicize current and newly adopted laws and to ensure that all the parties affected understood the laws and were aware of how to protect their rights under them while also appreciating the obligations created. This goal was significantly advanced by a series of roundtables, by regular Legal Clinics throughout Armenia, and by posting legal and regulatory information on the WL/NSP website.

As reported in the WL/NSP NGO Sector Assessment published in the early fall of 2004, definite changes had occurred as a result of the work performed by WL/NSP and cooperating partner NGOs. Government and NGO representatives were better aware of what constituted good NGO regulation which allows the third sector the freedom to act responsibly in the furtherance of the agenda of civil society. Additionally legislation had been passed on Charities and the law on Foundations. However the work on tax laws and laws on charitable giving to NGOs was still being advocated in the context of a broad push for legislation which will foster and facilitate financial sustainability and stability leading to NGOs being in a position to be better and more consistently responsible advocates for their constituents and civil society in the broader sense.

(D) Increased NGO Networking and Cooperation With Other Sectors

In 2000, USAID identified Armenia as a "pre-transition" country in terms of its evolutionary status towards a civil society since NGOs were reporting a very limited ability to effect change at the government level. Gaining access to the right people in government and persuading them to listen was difficult and often met with disdain. Part of the work which WL/NSP conducted with NGOs focused on establishing better and more pragmatically defined relationships between NGOs and media, and NGOs and the business community.

Many of the early trainings informed NGOs about the utility of accessing the outreach and increasing power of the media to better inform the general public about important social and public policy issues which were affecting the economic, social and political life of Armenian citizens. In time, much of the work in progress and that related to NGOs and the electronic media in particular was considered by USAID and WL/NSP to be in the purview of Internews, another USAID/Armenia implementing partner. WL/NSP turned its attention to helping NGOs with creating accurate public images designed to attract members, supporters and the international donor community. The WL/NSP program became an important source of funding for maintenance and expansion of NGO advocacy operations.

(E) Exit and Sustainability Strategy

Throughout the implementation of the WL/NSP program, World Learning and its implementing partners sought out and identified the most appropriate and impactful strategies, the best practices applicable to Armenian conditions, and those individuals and organizations which could continue the development of the Armenian third sector as representatives of indigenous civil society. The intention was to create, in full coordination with and support from the counterpart NGOs, the following core mechanisms. This was achieved by WL/NSP, if not in full, then in significant partial measure:

- (i) A regulatory environment which allows Armenian NGOs to continue conducting activities in support of their constituents' change agendas which were originally commenced with support of donor funding and to continue to do so in an indigenous support environment which fosters sustainability and independence from central and local authorities.
- (ii) Local professionals operating from sustainable and independent bases who continue to provide services and products desired by the NGO community and for which a payment for service/product is established, formalized and routinely functioning.
- (iii) NGOs with the stated missions, philosophies, personnel and material resources to continue providing the services and activities which are demanded by their constituencies in the furtherance of achieving inclusive and accountable governance practiced in a transparent, equitable and democratic manner.
- (iv) NGOs which are able to provide services to their beneficiaries and customers on a fee-based model; also known as intermediary service organizations (ISOs).

Taken together, addressed comprehensively and consistently, these mechanisms contributed to the foundation upon which nationally appropriate, responsible and responsive philosophies, structures, systems, procedures were created and put into place through a collaborative effort between the NGO community and WL/NSP.

Collaborative relationships between NGOs increased although there continued to be suspicion among NGOs regarding motives for openness and transparency. There still remain unfortunate traits associated with the late Soviet era where cloistering information was advantageous and sharing was an invitation to exploitation by fellow competitors for limited access to the sources of influence and power.

Access to skilled and knowledgeable personnel, be they former NSP staff or lead trainers, will help ensure, at least in the short-term, that the vitality and optimism created for a future which represents the will of the majority and the aspirations of the significant minority will be maintained and enhanced. WL/NSP created a cadre of focused trainers who have the incentive and the motivation to work with NGOs and elements of activist civil society to further the democratization of central government and the sensitization of regionally appointed representatives to electorally demanded reform.

IV. WL/NSP Component Activities and Achievements Made in Collaboration with Armenian NGOs and USAID Funded Implementing Partners

(A) Grant Cycles and Awards

The purpose of grant making, as stated in the original technical proposal for the NGO Strengthening Program, was to provide financial assistance to NGOs so that they could implement projects and, through hands-on involvement, achieve the following objectives:

- (i) NGOs would become "more developed and broader based" (IR 1.2 under the USAID Strategic Framework goal of "More transparent, accountable and responsive democratic governance").
- (ii) NGOs would enhance their abilities to represent their constituents thereby becoming legitimate and effective agents for change through advocacy actions on behalf of engaged and contributing constituents.
- (iii) NGOs would become more knowledgeable and skilled in serving the needs of civil society as it aspired to and gained a broader and more impactful role in the governance of Armenia.
- (iv) NGOs would interface with government at all levels in a constructive debate about public policy and its implementation.
- (v) There would be a continued expansion of the NGO role as representative and responsible agents for change in a transitional society moving towards a free market economy and open, accountable and equitable governance by a freely and fairly elected executive.
- (vi) NGOs would practice the skills and perspectives obtained in training and applying them to actual project situations.

Grant making was operationalized through open and competitively structured application and award cycles adjudicated in a fair and objective manner by USAID, the implementing partner PVOs and WL/NSP staff.

Seed Grants were awarded to nascent NGOs, mostly located and operating in the provinces, to help enhance their structural and systems integrity and to strengthen institutional capabilities. Grants were awarded to help NGOs secure staff and facilities, to assist with the development of strategic and operational plans, to help with the purchase of equipment to improve services, and to support programmatic initiatives. In total, 85 Seed Grants were disbursed. Of these 67 were awarded to provincial NGOs and 18 to organizations located in the capital city. The original target of funding 100 organizations proved unreachable given the actual absorptive capacity and the structural and environmental hindrances to implementation. The individual value of Seed grants was between \$1,000 and \$10,000 with the majority averaging of \$5,000 - \$6,000.

A second form of grant focused on supporting more advanced NGOs engaged in advocacy work. In total, 31 Advocacy Grants were awarded to NGOs having the advanced skills and capabilities needed to design and implement successful advocacy programs. Advocacy Grants ranged between \$10,000 and \$50,000 with the majority around \$30,000. Each NGO provided a cost share, of between 10% and 25%, usually in the form of in-kind contributions. The target set of 40 advocacy grantees by the end of the project was almost reached. Thirty one (31) grantees were funded even though conducting advocacy campaigns proved to be a more onerous and unpredictable undertaking than had been originally envisioned. For the thirty one advocacy grantees, and in particular those constituting the majority, which were advocating for changes in the legal and regulatory environment, the negative impact of factors beyond their control or influence slowed implementation considerably. Resulting from this, the rate of expenditure of funds was also slower than expected. Factors such as the time taken by legislators to debate amendments to current laws, the level of enthusiasm for advocacy action and stridency with which constituents mounted campaigns, and the simple fact that the National Assembly committees did not meet in continuous session are examples of factors contributing to the slightly lower number of advocacy grantees.

Special Initiative Grants constituted a third category. These grants funded NGOs which wished to work on emerging issues and opportunities that arose from the changing and developing social, political and economic environments during the implementation of the NGO Strengthening Program. Projects focusing on women's issues, anti-corruption, domestic violence, the environment, Presidential elections, rule of law and human rights were funded. WL/NSP provided 41 Special Initiative Grants which is almost twice as many as had been originally planned. Almost 40% of all Special Initiative Grants were made during the Presidential elections of 2003. Grants ranged in size from \$10,000 to \$35,000 with the average being \$25,000. Each NGO provided at least a 25% cost share, usually through in-kind contributions.

As envisioned in the original World Learning proposal for the NSP, an Unsolicited Grant category was also established through which 17 organizations were funded. These grants ranged from \$500 to \$7,500 with an average of \$4,000 and focused on topics such as the environment, disabled issues, advocacy for specific vulnerable groups in communities, human rights, volunteerism issues and youth and gender issues.

Follow-on Grants were also distributed during the last year of the program. In total, five (5) such grants were awarded. Each grant was valued at \$1,500. This assistance allowed some NGOs to further enhance the skills which they had employed in the conduct of successful grants they had just concluded. Allocation of these funds followed NGO participation in a nationwide Success Story contest. This contest publicized NGO activities as did the publication of a widely distributed book in Armenian containing project stories.

Over the four years of activity, the WL/NSP disbursed US\$ 2,000,909 to 179 NGOs. During the lifespan of the WL/NSP program, twenty (20) Grant Cycles were opened for competitive application by NGOs resulting in 1,646 individual submissions of intent to participate. Each Grant Cycle launch required the posting of a request for Expressions of Interest (EOI), where specific criteria for awards and participation eligibility and the grant size³ were described. The requests for EOIs were widely circulated among the NGO community through the WL/NSP NGO mailing list created and systematically updated by the WL/NSP Information and Communications Technology (ICT) staff. Information was additionally posted on the WL/NSP website; this was an excellent means of distributing information to the largest audience.⁴ Summaries of the Requests for EOIs were advertised in at least two national newspapers for several days to further publicize a Grant Cycle. Interested NGOs were given a chance to participate in group Question and Answer Sessions (Q&A) organized by WL/NSP to provide additional information on each grant competition. These sessions were conducted well in advance of the deadline for submission of EOIs. In their EOIs NGOs were required to provide a summary of their previous activities (the "history" of the NGO), a brief statement about their proposed activities and the rationale for their proposed project.

Depending on the specifics of a particular Grant Cycle, a Review Committee comprised of WL/NSP program staff and representatives from USAID and International PVOs was established. Review Committee members were provided with copies of all EOIs received at the World Learning Offices. Review Committee members decided and approved the list of applicant NGOs that qualified for the next stage of grants competition by a general consensus or by a simple majority vote based on criteria set in the EOI requests. Unsuccessful applicants were notified in writing, as were those NGOs whose EOIs were accepted.

The second stage of the Grant Cycle process required short-listed/qualified applicants to submit a full proposal of activities to be undertaken, including budgets indicating funding for the proposed activities. The format for a complete proposal along with additional clarifications, selection criteria and other relevant information was issued directly to the short-listed applicants in the form of a Request for Applications (RFA). The applicant NGOs were also given opportunities to ask questions on different aspects of proposal development during group Workshops. Proposals were reviewed and evaluated by a Review Committee composed of a wide ranging panel of experts and development professions from the Armenian community, USAID and the international PVO community. After grants were decided and prior to grant agreements being signed, a two and occasionally three-day Grant Management Workshop was organized for successful applicants to inform them of the WL/NSP grants management systems which WL/NSP operated in accordance with USAID rules and regulations. Grant Agreements, including detailed descriptions of terms and conditions of grants, were introduced to grantees during the Grants Management Workshop along with details and operating procedures for the relevant financial and programmatic reporting formats.

³ The Grant size varied from \$1,000 (for the follow-on grants) up to \$35,000 (for conditions under Special Initiative Grants).

⁴ Analysis by independent researchers from IREX/IATP demonstrated that www.worldlearning.am was, consistently, the most frequently visited of all of the international donor and implementing partner sites in Armenia.

The table below present the consolidated summary of the number of applicants for each Grant Cycle launched during the WL/NSP program. (SIG = Special Initiative Grant)

Grant Type and Cycle	Applicants from the EOI Stage	Applicants short-listed for the RFA Stage	Winners, Actual Grant projects
SIG on Domestic Violence	114	16	8
SIG on Hrazdan Gorge	14	7	2
SIG on Women's Issues	36	11	8
SIG Elections		64	16
SIG Human Rights and Rule of Law	77	8	4
SIG Anticorruption	52	9	3
Total Special Initiative Grant	293	115	41
Advocacy Cycle 1	111	16	5

Grant Type and Cycle	Applicants from the EOI Stage	Applicants short-listed for the RFA Stage	Winners, Actual Grant Projects
Advocacy Cycle 2	77	15	4
Advocacy Cycle 3	108	16	7
Advocacy Cycle 4	48	9	5
Advocacy Cycle 5	126	20	10
Total Advocacy	470	76	31
Seed Yerevan Cycle 1	72	9	4
Seed Yerevan Cycle 2	67	12	7
Seed Yerevan Cycle 3	95	12	7
Total Seed Yerevan	234	33	18
Seed Regional Cycle 1	135	41	23
Seed Regional Cycle 2	168	28	16
Seed Regional Cycle 3	169	33	18
Seed Regional Cycle 4	177	29	10
Total Seed Regional	649	131	67
Follow on Grants		5	5
Unsolicited Grants		56	16
Grand total	1,646	416	178

After the Review Committee had made decisions as to which proposals to accept, the signing of Grant Agreements was made followed by fund transfers to grantees on the basis of their stated needs in the context of their program implementation plan. Subsequent fund tranches, on a monthly basis, were released after a detailed review of financial reports for the previous period (month) and on the basis of appropriate requests, with expense forecasts submitted by NGOs for funding for the next period. At the end of each month, all grantee accounting and finance reports, particularly grantees' bank account reconciliation, cashbook records and expense reports, were checked by the NSP Finance Monitor and, selectively, by the Grants Manager. On the basis of monthly reports, both financial and programmatic, disbursements were made to grantee NGOs in accordance with projections based on the activities forecast in their Logical Frameworks and project implementation plans. By the end of grant distribution, in 2004, all wire transfers were fully completed, as projected. In several cases where a grantee, for a variety of reasons invariably beyond their control, was not able to generate a realistic

expenditure plan for unspent budgeted amounts forecast for the project implementation period, WL/NSP issued Refund Letters and claimed back unspent amounts.

In the table below is a summary of grants awarded by category. More than half of the disbursed grants (57%) were awarded to NGOs operating in provincial areas outside Yerevan; this is fully in accordance with the intention of the project goals as defined in the projects original RFA of 2000.

Grant Type	Total Number of Grants	Total Amount Obligated US\$	Remarks
SEED	85	454,575	
Advocacy	31	704,944	
SIG	41	855,297	Includes unsolicited
Follow-on	5	5,000	
Unsolicited	16	68,000	
TOTALS	178	2,019,816	

Not all grantees were able to complete projects within the timelines originally defined. Advocacy grantees are an example since their work depended significantly upon factors beyond their influence or control. No-cost extensions were granted by WL/NSP to those agencies which were convincing in their arguments regarding extenuating circumstances. Only upon positive evaluation of the reasons why projects could not be completed within their projected time-frames were NGOs awarded no-cost extensions. Those organizations which proposed additional activities within the framework of their projects, and requested additional funds for the purpose, had their applications consideration by special review committees and USAID. Only three projects were granted cost extensions.

Much benefit has been derived by NGOs through receiving financial support from donors. However, as the WL/NSP NGO Sector Assessment noted:

"The Armenian NGO sector's financial dependency on foreign donors remains the predominant factor in shaping the NGO sector. Many NGOs are still more oriented toward satisfying donors than Armenians. In this regard, the expansion of donor funding over the last 3 years may have created a disincentive for local communities to provide support. On the Armenian NGO side, the reliance on donor grants may be diverting NGO sector attention away from the fundamental issue of building support for the NGO sector founded on local sources.

Another concern is the continuation of the belief among Opinion Leaders that the high level of funding provided by donors has created an 'NGO Industry' that subsidizes jobs in a job scarce economy. The NGO sector is still perceived as donor driven."

(B) Regulatory and Legal Framework in Armenia

The activities of the legal and regulatory component of the World Learning NGO Strengthening Program were central to assisting NGOs in learning how to effectively lobby in the first instance and subsequently to impactfully advocate for the adoption of legal measures and provisions which allowed the third sector to function in a representative and constructive manner in respect of increasing democracy and ensuring open, accountable and transparent governance by all levels of elected government.

The traditional Armenian approach to effecting change was lobbying based on personal relations and contacts within the "nomenclatura." This was invariably for the exclusive benefit of the extended family and clan; civic consciousness and responsibility as, for example, expressed through social action and volunteerism did not exist other than in the form of the "Sobotnik" forced and mandated "volunteer" participation in civic actions.

Lobbying as an exclusive means to effect change was effectively transformed during implementation of the WL/NSP to civil and public advocacy involving constituents and supporters. Additionally, a significantly higher level of awareness among the general NGO community and the beginnings of a community awareness of right and responsibilities as electors and citizens became manifest during the four years of the NSP activity. Finally, the concepts of legitimacy provided by constituency and the awareness by some within the law making bodies that a link exists between the electorate and the advocacy activists has helped shape a more constructive and productive relationship resulting in the amendment or creation of laws which facilitate the development of civil society.

Over the period of four years, the legal component of World Learning's NSP developed in two main directions. Working on legal education of NGO representatives was one; the other focused on the creation and improvement of legislation affecting NGOs and civil society. As an extension of these two efforts, and in particular of the first, there was an ever increasing effort by WL/NSP, in coordination with NGOs, related to monitoring the implementation of legislation and the vital role which civil society and NGOs, as its representatives, have an obligation to play as watchdogs. There is an important but as yet underdeveloped connection to the Presidentially appointed Ombudsperson responsible for ensuring access to civic, civil and human rights under Armenian law.

During the first two years of NSP the programmatic focus was on changing and introducing new civil sector empowering legislation through close and frequent educational and advisory contacts among the WL/NSP and ICNL Senior Legal Counsel, the Ministry of Justice personnel and the National Assembly. This part of the program was successfully implemented through cooperation with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. During the last two years (2002 through 2004) the WL/NSP Senior Legal Counsel assumed complete responsibility for maintaining established connections to the Government of Armenia and for furthering legislative changes favoring the third sector and civil society in its bid to ensure the functioning of democratically elected government devoted to openness, transparency, accountability and actions which represent the wishes of the majority of the people most of the time. The ground breaking work of WL/NSP which commenced in 2000 resulted in significant changes, for example in the Law on Public Organizations. Such successes were achieved largely through lobbying and direct contacts with government officials and National Assembly members. During the last two years of WL/NSP extensive efforts were made to amend the Law on Public Organizations – to remove the clauses preventing NGOs from generating income as NGOs. Additionally NGOs worked on the 1% Law on tax free charitable giving and on the Law on Volunteerism. This was significant broad based civic activism rather than lobbying.

(B.1) Legislation

A tremendous amount of work was done by WL/NSP in close cooperation with the NGO community and volunteers from the legal profession on working with government to create a legal environment and regulatory framework which facilitates the development and functioning of the non-governmental community. The framework of amended, or newly created, laws also empowers citizens both as members of non-governmental organizations and as monitors of the implementation of laws. Although this role is still in its infancy it is a healthy sign of increased constructive involvement by ordinary people in determining how their communities and their lives are run. Listed below are summaries of progress and change in eight separate but interconnected facets of the legislative environment.

1. The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Public Organizations

Right from the outset WL/NSP and the NGO community assigned great importance to the new Law on Public Organizations and conducted a significant amount of work, cooperating with the Ministry of Justice and numerous NGOs in attempts to create a law that would enhance the independence of the public sector of Armenia. The National Assembly of Armenia adopted the law on December 4th 2001.

As a result of the excellent advocacy efforts of several Armenian NGOs it was possible to convince the Government to accept most of the twenty suggested amendments to the then existing Law on Public Organizations. Among important amendments was the removal of the article prohibiting individuals engaged in the army, police, and other administrative bodies to form and become

members of public organizations. Another was the stipulation of the right of forming an association without state registration. As a result of the combined work of the NGO community assisted by WL/NSP, Armenia currently has a Law on Public Organizations that complies with international best practice.

One of the most important amendments, however, giving the right to public organizations to engage in direct entrepreneurial activities for achieving their statutory goals, was not accepted, due to very stern opposition from the Government. NGOs working on the amendments to the Law were also divided on the issue.

In the years following the adoption of the Law on Public Organizations, WL/NSP and NGOs worked extensively on amending this provision. In October 2003 a working group comprised of NGO representatives from most of Armenia's regions was created to work on establishing a legal framework of Laws and Regulations which would be supportive of creating financial sustainability of NGOs. The issue of the right of NGOs to generate income by and for themselves is central to this and intimately connected with the Law on Public Organizations. The greatest success of WL/NSP in this was that NGOs have come to an awareness of the importance of the entrepreneurship right for their sustainability, and now they are able and mature enough to work independently on this. The continued efforts of the NGO committees and working groups on the issue of financial sustainability and the need to enact amendments to the Law on Public Organizations stems directly from the training, mentoring and guidance which was provided by WL/NSP.

2. Law On Charity

WL/NSP cooperated closely with the Ministry of Social Security (now the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs) on the development of the Draft Law on Charity. The Law passed the third bearing in the National Assembly in October 2002, and was signed by the President on November 8, 2002. NSP presented its comments on the draft on a number of occasions, and as a result most of these suggestions were included in the law.

This is an example of the kind of work which the WL/NSP legal department engaged in during the first years of the project prior to there being more effort placed on working with NGOs on civic activism and public involvement. The approach was entirely appropriate since NGOs had little knowledge of, and even less experience in, advocacy nor were they structurally or organizationally ready for such a task. In part, it is because of the pioneering work conducted by WL/NSP staff in the regulatory and legislative areas that NGOs were able to develop to the stage where in 2004 they are conducting sophisticated and effective advocacy campaigns.

The most important of the accepted recommendations was to remove the system of dual qualification envisaged by the initial draft. This would have required obligatory registration of organizations as charities. Additionally each organization would have had to obtain a separate qualification and approval of each charitable program as such. This recommendation was accepted. However the suggestion of WL/NSP to replace the practice of accreditation of individual charitable programs by a one-time certification of NGOs (through which they will obtain charitable status) never came through.

The draft of this law and the way it was presented by the Armenian Government could have presented serious impediments for the development of charitable activities and programs in Armenia. However as result of WL/NSP efforts, consisting of numerous public discussions and the provision of expert advice by the WL/NSP and ICNL Senior Legal Counsel, the possible obstacles were removed from the law making it a facilitating rather than a hindering piece of legislation.

3. Law on Social Assistance

During the first two years of its activities, WL/NSP worked on the Draft Law on Social Assistance, developed by the Ministry of Social Security. This draft had already been presented to the Government twice, but both times it was rejected due to lack of funds for its implementation. WL/NSP promoted further work on the initiative by providing international expertise regarding such laws as implemented in other countries, as well as raising the awareness of the public on the issue

through numerous discussions and round tables. In 2004 the lobbying and advocating for this Draft resumed, and due to the activities that WL/NSP had undertaken earlier, there was greater public awareness and understanding of the issue. Consequently, the Ministry of Social Security will have more support for pushing this initiative.

4. Law on Foundations

WL/NSP and ICNL worked closely with the Ministry of Justice throughout the entire process of the creation of the Draft Law on Foundations. The Ministry of Justice, starting in February 2002, was provided with a number of materials from international sources, for example, legislation on Foundations from different countries such as Spain, Moldova, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland and Lithuania. In Armenia there was no corresponding legislation, due to the fact that previously, Foundations as separate legal entities, did not exist in Armenia. Also WL/NSP, after examining the legislation of different countries created a version of the draft which was applicable and useful to Armenia. This preliminary version was passed to the Ministry of Justice and it became a basis for the first official draft. Following this the Ministry of Justice, during several months of close cooperation with WL/NSP, worked on further development of the draft and in August 2002 the Government officially approved the Draft on Foundations and presented it for discussion among interested parties.

In the beginning of October 2002 WL/NSP prepared comments and suggestions on the draft and passed those to the Ministry of Justice, the National Assembly - both to the National Assembly Legal Department and the National Assembly Standing Commission on State and Legal Issues - and foundations both in Yerevan and the regions. The draft was also discussed and its text explained during numerous regional legal clinics which WL/NSP held regularly for NGOs.

In November the draft law passed the first reading in the National Assembly. Some legal experts from the National Assembly presented their opinion on the draft, and responded negatively about the provision allowing the Foundations to engage directly in entrepreneurial activities. However, in part due to comments presented by WL/NSP, the Government on behalf of Ministry of Justice was able to insist that this provision was necessary and it remained in the draft.

As a result of this collaboration on December 24, 2002 the National Assembly adopted the Draft Law on Foundations, which entered into force and became a Law after the president signed it. This a real success, because within one year, the draft was developed and passed, and the resulting Law is in compliance with best international practice.

5. Tax legislation

Throughout the entire duration of the program the Armenian tax legislation had the attention of WL/NSP. Numerous meetings with Tax Authorities were organized. At these meetings the participants were presented with various documents illustrating international norms on taxation. Additionally, commentaries were supplied on Armenian tax laws.

In 2002 ICNL prepared a publication "Tax Analysis of Laws Affecting NGOs in Armenia" which was distributed among various Ministries, namely Ministries of Justice, State Revenue, Social Security and Finances. The purpose of this analysis was to offer general recommendations for changes that would bring Armenian legislation more in line with general international practices and, in particular, with the requirements of the European Union. This publication would prove to be important for the future legislative work of Armenian state officials. The tax analysis was also extensively distributed among Armenian NGOs, mostly during Legal Clinics, in order to raise their awareness both about the existing Armenian tax legislation and about the international best practice in this field.

Additional effort concerned the introduction of the concept of a One Percent (1%) Law. This law allows for taxable entities to donate a specified portion of their tax liability to the non-profit sector and therefore render it tax exempt. This tax mechanism is adopted and very successfully implemented in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It is expected that it can become an effective means through which NGOs can receive donations from supporters and thereby assist them in reducing reliance on foreign donors while becoming more close by linked to the needs and agendas of their

domestic supporters. During several discussions and round tables, as well as through legal clinics conducted in both northern and southern parts of the country, this mechanism was presented to the NGO community. At the end of NSP, NGO coalitions had formed around the advocacy issues of the One Percent Law on Public Organizations.

In the case of this law, and others, the initial work accomplished by WL/NSP in partnership with ICNL and a few of the most mature and advanced NGOs, laid the ground for civic activism by creating a broader coalition of constituencies and supporters. This is a situation where the enactment of sensible legislation, which allows civil society action, leads to greater and more impactful action by civil society for further change, although, this action is not confrontational but rather constructive and collaborative towards the government and the National Assembly.

6. Civil Code of Armenia

ICNL, within the framework of the WL/NSP program, was invited to provide commentary on the Armenian Draft Law on Public Organizations. In the course of reviewing this draft law, ICNL noted that certain provisions could not be amended due to provisions of the Armenian Civil Code addressing the same issues. In the spring of 2001, ICNL prepared recommendations, in which the opportunity was taken to make the Civil Code and the draft Law on Public Organizations comply with each other, and further improve the Code in those sections regulating non-profit organizations. Those recommendations were passed to the Ministry of Justice and other interested parties. As a result most of those comments are included in the present Amendments to the Civil Code initiated by the Government.

7. Draft Law on Volunteerism

During the last program year (2003 – 2004) the main concentration of the WL/NSP legal team was the creation and further development of a Draft Law on Volunteerism.

The need for the creation of such a document was manifested by constant problems that the NGOs had been facing with the Social Security Fund in connection with the Fund levying social security taxes on volunteers engaging in the activities of the NGOs. These problems vividly highlighted the deficiency existing in Armenian Legislation on this issue. The existence of a Law on Volunteerism would eliminate the deficiencies and further enable civil society members to play a significant role in the functioning of representative bodies such as non-governmental organizations. This Law would also protect the rights of both volunteers and volunteer organizations, and facilitate volunteerism in Armenia.

To further the work on drafting a Law on Volunteers and Volunteerism, international materials were gathered on the institution of Volunteerism, on which the WL/NSP Senior Legal Specialist created the first Draft in January 2004. Those materials included legislation and country reports from Bulgaria, Lithuania, France, Czech Republic, Russia and Portugal. Through a series of meetings, workshops and legal clinics the Draft was finalized, taking into account the opinions of the NGO community and legal experts, after which it was distributed to all interested parties and placed on the WL/NSP website for public awareness raising and commentary from the widest possible audience. As a result, a final Draft was prepared before the closing of the WL/NSP program in December 2004. The next stage, which the NGOs and Lawyers Network will undertake, is to advocate the Parliament. Presently the Armenian Ombudsman Office is also advocating this Draft.

The issue of taxes payable on services provided gratis by Volunteers established the needs framework for this very significant piece of legislation which, when enacted, will have far reaching impacts on the role of civil society members as activists for change and continued democratization. It also provided the centerpiece for a legal action by one NGO against the Social Security Fund which galvanized NGOs into solidarity and support for actions in favor of a Law on Volunteerism. The power of informational campaigns was also demonstrated by the NGO publicizing its progress through the courts rather than meekly accepting their pre-ordained fate; they did in fact lose their case against the Social Security Fund.

8. Other Legislation

In addition to the above mentioned Laws and drafts, WL/NSP was involved in other legislative initiatives such as the Law on Mass Media. The first discussion of this Law was organized by WL/NSP. Also, WL/NSP was actively involved in the international working group on the Law on Human Rights Defender of Armenia. In 2002-2003, before the Constitutional amendments were put to a public referendum, WL/NSP worked extensively on raising the public awareness on those changes.

(B.ii) Legal Consultations

1. Legal Clinics

Information is a commodity which is held close to the heart in Armenian civil society and among the members of its representative NGO community. Information withheld has long been considered as a source of power whereas disseminating, publicizing and sharing are understood to be potentially weakening and threatening. In respect of civil society actions in the context of knowledge of rights and responsibilities, the best that can be said is that they were hampered and even stopped because the level of awareness was so low. This was especially true in the Marzes where, in many cases, NGO members had no knowledge whatsoever about legislation which affected their lives both positively and adversely.

One of the most important WL/NSP components designed to inform, offer opportunities for questions and debates were the Legal Clinics. These aimed at both educating and consulting NGO representatives on various legal issues related directly to the regulation of the NGO activities and to the protection of the right of their constituencies. The Legal Clinics were held regularly on a monthly basis in the following cities of Armenia: Yerevan, Vanadzor, Yeghegnadzor, Goris, Kapan and Gyumri. During the life of the WL/NSP, 62 Legal Clinics were held, involving 1,012 participants. Over one hundred legal Acts covering almost all areas of NGO activities were presented and discussed during Legal Clinics. Questions and answers generated in the course of conducting Legal Clinics were also posted in the "Legal Corner" pages of the WL/NSP bilingual website³ which was a tremendously important tool for disseminating information, outreach and awareness raising. Independent research by IREX/IATP indicated that the WL/NSP website was the most visited of all those operated by donors and international PVOs receiving up to 300 individual visits per day.

The greatest achievement of Legal Clinics was making NGOs more aware of their rights and legal recourses and ways and means available to both maximize the impact of their advocacy efforts while ensuring a maximum of protection afforded by the law against the predations of opponents. Also, the Clinics reduced the information gap that almost naturally comes to exist in societies lacking highly developed and open informational systems and having a history of information manipulation and secrecy. This gap is especially noticeable in the regulatory and legislative area between capital city based activists and NGO members and those in the regions. NGO participation in the clinics significantly reduced this gap, thereby empowering them, and equipping them, to better represent their constituents. The practice of providing monthly Legal Clinics to the NGO sector was unique and the success of this project component is beyond question.

2. Legal Consultations

WL/NSP started in 2000 as a principle activist in working with ICNL and the Ministry of Justice in particular to guide, inform and in some instances to instruct lawyers, bureaucrats and politicians in the best ways and means through which to amend existing Laws and to bring new legislation into being. At that time working which NGOs as partners was premature since only a few were sufficiently well structured and organized to participate in advocacy activities. Nevertheless, NGOs were integral players in lobbying actions associated with, for example, amending the Law on Public Organizations. With time and the cumulative effects of WL/NSP general and specialized advocacy training, the role of the NGOs became more prominent and sophisticated. It was at this juncture that the Legal department of WL/NSP turned its attention to providing the NGOs with consultations and advice to

³ This website included important legal materials, laws and draft laws; links to relevant sites; frequently asked questions and answers; news on recent NGO law developments, and other information.

expand their knowledge of the rules, regulations, practices and laws which daily influenced their attempts at representative action on behalf of their constituents. The consultations were conducted on an as-requested basis as NGOs encountered issues, problems and questions during the course of implementing their projects. All available means were used: phone, email, meetings, website Q&A postings, and informational and update articles in the "Legal Corner" on the WL/NSP website.

(B.iii) Network of Lawyers

A significant achievement of WL/NSP legal activity was the formation, through voluntary subscription, of a Network of Lawyers. The uniqueness of this Network was that it brought together prominent lawyers from various international and non-governmental organizations, as well as governmental bodies such as the National Assembly staff, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, PADCO, NGOC, "Progress" NGO, International Union of Advocates, to work together on issues of non-commercial law, which is a relatively new branch of legislation in Armenia. The individuals involved in the Network joined voluntarily, attended monthly - or more frequent - meetings as needs demanded, and donated their time pro bono. The principle achievement of the Network was the improvement of the Draft Law on Volunteerism. Additionally, the Network also worked on the Draft Labor Code, the Law on Charity, amendments to the Civil Code and other regulatory and legal issues which impact NGOs and civil society.

V. Training and Technical Assistance

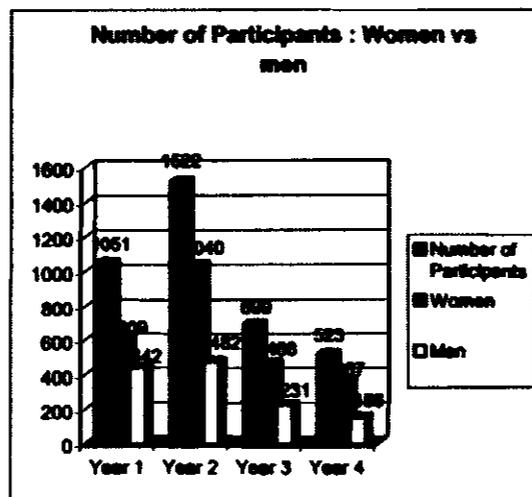
Foreword

Technical assistance and the organization, conduct and - later in the program - facilitation, of formal training interventions were key components of the WL/NSP approach to building NGOs' professional and technical capabilities and capacities. The component had interesting dynamics from the very beginning of the project, by causing positive changes year by year according to the need of WL/NSP clients. This following section contains analysis and illustration of the changes which took place in the NGOs' structure and functioning as a result of the WL/NSP assistance effort. Further it is a summary of the lessons learned during the implementation of the program and the logical evolution of training and technical assistance. Finally it reports on the successes of the training component during four years of WL/NSP implementation.

(A) Training and Technical Assistance Provided Through WL/NSP

General training and individual consultation during the first two years of the WL/NSP program, culminating in more individually focused workshops, consultations and hands-on mentoring in combination with grants and legal assistance provided by WL/NSP, were modalities employed to assist NGOs in their efforts at capacity building, capability enhancement and institutional strengthening. International Executive Service Corps (IESC) Volunteer Executives (VE) and - as the program developed and local capacity was built - local trainers - were the main providers of the technical assistance and training. In the first instance VEs acted as trainers, moving into a Trainers of Trainers role culminating in being co-facilitators and mentors as the WL/NSP program came to its end. During four years of WL/NSP implementation, 2,000 representatives of up to 500 NGOs received 3,163 hours of trainings in different topics such as advocacy, organizational development, environmental protection, project monitoring and evaluation, gender issues and so on. Fully sixty-five percent (65 %) of the participants of all interventions were women. Chart 1 below shows the gender mix at WL/NSP trainings over the life of the program and clearly illustrates that women participants were dominant in all years.

Chart 1. Gender composition of participants attending WL/NSP training interventions between 2000 and 2004.



A.1 Identification of clients' needs for training and technical assistance

The topics addressed during the trainings, workshops and consultations were defined using the following approaches which changed over time, as needs evolved and as the NSP assistance effort moved from start-up through to maturity and closure.

Years 1 and 2:

Through meetings with NGO representatives, relevant governmental structures, unions and associations, WL/NSP and IESC representatives conducted assessment and definition of needs which the clients considered important to address. The analysis of the needs statements gathered during meetings resulted in a list of topics that defined the technical assistance required. With this information, Scopes of Works were formulated and IESC Volunteer Executives were recruited from the US in the majority of cases but also from Canada and Europe.

Years 3 and 4:

During these years WL/NSP altered the way it gathered training needs information to a more objective approach based on quantifiable data sources rather than opinion and impressionistic data. On a routine and regular basis close to 100 grantees were monitored as they implemented their grant funded projects. The Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI) was also applied to some 100 NGOs to determine systemic and structural deficiencies and needs which could be addressed by NGOs with appropriate training. Additionally, a questionnaire seeking direct information from NGOs regarding their needs was created and distributed among the NGO communities in Yerevan and in the Marzes.

This approach to defining needs was both productive and efficient. It captured a broader range of NGOs and provided an opportunity to identify and categorize the needs of the NGOs as these appeared in their different stages of development. By summarizing these results the trainings and technical assistance were designed to better address more specific needs. After completing the implementation of training interventions during the first year of the WL/NSP program, the need for hands-on trainings and individual consultations on specific subjects became clearer. Generic trainings can easily satisfy basic informational and knowledge needs but are not necessarily the best or only way to address more advanced, and invariably more sophisticated and specialized, technical assistance requirements. Following the first year of the program in which IESC VEs were active and in close contact with the NGO community, it was stated clearly and consistently in their recommendations that NGOs would benefit much more if they were provided with more individual hands-on training rather than general training sessions. This was an excellent indication that the NGOs attending trainings and benefiting from grants assistance were developing and becoming more

active as representatives of their constituencies and communities. As the NGOs' activities and sphere of influence enlarged they encountered concrete limitations in their levels of knowledge and expertise, arising from specifics of their implementing environments. These, they concluded, and informed our implementing partner organization IESC, would be best addressed by WL/NSP modifying its training and technical assistance approach to focus more specifically on hands-on mentoring and consultancies based on actual case issues rather than generic approaches.

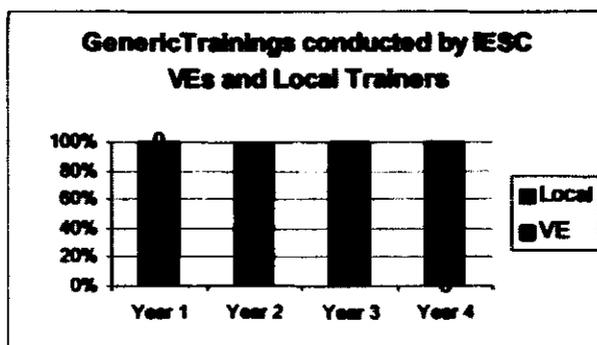
A.2 Training personnel and attribution of responsibilities; domestic expertise and international consultant roles in providing targeted assistance.

Resulting from considerations and analysis of the above mentioned observations coming in from the field, and also based on the recommendations from IESC VEs, WL/NSP changed its strategy from that employed in the first year of the project. The decision was made to develop local trainers who could conduct general trainings in organizational development, advocacy, board development, proposal preparation, grant design and logical framework, and project evaluation. IESC VEs would focus only on the provision of consultations directed at specific needs and areas of NGO development which satisfied the more advanced NGOs working on more sophisticated campaigns and issues. Eventually local trainers and consultants could address all the generic needs. This would be a work in progress culminating in the final year of the project by the total satisfaction of generic training needs by host country national experts and trainers. As Chart 2 illustrates, this was fully achieved.

A core of expertise was established by WL/NSP in cooperation with the NGOs which chose to participate in the Trainings of Trainers (TOTs). This knowledge base includes how NGOs can best structure and organize themselves, how they can write proposals and satisfy donor requirements for planning, executing and reporting on project implementation and impact and generally better work towards the advancement of civil society agendas ensuring responsive and accountable government at all levels ranging from the national to the local. Further, the individuals comprising the trainer corps are members of NGOs which positions them well to not only to train their own NGO's members but also to provide such a service to other entities.

The relative levels of involvement in basic and generic training delivery ascribed to IESC VEs and WL/NSP local trainers across the life of the WL/NSP program are shown in the Chart 2. The chart indicates that the trainings in the first year of were conducted only by IESC VEs and vice versa for the last year of the program. The percentage of generic trainings conducted by local trainers increased consistently from zero in the first year to 53% in the second year through 72% in the third year and reached 100% during the final year.

Chart 2. Longitudinal comparison of the respective roles of local trainers and IESC VEs in the delivery of generic and basic training to the NGOS community.



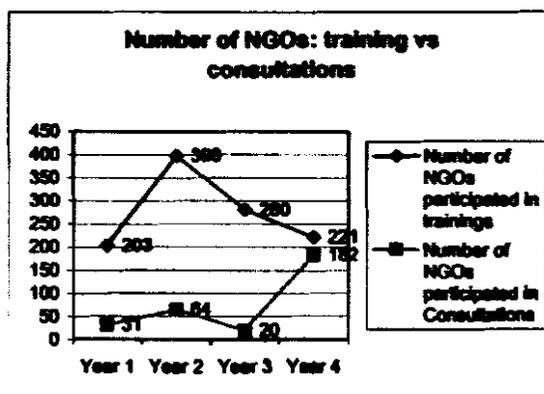
A.3 Generic and basic training in comparison with specialized consultancies

During the four-years of WL/NSP assistance operations, 1,102 NGOs successful by participated in trainings. Following successful completion of their training, 297 NGOs received individual, more specific consultation follow-up.

In the second year of the WL/NSP program trainings were conducted by both IESC VEs and local Armenian trainers. These trainings were attended by 398 NGOs. Starting from the third year IESC VE technical assistance efforts were more concentrated on individual consultations of which there were a total of 202 conducted during the third and the final year of the program: Year 2 (64), Year 3 (20), Year 4 (182).

During lifespan of the WL/NSP program 490 individual NGOs applied for, were accepted and successfully completed basic and generic trainings while 202 entities engaged and benefited from consultations. As noted, the former were increasingly executed by an expanding and professionalizing cadre of Armenian trainers while the IESC VEs with their decades of high level professional experience attended to the more issue specific and sophisticated requests for information, guidance and hands-on mentoring. Please see Chart 3, below.

Chart 3. Comparative longitudinal data for NGOs receiving training as compared with those engaging in consultations.



The WL/NSP program satisfied the USAID intermediate result requirement of creating broader based and more effective NGOs, particularly nascent and start-up organizations based in the Marzes. The program additionally created a corps of Armenian trainers. These are members of NGOs in the main. These individuals, at the conclusion of the WL/NSP assistance effort, are well established as known professionals in their respective fields and able to provide custom training to the NGO community. This will ideally be on a fee-for-service basis; if it is gratis, then the creation of local training organizations is unsustainable and a valuable resource facilitating the role of NGOs as representatives of civil society's aspirations and goals may vanish.

A.4 Training resource development: resources created and employed

During the first and second years of the WL/NSP program, IESC VEs conducted courses devoted to the training of trainers (TOT). These were on organizational development, board development and advocacy. The representatives of regional NGOs and Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI) Assessors were the principal clients to participate and benefit from these trainings. At the conclusion of each course, IESC VEs selected approximately thirteen (13) trainees as individuals with the assumed potential to become trainers. These assumptions of potential to become trainers working in the entirely embryonic and unpredictable freelance Armenian trainer arena were based on the individual's displayed knowledge of the topics presented in the training, and their training presentations displaying their potential to connect with people in an environment requiring information transfer as a basic objective. These selected potential trainers, and several members of the WL/NSP staff, provided trainings on organizational development, advocacy, logical framework training, financial control and reporting and project monitoring and evaluation.

The training materials, manuals, handouts on organizational development and advocacy were produced by IESC VEs during the first two years of the program when they were conducting the majority of the basic and generic training. These were completely reviewed and revised during the third year to reflect the increased appreciation of local needs and conditions; additionally by this time numerous case studies were available for inclusion into workshop manuals and training materials. In year three, under the supervision of the WL/NSP Advocacy Specialist, local advocacy trainers elaborated the training manuals for the advocacy course, the introductory course and the advanced courses. Additionally these were all translated into Armenian and made freely available to all organizations requesting them. In the final year of the program these materials were also posted on the WL/NSP website. Under the supervision of WL/NSP Organizational Development Specialist, local trainers created, and piloted through extensive use during training, manuals on organizational development. These were also produced in Armenian language versions and made freely available to the NGO community.

The newly developed training materials were highly appreciated by NGOs which stated in their evaluations that the fact that the materials were based on Armenian culture and reality made them relevant and useful. During four years of WL/NSP activities, 538 NGOs participated in advocacy training and workshops, 621 in organizational development training events and 88 in the training of trainers sessions.

The WL/NSP executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Peace Corps under which Peace Corps Volunteers conducted trainings on Gender and Development in the regions.

(B) Technical Assistance to NGOs Through the International Executive Service Corps (IESC)

The International Executive Service Corps (IESC) played a significant role in the provision of trainings and technical assistance. The original plan called for fifteen (15) Volunteer Executive interventions each year, and this was approximately the rate at which actual implementation proceeded. In total, 60 projects were completed during 4 years of the WL/NSP. The projects implemented by IESC VEs covered topics relating to different aspects of organizational development (8); advocacy and coalition building (8); constituency building (8); fundraising (7); NGO PR and marketing (6); women's issues (4); civil society (3); training of trainers (3); promotion of youth activism (3); code of conduct for NGOs (2); NGO media relationship building (2); proposal preparation (2); communication skills (1); human rights (1); environmental issues (1); and teaching methods for learner's with special needs (1).

Of the 60 completed projects, 31 focused on addressing the subject matter and the NGOs needs through specific and targeted individual consultations; 27 Volunteer Executives provided general trainings while; 2 projects involved trainings coupled with consultations.

(C) Recruitment of Participants for Training and Consultations

When WL/NSP launched the first seed grant projects in the regions and special initiative grants (SIG) in Yerevan, the staff of the organizations which submitted expressions of interest and project concepts which were accepted for development into proposals became the main potential participants for the trainings. As the number of NGOs which registered with WL/NSP on its NGO Database increased and as the grants cycles proceeded and multiplied, so did the number of NGOs applying for training and technical assistance. This led WL/NSP to adopt a new approach for the process of selecting NGOs since the number applying could not be catered to.

Application forms for different trainings were prepared according to the topic and project needs, selection criteria were set up. The selection process adopted in the latter part of the program required applicants to define their needs carefully and relate these to their perception of the stage of development of their organization and to the kinds of activities which the organization was involved in. These statements were then matched by the Training Coordinator and staff to the kind and level of training being offered by WL/NSP. One major advantage of the careful selection of applicants was

that training groups were composed of individuals with roughly similar needs and of the same level of experience. Thus the difficulties of training multi-level groups was avoided to the advantage of the trainees and the course presenters. The fact that organizations were expected to apply voluntarily and go through a selection process rather than being required to attend trainings because these were mandated as part of the grants, ensured that only highly motivated applicants would become participants of the trainings, workshops, consultancies and hands-on mentoring sessions.

(D) Measuring the Results, Impact and Successes

Management Systems International (MSI) consultants worked as part of a contractual arrangement between MSI and World Learning to support the WL/NSP program in its monitoring and evaluation effort. MSI consultants proposed the KSA (knowledge, skills and attitude) approach to measure both short-term and long-term impact of the training and technical assistance interventions. Local trainers, using the MSI model, created pre-training and post-training evaluation tests for measuring changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes on the part of the participants who had attended trainings. These were applied immediately before the training and immediately following the end of the training intervention and allowed WL/NSP to obtain a sense of the short-term impact.

In the final year of the program, 34 NGOs were interviewed regarding the impacts of advocacy trainings (17 organizations) and organizational trainings (17 organizations) on the structure of the NGOs or on the way they function. According to the analysis of the responses the following was revealed:

As a consequence of advocacy training the NGOs:

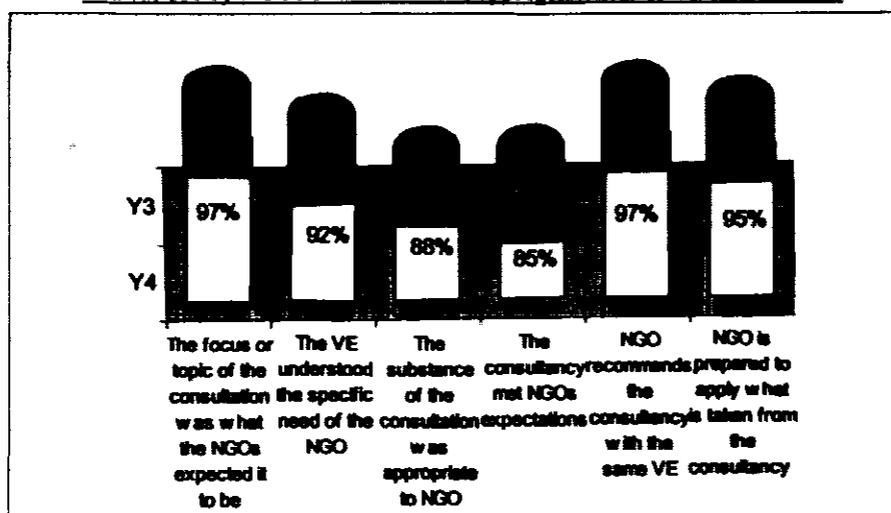
- Are using different lobbying techniques
- Are involved in coalition building
- Make greater use of the print media in the conduct of their advocacy campaigns
- Are sharing the knowledge they gained and training other members of their NGOs
- Have enhanced cooperation with the government

Resulting from organizational development the NGOs have:

- Improved board structure
- Increased cooperation with the private sector
- Started using their new knowledge in their own project implementation
- Conducted the training they received for their NGO staff

For IESC VE projects, MSI suggested another form of pre- and post-intervention evaluation. The pre-intervention test was concerned with determining NGO needs and expectations of the consultancy. The responses to questions in the pre-test allowed the VE to better structure the consultations based on the stated needs and expectations voiced by the NGO. The post consultation test questions gauged the appropriateness and quality of the service the VE provided and included items about the immediate impact of the consultancy on the project and the abilities of the NGOs to apply knowledge provided by the VEs. This tool was used by each of the VEs involved in the last 22 projects commencing from the third year of the WL/NSP program. Chart 4 illustrates the opinions of the NGOs as to the value and appropriateness of the VE interventions.

Chart 4. Evaluations by NGOs of the value and appropriateness of VE interventions



According to the NGOs, 92% of all IESC VEs understood the peculiarities of the needs of each NGO and 85% met the expectations of the NGOs. Fully 95% of NGOs in the final year of the project stated they would apply what they learned from the consultations they had completed. This is a slight increase from the 93% recorded for the previous year.

Forty-five (45) NGOs were involved in more than three individual consultations conducted by IESC VEs in Yerevan and in the regions on topics such as advocacy, constituency building, management, fundraising, youth issues, PR and marketing. These NGOs were interviewed by phone to determine how effective the consultations were and what type of changes had been brought about as a result. All NGOs stated that the consultations were effective. Two NGOs, however, mentioned that they had made no changes at all, two others had brought about small changes, while 40 organizations indicated that they had introduced changes in the form and function of their organizations following the consultations. These were in the realms of institutional changes, experience exchange, information on getting new sources for funding, review of the NGO mission, becoming better informed about community needs assessments, proposal writing and finding new donors by using the internet.

The combination of general trainings followed by consultations was valued by the NGOs. The trainings provided them with general knowledge on the topic and helped them understand their specific needs. These were subsequently addressed during the consultations. Although the NGOs valued both training and consultations as means to further their institutional development and project implementation, only 19 out of the 45 NGOs preferred training only, 17 NGOs said that they no longer preferred trainings and instead preferred consultation, and 16 preferred a combination of both.

All the interviewed NGOs mentioned that they applied the information and knowledge received during the consultations and trainings mostly in the mentioned areas below. In summary, changes effected as a result of training and consultations are the following:

Advocacy – increased cooperation with local government authorities and NGOs, better strategy development for advocacy campaigns, increased letter writing especially to the President of Armenia and other government representatives, improved lobbying mechanisms applied to creating changes in legislation, obtaining advocacy project grants from the European Commission.⁶

⁶ One of the NGOs is providing online consultations on Lobbying for the NGOs in the Caucasus

Fundraising - making policies, strategies and plans for fundraising from local sources, improved skills of letter writing to different donors, creating different informational packages to meet the needs of different donors, improved skills in proposal writing. Due to successes in fundraising using newly acquired tools, the NGOs were able to secure new office space, new equipment, additional inventory, and improved cooperation with local businesses and banks. The consultations gave extraordinary ideas for non-traditional fundraising methods that can solve daily self-sufficiency problems of the NGOs.⁷

Constituency Building - increased the number of NGO members and beneficiaries, started cooperation with local authorities, understood the importance of community needs analysis and created community centers, increased the community trust level.

Management - clarified the role of the board and board members, improved the structures of the NGO, defined strategies and strategic plans, NGO missions, clarified methodology for NGO activities.

PR and Marketing - mission statements were clarified, NGO promotional fact sheets improved, target audience better defined, community needs assessed, improved letter writing skills created to target different audiences, refined/revised NGOs logos, cooperation with different agencies established, plans made to market services provided by NGOs.

Four hundred and eighty-two (482) representatives from business, educational institutions, government, international organizations and the mass media participated in different topics-based trainings on coalition building, NGO-government collaboration, NGO-mass media cooperation. From the inception of the WL/NSP program a group of individuals was developed and trained so that they could use the WLID Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI). The application of this instrument became fundamental to WL/NSP defining and evolving implementation strategies and the content of its assistance effort. WL/NSP also developed a cadre of local trainers taken from within the NGOs to conduct the trainings on organizational development, advocacy, and board development. To further provide opportunities for professional development, twenty-seven (27) individuals from WL/NSP staff, local trainers and IAI Facilitators participated in different trainings and consultations conducted by IESC VEs. All above-mentioned trainings helped them in their day-to-day work with the NGOs by enhancing their professional skills, knowledge and competencies.

Summary

The training, workshops, consultations and hands-on mentoring opportunities played a significant role in providing NGOs with prospects for and enhancing their institutional capacities and capabilities. Many NGOs stated that the positive structural and operational developments they had engineered for themselves, subsequent to participating in WL/NSP training, would not have been actualized had there not been WL/NSP's broad and later specifically targeted training, consultation, legal clinics and grants. The results, as presented by the NGOs themselves, bear out the appropriateness and high impact of what was proposed in the original World Learning technical program description as a multi-faceted and integrated approach to helping NGOs develop into broader based and more effective entities.

⁷ One of the NGOs working in rural communities is making films about the problems of communities. In that project the largest part of the budget is for buying video tapes. As a result of an IESC VE consultancy, they just exchange the written tapes for clean ones from the community. Usually communities would like to own these materials.

Chart 5. Comparative distribution of trainings and consultations offered by WL/NSP

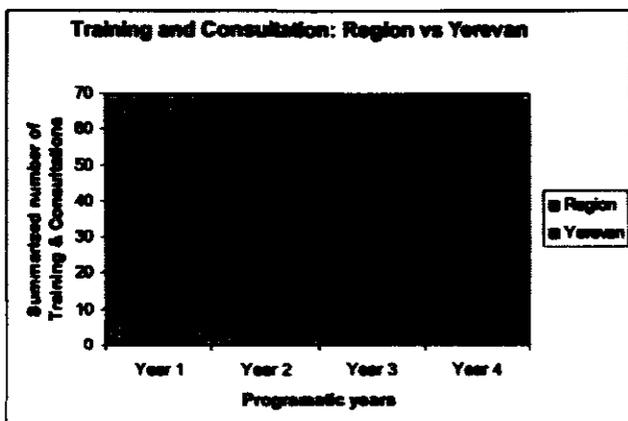


Chart 5 shows that the efforts of WL/NSP in terms of providing trainings and consultations in Yerevan and regions were approximately similar although slightly greater attention was afforded the regions in three years of the four, as was required by the Cooperative Agreement. It should be noted that for a maximum return to the assistance investment, the reverse would have been acceptable since it is in the capital city that the most advanced NGOs reside and practice their profession. However, WL/NSP

produced, in cooperation with the NGOs, noticeable results, acting as a mechanism through whose actions the Marz populations became stronger voices, through being better represented by the NGOs in the communities, in the movement towards greater involvement, representation and effective change leading to democratic and fair governance.³

WL/NSP commenced its program by employing IESC VEs as trainers in all its basic and generic training interventions. During the course of these WL/NSP created a cadre of Armenian trainers who gradually took over this role completely, leaving the VEs to focus on more specialized interventions to match the growing demand for these from a maturing and sophisticated NGO community. In time Armenian consultants will also dominate, quite appropriately, in this role. According to unsolicited reviews and comments, NGOs stated that the IESC VEs were the "fresh air" in the training and technical assistance effort. The foreign experts – the VEs mostly came from the USA with two of the sixty from Europe and one from Canada – brought new ideas for the NGOs. The value of the advice provided by the VEs stemmed from the decades of professional experience each brought to their interventions experience gained in the non-profit sector often augmented by either work for State and national governments or in the international arena. NGOs mentioned in their evaluations of VE interventions that to learn through examination of foreign case studies and experiences was the most valuable from their point of view. Such comments stem from the genuine feeling of isolation from the democratizing states to their north and north-west in Europe. There cannot be a strong enough recommendation to maintain open the possibility for Armenians to travel and visit with NGOs in Europe or North America be it the USA or Canada.

VI. Advocacy: From Lobbying to Civic Action Through NGOs

(A) Introduction and perspectives on this long-term and complex process

As a population living in the Soviet Republic of Armenia, people were accustomed, absolutely required in every essential way, to subordinate their personal opinions and perspectives to the social, economic and political blueprints for stasis and "development" as defined by Moscow and made concrete by the Armenian Communist Party and its governmental structures. This was a deferential society and submissive psychology in its overt expression. No "simple mortal" could even think about changing Government's policy let alone its form and functioning. Demands regarding openness, transparency, accountability and representativeness of electorate views and desires were rarely voiced, and then, by a minuscule number of intellectuals and professionals who suffered the consequences of the opposition they manifested towards the "will of the people." The "people," by and large, had no

³ For a complete statement of the changes in the NGO community which occurred August 2000 through August 2004 the reader is referred the two NGO Sector Assessment analyses produced by WLID and MSI as part of the WL/NSP program, one in 2001 and the other in 2004.

views or opinions as to the nature of their society or how it functioned to their benefit. Oppositionist views publicly expressed were considered a betrayal of the communistic party and the Motherland. This was the nature of the advocacy environment which WL/NSP encountered when commencing the implementation of the NGO Strengthening Program.

Attempts to bring about change, the only mechanism that people were using at that time, and have continued to use until the present, were through personal lobbying. Individuals, not representative entities such as NGOs – they simply did not exist in the form Armenia appreciates them at present – influenced those individuals in power and authority by persuasion, coercion, promises of favors or simply bribes. The reach of such activities was arrived at during the Brezhnev Presidency of the USSR when manipulation of the system through “lobbying” for personal, family and clan advantage was rife to the point of making equitable governance of the Republic of Armenia nonexistent. Thus an Armenian tradition was established and carried over into the post-Soviet practices of the Republic of Armenia during the years of democracy currently prevailing.

In 2000, when WL/NSP first introduced advocacy training, the concept of advocacy as a legitimate and effective practice engaged in by activists representing civil society was misunderstood by both NGOs themselves, the government, and, most unfortunately, by the general public which forms the constituencies democratically and freely supporting actions for change be they lobbying or advocacy in a broader sense.

This was for a number of reasons of which the two principal ones merit elaboration. The first reason has been mentioned above, but is worth repeating, because it so fundamentally colors the perceptions of both civil society advocates and the parties which are being lobbied. There was simply no tradition of the people, the electorate, who gave their mandate to the government to act on their behalf, having the right to voice opposition and certainly not to have the power to effect the personal or party desires of those individuals who find themselves in positions of power and authority by virtue of fraudulent elections, nepotism or cronyism. The second was the misinterpretation of the word advocacy. This was translated into Armenian as “rights protection.” WL/NSP spent more than one year employing an aggressive training campaign focused on NGOs to assist them in understanding that it is not necessary to be a lawyer to engage in civil actions designed to change the status quo and create new systems, structures and perceptions which allow for the development of open, transparent and accountable governance at all levels. Advocacy is not an issue for attorneys and courts; rather it is for the general population and each individual member of society. It is simply a “change.” Irrespective of how simple this may appear, the lack of an appreciation of this concept prevented forward motion with advocacy initiatives, even during the early years of the WL/NSP program. Only during the final year of the program was there a perceptual breakthrough, and effective representational civil and civic advocacy per se commenced.

As the WL/NSP program was initiating its assistance to NGOs conducting advocacy campaigns, it should be noted that there was an absence of dialogue among decision makers, lawmakers and the NGOs which were, meanwhile, publicly professing to the donors and the general public that they were civil society representatives engaging in forming and actualizing the process of change. Each camp was blaming the other for non-professionalism and disingenuousness. In actual fact there was no intention to cooperate, as such was seen as undermining the potential for satisfying each faction’s personal interests and goals. Only something euphemistically called “legal advocacy” could be employed in order to effect change in the regulatory and legal environment which alone could be considered as determining the possibilities for change and development. Effectively, advocacy actions for fundamental change were irrelevant because there was no base for them.

WL/NSP offered a means through which NGOs could cooperate with decision makers by creating a grant making mechanism providing NGOs with financial support for actions aimed at reforming legislation which affected the way in which NGOs operated as representatives of civil society and how they managed to sustain themselves as on-going and viable entities. Fully one year following the foundation of WL/NSP, NGOs began to understand that advocacy is a “change process” and achieved some measure of success in influencing decision makers and advocating for the interests of their

beneficiaries; meaningful dialogue took place and cooperation between NGOs, MPs and ministers became evident. This was a major step forward.

Another issue faced by WL/NSP was the nature of beneficiary participation in the advocacy campaigns conducted by NGOs. This was, originally and per force traditionally, decidedly marginal and tokenistic since NGO dignitaries lobbied their National Assembly and government friends for favors which resulted in some concessions being made in respect of the lobbyists' goal but no genuine recognition of the power of civil society as definers of the nature and extent of social, political and economic change and development. The movement towards democratization and open democratic government was "cosmetic" and ultimately non-threatening to the entrenched and undemocratic power elite which controlled, and still do so without effective challenge to the fundamental structure, the economy and government for their own purposes. Even when NGOs joined into coalitions, as stipulated in the Cooperative Agreement was desirable and necessary for furthering democratization, the result was like a lobbying campaign rather than advocacy where NGOs, joined in coalitions to convince their friends and intimate contacts that change was desirable.

Recognizing that advocacy was previously hardly ever a preferred means utilized by NGOs to effect change, WL/NSP conducted specialized training activities based on actual needs statements. These interventions addressed issues, based on stated and actual NGO needs, which encouraged the development and effective implementation of NGO-led advocacy based on significant constituency support. In the first instance it was important to expand the understanding of advocacy among the general NGO population and distinguish it from the most commonly held view, in the early stages of this program, of it being invariably a confrontational interaction. The focus of the training aimed at creating an awareness of the opportunities for the creation of partnerships and collaborative ways of managing the process leading to democratizing and egalitarian change.

During the program, especially in the third and also the final year, consistent efforts were expended by WL/NSP to foster working with NGOs to strengthen their ability to create constituencies and thereby legitimize and empower popular based support for issue focused advocacy campaigns. Furthermore, the novel approach proposed by WL/NSP suggested to NGOs they take their inspirational and directional lead from constituencies when the definition of advocacy themes and directions is the point, rather than these being the creation of distanced and distracted NGO power elites. A partially successful effort was made in helping NGO leaders and memberships appreciate the very positive benefits arising from sharing information not only among each other but also with political leaders, the media, the educational establishment, unions, associations and other community based organizations. However, the tradition of secrecy and limited access to information remains a definite feature.

NSP commenced establishing a cadre of professional trainers these being created through TOT programs linked to specialized topic-based trainings and consultations. IESC VEs initially conducted the TOTs. Following the completion of the TOTs, WL/NSP involved the "graduates" in advocacy trainings as trainers to test them and to provide them the opportunity to determine if they really wished to make this activity their profession. Unfortunately, this attempt was not particularly successful. Because TOT participants were chosen from among the WL/NSP IAI Facilitators, these being paid contract professionals who, in the estimation of the WL/NSP Advocacy Specialist, would provide their services only for a fee, the passion and unbounded, yet centered, enthusiasm which has to accompany genuine advocacy drives was missing. Training for advocacy actions requires that a person who wishes to train others has to be involved in advocacy on a daily basis and be fully committed to the cause. Advocacy is not essentially and exclusively theoretical, one has to feel the essence of the demands of advocacy goals and associated actions as well as have experience in working with decision makers to make effective advocacy drives and campaigns and to satisfy constituents and impress opponents. Most importantly the advocate activist must have the passion to guide and influence others be they supporters or the ones to be influenced. In retrospect the best candidates would have been the NGO members, those, who would be passionate about the cause they were fighting for and dedicated sufficiently to share their experience and inspire others within the NGOs to work for change.

All NGOs who entered the grant competitions also participated in advocacy trainings. Initially, during the first and into the second year of the program, advocacy trainings were designed by IESC Volunteer Executives, but they lacked the host country context and flavor which beneficiary NGOs informed the implementing partner were absolutely necessary for impactful training to happen. This deficiency was subsequently remedied when sufficient host country materials were gathered and incorporated into training manuals and session designs.

The Advocacy Training Manual was prepared by Armenian advocacy trainers and specialists basing their work on the pioneering efforts of IESC Volunteer Executives. The original documents were created using a combination of US based experience modified by local contexts and conditions. The locally produced manual introduced three levels of advocacy training.

The first was a one-day training for NGOs who had no exposure to advocacy as a practice but which did have at least a basic theoretical awareness. Training would help them to determine whether they would focus more on advocating for change as a modus operandi or to continue with their existing efforts which were mainly in education and charitable activities.

The second level of advocacy training concentrated on providing to NGOs the classic tools of advocacy informing them about steps in the process of implementing advocacy campaigns. These included: lobbying decision makers, work with mass media and involvement of constituencies. This training, of three days duration, was designed for those NGO who were sophisticated enough to define an issue to advocate for, or against, and wanted to effect change, but the advocacy campaign would have been a first experience for them.

Advanced advocacy training was conducted over a three-day period. The goal was to share with NGOs the best international practices and Armenian success stories as told by local NGOs. The training also included first hand reports about data collection and monitoring and evaluation of campaigns undertaken by NGOs. Attempts were made to discuss with NGOs more sophisticated dimensions of the nature of relations with the public and the media. Novel, and for Armenia quite advanced concepts, such as for example, NGOs as providers of testimony to decision makers and lawmakers – this is when an NGO testifies in front of a committee of MPs or ministers on the issue they are advocating for – were introduced during advanced trainings.

An objective, stated in the original technical proposal for WL/NSP, was to address was the formation and management of NGO coalitions which would unite NGOs into a single force on a particular issue. This was attempted at different times during the program, mainly through employing the mechanism of Special Initiative Grants (SIG) which would be used to unite NGOs, in a coalition, around a specific issue. An example of this kind of coalition forming initiative was related to the SIG on domestic violence. This was a closely engineered coalition forming exercise heavily influenced by WL/NSP. Although there was some solidarity and coordinated activity which came about, ultimately because of the coming together not having any indigenous rationale, the coalition did not endure. Another attempt was around a SIG on environmental issues which concluded in a manner similar to that on domestic violence. Although these attempts were not marked by resounding success, they were examples of coalitions forming and having impacts in their chosen area of advocacy arising from cooperative and coordinated action from a number of organizations. Invariably these were organizations with pseudo-autonomous branches in the regions which coordinated advocacy actions⁹. Although these might not be described as true coalitions, at the very least, they mark an embryonic state where cooperation and coordination between semi-independent entities is seen as legitimate and effective in effecting change through advocacy.

In the fall of 2003 during a conference supported by WL/NSP, NGOs based in and representing two southern Marzes formed a coalition which later was named and became nationally known as the "Southern Block." The main ambition behind the formation of this coalition was to demonstrate to the

⁹ "Anna consumers' Association", "Astghik" NGO

governments (national, regional and local), that the governmental representation in the regions by individuals not chosen by the populations of these areas was unacceptable and the Southern Block would act as representation and as a force for change. Nine activity areas were selected and managed by standing committees. At the time of closing the WL/NSP program the Southern Block was not as active as its charter and mandate had promised. However it implemented projects and fulfilled its representative obligations towards its constituents. It also survived the first test to its democratic principles by engaging in and conducting Presidential elections according to the highest standards of accepted democratic norms and practices.

In 2003, WL/NSP adopted a new approach to advocacy. This emphasized the involvement of constituencies in direct lobbying; in other words, "participatory" or "citizen advocacy." The Armenian electorate was voting in presidential and parliamentary elections which were being prejudged by most observers as being inadequate expressions of free and fair expressions of voters' wishes. There was a clear and present need for NGOs to undertake actions and raise the awareness of people that their vote was crucial for maintaining a meaningful role for civil society and for the democratic health of the Republic. Following close consultations with USAID the decision was undertaken to design and institute a new advocacy grant cycle, which concentrated the efforts of NGOs not only on the pressing need to address the voters' illiteracy regarding democratic norms and their rights as the electorate but also their apathetic feelings associated with their power as a constituency to be a force for change.

One of the successful responses to the above-mentioned challenges was the change brought about by the NGOs, involving the community as constituents, into the formulation, evaluation and final adoption, by democratic consensus, of the three year development plan for the town of Goris in southern Armenia.

Towards the final stages of the WL/NSP program, the need to have NGOs active in the post-legislation making stage became obvious and pressing. The implementation of the Law on Freedom of information was a tipping point in a consensual appreciation that making, and then passing, a Law was insufficient for ensuring that long-term and irreversible change in the regulatory and legal environment was taking place. Laws can be ignored; they be intentionally misapplied to serve the status quo and vested interests benefiting from this, and Laws can be applied as a punitive measure against forces – democratizing in the case of Armenia – which are working for change towards a free and open society.

As a means of moving NGO thinking and action into the advanced stage of perceiving that monitoring the implementation of the law was a logical and imperative next stage beyond advocacy for the changing or introduction of legislation, WL/NSP introduced a new design for the Logical Framework applied to all grants, which all grantees were obliged to employ in the design and management of their project implementation activities. The principle and major change was to alter the goal of the Framework from changing the law to monitoring its implementation and evaluating the results achieved. This rather minor appearing change resulted in NGOs focusing much more on the implementation of laws rather than, as before, the mere passing of drafts into laws.

This rather small technical alteration had broad and sweeping change effects and was possible because the NGO community, its constituencies and the governmental apparatus with which NGOs were interacting had changed noticeably during the four years of WL/NSP activities. A greater respect for democracy and its benefits became apparent as did a positive appreciation of constructive dialogue rather than destructive oppositionism expressed at every opportunity, natural or fabricated, both between elements of the NGO community and civil society and the government and lawmakers. An example of the kind of change which this technical redefinition of objectives and goals made to the real world of community action and effective social, political and economic change was in Goris when an organization reached its "goal" without changing legislation, but through piloting the issue¹⁰.

¹⁰ Goris Teachers' Union advocacy urging the formation and democratic functioning of Student Councils

(B) Results of WL/NSP assistance to advocacy NGOs.

NGO efforts to influence government in 2001 were largely characterized by highly personal contacts aimed at getting government help to solve or alleviate a particular person's problem. The idea of systematic efforts to change laws and government practices for whole classes of constituencies, such as elderly, was hardly thought of. The rise of advocacy on behalf of NGO constituencies is a major change brought about by the work of WL/NSP. In 2004, research conducted in the course of preparing the NGO Sector Assessment showed that many in the NGO community were attuned to the need to influence government policies and decisions through systematic advocacy efforts. An increasing number of visible political actions were organized by NGOs through lobbying and public mobilization. Some government officials have noted this and as one stated:

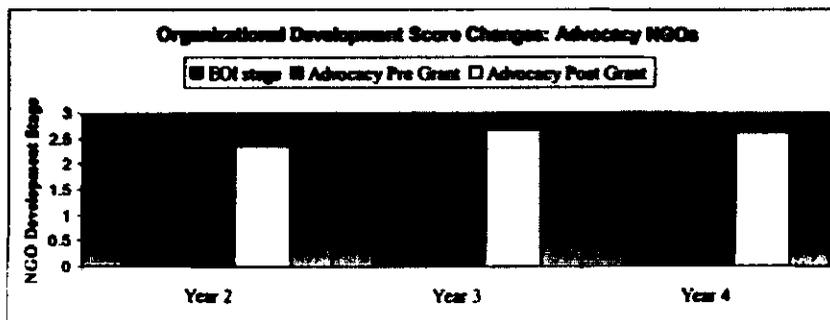
"There are NGOs which clearly understand the legislative field, they point out gaps and initiate the change in that sphere, thus representing the interests of their beneficiaries. There are also NGOs which simply are wasting our time." *Central Government, Ministry Official*

Advocacy became a widely employed process during the last three years of NSP. While advocacy is literally translated into Armenian as "public interest protection," this term and concept has been most widely understood by NGOs as defining action leading towards legal reforms such as amendments to existing laws or the creation and adoption of new legislation. The NGO community's growing interest in advocacy has been the direct result of donor community efforts to adapt and apply western models of advocacy theories and practices through numerous trainings, grant projects and advocacy specialists' consultations. As a result, 33% of NGOs sampled during the Second NGO Sector Assessment in 2004 committed themselves to this mission, and 34% implemented various activities and projects during NSP's last three years which focused mainly on legal advocacy and legislative reforms.

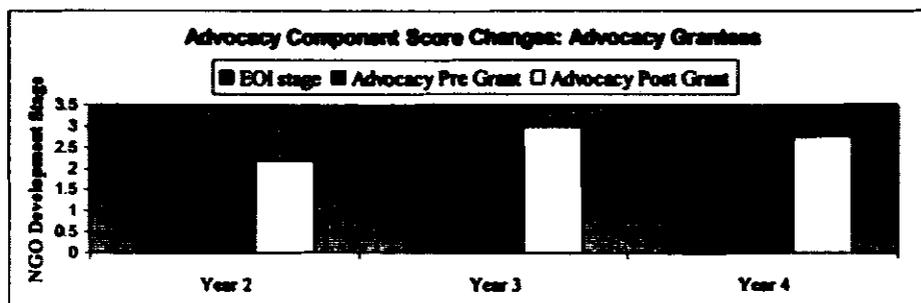
The advocacy role of NGOs has become recognized by many in Parliament and by National and Local Government. However, this is still very selective, rather than a generalized sense that NGOs as a group are now able to effectively represent interests and offer well conceived legislative solutions.

The developmental advances signifying increasing organizational and operational sophistication have been illustrated by the results from Institutional Analysis (IAI) testing. WL/NSP's Advocacy Grantees' overall institutional development scores for the three WL/NSP Program Years indicated a gradual and sustained growth in organizational development which took the NGOs through the mid-developing stage and continued to advance towards the more consolidated stage.

Advocacy grantees, for the last two years of the WL/NSP program were in the "early" stage of their organizational development; that is with IAI scores lower than 2.5 (please see the section dealing specifically on IAI to learn more about the scoring of NGOs and the link of scores to organizational development level). During the course of the program, these advocacy NGOs entered into a "mid" stage of organizational development. The pre-award IAI ratings for Advocacy grantees, with an exception of Year 1, consistently exceeded NSP's targets for this indicator. Average pre-award ratings for Advocacy Grant applicants were always slightly higher than the average pre-award ratings of all other grant applicants indicating that, on the whole, NGOs working in the field of advocacy were a little more sophisticated and developed than the typical entity.



During the course of the WL/NSP program, advocacy grantees demonstrated solid and positive change in the direction of being better organized and better representatives of their constituencies. During the last two years of the program these changes exceeded NSP targets and placed the Advocacy NGOs in the "consolidated" developmental stage. As shown below, the grantees advanced to a "late developing" and "early consolidating" stage on the Advocacy component score.



Most of the Advocacy grantees achieved their major program objective and made legislative changes. In the third year of the program 11 projects and in its final year, 19 projects financed by WL/NSP were devoted to advocating for change. The percentage of Advocacy grant projects that achieved their purpose is notable standing at 82%, while 68% of projects achieved their targets fully or at least partially or exceeded their planned indicators.¹¹ Some 18% in year 3, and 32% in year 4 did not achieve the set targets by the time of assessment due to various reasons beyond their control such as presidential elections (in Year 3) or delays with the delivery of draft laws from the government to the National Assembly. For some projects, the laws they were instrumental in changing were still not enforced when the NSP closed, since the budgets associated with the implementation of the law have not been discussed by the Executive or there inadequate financial resources were allocated to the enforcement mechanisms.

These last two mentioned impediments to ensuring that change happens as a result of amended laws or new laws being introduced is unfortunately all too frequent in Armenia where pace, and even direction, of change is often dictated by factors not in the public domain nor capable of being influenced by democratic processes and the public will.

During the final year of the WL/NSP program a study was conducted to determine which factors were pivotal in determining the outcome and impact of NGO advocacy campaigns. On the basis of analysis of information provided in the evaluation questionnaires and monitoring visits conducted by NSP staff, the following 12 major factors playing an essential role in the implementation of advocacy campaigns were identified:

- The avenue chosen through which to introduce the law or amendment being advocated for either via government or via National Assembly deputies. The former provided more potential than the latter for the action being accepted and the law or amendment being passed by the National Assembly.
- Republic of Armenia signing International Conventions and Treaties. If actions are connected in some way to documents already signed or in the process of signing then they stand a better chance of success.
- Republic of Armenia entering the European Community. If the action is perceived in some way to be connected with this then it stands a better chance of approval.
- If the advocacy campaign is run parallel to an advocacy project receiving funding then there is a better chance of the campaign being successful.

¹¹ 7 projects fully attained their purposes and 2 NGOs did so partially in Year 3, while 2 NGO partially attained their purposes while 5 NGOs exceeded their expectations in Year 4.

- If the issue is an "old" one and people are familiar with it then it is likely to be more successful.
- "On the Wave" or "Opportunity Window:" popular issues, be that because of good awareness raising work by the NGO or the popularizing actions of, for example the media, are likely to be accepted.
- Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed. Very general goals and advocacy campaigns are most likely to have no popular support.
- Grassroots' involvement: the greater is the chance for advocacy campaign success.
- Stable Political Situation; no elections. These disrupt the routine function of the National Assembly and the lawmaking process.
- NGO collaboration. The greater this is the better for the success of the campaign.
- Personal Contacts. Even though advocacy is on the increase the element of personal lobbying is still crucial.
- An extended grant program or repeat funding can determine the outcome of a campaign which takes longer than originally planned.

All NGOs, during the first years of the program during the First Advocacy Grant Cycle, that were active in campaigns which amended or created new laws, did so when factors such as "stable political situation" and "inter-NGO collaboration" were evident. Next in order of perceived importance were factors of "personal contacts" and "grassroots involvement." Fully 60% of NGOs mentioned these factors or combinations of these as positively affecting the outcome of their advocacy work.

During the second grant cycle, NGOs stated that the way they introduced their proposals for change was important: "Law Introduction" process was considered critical by all (100%) respondents and "NGO Collaboration" was present in all projects. Next, the factors of "Republic of Armenia signing International Conventions and Treaties," "Parallel to advocacy project funding in the same area," "Old Issue," "On the Wave" or "Opportunity Window," "Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed," and "Grassroots' involvement" (50%) were viewed as influential.

Cycle III NGOs stated that NGO collaboration, Personal Contacts, and "Old" Issue (71%) were determinants. Then followed Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed (57%) and "Opportunity Window" (43%). The factors absent for grantees during this round were Grassroots' involvement, Republic of Armenia signing International Conventions and Treaties, and Parallel to advocacy project funding in the same area (14%), and, to lesser extent, Law introduction process, Republic of Armenia entering EC, and Stable Political Situation.

On average, across these three cycles, the most present factors were NGO collaboration (82%), Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed (56%) and Law introduction process (56%). Together and working in combination, these factors were considered as important to successful advocacy.

Cycles IV and V produced about the same picture: Law Introduction process and Personal Contacts (100%), Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed and Stable Political Situation (No elections) (80%), "Old Issue", "On the Wave" or "Opportunity Window," NGO Collaboration (60%), Grassroots' involvement and extended grant program (or repeat funding) (40%).

The Law Introduction process played a role in 86% of successful projects, Very Specific Issue/Need being addressed – 81%, Stable Political Situation (No elections) – 76%, Grassroots' involvement and NGO collaboration – 73%, Personal contacts (71%) and "Opportunity Window" – 60%. On average, the most often stated factors were Law Introduction process, Very Specific Issue/ Need being addressed, and Stable Political Situation (No elections). The least popular is Republic of Armenia entering EC.

During the same survey which yielded the above presented information for NGOs which did succeed, studies were conducted on those agencies which failed in their advocacy attempts. They attributed their lack of success to a series of factors starting with their choice of the way through which to

introduce their action. Most NGOs mentioned their Law Introduction process (90% of projects), NGO collaboration (90%), Very Specific Issue/Need being addressed and Grassroots' Involvement (80%), Stable Political Situation and "Opportunity Window" (70%). For amendments on average, the most popular are Law Introduction process, Very Specific Issue/Need being addressed, Stable Political Situation (No elections), Personal contacts (83%). The other factors that played role are "Old" Issue (67), Grassroots' involvement and NGO collaboration (66), "Opportunity Window" and Extended grant program (or repeat funding) – 50%, Republic of Armenia signing International Conventions and Treaties, Parallel to advocacy project funding in the same area (33%). The least popular are Republic of Armenia entering EC (16%). It became evident during the WL/NSP program that many of the factors controlling an NGOs ability to successfully lobby and advocate are complex, highly interdependent and frequently unpredictable in their timing and the effect of them bearing down on the advocacy process.

VII. The Measure of NGO Development and the Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI)

(A) The Institutional Analysis Instrument: Structure and Application

The Institutional Analysis Instrument (IAI), developed by World Learning, and widely used by the organization on its NGO strengthening projects, was employed by the NGO Strengthening Program (NSP) for two major purposes. Both ensured that WL/NSP activities led to broader based and more effective NGOs operating in Armenia.

In the first instance, the data this instrument collected informed the Project Monitoring Plan (PMP) which reported on the progress of NGOs towards attaining a broader based and more effective status stemming from working with WL/NSP. Secondly, the IAI provided essential guidance as to the kinds of training and technical assistance which WL/NSP should deliver to NGOs and which they would benefit from most. The IAI proved extremely versatile and useful in gathering information which created the foundation for a rational and objectively grounded series of strategic decisions molding the form and the functioning of the WL/NSP assistance effort between 2000 and 2004. Additionally, and most importantly, the IAI process and analytical results provided NGOs with a sense of where they were organizationally and developmentally, and how they could advance towards a position from which they could serve their constituents better and more effectively. As the program matured it was discovered that the development of advocacy NGOs was not being measured accurately. To resolve this problem a new tool, the Advocacy Analysis Instrument, was developed and piloted before the program came to a close. The results of the pilot indicated a much better measure of the degrees to which advocacy NGOs had responded to WL/NSP assistance.

The IAI instrument gathered information on six aspects of NGO organizational capacity. These were:

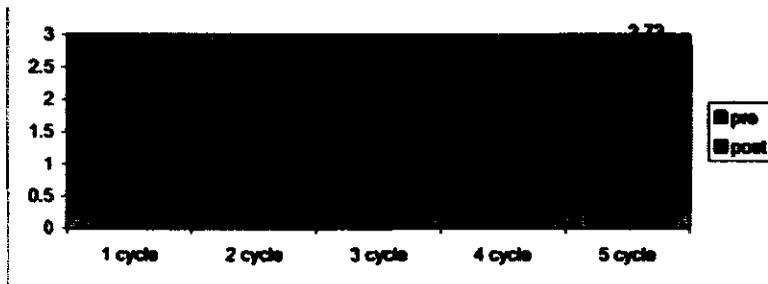
1. NGO governance: governing bodies, board members capacities and skills, understanding of mission and its development, work with target constituency, roles and responsibilities of board members
2. Operations and management of the NGO: administrative procedures and manuals, planning procedures, communication methods, ways of program development and implementation
3. Human resources: staff capacity, task management competency, performance management and staff development plans, team development and conflict resolution methods
4. Financial resources: accountant, budgeting capacities, approaches for financial control, external financial control attempts, potential resource bases
5. Service delivery: list of external experts, feedback from community, service impact assessment
6. External relations and advocacy: public relations, communication with government and non-governmental sector, advocacy approaches

During the first year of WL/NSP, some 50 individuals were trained - during three IAI courses - by Management Systems International (MSI) on how to implement the IAI tool. The best twenty (20) trainees were hired as Personal Service Contractors to conduct the more than 850 IAI assessments performed during the life of the WL/NSP program. The information collected through the IAI was kept both as an internal electronic database and in hard copies - in Armenian, of narrative IAI reports.

The database contained scores and sub-scores on all the IAI categories and sub-categories and the information could be sorted by grant types, dates, geographical location of the NGO client, by the name of the IAI facilitator. The hard copies of confidential narrative reports were also kept in the NSP office and are available for outside use only with the permission of client NGO(s).

The IAI tool proved very effective in determining the degree to which NGOs changed as a result of assistance provided by WL/NSP. It was labor intensive and time consuming but did provide information of a kind and quality that made its application very worthwhile. Consequently, through the Action Plans which NGOs could develop and employ, should they so wish, NGOs did have access to guidelines and roadmaps for their future development.

Comparison of average pre- and post- IAI score for all grantees overall in five grant cycles is provided in the following table. The IAI used a four-point scale:



As the above table shows, the greatest improvement occurred among the 1st cycle grantees, which is not surprising as this was the very first IAI assessment and NGOs obtained a huge amount of information and mentoring that they did not have prior to the start-up of WL/NSP.

(B) Impact of WL/NSP Assistance on Grantees as Indicated by IAI analyses

The following section refers to advocacy and seed grant NGOs which received financial support for project implementation from WL/NSP.

The highest scores for all advocacy grantee NGOs, irrespective of which grant cycle they were in, were achieved in the categories of governance, then external relations, followed by advocacy. The greatest changes – denoting the largest developmental advances – were made in governance, then in external relations and advocacy and thirdly, in operational and management systems. NGOs had decidedly changed, for the positive, the way they govern themselves as public entities which had an effect on the way in which they relate to constituencies, the government and the business sector.

WL/NSP also tracked the progress of some non-grantees. For non-grantees, whose mission focused on advocating for change, developmental progress was noted in firstly the service delivery category, secondly in external relations and advocacy category and thirdly in operational and management systems. Non-grantees not only changed less than WL/NSP supported NGOs but they also focused their efforts on traditional missions to beneficiaries rather than enacting structural and procedural modifications which would render them better and more effective agents for change.

It is instructive to note that smallest change was reported in the “financial resources” category. This quite simply means that NGOs will continue to rely on donors as long as they are providing funds to Armenia. The entitlement mentality is still prevalent in the Armenia’s Third Sector’s perspective of the post-Soviet world.

In summary, the highest scores and the biggest developmental changes of advocacy grantees were reported, firstly, in the governance category and secondly for external relations and advocacy. The

changes mean that decision makers and NGO leaders understood the need for changes and supported the process of change.

For Yerevan Seed and Regional Seed grantees and non-grantees combined the following trends were reported through the changes noted in IAI reports. The greatest IAI change for Yerevan based seed grantees and non-grantees combined was firstly for governance category and secondly operations and management systems. For regional seed grantees and non-grantees the greatest degree of change was demonstrated firstly for governance and secondly for service delivery.

According to the reported IAI scores the biggest change for Yerevan seed grantees only happened mostly in operations and management systems, while for Regional seed grantees only this appeared in the service delivery category. The smallest change for all seed grantees and non-grantees combined occurred in the financial resources category.

VIII. Information and Communications Technology: Its Role and Impact on WL/NSP Assistance to NGOs.

The information and communications technology (ICT) component of the WL/NSP can be divided on four major subgroups:

- ICT capacity building at WL/NSP offices, in Yerevan and at the regional offices, which ensured their smooth and effective functioning during the entire project period
- Development of a comprehensive database on Armenian NGOs, both for NSP project and public use
- Creating, maintaining and continuously developing the WL/NSP web site: <http://www.worldlearning.am>
- Creation and development of databases (WL/NSP training and IAI databases) used by the project for tracking assistance impact and for reporting progress of the NGO sector
- Development of the WL/NSP Internal Network – the "Intranet"
- Organizing and operationalizing the information outreach and public relations component.

(A) ICT Capacity Building at WL/NSP

This included planning and purchasing computers and computer equipment, designing and building local area network (LAN), software installation, server/system administration, enabling Internet connection through local ISP, providing World Learning staff with Internet access and e-mail boxes, maintaining the <Worldlearning.am> domain and web site, ensuring information security and antivirus protection, performing everyday maintenance and repair of equipment, implementing regular hardware and software upgrades, providing IT consultation and training for staff.

The IT system which was selected and developed for WL/NSP was very reliable and effective.

(B) Creating and further developing the WL/NSP Web Site: <http://www.worldlearning.am>

A major achievement of the WL/NSP program was the creation of the project's web site. The initial version was launched in the spring of 2001 and was continuously developed and enhanced during the life of the project. At the time that WL/NSP project ended the website was one of the largest and most visited in Armenia. It presented detailed information not only about the WL/NSP program, but also useful information for Armenian NGOs and about Armenian NGOs. The website is to be taken over by the successor organization to WL/NSP which has been formed by the staff of the WL/NSP program. The Professionals for Civil Society (PFCS) assisted by financial support from UNDP will continue with the website work started by WL/NSP.

The major sections of the project site included:

Armenian NGO directory

This is a comprehensive database on Armenian NGOs developed and compiled by WL/NSP. This database was made available for public use through the web site. An advanced search format attached to the database made information retrieval easy and convenient. NGOs could be searched by name, mission, names of the contact persons, address, phone numbers. There were also two separate listings, where NGOs were distinguished by their field of activity and geographical location. The central part of the NGO directory was the NGO profile page, providing access to all information available for that specific NGO.

WL/NSP Grants

Grant making to NGOs was a major component of the WL/NSP and during the four years of the project, 172 grants were awarded through 19 grant cycles. The grants section of the web site presented comprehensive information about all NSP grantees. One could start navigation through the list of all 19 grant cycles, then preview detailed information of each cycle, including dates, description, application forms, list of EOI (Expression of Interest) stage applicants and successful grantees, and grant cycle statistics. A detailed description of each successful project was also available on a separate page.

Legal Section

WL/NSP had a legal component composed of consultations for NGOs and work on Armenian non-profit legislation. The "Legal Corner" on the web site presented details about these activities and much other helpful information for NGOs. One could find English and Armenian versions of Armenian "Law on Public Organizations," "Law on Foundations," "Law on Charity," drafts of Law on Volunteer activities and Labor Code, many useful legal materials, comments and advice. There was also a legal "Questions and Answers" section for NGOs, a news archive and a legal links collection. The section was jointly maintained by the WL/NSP Legal section and KCT teams.

Advocacy

This page mainly presented the Code of Standards for Armenian NGOs developed by WL/NSP together with the NGO working groups. Along with the text of Code in English and Armenian there was also an electronic form for NGOs to express their support for this charter and the list of NGOs already accepting the Code of Standards.

Publications

This section presented major documents developed during WL/NSP's four years of work on NGO strengthening. One could find here, for example, the 2001 and 2004 NGO Sector Assessments, the Advocacy Manual and the NGO Success Stories brochure.

NGO News Line

This section was launched in March 2004, and quickly became one of the most popular sections of the web site. It presented almost daily updated news, announcements, press releases about various activities being implemented by Armenian NGOs. The bilingual NewsLine on the WL/NSP web site eventually became the main news source about NGOs in Armenia.

NGO Success Stories

This section presented another initiative by the WL/NSP information team launched in the fall of 2003. Here one could find 66 success stories submitted by NGOs that resulted from the success story contest. Stories were written by NGOs themselves in free and informal style and introduced their major achievements to the general public. This was an excellent form of outreach and public awareness raising.

Top story and news

This section presented regular information about WL/NSP activities and achievements. The most current and important material was presented as a top story on the first page. Top stories were usually

changed every 7-10 days. Both top stories and news were archived so that a historical reference source was built up.

Public announcements.

This was another very popular section of the WL/NSP web site. It presented different announcements about grants, conferences, fellowship and scholarship opportunities, job openings which were collected from various mailing lists, web sites and the print media. The section contained a special form through which NGOs and other organizations could submit their own announcements.

Other features of the WL/NSP web site included the following:

- The site was completely bilingual; all information was presented in English and Armenian and thus accessible for visitors both from Armenia and abroad.
- Most of the information on the web site came from various databases and was updated almost daily.
- All information on the web site was interconnected by links, which made the site user friendly and very easy to navigate.

According to a recent "Comparative Analysis of Quality and Demand of Armenia. Internet Resources" conducted through IREX/IATP, the World Learning NSP website was recognized as the leader among online resources among international and non-governmental organizations, missions and donors operating in Armenia for its quality, timeliness, popularity as well as information capacity and accessibility.

(C) A Comprehensive Database on Armenian NGOs

One of the major WL/NSP ICT tasks was the creation of a database of Armenian NGOs. The first version of this database, containing data on some 200 NGOs, became available in March 2001. Initially this database was intended for in-office use only. The purpose for creating this database was to provide staff with some institutional/contact information about NGOs working with WL/NSP. It was planned that the database would be used for contacting NGOs on an as needed basis to complete such tasks as compiling training groups and disseminating information.

With the enhancement of WL/NSP activities and the increasing acknowledgement of the project's work in Armenia, the project received a growing number of requests from various organizations and institutions to provide NGO related information. In order to satisfy this information need it was decided to attach a web interface to the NGO database and make it available on-line through the project web site. The Internet version of the NGO database was launched in January 2003 and soon became a major source of trusted and accurate information about NGOs in Armenia.

As the WL/NSP program closed the NGO database contained records of some 933 most active Armenian non-governmental organizations. NGO data included name and contact data, mission statement, field of activity, registration status, proprietary issues. Another section contained information about projects implemented by the NGO. The projects were described by title, dates, location, brief summary and description. There was also data on whether the project was supported by a grant from a donor organization. All information was made available in both English and Armenian languages and constantly updated and appended.

(D) Additional Databases

To support WL/NSP activities a number of additional databases were developed:

The Training Database contained information about all the trainings conducted by WL/NSP. Courses were specified by course name, dates, venue, category, duration (days, hours), number of participants, trainers. Participants described by names, gender, age group and which organizations they represented. There was also a distinction as to whether training participants were members of an NGO or members of other organization/institution. Training information was partly available through WL/NSP web site and entirely accessible to WL/NSP Intranet users. At the time of the closing of the WL/NSP the training database stored records of about 232 courses and 3,650 trainees.

The Grants Database stored detailed data about WL/NSP grant cycles and grantees. In total all 19 grant cycles and 178 grants were recorded. Each cycle was presented by name, category, dates, regional distribution, description, application forms, lists of successful EOI stage and grant applicants. Grants themselves were described by name of awarded organization, project title and description, amount awarded, dates, location, name of project manager. To make the project's work more transparent this information was completely available to the public through the organizational web site.

The IAI Database stored the results of 500 IAI analyses. Along with IAI numeric level information, the database contained additional information such as name of assessed NGO, date, type of assessment, status of NGO at the assessment time, name of assessor. This data was for internal use and available only through the Internal network.

The Web database served as data storage for information which appeared on the web site such as top stories and news, announcements, staff list and NGO news line articles. Similarly, the Intranet Database contained data for the Intranet.

(E) Information and Public Relations (PR) at WL/NSP

The ICT team was also responsible for the Information/PR activities within WL/NSP. This work included:

- Preparing press releases about WL/NSP activities
- Contacting media outlets and ensuring proper media coverage of various WL/NSP events
- Writing articles for the web site in English and Armenian
- Data editing, translating, entering into various databases
- Interviewing NGOs for NGO NewsLine
- Assisting in NSP promotion materials preparation
- Other outreach activities as needed.