COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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It was prepared by the Residential Heating Project's Artak Ghazaryan, Anna Kirakosyan, Henry Koner.

Residential Heating Project
USAID Contractor
75 Hovsep Emin Street
Yerevan Armenia
(374)-10-268982 (tel.)
(374)-10-210882 (fax)
www.heat.am

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Armenia Residential Heating Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to improve access to residential heating through the introduction of alternative heat energy technologies and funding mechanisms to the Armenian heat energy consumers.

This communications strategy is intended to serve as a tool to improve the communications and awareness of residential heating issues to consumers and provide a series of recommendations designed to contribute to the Residential Heating Project and its counterparts and stakeholders achievement of the Project's long-term goal and, in particular, to identify and clarify important messages to be presented during the implementation of the Project.

PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

This communications strategy is based on a general approach which can be defined through the following interactive principles:

- soliciting stakeholder input;
- developing key messages;
- defining the audience;
- disseminating messages to target audiences through the most effective communication channels; and,
- inviting feedback.

VEHICLES TO COMMUNICATION

Public Awareness and Communications activities will use the following vehicles to communicate the intended Project messages and will consist of:

- customer surveys;
- interactions with NGOs;
- use of mass media;
- publications; and
- targeted training.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS FOR COMMUNICATION

The specific interventions to be incorporated into the communication and public awareness process will be conducted through a collaborative and interactive approach to reach counterparts and stakeholders with an interest in residential heating and will include but not be limited to:

- conducting communication activities and maintaining regular contacts with counterparts and stakeholders;

- properly branding and marking USAID support of heat energy projects;
- supporting internal communication;
- supporting project initiatives, such as support to passage of legislation;
- developing press kit materials;
- developing the project web site;
- producing informational materials such as brochures and public service announcements; and,
- maintaining regular contact and cooperation with mass media and journalists.

COUNTERPARTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Although the full list of interested stakeholders and counterparts involved in the development of the residential heating sector is rather extensive, the general categories of the targeted counterparts and stakeholders for inclusion in the communications strategyare:

- Ministries and Other Government Agencies
- ArmRusGas Company;
- USAID and selected USAID project implementers;
- Renewable Resource and Energy Efficiency (R2E2) Fund;
- Heat Energy Consumers;
- Condominium Associations, and other relevant NGOs;
- Armenian Energy Service Companies (ESCOs);
- Mass Media;
- Banks and other financial institutions; and,
- Community Leaders.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

The overall goal of the Residential Heating Project is to provide the Armenian public with the full range of available heat energy alternatives. Implementation of this Public Awareness/Communications Strategy is expected to result in making a significant contribution toward the Project's overall goals and objectives by:

- Enhancing the image of USAID and the Residential Heating Project by spotlighting its approach to serve the public through local heating solutions;

- Creating public support to the heating sector policies being implemented by the GoAM and supported by Donor Organizations such as USAID, World Bank and UNDP;
- Contributing to the development of a robust and sustainable residential heat energy market in Armenia;
- Creating support to heat sector development by key stakeholders, such as banks, condominiums and consumers;
- Promoting a better understanding by key stakeholders, partners, and consumers of residential heating options and approaches;
- Improving transparency and the flow of information between customers and the heat energy service providers;

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The overarching long-term goal of the USAID Residential Heating Project is to improve access to residential heating through the introduction of alternative heat energy technologies and funding mechanisms to the Armenian heat energy consumers.

This strategy is intended to serve as a guide to the Residential Heating Project for its communications and public awareness activities over the next three years and provide a series of recommendations designed to contribute to the Residential Heating Project and its counterparts and stakeholders achievement of the project's long-term goal and, particularly, to identify and clarify important messages to be presented during the implementation of the Residential Heating Project.

This strategy includes a general approach and general scope of activities to be implemented by the Residential Heating Project in the area of public awareness and communications. This strategy describes the basis on which Residential Heating Project will collect, analyze and disseminate key information to various audiences on the heating market, heat supply, and other specific topics based on the project objectives. Selection of target audiences will be carried out based on selection of consumers of viable new heating projects and sites for project retrofits, necessity of implementation of specific information projects, and dissemination of specific information.

The general principles of an interactive communication approach are based upon the following:

- soliciting stakeholder input;
- developing key messages;
- defining the audience;
- disseminating messages to target audiences through the most effective communication channels; and,
- inviting feedback.

The strategic approach will be accomplished in three phases. Namely:

- Preparation of decision-makers, spokespersons and journalists on advocacy points and developing their capacity to effectively communicate reassuring messages and benefits of the residential heating strategy.
- Improved awareness of viable heating projects: Use of USAID-supported projects as:
    - vehicles for ongoing national publicity and more detailed explanation of project goals both to the general public and to professional and local elites;
    - demonstrated examples of USAID supported heating projects and their relevance and application to the Residential Heating Project.

- Campaign associated with broader implementation of residential heating, involving more detailed explanation at the national and local-levels to provide information related to launching of projects and services.

Public awareness and communications activities of the project will be conducted through the following vehicles of communication:

- customer surveys;
- interactions with NGOs;
- use of mass media;
- publications; and,
- targeted training.

In addition, these activities will include ongoing work, which refers to:

- conducting communication activities and regular contacts with counterparts and stakeholders;
- properly branding and marking USAID support of heat energy projects;
- supporting internal communication;
- supporting project initiatives, such as support to passage of legislation;
- developing press kit materials;
- developing the project web site;
- producing information materials such as brochures and public service announcements; and,
- maintaining regular contact and cooperation with mass media and journalists.

The strategy also consists of mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of public awareness and communications efforts of the project.

Public awareness/communications activities will be conducted in collaboration with:

- Ministry of Energy;
- Ministry of Finance and Economy;
- Ministry of Urban Development;
- Ministry of Regional Management;
- Ministry of Territorial Administration;
- Ministry of Environment;
- Other Governmental agencies;

- ArmRusGas company;
- USAID and several USAID implementers';
- Renewable Resource and Energy Efficiency (R2E2) Fund;
- Heat Energy Consumers;
- National Condominium Association (NACO), and other relevant NGOs;
- Armenian Energy Service Companies (ESCOs);
- Mass media;
- Banks and other financial institutions; and,
- Community leaders.

The full list of interested stakeholders and counterparts in promoting public awareness and communications for heat energy efforts is rather extensive. In this case there is a necessity for coordinating the information dissemination to meet the needs of this wide cross-section of stakeholders.

It is important to effectively cooperate and coordinate communication efforts in the preparation of public information materials, other ongoing public awareness activities and maintain open channels of communication with other projects and donors. Regular coordination meetings should be established to assure that duplication of efforts is eliminated or minimized.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Public awareness and communications play an important role at every stage of the project to assure that the proper message is being delivered and consensus is reached with counterparts and stakeholders. At the beginning of the project communication sets the stage with project staff around a common vision and message. During implementation it helps the project in achieving objectives, improve reporting, and build awareness and consensus of issues. Throughout the project, and even at closeout, communication helps document impact for stakeholders, the public, and the development community. In addition, public awareness is aimed not only to inform but also to promote targeted education and action (such as activities, for example, to promote energy saving; gas safety etc.).

This document presents the preliminary strategy and is intended to serve as a foundation for developing specific public awareness/communications activities. Components of this strategy should be reviewed periodically and enhanced to reflect the evolving needs of the Residential Heating Project.

This strategy presents background information, including the project context, project objectives, main general messages, and potential channels of communication in Armenia and recommendations.

Annex I features the public awareness/communications related short-term deliverables approved by USAID. In addition, general public awareness/communications guidelines for project team members will be provided under separate cover.

1.2.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY

Devising a communications strategy for the Residential Heating Project is subject to a variety of constraints and problems specific either to Armenia itself or to those transition countries, which have not advanced along the road of economic and political transition. However, there are ways, if not to overcome these problems, then to least of minimize them by adjusting methods in approaching problem-solving. The strategy sometimes will, therefore, follow a "problem-response" format. The solutions proposed will form an important background against which all the more traditional elements of the strategies will be elaborated (messages, audiences, tactics, evaluation, etc) for the separate public education programs, e.g. for viable heating projects. Some core specific activities are described in the strategy under diffe rent sections. For instance, the strategy contains specific section on training but such activities are presented also in mass media section related to journalists' training.

1.2.2. SOURCES

The strategy draws on the following main sources:

- Experience of USAID, Chemonics International, Advanced Engineering Associates International, Inc. (AEAI), Alliance to Save Energy (ASE), and Hill International;
- Experience in other NIS countries;
- Meetings conducted by the project's public awareness/communications team members to define the counterparts' needs;
- Meetings conducted to define journalists' needs;
- Analysis, summarizing all public awareness efforts in the area; and,
- Activities undertaken as part of the Residential Heating Project or other USAID projects with a view to gauging attitudes and reactions to the current situation informing the design and implementation of public awareness efforts--namely:
    - Residential Heating Project Start-up workshop;
    - Focus groups and surveys conducted by USAID and other donor organizations; and,
    - Anticipated results from the survey being conducted by AEAI as they become available, which will provide input for public awareness and communication efforts.
    - The "lessons learned" from pilot programs that have influenced opinions on where we need to focus our communications with consumers.

2. OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Residential Heating Project provides assistance to the Republic of Armenia in implementing the Government's (hereinafter- GoAM) Urban Heating Strategy (adopted by the Government on the 5th of September 2002 Govt. Decree #1384), in particular, to demonstrate the full range of heat supply alternatives, e.g., centralized heating, including cogeneration, regional boilers that serve municipal districts, heat-only boilers for apartment blocks, and single apartment heating. The Residential Heating Project will focus on implementing various alternatives to promote the developing heat energy market in its ability to realize long-term least cost solutions that enhance effective management and reduce environmental impacts.

The Residential Heating Project's focus will be based, in part, on the heat sector's continued priority of improved transparency and commercial operations in order both to reduce the opportunities for corruption and to improve the quality of service delivery to customers. It is also motivated by the fact that efficient heat supply will increase Armenia's energy security by managing and using scarce resources with greater efficiency and in an environmentally sustainable way. Improving economic efficiency and ensuring sustainable heat supply also provides an essential element to improve the quality of life for all Armenians.

The emphasis of the approach to the Residential Heating Project will be to encourage the use of small centralized gas heating systems with an emphasis on energy-efficiency, particularly among small networks involving a few apartment buildings or at the apartment building-level. There will be less emphasis on individual apartment heaters which should be considered only as a last resort.

One of the main objectives of the Residential Heating Project is to improve the effectiveness and commercial operation of key private sector and Government institutions that will promote more transparent and efficient heat sector management in support of a sustainable commercial heat energy market; and to support broad-based private sector and civil society contributions to implementing the UHS by:

- Implementing heat supply through USAID supported heat projects to assist in realizing cost-effective and efficient heating infrastructure options;
- Assisting condominium associations (CAs) to improve their capacity to organize and manage heat supply projects; and,
- Assisting private sector organizations and home owner associations to strengthen their capacity to implement effective heat system operation and to improve their commercial operations both to improve the quality of service and to support sustainable system operation.

2.1. LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

The overall objective of the strategy is the contribution to reach the overall objectives of the Project. Based on these objectives, the communications strategy has the following long-term and short-term objectives:

- To enhance the image of the Residential Heating Project by spotlighting its approach to serve the public through local heating solutions in energy-efficient configurations;

- To create public support to the heating sector policies being implemented by the GoA and supported by Donor Organizations such as USAID, World Bank and UNDP,;
- To promote the development of a robust heat energy market in Armenia;
- To create support to heat sector development by key stakeholders, such as banks, condominiums and to enhance their cooperation;
- To promote better understanding by key stakeholders, partners and more importantly, customers and consumers;
- To improve the two-way flow of information between the customers and the heat energy service providers; and,
- To encourage other communities by the example of USAID-supported heat energy projects.

3. RESOURCES

The costs to support a communication strategy can be high. Printing and distributing a leaflet to Armenia's large number of heating consumers could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, while producing and airing one 30-minute TV documentary on the advantages of local heat energy solutions or the benefits of a robust heat energy market could cost up to fifteen to twenty thousand dollars. In addition, the implementation of these tasks not only requires financial investment but also appropriate human resources.

The application of resources in an effort to minimize cost includes:

- **Maximum reliance on Public Relations communications rather than paid media coverage:** The Armenian media many times, in particular in periods between elections or when there is a dearth of political discussion of great importance, are eager for newsworthy stories. This need for news can be used to obtain free coverage, given sufficient preparation of journalists, a proactive and intelligent attitude to story ideas and creation of newsworthy events. The Residential Heating Project communications campaign will endeavor to ensure that these preconditions are met.
- **Use of counterparts and experts as communicators**: This, in fact, is one particular variety of free media coverage. Obviously it presupposes both knowledge and ability to communicate --a problem addressed below.
- **Caution in committing resources to large-scale public awareness and media campaigns:** These campaigns may be appropriate under some circumstances but they are rather expensive and there are certain preconditions for their implementation and effectiveness, however, they will be undertaken but only sparingly and after careful thought. In particular, there is a strong case for not undertaking such a campaign: where donors are divided on approaches to the issue in question; where counterpart organizations have failed to create the necessary public awareness and public communication function; where such a function exists but personnel have insufficient training and experience; or where the counterpart organization is, in effect, trying to shift most of the cost of such a campaign onto Residential Heating Project. Nevertheless, effort must be made to overcome such obstacles, in particular where members of the public are required to take some action. Second, smaller-scale activities, especially in the early stages of the process, can be effective. They can also be a useful method of developing local skills and gaining knowledge that can be deployed in the later stages.
- **Careful testing of methods and messages, and use of what has been found to work, where possible:** The range of pre-existing media and opinion research that can be taken for granted in an advanced Western economy is absent in Armenia. While research has generated some tentative conclusions, it has, of necessity, been patchy and impressionistic. In particular, there is relatively little experience of "what works" in Armenia. Close attention to ongoing

research and feedback from focus groups and surveys is therefore needed. This is another reason for caution about large-scale campaigns in the early stages: they could mean large-scale mistakes and consequently a large-scale waste of scarce resources. Through different surveys conducted by other projects we should find out where households receive information about residential related issues in general and about residential heating, in particular.

- **Human resources:** This is one of the important components of the strategy. Initial consideration of resource needs suggests that for successful implementation of Public awareness and Public communication tasks the project needs at least:
    - 2 public awareness specialists: will assist in developing external communications capacity in counterpart organizations at the national and local levels.
    - 1 statistician: analyze statistical data, including through SPSS Package, determine trends and present data in precise and accurate form. The statistician will arrange and oversee the implementation of surveys, will develop and pre-test the questionnaires, organize focus groups if necessary to clean the questionnaires, make the data coding, entry and analysis through the SPSS software, develop a monitoring system and provide monitoring and evaluation activities for test project site activities.
    - 1 training specialist: develop training plans, training procedures, and prepare training reports based on USAID requirements. Will draft scopes of work for a particular training program identifying key training objectives, desired results and general course outline

  As mentioned above the coordination of efforts of involved parties, including each other's human resources and channels of information are much needed and will contribute to effective use of human resources.

4. CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC OPINION

The standard role of civil society and public opinion in formulating and implementing policies in advanced Western democracies cannot be assumed in Armenia, for at least three reasons:

- **Poorly informed and reactive public**: The Armenian population is still not used to considering policy issues generally and lacks information, the social infrastructure (e.g. membership organizations, lobby groups or specialized magazines for specific interest groups) and understanding of heat, health, and environment related issues in particular. There is, therefore, minimum potential for involving the public in heating policy and development debate. Based on previous research, communication is generally forgotten unless it is associated either with some action that the public is required to take, or with some conspicuous event.
- **Poorly informed media**: In the absence of trusted and understandable information from the Government, information from the media is a key if the public is to develop and exercise the capacity for such debate. But there is a large percentage of the media which also is not trusted by residents. Nevertheless, the media, at present, are in need of greater understanding of the issues related to the heat supply sector.
- **Poorly developed NGO sector**: While NGOs exist in Armenia, they have as yet not acquired a recognized position in the policy-making process and only limited skills in lobbying. However, there are NGOs which are working with thousands of beneficiaries and these NGOs can be very useful in information dissemination, public awareness and education and hopefully, in the long-term, the lobbying process.

Solutions: While the above mentioned issues are serious, they are not necessarily fatal, for a variety of reasons:

- **Decision-makers consensus:** There would appear to be no serious disagreement on the Residential Heating Project's focus and collaborative emphasis among policy makers-even if there is no overwhelming enthusiasm or overall consensus for some aspects of it either. Public support can be built gradually by working through the media and local NGOs and decision makers, and used to the advantage of the Project at the implementation stage, when progress may become more problematic.
- **Event focus:** Events (if properly planned and managed) ensure free media coverage and conserve scarce resources and receive a double benefit. In particular, the fact that legislation (e.g. changes in the laws and Gov. Decrees) is likely to be passed anyway creates the opportunity for an initial event (planning and collaborating with appropriated press services and journalists accredited to press services): the successful first, second or third reading of the law (to involve key policymakers from the National Assembly), or signing of

the law by the President. Another event, which will essentially ensure effective media coverage is the Heat Energy Sector Exhibition. The Residential Heating Project intends to establish a tradition of conducting annual exhibitions of heating technologies in Armenia, where not only technology companies, but also all potential participating organizations, including donors, condominium associations, energy service companies, banks and potential investors will be present.

- **Enhancement of media capacity:** As discussed below, an early increase in understanding and interest on the part of the media is a key element of Residential Heating Project strategy. This process is intended to feed through into increased public awareness, especially as coverage will touch on matters of everyday experience and concern to the public, will continue to be event-linked, and will eventually involve actions required of the public. Well-informed media which understands the issues related to heat energy sector development will help pre-empt the airing of mis-conceptions related to Residential Heating Project and the GoAM goals and objectives for residential heating.
- **NGOs future development**: One of the main elements of communications and public awareness should be an enhancement of the NGO sector and involvement into the public awareness process. The GoAM also should be encouraged to use NGOs as an information channel. This process will serve both to raise the morale of those in the sector and to compensate for Government communication shortcomings.

Specific target objectives in working with NGOs include:

- Involvement in the public awareness and public education process;
- Involvement in the lobbying process (when some legislative changes will be proposed); and,
- Professional support, such as training of engineers or condominium workers.

Specific key NGOs that we will interface with include:

- National Association of Condominium Owners (NACO) (can be used for professional and public awareness purposes);
- Association of Condominium Chairmen;
- New Millennium Condominium Association;
- Third Nature Condominium Association;
- Armenian Public Relations Association – working with mass media, journalists, international organizations and policy and decision makers (can be used for Public awareness purposes and lobbying).

- Union of Communities of Armenia – working with Community council of the Council of Europe, most of Communities and Community leaders of Armenia, Condominiums, Quarter Municipalities of Yerevan, Ministry of Regional Administrations and Marzpetarans (can be used for Public awareness purposes and lobbying).
- Union of community councils – working with community councils, community leaders, Government, Condominiums (can be used for Public awareness purposes and lobbying)
- Armenian ESCO Association (can be used for professional purposes)
- Specific condominiums (all condominiums have NGO status)
- Union for protection of Consumers' interests.

NGOs working in the areas of health, civil society and the environment through USAID funding can be important communication vehicles for public awareness efforts. The Residential Heating Project will coordinate activities with USAID in the event that working with these NGOs can help support project objectives. Residential Heating Project may need to conduct workshops with the identified NGOs to assure they are aware of the objectives of the residential heating sector and they are "able" and "willing" to disseminate information among their beneficiaries.

5. THE MASS MEDIA AND METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

In Armenia, there is a lack of public information about heat energy issues. The heat supply sector is currently being associated with issues such as gas supply, gas safety etc. Historically, comprehensive information campaigns using mass media have not been conducted. Only a limited number of small scale informational activities have been conducted in past years, in particular with a small number of residents within USAID-supported project areas.

Mass media has a significant role to play in promoting heat energy topics and enhancing public opinion. For planning any public awareness campaign, it is very important to consider the overall credibility of the mass media, e.g. whether people trust the information provided through various media channels.

The effectiveness of the Residential Heating Project public awareness/communications efforts and the selection of methods of communications and media channels depend on consideration that:

- Armenians have a certain distrust of mass media but nonetheless tend to use television as their primary source of information, followed by radio and print. Neighbors, friends and family are considered as more trusted channel for receiving reliable information. However, in these instances, the accuracy of the information being channeled cannot be verified.
- The geographic scope of certain types of media, especially newspapers, is limited. While selecting media channels for awareness and communications activities preference should be given to those that have the widest coverage and are not too costly for the general public.
- Armenians appreciate nationally related information but have a tendency to personalize information particular to each individual's circumstance; this appears to result in each individual taking away their own message from information presented.
- On the whole, the population in Armenia is often technically trained, able to recognize and to understand the relationship between technical efficiency and cost.
- Many features of the Armenian media scene se em at first sight to be discouraging from the stand point of Residential Heating Project communications:
- **TV:** Surveys conducted through various organizations such as the Yerevan Press Club, InterNews NGO, and household surveys of the National Statistical Service conclude that television is the most effective way of communicating massages with people. According to all conducted surveys in this area, television remains as the primary source of information for more than 60% of the public.

However, television may be less effective as a public lobbying vehicle. Most of the television stations appear to be balanced – in their treatment of the Government and its policies. Public TV "de jure" is independent, but because it is the only one financed by

the state budget, it seems that it is less than independent. Of the rest, those with current affairs coverage show varying degrees of independence, but are mostly not very outspoken. Of Armenian-language channels, “h2 TV” and “Armenia TV” are balanced and would not be controversial with respect to the Government in power. Shant TV, Kentron TV and ALM TV are more willing to be critical, but only moderately so. But there is very important point: Almost all TV stations are willing to be more critical when issues are related to people’s residential life. They are also critical to issues not within the frameworks of the station owner’s policy.

The Public TV’s coverage area includes 99% of Armenia, plus all countries where large Armenian Communities live. Also, there is another channel with genuinely nationwide and international coverage, - the h2 TV channel (very soon Armenia TV also will have National coverage. Currently it has also satellite coverage). Seven other channels, AR TV, ArmenAkob TV, HY TV, Yerkir Media TV, ArmNews TV, TV 5, Dar 21 TV, plus two Russian stations “1” (Russian Public TV) and “Russia”, one NIS covered “MIR TV” and CNN, have less than national but more than Yerevan coverage exist.

On these and Public TV, programs consist mostly of news, political talk shows and entertainment. Heat related issues are not normally featured and there is no recognized format for handling them in an interesting manner. Usually heat supply issues are highlighted before each heating season and mainly in news programs.

Many stories are being aired after a Government Decree related to the ensuring adequate heat during the heating season.

The chart below, prepared by InterNews NGO, presents the rating of TV channels,

	Name of the channel	News		Feature films	Serials	Music programs and clips	Sport
		Local	International				
1.	Armenian public TV	62.50 %	5.80 %	11.90 %	21.60 %	8.20 %	32.4%
2.	Second Armenian Channel	15.50 %	2.00 %	11.00 %	6.80 %	1.20 %	3.80 %
3.	First Channel (O?T)	-	47.40 %	24.10 %	22.20 %	12.80 %	5.80 %
4.	Channel Russia	-	27.90 %	13.90 %	9.60 %	8.40 %	4.60 %
5.	Ar	7.20 %	1.6 %	11.60 %	-	0.80 %	-
6.	ALM	21.10 %	12.80 %	5.30 %	-	10.80 %	13.60 %
7.	NTV	-	13.80 %	6.20 %	3.80 %	0.30 %	4.40 %
8.	Armenia	23.80 %	5.60 %	15.60 %	42.10%	1.00 %	35.70 %
9.	Shant	23.50 %	3.60 %	9.60 %	12.20 %	0.40 %	-
10.	Armen-Akob	-	-	10.70 %	-	3.80 %	-
11.	Kentron	23.00 %	3.80 %	9.40 %	1.20 %	0.60 %	0.80 %
12.	Hay TV	4.00 %	0.40 %	5.40 %	-	3.70 %	-
13.	Shogakat	1.4 %	-	4.20 %	-	0.60 %	8.20 %
14.	Hayrenik	-	-	4.60 %	-	5.60 %	-
15.	Dar 21 (Muz TV retranslation)	-	-	-	-	48.40 %	-
16.	TV 5 (retranslation MTV)	1.8 %	-	2.60 %	8.40 %	21.60 %	-
17.	Yerevan	-	-	4.20 %	-	-	2.40 %
18.	Armnews (Euronews)	12.20 %	27.20 %	-	-	-	3.20 %
19.	CNN	-	5.00 %	-	-	-	0.50 %
20.	MIR	-	1.80 %	0.90 %	-	-	-
21.	It depends	6.20 %	9.20 %	31.20 %	3.00 %	13.60 %	10.20 %
22.	Don't watch at all	8.90 %	6.10 %	12.20 %	29.10 %	10.50 %	39.20 %

- **Radio:** Studies indicate that only 11% of the population receives their information from radio. Moreover, state-owned national radio can now not be received in some parts of the country given deterioration of the network. Private FM stations are devoted to music, with five-minute news slots taken from news agencies.
- **Print media:** Readership of newspapers and periodicals is low, mainly because they are expensive relative to extremely low salaries and pensions. The noteworthy thing is all national newspapers regardless of volume, publication frequency and circulation have almost the same cost of 100 drams (around USD 0.45) for a copy.(a single newspaper costs around 2% of the average monthly pension). In addition, the

national market is split between six or seven dailies, with no single one enjoying a clear dominance.

There are local newspapers only in two senses. First, national papers will sometimes do local sections for the bigger population centers. Second, the marz councils or governors (marzpets) in some large centers produce a local newspaper. Regional newspapers completely depend on regional or municipal administration or on private sponsors.

After the new administrative-territorial division of Armenia in 1996, regional newspapers were founded by local municipalities or regional administrations (marzpetarans) in all 10 marzes (regions). These editions were published depending on financing from 3 times a week ("Lory marz") to 2 times a month ("Syunik" or "Syunyasts ashkhar" now, "Kotayk"). Within the same period in some regions, city newspapers started to publish on the basis of the former regional newspapers due to support of the local town council. The status of all these editions has changed as it was in the case with national ones: JSC and LLC were formed, but financial sources remained the same. Town and regional newspapers' circulations range from 300 to 1,500 copies. They are mainly distributed through subscription, which is implemented by town councils and regional administrations. Despite of their low prices- 50 drams, newspapers are not being sold through retail sale.

Neither radio or newspapers are overly promising (although the Project Team intends to test the possible effectiveness of using the municipal newspaper as a communications vehicle), since circulations are low and geographical areas in need are not covered.

There are around 20 well known print media on the Armenian market with rather modest circulation. As to the regional media (around 25 regional and municipal newspapers) in most cases they are not being issued regularly and cannot compete with national editions.

Seen below is an overview of the leading public and political print media in Armenia in alphabetic order:

- **"Azg"** daily on Armenian, A3 format, volume -2 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 3000 copies,
- **"Hayastani Hanrapetutyun**" daily in Armenian language, A2 format, volume-4 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 5,000 copies
- **"Haykakan zhamanak"** daily in Armenian language, format A3, volume-2 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 3,500 copies,
- **"Hayots Ashkhar**" daily in Armenian language, A3 format, volume-2 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 3,500 copies,
- **"Aravot**" daily in Armenian language, format A3, volume 2 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 5,000 copies.
- **"Golos Armenii**" published 3 times a week in Russian language, format A2, volume 4 printer's sheets (8 pages), and circulation 3,500 copies.
- **"Iravunk**" weekly in Armenian language, format A3, volume -4 printer's sheets (16 pages), circulation 8, 000 to 17, 000 copies, has 2 weekly enclosures published separately.

- **"Novoe vremya**" published 3 times a week in Russian language, format A2, volume 4 printer's sheets (8 pages), circulation 5,000 copies,
- **"Respublika Armenia**" published 2 times a week in Russian language, format A3, volume 3 printer's sheets (12 pages), circulation is not provided by the newspaper.

Circulation numbers indicated by the editorial offices are often not reliable. Circulation figures are typically overstated. Most probably, overstated circulation is an attempt to maintain the publication's image (there are also issues connected with bookkeeping). That is why some editorial offices prefer not to indicate their circulation.

- **News agencies and online media.** There are a few news agencies in the Armenian media market, which have strong leadership and audience and which are more popular among print media and TV channels: Armenpress, Noyan Tapan, Arminfo, ARKA (specializing mainly on economic information publication and having all banks as clients), and Mediamax,. These 5 compete with each other and divide the market of this media type between them.

In general, information dissemination through news agencies is very effective. News agencies will be one of the main communications vehicles under consideration. ARKA and Arminfo are producing special bulletins on energy market for their clients: Banks, State Gov. bodies, Parliaments, International mass media, newspapers, TV and Radio channels.

- **Online media:** The market for online media is becoming very strong in Armenia. According to surveys 15% of the population is now using computers and the Internet. Currently there are a few popular online media, which can be very effective vehicles for the project, e.g. www.panorama.am.
- **Journalists**: Journalists are quite poorly informed about heat supply issues, as well as gas safety issues. They are usually under pressure to produce copy and they lack financial incentives to go into issues in depth. The print media are usually paid a base salary plus a bonus based on lineage. Hence they have no incentive to put an unusual amount of effort into researching a particular story. Since as a rule the media are short staffed, journalists are almost all generalists rather than specialists responsible for specific sectors.

Solutions: The short comings described above, however, can be addressed to the benefit of the project for the following:

- **Supportive TV:** The present Government is genuinely committed to the heat energy sector. Hence the shortage of fierce criticism among TV stations may not be a disadvantage--and the moderate, constructive tone of criticism on most stations other than Public TV may be adequate to support heat sector development.
- **Concentrated TV Coverage:** Just two stations—Armenian Public TV and h2 TV --account for over 30% of the Yerevan audience. They

account for a far higher proportion of the poorer audiences in the countryside, where polls indicate they have a 60% audience share. Armenian Public TV is the only station that can be received in some remote country areas, while old-fashioned TV sets are capable of receiving only Public TV and h2 TV--a distinct advantage in a country where money for consumer durable purchases has not been plentiful...Prioritizing these two stations would probably be most effective. The two main Russian-language channels (1, and Russia) have a combined Yerevan audience share of over 20%, but can be ignored for present purposes, since their emphasis is on entertainment and their local content is minimal. For local news, viewers typically switch to an Armenian language channel.

- **Popular national radio:** State radio is popular among precisely the groups most in need of targeting--housewives, pensioners, and the unemployed. Outside of Yerevan, the habit of leaving the radio on all day in the kitchen is widespread, so sufficiently striking materials would probably make an impact.
- **Influential print media:** Circulations are low, but print media are read by those with influence--including those working for other media. Articles can therefore have an impact out of proportion to the numbers reading them. These articles may well be the best forum for in depth analysis and good print journalists should be encouraged to do this.
- **Receptive journalists and media:** The media are, generally, eager to have news material. Experience in Armenia is that TV has never turned down the offer of an interview on a heating theme. Being short of time, individual journalists are receptive to user-friendly, clearly explained materials and stories that are presented in an almost "camera-ready" form (if the necessary capacity were made available to provide it). In addition (or alternatively), it is possible to select capable journalists who are interested in heating issues and, while not interfering with content and indeed encouraging a critical tone, to cultivate and help them by inviting them to seminars and training events, and providing them with info materials, story ideas and experts to interview. In a situation of scarce resources, it is a significant plus that, to date, journalists have never asked for money as a condition of writing a story.
- **Informing Journalists:** In order to implement a long-term media campaign that will support application of new heating technologies it is necessary to identify 12-15 journalists who will receive periodic targeted information (Many Armenian journalists don't like the word "training", in Armenian). The objective will be to develop "heat energy journalists" with a particular focus on heating related issues. More specific technical information would be provided in future workshops and seminars and ultimately, this group of journalists would be identified as the primary "heat energy journalists" in Armenia.

Proper selection of these journalists is important. USAID through other assistance programs, has identified a variety of "friendly media" that may provide an initial list of journalists for participation. In addition, Residential Heating Project technical experts can readily identify those journalists whom to date have demonstrated an interest in covering energy-relevant topics.

The "heat energy journalists" should receive from the Residential Heating Project Team an initial informative seminar -workshop on heat sector issues and key program topics and then they will be keeping up with the flow of information in a readily accessible form. Given time pressures, initial instruction would have to meet two criteria. It would need to be short: a day-long seminar, or possibly weekend, would be the maximum likely to be acceptable. While a half-day may be preferable, this would leave little or no time for the discussion or interactive exercises to make training or workshops more effective as well as verifying that messages have been properly understood. Such trainings-workshops would need to have immediate relevance and use: in practice, this would mean being linked to some imminent event (for instance, the passage of a law) and accompanied by written background materials usable in articles or reports.

Training should also, if possible, be attractive as an event: if funds permit it should be conducted in a pleasant location somewhat outside Yerevan, possibly on a Saturday, with transport lunch and dinner provided. Training at a venue outside of Yerevan will reduce potential distraction and increase the effectiveness of the training. When such seminars take place in Yerevan the possibility is there for distractions due to phone calls and other interruptions and journalists cannot be focused solely on heating issues. For Journalistic Workshops on heat energy sector issues, the hiring of a professional NGO, well known and popular among journalists, is recommended, e.g. Union of Journalists or Armenian Public Relations Associations.

- **News hooks:** Media orientation to news events and commentary on them, rather than documentaries etc, may not be a disadvantage. There are plenty of possible news events--debates on legislation, the passing of laws, the opening of new or restructured boiler houses, launches of USAID-supported heat projects, surveys, etc. If these can be presented to the media as newsworthy, and if those asked for comment can be primed to give it succinctly, understandably, and with a maximum of information and advocacy content, steady and positive coverage can be generated. If the events in question can be made colorful and associated with positive national symbols, so much the better: while Residential Heating Project would not be in a position to finance this, it might be able to provide useful recommendations to well-disposed central and local authorities.

- **Selective use of leaflets:** The blanket use and delivery of leaflets is expensive. Past experience shows, however, that the impact of printed materials is quite high. Compromise solutions should therefore be found. One is the combination of leaflets with advertising and public service announcements on Public TV and Public radio: if leaflets can be posted directly or be put in strategic places like post offices, social service centers, health centers, municipalities etc, and audiences made aware of where to find them if they want them, affordable volumes will suffice and have a high impact. If necessary

due to limited numbers, they may be on local authority public notification or bulletin boards (in a suitably enlarged format to facilitate easy reading).

- **Public service announcements and low-cost advertising**: While predominant reliance on paid advertising is ruled out on cost grounds, it should be noted that moderate use is feasible, since rates are quite low. There is also a USAID rule prohibiting buying TV airtime.

Although there is no tradition or understanding of the concept of free public service announcements in Armenia, an airing of one-minute clip costs about $100 plus 20% tax on Public TV channel, $80 (+20%) on h2 TV channel, Armenia TV channel, little bit less in other channels and as little as $10 on a local TV channels. Public radio is relatively expensive at $60 dollars per minute and billboards in good locations are also prohibitively expensive. But at the same time public service announcements in radio, television and print can provide the Residential Heating Project with immediate access to Armenia's consumers while promoting a certain level of trust in mass media inherent to its providing accurate information. Taking ArmRusGasProm as an example, the Residential Heating Project can develop the PSAs and ArmRusGasProm can pay for the air time.

Nevertheless, a small advertising budget, skillfully deployed at key moments and combined with information conveyed via news coverage and selective leafleting, could go a long way. Public Service Announcements will be used by the Residential Heating Project as a key communication channel.

- **Communication through** Residential Heating Project **website:** The Residential Heating Project web site will be hosted at the following address: http://www.heat.am. The website should become a major backbone of public communication efforts. The Project should aim to provide regular website updates. The site has to be geared toward both a technical and specific target audiences and the general public. The site could be reorganized to place important technical announcements in one section but also have a journalist-oriented section that will contain briefing materials, questions and answers, a database of past press releases, references to policy objectives and other reference materials. A similar section could include important information for consumers and/or resources for educational programs. The website should be a clearinghouse of information in both Armenian and English. If possible, international traffic, including potential investors and service providers in Armenia, will be unlimited. Since the website is the primary location for journalists to find information about the sector, the public awareness section must play a role in determining what materials should be posted on the site. The responsibility for the website should be shared among the public awareness staff and other team members. The public awareness staff should be tasked with regular maintenance of the site to better publicize the role, responsibilities, and actions of the Project to multiple audiences. Materials should be presented in Armenian and English, and new material should be added on regular basis.

6. ELECTED OFFICIALS AND MINISTRIES

Elected officials and Ministries must play a role in informing the public about heat sector strategies and their benefits--since NGOs are weak and media will more likely play a reporting rather than an analytic role. There are various concerns associated with delivery of messages with regard to the residential heating sector:

- **Lack of technical information:** This applies at various levels. In some cases the relevant ministerial expert staff are not sufficiently informed of the issues related to the heating sector. Members of the National Assembly are likewise uninformed about heating sector issues. Aside from lack of interest in details, lack of time is a factor since most National Assembly members are only part-time parliamentarians with other interests.
- **Lack of communication skills:** While elected officials are generally good public communicators, they are not necessarily good at communicating the principles and benefits of new heating technologies. They may need to be helped to identify and find supporting arguments for key advocacy points. High level ministerial officials and especially ministerial experts have generally not developed public communications skills.
- **Lack of time:** The last two points are especially relevant because such communication may be necessary very soon, when legislative changes in the heat energy sector are proposed by the Government. It is anticipated that legislation will be going through the National Assembly relatively soon and an opportunity will be missed if elected officials and ministerial experts are unable to explain proposed legislation via the media. In addition 2006-2007 is a pre-election period and elected officials will have willingness "to be educated" on heating issues, as part of their pre-election programs, although this tactic contains some danger in using messages which may be incorporated into election campaigns.
- **Lack of analytical/interpretative skills:** Both now and as any changes occur, the ability to look at statistics and make them "tell a story" will be at a premium. It should be stressed that this is not a matter of sophisticated mathematical analysis, but simply of looking at relevant figures, drawing significant and simple conclusions, and expressing them in a form that the public can understand. This ability will become more important, since the volume of potentially usable information available will grow--as will its significance in monitoring the effectiveness of reform and likely causes of public discontent or mystification. At present, this ability is basically absent in the case of elected officials (for technical reasons) and ministerial staff (for reasons of communications skills).
- **Lack of public trust:** Since it has never, in the course of Armenia's history, experienced a flow of information from the Government that

was both steady and complete and credible, the public is not used to the idea of the Government as a source of information. The public is skeptical of Government provided information on the occasions when it is offered. It may be the most misunderstood aspect of the heating sector initiative - given memories of communist-era surveillance.

- **Lack of developed PR capacity:** Beginning 2005 the President of Armenia has instructed all Government bodies to have PR officials, and if it necessary even to make restructuring and create a PR department. But several problems still remain. First, personnel are inexperienced, since there is no tradition of modern PR campaigns, and few people are trained in its techniques. Second, some --but not all--ministries do not appreciate the importance of PR, perhaps understandably since they are faced with more basic problems and with resource of talented personnel in all areas. The normal approach for ministries in implementing a new program is to publish a law without background or explanation. Third, the technical and financial resources needed to run public awareness activities are scarce. This is not only an immediate problem, which might be alleviated by the Residential Heating Project's help and limited financial resources. It is also likely to be a long-term problem, since budgetary constraints will be tight for the foreseeable future, creating some question whether sustainable PR capacity can be created.

Solutions: Various ways are available to minimize, if not eliminate, the concerns raised by the points above. Some of the approaches include:

- **Seminars and leaflets for elected officials:** Special seminars in reform issues can be arranged for members of the National Assembly or other decision makers, through coordination with other USAID projects e.g. USAID/Legislative strengthening program. While formally concentrating on the substance of the heating strategies, these seminars can also contain implicit advice on how to present that substance publicly. Short leaflets, also geared to providing materials for presentation rather than great detail, should accompany these seminars and should also be so designed to be usable as stand-alone resources as necessary. This will deal with the difficulty that many members of the National Assembly will not have the time to attend seminars. The leaflets in question may also be usable in seminars for local opinion leaders and --wholly or in part--for journalists, who would thereby get some notion of the policy-maker's view of the problems in question. This should be prioritized, so that the necessary knowledge and skills are in place in time for at least some of the legislative process to be used as a PR opportunity. Regrettably, public debate in the strict sense is unlikely to play much of a role in refining, and mobilizing support for heat related legislation: it will therefore be sufficient if these developments are ensured by the time the bills reach third reading. Much publicity beforehand might, indeed, be confusing, since details might change in the course of debate in the National Assembly.

- **Communications skills courses for Government officials, experts, spokespersons**

Use of counterparts, Government officials and experts as communicators is, in fact, one particular variety of free media coverage and on of key elements of communications strategy. Officials likely will need to communicate with the public through the media. In some cases, training sessions for individuals might be connected with particularly important media appearances by those individuals--a very effective method of concentrating the trainee's mind! This has already been done successfully by different USAID funded projects.

Distrust of the Government and of Government pronouncements will take some time to overcome. Little more can be said other than an effective communications process, accompanied by more than ritualistic admission of problems and mistakes--and by as few unrealistic promises as possible --will have a long term effect on credibility. One short-term expedient might be to use non-Governmental figures as communicators. Heating related information can be more credible when it comes from experts. Articulate engineers might therefore be enlisted--especially if professional associations can be included in the discussions regarding residential heating. Another possibility is to use NGO figures thereby raising their profile and contributing to the strengthening of Government and NGO partnerships. Experts, from other countries which have implemented heat sector reforms might also be used to testify to the long term benefits of reforms.

Again, timing suggests that some priority should be given to these sessions. They might, incidentally, be a useful means of promoting communication among the administrative authorities--both between officials of different ministries and between central and local officials.

- **"Using statistics" courses and user-friendly reports:** The courses would be geared to meeting the presentational needs of Elected Officials and officials, as defined above. Their practical nature would be stressed. Hand-in-hand with this, there would be an effort to ensure that data--both that collected now and that collected and aggregated through the use of the new IT resources at the disposal of ministries—will be presented in a format calculated to allow its use by those communicating with the public. As indicated above, the information would also need to yield conclusions about the ongoing successes and shortcomings of the heat sector development process, about the effectiveness of communications, and about discontents and misapprehensions needing to be addressed by communications.

- **Use of "surrogates":** An effective communications process, accompanied by more than ritualistic admission of problems and mistakes--and by as few unrealistic promises as possible --will have a long term effect on credibility. One short-term expedient might, however, be to use non-Governmental figures as communicators. For instance, medical information disseminated from physicians would be viewed as more credible than if communicated from Government officials or other sources. Likewise would be the case of heating related information from engineers or experts. Articulate engineers

and specialists might therefore be enlisted as surrogates or spokespersons as can NGOs or experts from other countries.

- **PR departments: "learning by doing":** On the subject of PR personnel in ministries, finally, there is good news as well as bad. While inexperienced, those in place are proving to be enthusiastic and eager to seek expert advice. "Know-it-all" attitudes and nepotistic appointments are rare. Some ministries are definitely not underestimating the importance of PR: Ministry of Energy, for instance, is headed by a good communicator who knows the value of public relations and whose priorities are permeating the organization. Experience gained in the future, while guided by outside experts, will be intense enough to dissipate inexperience rather quickly: the process of preparing seminars for elected officials, administrators, journalists, and local elites will give new PR practitioners several types of insight, as would (if at some stage they could be in a position to stretch to this) event management and the preparation of a "promo-in-a-box" public awareness kit with a variety of prepared materials and manuals to help others to stage events. The fact that the measures involved are multiple and relatively small-scale, rather than constituting a single full-blown PR campaign will mean that inexperienced personnel can start "at the shallow end" and that mistakes can be instructive rather than catastrophic. Experience in small-but-well-designed PR activities, moreover, will provide part of the answer to the question of long-term sustainability. Even if greater awareness of the value of PR increases its share of scarce resources, Armenia's economic situation makes it unlikely that resources will become very much more abundant in the foreseeable future. Doing a lot with a little will therefore be a useful skill to have learned.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local officials and business figures are immensely influential. They have great potential for communications and mobilizing local opinion to support a residential heating strategy; ensure smooth implementation of a strategy; for organizing events; and for articulating the experiences and practices in their own area to national audiences. This potential is especially large in areas in which USAID-supported heat projects will be operating. It is important that these local authorities are involved in the communications process.

Solution: The remedy is as simply stated: these local authorities need to be included and to feel included. To this end, they should be given access at the appropriate time to the same information and communications workshops as those in Yerevan. Some workshops and seminars should be held locally in order to maximize convenience and communication within the local authorities, and in order to prepare for local launches of USAID-supported heat projects. In other cases, participation in such events in Yerevan will be more appropriate, for reasons of specialization, the need to compare experience and draw on the expertise within the capitol, or the simple need to feel part of a larger process. The progress of USAID-supported heat projects needs to be used to publicize and explain the process to the public at large, with local figures thereby becoming nationally known.

8. CONDOMINIUMS AND ARMRUSGASPROM

8.1 CONDOMINIUMS

Condominiums and condominium associations (i.e. National Association of Condominium Owners, Third Nature NGO, Millennium Communities, Association of Condominium Chairmen, etc.) can and should be purveyors as well as recipients of information about residential heating problems, options, tariffs, and lessons from implementation of different heating options in Armenia. To a lesser extent, housing maintenance and management companies (the former "ZHEKS") could also fill this role of informing consumers about heating issues, but their effectiveness in doing so is dubious. Thus, the Residential Heating Project will focus its communications efforts on condominiums and condominium associations because these are the organizations that are becoming increasingly responsible for providing maintenance to common areas and liaising between apartment owners and utility service providers including heat suppliers. In some cases, condominiums themselves may serve as the heat suppliers.

Within the context of the Project, condominiums have a demonstrated need for: greater awareness and understanding about heat issues; how to communicate with their members about controversial issues related to heat; and how to manage heat-related disputes and problems. The Project has proposed a training program for condominiums and condominium associations, while this strategy outlines the framework for enhancing communications to, and within, these important members of the Project's audience.

Of the 708 condominiums registered in Armenia approximately 20 percent do not function at all, and a significant portion of those functioning do not function to their full potential. Aside from the well-documented[1] barriers and issues with Armenian condominiums in terms of their management, responsibilities, and relationships with the apartment owners, a notable deficiency has been the lack of dialogue and understanding between the condominiums and the residents, as well as between residents (or condominiums) and the local authorities influencing communal services.

There is a critical need for mutual communication of concerns and opportunities between and among condominiums, residents, and local providers of heat. For example, residents need to receive and understand clear information about the heat energy market and their options and rights as heat consumers. They need to understand more about how and why condominiums can enable their access to and management of more efficient, affordable heat. Likewise, condominiums need to learn how to improve relations with their customers (the residents) and how to address and resolve heat-related issues, and prevent problems where possible.

As noted in previous sections with regard to raising awareness about residential heat options and safety, there is a need and demand for raising public awareness about the Armenian and international experience with condominiums, and analysis of the benefits of joint ownership offered by condominiums. Additionally, the condominiums and condominium associations must also understand and execute their roles and responsibilities as service providers and representatives of the interests of apartment owners.

1 USAID projects in recent years (e.g. implemented by the Urban Institute) have devoted a significant amount of resources to strengthening the legal and institutional framework to create, develop and maintain effective condominiums. However, this work is a long-term endeavour and requires further assistance and capacity building.

Solutions: Working with condominium associations and other partners as needed, the Residential Heating Project will implement a communications strategy for condominiums and apartment owners to increase the probability for developing successful heating projects due to improved relations between and among the condominiums and owners and other partners (e.g. if a third party provides heat) through the following efforts.

- **Conduct apartment owner surveys:** Conduct surveys of apartment residents in identified potential project sites to obtain their perspectives on: any problems relating to condominiums (or lack thereof); the services they expect; and their willingness to participate in heating projects through the condominium structure[2]. These surveys will inform the Project team about the institutional, managerial, socioeconomic and political barriers and opportunities for proceeding with a proposed project.
- **Disseminate information:** The Residential Heating Project will prepare and disseminate information leaflets and provide information about residential heat to the general public via television and other mass media, as well as conduct workshops to raise public awareness. Where possible and practical, the Project team will involve relevant partners (donors, NGOs, implementers) into the process, to benefit from others' experience and expertise. One of the main messages of the disseminated information is that residents as consumers and as owners of apartments have to take responsibility regarding selection and payment of the services provided through condominiums, including heating supply.
- **Develop informative documentaries**: Some of the residents in the pre-selected heat project sites (e.g. Spitak) informed the Project team that they were not aware of condominiums, much less of their potential role in heating, and they asked for more information – specifically in the form of a short film, documentary, or news feature. The Project team will examine and update if necessary any existing materials from other donor projects for this purpose, and where none exist or more is needed, the team will develop such documentaries and work through local and national media channels and partners to ensure that they are aired and used in training.
- **Offer selected training:** The Residential Heating Project will offer training to condominiums and condominium associations as outlined in an extensive training needs assessment specifically for this audience. Specific training modules related to communications and outreach to residents, and informational seminars are outlined in that report, which has been submitted to USAID and is available upon request.
- **Conduct community stakeholder meetings and workshops:** Condominiums can represent an important source for communication and a forum for discussion of relevant issues for residents. Some

2 Condominium structure refers to all three legally identified forms of condominiums.

sample topics include: explanation of how heat tariffs are derived and different payment and billing options (monthly, seasonally, prorated for the heat season throughout the entire year, etc.); understanding the various heat options for your condominium – making sense of the options from consumers' and heat providers' points of view; "frequently asked questions" forums whereby residents submit their top 2-3 choices for discussion topics and the meeting facilitators will moderate discussion on those issues.

8.2 ARMRUSGASPROM

The Residential Heating Project team is committed to developing strong cooperative relationships with ArmRusGasProm as one of the key heat energy sector counterparts. ArmRusGasProm and the Residential Heating Project have jointly developed a draft work plan of activities which addresses issues related to heat systems operation, contractual arrangements for sale of natural gas, development of individual heater technical specifications and the legal framework pertaining to gas safety and equipment certification. The communications strategy will concentrate efforts in the areas of public announcements and public relations through:

- Improving the Public Relations capacity of ArmRusGasProm;
- Development of a sustainable Public Relations strategy; and
- Improvement of ArmRusGasProm's relations with its customers, counterparts and the mass media.

The Residential Heating Project Public Awareness/Communications team and the ArmRusGasProm press department began collaborating informally early in the initial stages of the Residential Heating Project through meetings, discussions and exchange of information. Gas safety and consumer education on gas safety was identified as a high priority to improve its relations with gas customers. Thus, the initial focus of assistance of the Residential Heating Project to ArmRusGasProm has been launching a public information campaign and preparing TV public service announcements on gas safety issues that target residential gas consumers. The drafting and approval of the joint work plan with ArmRusGasProm is a significant step forward as it will help to put the cooperation on a consistent footing.

The initial major task planned focuses on the development of the PR strategy for ArmRusGasProm. It will prioritize both short-term and long-term public relations objectives such as to increase the awareness of consumers on gas safety norms, use of equipment and gas appliances, improve public understanding concerning gas tariff design, pricing mechanisms and payments for the use of natural gas.

The PR strategy will visualize the specific activities and projects to be spearheaded by ArmRusGasProm, with Residential Heating Project input, in pursuit of goals specified above through:

- Public education campaigns through TV public service announcements and printed visual materials such as posters, brochures, leaflets

- Media briefs and seminars, organizations of discussions with NGOs and condominiums, other civil society organizations
- Dissemination of technical analysis and information which may have a public interest

9. TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Training activities are a crucial element of the Residential Heating Project communications strategy. The strategy has already described some type of training activities, such as ones for condominiums. In this section a general approach will be described. However, a separate training needs assessment is being prepared and will provide additional detail and focus for proposed training.

The Residential Heating Project team will provide training or training assistance (including preparation of training materials and manuals) to:

- selected private sector counterparts, including but not limited to energy service companies (ESCOs), commercial banks and/or credit institutions that support heat supply sector and related industries investments to NGOs, associations, and other civil society stakeholder organizations;
- ArmRusGasProm;
- key GoAM counterparts, including the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Civil Construction, and the Armenian Public Services Regulatory Commission; and,
- The Renewable Resources/Energy Efficiency Fund manager.

The Residential Heating Project team will provide assistance and training to private and public sector institutions to introduce more efficient and environmentally sound management of heat supply, including improved governance of selected institutions that provide services using these resources. With more transparent, commercially-motivated and effectively regulated management in place, it is expected that heat service providers will identify and implement activities that reduce waste, manage demand, increase supply, and improve the quality of service. All of these outcomes will contribute to increase Armenia's energy security.

The support to the R2E2 fund manager will include developing staff members' skills, fund practices and procedures, and providing hands-on training while the initial heat projects that are to be financed through the fund are analyzed, developed, and implemented.

The Project staff and counterparts staffs will be trained in the necessary professional and inter-personal skills to deal sensitively with customers. The Project staff will also be trained on USAID new branding, marking and reporting policy. Branding and marking is explained in the paragraph below.

The project team will also be involved in preparation of training materials and training manuals, when conducting training of trainers.

The project team in the first year of the project will:

- Assess the training needs of the counterparts;
- Develop a training program for the first year that specifies the needed training;

- Provide extensive training, both hands-on and formal, for the R2E2 Fund Manager Staff, for PFIs, and for energy sector entities that will apply for funding of their proposed heat energy projects;

The project team is planning to elaborate a comprehensive capacity building and training intervention program which is targeted to multiple recipients - ESCOs, NGOs, condominiums, community development centers, banks, and other civil society organizations-project stakeholders.

9.1 BRANDING AND MARKING

Branding. The branding of the Residential Heating Project was agreed upon by the USAID Project Officer. The program will be known as the "USAID Residential Heating Project." There will be no other name or acronym used to name the organization on business cards, reports, brochures, public service announcements, and other material or communications with counterparts and the general public at large.

Marking. The marking of the project name is important to ensure that the Armenian people are made aware of the tremendous efforts in place by USAID in improving the heat energy services to people across Armenia and developing a robust heat energy market that will provide affordable, safe, sustainable and reliable heating options for all heat energy consumers in the country.

The USAID Residential Heating Project will mark public awareness documents appropriately. All brochures will prominently include the USAID logo, from the American people. PSAs funded by the Residential Heating Project will end with the USAID logo.

As for boiler houses and related heating equipment procured by USAID, we propose that a sign be posted on the side of each boiler house and not on each piece of equipment. If the boiler house equipment was also provided by other organizations, those organizations should also be recognized. Any costs related to the recognition of other organizations contribution will be borne by those organizations.

Objectives: Depending on the need of particular stakeholders the training program pursues the following long-term objectives:

- Enhance the technical capacities of the project stakeholders in delivering services to their beneficiaries
- Improve the level of awareness and understanding of various project stakeholders on a wide range of topics related to the heat supply sector including technical, regulatory, legal and financial issues, and R2E2 Fund opportunities
- Organize study tours for project stakeholders, and to the extent possible for journalists, to get familiar with international experience in condominium management and heat supply sector development.

9.2 TRAINING FOR ESCOS

The training programs for Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) should take into account the experience of the project consortium participant AEAI to avoid the duplication of effort.

To date, AEAI, through the USAID-funded EE, DSM, RE Program, succeeded in developing a comprehensive training and capacity building program for ESCOs designed to improve their organizational, technical and project management skills. Short-term efforts should focus on the following directions:

- Organizing an introductory workshop to familiarize ESCOs with the Project goals and objectives
- Surveying ESCOs on their current training needs

9.3 NGOS AND CONDOMINIUMS

Already described above are some training activities for NGOs and Condominiums which can serve as useful liaisons between the Residential Heating Project and the public thus facilitating the implementation of public awareness campaigns and helping to promote Project objectives among their beneficiaries and clients.

In general the training for NGOs and condominiums should target the following areas:

- Institutional development and organizational strengthening of condominiums including management and operations, and financial management. It is likely that many of the active NGOs have already participated in this type of organizational training under other USAID-funded initiatives targeted to strengthening the civil society sector.
- Marketing, PR, communications and customer relations training for NGOs and condominiums/condominium associations designed to improve their marketing and outreach skills and the ability to work with consumers.
- Business plan development training for condominiums, introduction to the procedures of R2E2 Fund and local commercial banks.
- Proposal development, project management, monitoring and evaluation

9.4 SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS FOR POLICY MAKERS

In case legislative reforms are needed, special seminars, workshops on reform issues can be arranged for members of the National Assembly or other decision makers, involving other USAID projects e.g. USAID/Legislative strengthening program (as mentioned in above sections).

9.5 SPOKESPERSONS, PR DEPARTMENTS AND UNITS

Assisting counterparts in developing PR capacity is one of the major elements of the Strategy. The public awareness efforts need to identify spokespersons from the Project members and counterpart organizations, including condominiums and the R2E2 Fund, and conduct training how to deal with media and residents, how to get people to

understand what is being communicated etc. The appropriate training assistance to develop and improve PR capacity and skills will be provided also to PR Departments of counterpart ministries.

9.6 MUNICIPALITIES/LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Residential Heating Project intends to prepare training manuals for use at the local level on how to conduct public awareness campaign among residents, what messages to use etc. Training manuals will be prepared based on defined Project objectives.

10. ENSURING PUBLIC AWARENESS SUPPORT TO PROJECT INITIATIVES

As mentioned above, during Project implementation ongoing public awareness activities will be conducted, such as media coverage and other activities etc. But two of the more public awareness support activities are described as follows.

10.1 ENSURING SUPPORT FOR PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

The detailed description of activities to support the legislative process was described in the section Elected Officials and Ministries. Here the main objectives are presented.

During Project implementation the main objectives of such activity are:

- To encourage legislators to support proposed legislative reforms.
- To develop research capacities in order to be able to better understand relevant issues and provide well-grounded arguments.
- To ensure that the designated local and national spokespersons can communicate effectively with the media and are familiar with the main advocacy points for the respective audience.
- To build capacity among counterparts to implement a public education campaign.
- To develop pre-packaged rollout promo campaign kits for local campaigns.

After passage of legislation there will be also a need of Public awareness support during implementation of legislation to ensure the proper effectiveness and acceptance by citizens.

10.2 ENSURING SUPPORT TO R2E2 FUND

The R2E2 fund manager may not have a staff person specifically responsible for Public Awareness and Communications. USAID has agreed to assist in this need by providing full Public awareness support to R2E2 initiatives, which is based on overall Residential Heating Project objectives. The project team will assist the R2E2 fund in conducting events and campaigns such as:

- Launch ceremonies,
- Seminars and workshops, especially with mayors on the role of municipalities in implementation of particular USAID supported projects,
- Gas safety awareness campaign
- Participation in discussions on UHS and identification of need for update
- Consumer-supplier relationships and commercialization.
- Preliminary survey of heating systems in selected households

The Residential Heating Project public awareness team will also provide assistance in conducting interviews, printing articles, organizing TV programs and talks shows, preparation of brochures, other printable materials for specific target audiences.

11. COMMUNICATIONS BRIEF: REFORMING THE HEATING SECTOR

11.1 CORE MESSAGES

The clarity and reinforcement of core messages is key to a successful communication program. Overall, Armenian homeowners need to know there is a genuine interest from the Government and donor community in improving their comfort and quality of life. Also, Armenians must understand the options, costs, risks, and responsibilities included in residential heating sector development. Core messages to be delivered consist of:

- **Taking an "ownership" position:** The message needs to be clearly and credibly communicated that the Government is committed to creating a more efficient and safe heating system. But at the same time another message must be understood by residents that they themselves own their services and Government is only providing the environment but the homeowners will have to take an "ownership" approach to have a sustainable heating system.
- **The importance of transparency in transactions and activities related to residential heating:** Many residential heating projects have not been successful in the past due to the lack of understanding by the residents and a total lack of transparency in the development and operation of heating systems.
- **The cost of heating and gas safety:** Several options are available for heating and what may appear to be the cheaper option may not be the lowest cost or the safest option. A full disclosure of cost of heating options and the issue of gas heating safety must be clearly communicated.
- **Homeowner responsibilities for heating system development and operation:** In a similar fashion to taking ownership of heating systems, homeowners must be made clear as to their obligations and responsibilities from both the financial and operational perspectives. Lack of clear communication of owner responsibilities has met with less than positive results in past heating system development.
- **Banks need to understand the benefits of investing in the heat sector:** The potential for a positive return on investment must be communicated to the banking sector to attract capital and interest in participation from the banks.

These core messages must be communicated efficiently and effectively. But public education resources are limited as are counterpart's capacities to effectively educate the public. Under these conditions, the predominant approach must therefore be to use mass media thus securing free publicity to the greatest extent possible. Since Armenians need to see development of heating systems in a positive light, it might be appropriate to invite experts from countries with experience in the residential heating sector to testify before decision makers and in interviews for journalists about the effectiveness and benefits in his/her country.

In its implementation the campaign needs to recognize that the introduction of a central heating system is, looked at from a national perspective, a staggered process. This means:

- that much activity must be at a local level, associated with the system's introduction in that particular locality;
- that it must avoid information overload, first transmitting concise, clear messages and general information and positive impressions without burdening the public with detailed information that it cannot use immediately—such detailed information being reserved for local launches.

11.2 MAIN AND SECONDARY TARGET AUDIENCES

The Public Awareness strategy builds upon the existing information on stakeholder market segmentation to plan and implement the outreach activities with due consideration of the following factors:

- diverging needs and interests of Program stakeholders,
- available channels of information,
- social, demographic, as well as geographic differences of customers,
- differences between individual and institutional needs and interests.

The selection of information target groups and the development of issue-based messages and objectives will put the information and awareness efforts on a more realistic footing.

Residential sector will be the main and largest target audience for the Public Awareness campaign within the framework of the Residential Heating Project. The following important factors will be taken into account while planning the type of information as well as messages to be delivered to the residents:

- Wide social difference between various groups of the population;
- Urban and rural type of residence which necessitates selecting different communication channels;
- Low level of public awareness of heat energy related issues,
- General mistrust of the public towards Government as the source of information.

The public awareness campaign will aim to advance and accelerate public understanding and acceptance of concepts, for instance "heat energy is safe, cost-effective and efficient". It will advance the message that these concepts are both understandable and beneficial, and that — when actively carried out — public good will result. The concepts promoted through ongoing awareness efforts, public service announcements, newspaper inserts and other materials should therefore stress both individual and public benefits that come from using heat energy, following safety measures and also conserving energy. For instance the majority of consumers spend up to 20% of their income on electricity (according to surveys). Using centralized heat energy efficient technologies will ultimately produce savings for individual households.

Nobody claims that the cost of heat energy is cheap, but investments will eventually pay back. The National Association of Condominiums (NACO) is a key stakeholder concerned with residential heating. Based on USAID supported projects' results, Residential Heating Project should attempt to promote to residential consumers the idea of collective action necessary for the rehabilitation of heating and provision of sustainable heat supply.

Commercial sector includes private companies with a wide array of activities. Here, ESCOs and Banks are one of the direct outreach target groups since their strengthening falls under one of the Residential Heating Project main objectives. Through the Public Awareness component, ESCOs and Banks will be assisted in publicity and information dissemination, particularly through the web site and virtual marketing tools.

For both residential and commercial sector stakeholders, the information will be aimed at:

- Encouraging both clients and service providers to work with each other,
- Showing affordable heating efficiency solutions through the example of technical USAID supported projects to be implemented at municipal sites,
- Proving that USAID supported projects can be bankable by demonstrating possible project structures and existing financing opportunities.

Other, **secondary target audiences** include:

- decision makers,
- spokespersons,
- counterpart PR experts,
- NGOs,
- mass media

They will serve both as audience, media vehicles and communicators, through which the information on heat energy will be extended to the public. NGOs such as NACO, the Armenian ESCO Association, or the Armenian Public Relations Association as well as others have wide networks of constituencies and can become potential partners during the implementation of outreach campaign, channels for collecting and disseminating information.

11.3 KEY MEDIA VEHICLES

Choice of media, by groups[1]:

- For **residents and general public**:
    - Main national TV channels,

1 *more detailed description is brought in mass media section of the report*

- local TV channels;
- Public radio (especially for pensioners);
- Leaflets, posters and brochures;
- NGO activities,
- Condominium meetings
- Direct awareness efforts.

- For **counterpart PR experts**: seminars, training (where appropriate), articles in newspapers and, public information kits can both to inform and help develop PR capacity. (Information kits should be complete with manuals and guidelines on how to deal with the press, how to run information campaigns, sample brochures, press releases, announcements, posters etc. Hard copies should be in easily reproducible format. Copies should also be provided in electronic format in order to enable the recipients to tailor the materials to their specific needs).
- For **decision-makers**: presentations, seminars/workshops (maximally interactive, and drawing on evidence and arguments in support of centralized heating system from countries already using these type of systems and to enable feedback and verification that messages have been understood), newspaper articles placed in papers read by them, brochures and fact sheets summarizing the findings of important reports.
- For **financial specialists and policy-makers**: seminars, newspaper articles, and articles in specialist journals and bulletins, statistics of the use of heating systems and benefits in Western societies.
- For **journalists**: newspaper articles, press packs with brochures, fact sheets, relatively detailed, if possible almost camera-ready articles explaining any proposed reforms to the heating sector, for publication in newspapers, press releases, and human-interest stories – including stories testifying to positive experiences in countries using the system. If felt necessary as project implementation unfolds, interviews with foreign experts.

12. **USAID SUPORTED PROJECTS**

12.1 PRE-LAUNCH OF PROJECTS

KEY OBJECTIVES:

1. To position local centralized heating as the probable best solution to the problems of the both from the point of view of consumer and providers.
2. To make people more aware of their rights and benefits under the local heating system.
3. To make service providers aware of the benefits that the new viable system will bring,
4. To build capacity among national and selected regional counterparts to implement a public education campaign.
5. To support local and national spokespersons by counseling them on effective advocacy points and messages and where necessary developing their capacity effectively to present these to the public and media.

12.2 LAUNCH OF PROJECTS

KEY OBJECTIVES:

1. To use the viable heating and/or retro -fit/rehabilitation projects as a vehicle to demonstrate the benefits of central heating system as more effective, quality heating service in an Armenian context both to the public in general and to service providers.
2. To provide spokespersons with more detailed messages about how the system will work, including results from the project.
3. To closely monitor project campaign results and prepare pre - packaged rollout promo campaign kits for local campaigns.
4. To educate local representatives
5. To encourage use of a small central heating system.
6. To conduct a project campaign to publicize eligibility criteria for low income and socially vulnerable groups.

It is envisaged that successful USAID supported projects, as well as other program activities will be widely promoted and advertised through the media to enhance the awareness of consumers and other stakeholders on heating energy technologies and services.

It is very important to note that each USAID supported project needs to have specifically tailored Public awareness/communications approaches and plans, based on this strategy.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION REVIEW

13.1 DESIRED COMMUNICATIONS RESULTS

- Frequency of well-informed, positive and communicative statements by influential figures. Evaluate through media monitoring.
- Frequency of well-informed and positive articles and especially TV programs. Evaluate through media monitoring.
- Evidence of support for reforms among consumers. (Focus groups)
- Evidence of improved quality service due to people paying their heating bills.
- Successful passage of any proposed heating related legislation
- Broad public support for the legislation (survey)
- Spokespersons prepared to undertake more detailed Public awareness campaign
- Broad awareness that new heating technologies will have positive results.
- Broad public acceptance of concept of centralized heating system, or new heating technologies and linkage of financial market benefits (surveys compared with the baseline survey).
- Decreased number of people using individual gas heaters.
- More people paying for centralized heating system.
- More awareness of benefits (survey).

The project will also implement monitoring and evaluation of Information Dissemination and Media Monitoring, Monitoring of Online Activities, as well as monitoring of reporting: Monitoring and evaluation results will be used not only to assess the effectiveness of this program, but also to answer questions of long-term importance, such as what kind of measures prove best in Armenia and how; what works, why and assessment of measures that did not succeed and evaluation as to why.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF DELIVERABLES RELATED TO COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Task	Name of Deliverable	Due Date
Task 1.1: Public Outreach and Awareness, Training Coordination	Preparation of short-term and long-term Communications Strategy approved by USAID	Jan 2006
	At least 6 public service announcements in heat supply issues highlighting UHS activities, the Advisory Center, ongoing projects, USAID's contribution, and success stories.	Starting from Jan 2006
	professionally produced, short documentaries on successful pilot projects and the benefits of USAID's work in Armenia, in English and Armenian	Semiannually
	elevision interviews for TV explaining the need of proposed changes including interviews with heat sector officials on progress implementing the UHS, initiatives, and success stories in eeting Armenia heat supply challenges. Issues ddressed in the campaigns will focus on policy tiatives that have been enacted by the National Assembly or the GOA.	Biannually, starting July 2006
	ublication of Leaflets, "Questions and answers" brochures, booklets, posters, news and feature stories, hotlines, newspaper inserts, town hall meetings	Starting from Jan 2006
	raining needs assessment report	Jan 2006
	rst training programs provided by the Heat program for selected counterparts, including NGOs on interview techniques of media interviews	May – June 2006
	esign and launch a National Condominium Campaign	March 2006
	evelop a set of standardized condominium commodity assistance packages for targeted condominiums	March 2006
	elect appropriate NGOs for training to monitor heat sector activities	Jan 2006
	omplete NGO training	July 2006
	5 (5 per year, including option years) PSAs on heat supply issues highlighting the UHS activities, Advisory Center, ongoing projects, USAID's contributions, and success stories.	Semiannually

Task 1.3: Support the Development of the R2E2 Fund Manager	raining and technical assistance needs assessment completed	TBD 2006
	etailed training plan	TBD 2006
	Development of internal practices and procedures	TBD 2006
Task 1.4 Attract Investment and Encourage Economic Development in the Heat Energy Sector	raining and technical assistance needs assessment completed	Jan 2006
	Detailed training plan	Mar 2006
	First study tours conducted	July 2006
Task 1.5: Creation and Development of the National Advisory Center Development		
Task 1.6: Update the National Urban Heat Strategy and Implementation Plan	Setting up a task force of Ministries, donors and other stakeholders Review and updating of the COWI report from 2002 Development of draft heating strategy Adoption of new UHS by GOAM	Sept. 2006
	Draft Implementation plan for national UHS	Oct 2006
Task 2.1: Review and Assessment of the Existing Situation in the Heat Energy Sector	Summary report including: • current heat supply market assessment • progress of ArmRusGasProm gasification • existing situation of condominiums in Armenia • review and assessment of the existing heat manufacturing based in Armenia • comprehensive analysis of the accidents	January 2006
Task 2.5: Development of Heat Energy Projects	eveloped list of heat energy project concepts together with WB and UNDP and other stake holders	TBD pending MOU
	evelop conceptual designs for the first phase of heat energy projects	February 2006

	oordination with other donor's development of practices for selecting vendors through tenders. onitoring of implementation and commissioning. essons learned from each project	Continuous throughout the implementation