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Activity Report

City Research Center NGO



Gyumri, Armenia

Updated November 1, 2009

HISTORIC HERITAGE www.alexandrapol.org

In 2000 a very urgent grassroots need emerged among a group of Gyumri based intellectuals: artists, businessmen, urban planners and architects – need in preservation of the historic immovable heritage of 19th century in Gyumri city and its revitalization as a potential for the city' development: social, economic, cultural.

CRC started its mission as an advocacy organization to promote the cultural heritage of Gyumri. The first project "*Alexandrapol 2*" was launched in 2003 to initiate the registration of historic buildings and creation of the digital database.

The project aimed at saving the existing archive documentation on the buildings (drawings, plans, photos, etc.); registration of the buildings themselves through photographing, giving description, etc. With the support from UNDP and close collaboration with "Kumairi" Museum-Preserve the database of historic buildings of Gyumri has been created and continues to be accomplished up today.

Later on the online version of the database has been created and posted on-line at www.alexandrapol.org creating wider access of worldwide audience to the historic Gyumri.

The preservation of historic heritage can not go without community so far a special consideration was given to the community outreach: awareness raising, publicity and education. In this respect a social marketing campaign was launched to promote the architectural heritage among the citizenry of Gyumri.

Set of activities came to complement each other for the better outreach:

Survey among the historical downtown community

The survey aimed at finding out the attitude the residents have towards the historical buildings and the historical environment they live in.

The results of the survey helped further to adjust the approaches, principles and the actions of the campaign to make it more community oriented and better address the issue of the campaign.

Public Discussions

A public discussion is not only a case to speak up the issue of the campaign but also to activate citizens, give them practice in participation in city life and holding a discussion.

The community members, the local government and businesses. specialists in relevant fields: architects, urban planners, historians, ethnographers, and artists came together to discuss:

Historical preservation. Why it's important for Gyumri City?

The mechanisms of historical preservation and how they're implied in Gyumri.

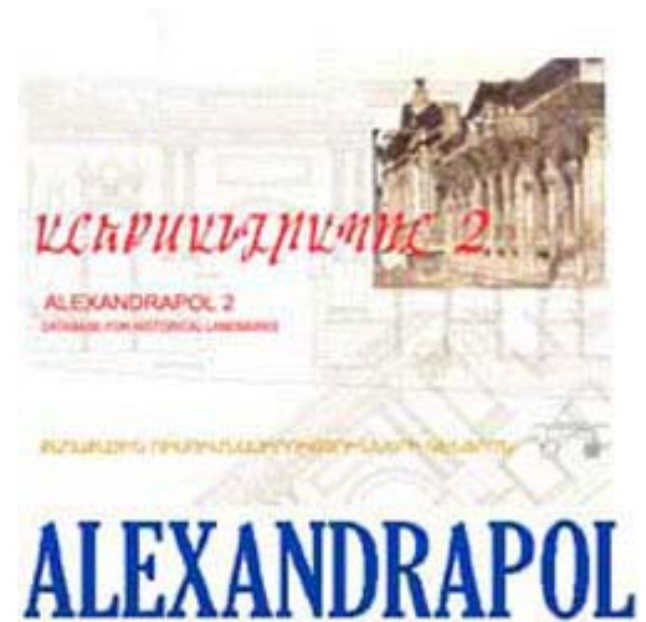
The economic benefits of historical preservation

Partnership between the community, local government and businesses for historical preservation

As a result people made a step forward in holding a discussion, speaking about the problems in their community, developing partnership oriented mentality among different parties (community, businessmen, local authorities.)

Publications

A set of postcards presenting the architectural culture of Alexandrapol has been published. The post cards that are printed in Armenia don't include Gyumri as a topic and don't recognize Gyumri as a valuable tourism destiny, whereas it's a good and simple way to present the city to the outsiders and also locals. The set of the postcards designed and printed within this social marketing campaign is very unique by its concept. They depict the architectural culture of Gyumri city within the second half of 19th century – the beginning of 20th cent. The cards also visualize the current situation of the historical downtown environment.



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The post cards were distributed among the community members, guests and other people interested in Gyumri during different events of the campaign – expos, concert, public meetings and further after the campaign ended. One set includes 12 cards, each presents a specific piece of architecture. 350 sets have been published.

TV Production

A talk show about the historical heritage and ways of its preservation was organized and aired by the local TV channel "GALA". Before the show the citizens were interviewed in the streets about the topic so that to refer to public opinion during the program. The representatives of the City Hall, NGO leaders, businessmen, experts – architects, urban planners, historians and the community members were invited to the talk show. The audience had a chance to question the guests of the show by phone. According to the number of calls received during the show, people are interested and concerned with the topic of historical preservation and up-to-date development of the city.

Concert

A concert devoted to Gyumri Historical Heritage and its preservation was organized in partnership with U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers, particularly Nick Spina.

Two-hour concert with participation of 15 performers and musicians from Armenia and U.S.A. presented the Armenian and American music stating the importance of historical preservation and encouraging people to value the tangible heritage of Alexandrapol and care for it. Around 200 guests from Gyumri, Yerevan and other cities, Peace Corps Volunteers from different marzes of Armenia attended the event.

Exposition

Parallel to the concert the photo exposition presenting the urban history of Gyumri City was set up. Sossanna Mkrtychyan, an artist, exhibited her art collection "Gyumri" relating to the topic. The "Style" Art Museum provided the halls for the concert and exposition.

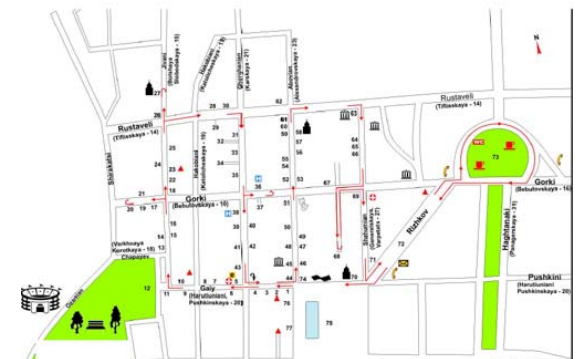
Walking Tours

A walking tour around the historical city was designed in partnership with Rick Nay, an American interested in Armenia and Gyumri particularly and Paruir Zakaryan, the director of "Kuamiri" Museum – preserve. The itinerary includes two blocks in the very center of the city downtown. The tour basically shows the architectural specifics of the historical buildings and explains the mentality, approaches people showed up 100-200 years ago in creating the urban environment.

A group of interested school students and grownups came together to experience the tour. The walking tours are further used to guide the school groups, students, foreign guest and others curious to explore historic Gyumri.



Walking Tour 1



Puppet Show

The Gyumri puppet theatre got inspired with the campaign message. Here the campaign had two goals:

- To bring the campaign message to the younger audience
- To help the Gyumri Puppet Theater to get publicity among the community and restore the recognition and glory the theater once has had.

To meet both goals a specific activity was designed in partnership with the puppet theatre – an expo/ fair to present the puppet theater and to speak about the historical heritage of Gyumri.

The event united few elements:

an exposition of the puppets,

- panel sessions telling about the puppet theater, its history and present, how they perform and make the puppets, etc.
- puppet show about the historical heritage of Gyumri for kids.

The audience invited to the event covered a wide age range: kindergarten age kids, school students, and grownups – parents, who enjoyed the event not less than their kids.

Another activity to highlight the importance of historic heritage was ***Conference/Workshop*** initiated with the support from US Governemnt.

Conference-Workshop on the topic 'Cultural Heritage - Potential for Development' was organized on March 16-18, 2007 in Gyumri, "Style" Art Museum

It aimed at creation of forum to discuss the possibilities for economic and cultural growth of the city and the role of cultural heritage in this process through involving Gyumri community.

Two days conference discussed the possibilities for reconsideration of the role of cultural heritage and its preservation and development.

The topics of discussions included urban planning, architecture, conservation, community issues, art, anthropology, demography, psychology.

Wide audience: urban planners, architects, artists, scientists, students, businessmen were involved in discussions.

A set of materials showing the world's urban history and culture were presented to accomplish the conference visually.

Urban paintings, historical documents of urban planning, lithography, etchings, old and modern photos illustrated the history and development of urban planning worldwide.

The illustrations showing urban history of USA, Europe and Near East becoming the guidelines for conceiving the conference message.



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INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE www.cityresearch.org/culturalcaucasus

CULTURAL CAUCASUS

South Tower

The intercultural Dialogue started to develop in CRC's mission from the idea of caring about the historic heritage not only of Gyumri but also other states of the region: Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran; moreover, to do it involving the citizens from all these states.

This put the start for Cultural Caucasus international movement - designed to promote peace, respect, and cultural understanding among the people of the Caucasus region - is initiated and implemented by the City Research Center NGO with support from the Art and Culture Network Program of the Open Society Institute Budapest. Since 2004, these two entities have worked to spread the idea of peaceful coexistence where people know, respect, and care for neighboring nations and their cultures throughout the South Caucasus.

The activities of the movement occur in the surrounding countries of the region: Armenia Georgia, Turkey, Iran every year. Each of the forums is a 5-6 day event consisting of active intercultural communication among and between the citizens of the region through different means: cleaning and beautification of historical sites, visiting local communities, exploring each others tangible and intangible cultural heritage, making cultural presentations, preparing ethnic dinners, organizing concerts, informal discussions, etc. To date, the most tangible output of the Cultural Caucasus has been the cleaning of historical sites; however, the intangible aspect of cleaning minds and hearts can not go unnoticed. Within years the Cultural Caucasus movement united a group of devoted and motivated citizens from different states of South Caucasus who believe in creation of a more just, free, peaceful and cultural society in South Caucasus and who take initiatives to do so.

During the periods between the annual meetings the project participants continue working via e-mail, phone, and other forms of communication. While communication is mostly informal and friendly it helps generate and develop ideas for further activities concerning the Cultural Caucasus movement, and the exchange of information and knowledge about topics relevant to the movement mission: cultural heritage, cross-cultural dialogue, peace building, multi-cultural environment, etc.

The first historic site that hosted international group was South Tower in Gyumri, Armenia on September 2004. For four days an active initiative group of like-minded people from Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey was cleaning and beautifying South Tower - one of the most prominent historical landmarks in Gyumri (Armenia), by common efforts making it more attractive for the neighborhood and at the same time beautifying the neighborhood itself. On the other hand people from neighboring countries of different professions, inspired by the idea of cooperation for development had possibility for face-to-face communication for several days: to live, to work, to create, to relax together, to experience different cultures, to present their own cultural values, to practice cleaning the environment of a historical monument.

The project caused great interest among Gyumri people and visitors, municipality and representatives of international organizations.



CULTURAL CAUCASUS

Uplistsikhe

The cave town Uplistsikhe in Gori region of Georgia was the next venue where the Cultural Caucasus gathered old friends and new allies. Having the South Tower project in Gyumri (Armenia) as a prototype, the next summer, 2005 a neighboring country Georgia was delighted to host a group of enthusiastic, energetic and optimistic citizens from Armenia , Azerbaijan , Georgia , Iran , Turkey and the USA in one of its historical sights Uplistsikhe, Gori , Georgia .

The diverse group of six nationalities, committed to the idea of cultural interaction and exchange of national traditions, cohabited for five days in Gori villages. Contented by the generosity and kindness of the Georgian people, the atmosphere was left to encourage open hearted and casual communication among the representatives of various nationalities.

As a vital component of the forum, the group visited historical sights in nearby villages. The astonishment and respect for the masterpieces, created by ancestors centuries ago, contributed to the willingness to clean and to beautify the surroundings. "We are cleaning historical monuments and at the same time cleaning our souls", as mentioned one of the participants of the forum.

The mixture of cultures and the feeling of contributing to the beautifying and cleaning process of historical monuments created a lot of positive energy, which was successfully aimed to break the ice and misunderstanding among the nations by educating to be more tolerant, compassionate and objective to each other.



CULTURAL CAUCASUS

Ardanuc

In 2006 Cultural Caucasus sponsored another successful project. This year the international group of participants gathered in city of Ardanuc , Turkey , located in the Artvin Province, Turkey . Building upon the experience gained from the two previous projects in Gyumri , Armenia and Uplistsikhe , Georgia , the group undertook cleaning and beautification projects at historical sites in several small villages near Ardanuc.

A unified and dedicated team of participants is vital to the successful completion of any initiative. Many of the participants at this year's event had worked on the two previous projects. This "core" group is made up of volunteers from each of the countries in the region, Armenia , Azerbaijan , Georgia , Iran and Turkey . This year several newcomers joined this group of experienced participants. Two American volunteers who have been involved in projects in Armenia over the past several years also participated. These new members added to the energy and good will of the group and contributed greatly to the success of the project.

As our mini-bus wound through the mountainous terrain of the Turkish countryside, our friendly group of volunteers had one main goal in mind – to bring a message of peace and cultural understanding to the local villagers. We were amazed to see the many ancient religious structures and fortifications scattered throughout the region. They seemed to "spring" out of the most unbelievable and inaccessible places. The historical monuments that we came upon seemed to have been sleeping for centuries, but they came alive for us as we walked along their walls and through their beautiful buildings. Our group was filled with gratitude and respect toward the local people every time we saw how well they had maintained these historical monuments and the surrounding environment. The local villagers quickly understood and greatly appreciated the mission of our project, and they were eager to become involved in our work. Their welcoming attitude not only supported our work but also proved how worthwhile our mission was. The warmth, hospitality and good will extended by the villagers filled us with joy, and the many tasty meals of ethnic dishes prepared by both the project participants and the local people made the experience unforgettable.

Each day, after completing our work, we returned to our accommodations in Ardanuc, a typical small Turkish city. This quickly began to seem like home to our group. We felt that we had truly become a part of the community when we were invited to participate in a wedding ceremony. The locals were glad to welcome us into their wedding dance circle and make us their friends. It is probably the first wedding to take place in the entire Caucasus region to include such a diverse group of participants, nations, cultures and religions. Although every participant was performing his or her own national dance, the wedding circle was indivisible and incredibly friendly.

The local government of Shavshat organized a large festival devoted to environmental protection. Our group was welcomed to join in the festivities and enjoy the music, food, dance and exhibits. This interesting cultural experience further added to our understanding and appreciation of the people and culture of the region.

As we traveled through the mountains of Artvin Province and spread our ideas and vision of peace, tolerance and understanding for the South Caucasus region, we believe that we cleaned more than just the monuments and historical sites of the region. We believe that we have helped "clean" the minds of both the group participants and the local villagers of the misunderstandings that have long plagued this area. We hope that this project will lead to many more initiatives that will continue to further the message that we have brought with us.



CULTURAL CAUCASUS

Phurtio

In 2007 Shouakhevi, Ajara hosted the fourth international intercultural forum. Shouakhevi is a picturesque beautiful place with pure healthy air and untouched nature. It is located in the mountains of Ajara in the gorges of Skhalta-Khikhani and Maretti.

Mountainous region of Ajara was chosen as the venue for the fourth intercultural forum for its indigenous multicultural environment where different ethnic groups and religions stillcoexist in tolerance, understanding and peace.

The international group was accommodates in the center of Shouakhevi region with the families of Nodari Davitatzé, Nargiz Putkaradze, Otari Tsinaridze, and Zurabi Davitadze. Those kind people were happy to accept people from different states of South Caucasus in their families and showed up a cordial hospitality to the guests.

Staying with the host families created wider possibilities for the participants to experience cultural elements specific to that region, including:

- Applied arts and crafts (pottery, goldsmith, embroidery, wood carving)
- Vernacular architecture (culture of wooden houses, panning of dwelling houses, farmstead)
- Oral histories about the place, people, etc.
- Traditions and customs (religious holidays, national celebrations, culture of hospitality)
- Local production (corn, winery, tobacco, textile industry)
-

Like in previous forums the priorities of the group remained:

Cleaning and beatification of the historic sites and monuments. In this respect the group visited Okropilauri fortress, Khemshiashvili fortress, old arched stone bridges specific to that region in Phurtio, Makhunseti, and Dandaló for cleaning.

Communication with local people and experiencing different cultural elements. The group visited many villages of Shouakhevi region, among them Nigazeuli, Khinchauri, Brili, Dabadzveli. In Nigazeuli we visited the museum of Semin Khemshiashvili – the national hero of Ajara having closer interaction with the history of the place. In Nigazeuli we visited some families (Abashidze, Putkaradze, Tsekhvladze). We got to know their daily life, habits, crafts, houses, tasted home-made delicious food. The villagers granted some pieces of local crafts to the museum of Cultural Caucasus.

Many different things “donated” by the participants and the local people accumulated creating kind of a museum. The museum enriched also with the synergy of our collaborative creative efforts.

A good cultural experience for the group was participation in the religious holiday Mariamoba celebrated in Khinchauri village, which attracted all the population of Shouakhevi. We enjoyed a real Georgian chorus and a Georgian party.

The group also visited a new established textile workshop in Shouakhevi. The specialists from Tbilisi came here to train the local women and young ladies to make “pardaki” (Georgian for a small rug hang on the wall – an element of interior design, shawls, and the techniques of composing patterns). The forum in Shouakhevi was enriched with a novelty – workshops of creative collectivity organized and conducted by the participants themselves.



CULTURAL CAUCASUS

Phurtio

Arman Tadevosyan, a forum participant from Armenia was facilitating crafts workshop. We started the process from the very beginning. The locals helped us to find and dig out the clay in Brili village (the name of the village means clay in Georgian). The participants together with the locals with great excitement were modeling different figures symbolizing peace, human friendship and trust. They produced also some souvenirs and crockery. Later we burned the pottery in the open fire, which attracted all the villagers of all ages. The burning process turned to be a big celebration – a party with presentations of national dance and ethnic cuisine. Half-broken and half-burnt pottery came out really good. On our way back the Georgian custom house was blaming us for illegal export of antique pieces of national history. Good job!

Alexey Manukyan, another participant of the Forum from Armenia was facilitating art workshop. The participants of the workshop were provided with the canvases, paints and freedom in creativity. It was a pleasure observing people mixing up the paints and putting them on the canvases with their fingers instead of brushes. The workshop opened up people, they were fully sincere, open and free in their feelings and emotions, like little kids. They were absolutely absorbed by the creative process and freedom of expression united with their deepest feelings and desire for peaceful creative coexistence for common welfare in South Caucasus.

People of different ages, social groups, nationalities, religions and beliefs came together for common work and creativity. The synergy of their work (clean historic sites, pottery, canvases and the most important – their cleaned and treated souls and hearts) became symbols of peaceful coexistence and cultural integrity for everyone's' good in South Caucasus.



All Different—All Equal

On the same year 2007 CRC in partnership with European Cultural Foundation has developed special platform for the youth of the region to come together, experience each others' cultures, participate, get to know and appreciate mankind values: human rights, diversity, multiculturalism.

Awareness Raising Tour for Culture and Peace by Gyumri - Akhaltsikhe - Kars was initiated within the European All Different - All Equal Campaign to bring the message of the campaign to the region.

The tour aimed through art-and-culture-based activities to:

- Challenge stereotypes
- Mediate tension between the need for historical justice and a need for better and different future
- Transform the relationship of hatred into relationship of interdependence and trust.

This initiative is an attempt to prepare and encourage the youth of South Caucasus to build a region where diversity is embraced for its positive potential, equality is actively pursued and an interdependence between different groups is recognized. It's an attempt to ensure the societies of the South Caucasus states that they can leave more equitably and peacefully together.

The working group consisting of 15 young citizens from Armenia, Georgia and Turkey gathered in Gyumri.

"Style" Art Gallery hosted the international group for the informational seminar. During the informative seminar the group was presented All Different -All Equal campaign of Council of Europe for diversity, human rights and participation.

The group practiced the interactive methods for promoting the campaign among the community, such as role games, theatre performances and others. The participants also made presentations on his/her city and community.

The cultural infill of the program was the workshop of national dance aiming to teach the participants a piece from Armenian, Georgian and Turkish national dance.

The working group met the young citizens - University and school students of Gyumri, Representatives of some ethnic minorities living in Gyumri (Yezidis and Russians) were present. The group presented the aims and objectives of the campaign and the project. An interactive performance for developing mutual understanding and respect involved both the working group and the local citizens. Following the performance in a circle they discussed different issues of coexistence: stereotypes, historic memory, importance of looking forward and making a step forward in partnership and development.

Another activity was creation of a big poster of All Different All Equal. Later on the group and the local students made a walking tour by public places in Gyumri with the poster in their hands sharing the campaign message with larger community.

The main conclusion of the people involved in the activities was that all people are humans regardless nationality, religion, governmental policy and other factors and that the most important and effective step in developing relations between neighboring countries is face-to-face communication.



In early morning the group started to Akhaltsikhe – the next destination point. On the road the group did not lose the time, they started to explore Armenian, Georgian and Turkish national songs trying to find similarities in the music or the words of the songs. Ultimately they found a piece, which became the anthem of the tour.

Arriving in Akhaltsikhe, the group was hosted in the Center for the Multi-ethnic Youth Community of Akhaltsikhe. That day the representatives of different ethnic groups (Armenians, Ukrainians, Russians, Georgians, Greeks) came together to meet the international group and learn about the campaign. The tour group made an introduction of the project and All Different All Equal campaign, hold an interactive performance on the diversity, human rights and equality and organized role games. The workshop of national dance we started in Gyumri continued in Akhaltsikhe in a wider format involving the local youth.

The specialist and volunteers of the Center organized a crafts workshop for the group called "Tekka" (Georgian for felt). The group learned the technology of making the texture out of wool and designing patterns on it. Participants themselves prepared a felt poster of All Different All Equal. This became a practical output of the workshop.

The process of common work and production of a synergy was very attractive process stimulating the participants to feel as one group and one unit and be more productive in promoting the campaign. In the evening the group together with locals had a walking tour by historic places of Akhaltsikhe, attended Georgian dinner. The national dances were a good experience for both locals and project participants.

The next morning charged with Georgian hospitality and full of impressions the group took the third destination of the tour – Kars, Turkey. That day Turkey was celebrating Ramadan – a big religious holiday. Most of the population is spending that day with families. Nonetheless many young citizens from Kars (mainly Kurds and Turks) found time to meet the international group and talk about diversity, human rights and coexistence.

The meeting was held in the conference hall of Sim-Er hotel. Regardless the official look of the interior room, the environment was very friendly and human from the very beginning.

Through interactive games and performances, we have organized from the very beginning of the meeting, the participants and local people quickly got to know each other and the atmosphere of understanding and trust was established. The musical workshop of the national song, where Turks were singing Armenian and Georgian songs and vice versa was a perfect continuation of that process.

Once the understanding was gained we transformed the communication in a more complex level, i.e. to try to go deeper into the meaning of All Different All Equal slogan, which seems so simple and so clear. We tried to understand where we are equal: in rights, in desires, in feelings as humans. We also tried to transform the phrase for describing the society of our region. We offered the group and the locals to continue the phrase all different – all..... They offered lots of assumptions, among them:the concert continued.



- all different all human;
- all different all friends,
- all different all problem;
- all different all together,
- all different all similar, etc.

The word game helped to find out many qualities, perceptions, and understanding of our societies and. After lunch the group and locals had walking tour by historic Kars and visited the Kars Art Center, where the concert continued.

Evening was given for a farewell party with national dances.

Conclusion

All Different All Equal campaign held by the group of young citizens from South Caucasus gave them an opportunity for face-to-face communication with the coevals from the neighboring countries. The life contacts helped them to overcome many barriers and stereotypes formed by governmental policy, historic memory and other factors. They had possibility to see and perceive each other just as humans with the same emotions, feelings and desire for peaceful coexistence and development.



Partisans of Peace

On year 2008 Kars, Eastern Anatolia hosted another group of young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey for a 5 day Colloquium entitled Partisans of Peace to address the ethnic and political conflicts in South Caucasus states (Nagorno-Karabakh involving Armenia and Azerbaijan, Abkhazian and South Osetian conflicts with Georgia); peaceful transformation of conflicts, intercultural dialogue. The project was about bringing together the young citizens who directly suffered from these conflicts during the last 2 decades: young people from refugee families and the ex-military servants at the borderline areas of conflicting regions from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia and addressing the personal problems of the young people caused by conflicts. Nevertheless the latest events in August 2008 that stroke South Caucasus region made the Abkhazian participation in the project impossible. Participants from Turkey were involved in the project.

The following objectives were addressed:

- Educating the youth in the states of South Caucasus to be free of prejudices and stereotypes of the mass propaganda of ethnic hatred, tolerant towards cultural and religious diversity, able to build civil and just society in South Caucasus
- Creating bridges of understanding between the youth of conflicting regions through promotion of intercultural and inter religious dialogue and mitigating the tension between the young citizens of the conflicting regions through face-to-face communication and collective work
- To help integrate the young citizens from refugee families into the society they live in through raising their awareness on their rights and responsibilities
- To educate the ex-military servants about the mankind values such as human rights, respect for diversity and multiculturalism, tolerance and peaceful coexistence

The main themes addressed with the project are the ethnic and political conflicts in South Caucasus states (Nagorno-Karabakh involving Armenia and Azerbaijan, Abkhazian and South Osetian conflicts with Georgia); peaceful transformation of conflicts, intercultural dialogue. The project was about bringing together the young citizens who directly suffered from these conflicts during the last 2 decades: young people from refugee families and the ex-military servants at the borderline areas of conflicting regions from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia and addressing the personal problems of the young people caused by conflicts.

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A complex of methods was elaborated to provide utmost effectiveness in educating the participants and providing them a space for collective creativity where they could experience the real communication and recognition. The variety of methods included interactive role games, lectures, and presentations, film screening and debates, collective creativity actions.

The main program elements were:

- Interactive role games addressing different issues: human rights, stereotypes and prejudices, the problems and challenges that the refugees face, discrimination and xenophobia, etc.
- Lectures, debates and presentations on human rights, ethnic conflicts and the ways of their resolution, diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance
- Film screening and debates. Documentary films about peace, absurd of war and human rights produced by the filmmakers from Israel, USA, France, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia were screened and discusses with the participants.
- Collective creativity actions. The participants were offered to compose thematic scenarios and shooting short films on the topics addressed (<http://www.facebook.com/video/?id=1244337404>).
- Visits to cultural places in and within the vicinity of Kars

As a result participants enlarged their outlook on the neighboring states of the region, got better understanding of the people from their region, shared the believes, desires and concerns. They learnt about the human rights, tolerance and peaceful coexistence idea, and transformed their prejudices and stereotypes.

Most of the participants have never had a chance to meet their coevals from the neighboring region. Face-to-face communication and the same type of life problems they experienced helped the young citizens to transform their perception of the neighboring people, which was imposed on them by the state ideology and historic memory.

The group unanimously agreed on the point that a friendship established within a small group should spread out to involve the whole nation.

The role games helped the participants to dig deeply in their hearts and find out stereotypes and misbelieves that lay down deeply in all of us.



Roadmap to Peace

On year 2009 CRC responded to the latest political developments – the peace process negotiations started by Armenian and Turkish Governments by suggesting a big-scale event to reach the communities of Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan for discussing the recent trends and future developments.

European Youth Foundation and Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a program of German Marshall Fund supported CRC with this idea and an ambitious initiative called Roadmap to Peace consisting of two components: an intercultural workshop in Kars and a tour by cities and villages of Eastern Anatolia to share the message of peace and coexistence.

Roadmap to Peace implied art and culture as the most effective creative and uniting tool for warming up the hearts, establishing understanding and spreading love.

That's where we succeeded choosing few art genres: music, film, dance, photography, inviting young artists from the three states and creating that amazing interaction between the artists and non-artists participants and the local people involved.

Four days long the group worked in Kars learning intercultural through nonformula education techniques, attending panels of musical, dance, filmmaking and photography workshops and developing the techniques for further sharing with the communities of cities and villages of Eastern Anatolia.

For 12 days the group oc 'Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten' was scrolling the hills and valleys from Digor to Dogubayazit, Igdır, Van, Tavan, Gevas, Bitlis, Agri, Sarikamis, Yanıkcaı (Arpet), Bogatepe, Muradiye bringing the music, dance, humanity, love, peace; involving the locals into the art process and dialogue.

The participant5s also have had an incredible experience of getting a deep insight into the local context and cultural specifics by staying with the host families in Gevas and Dogubayazit, creating firmer links between the participants and the locals.



NONFORMAI EDUCATION www.civitaschool.org

CIVITAS Virtual School

The creation of CIVITAS Virtual School (www.civitaschool.org) has been supported by the Alexandria-Gyumri Sister Cities Committee. The purpose of the virtual school is to help develop a sense of civic pride and to increase an awareness of the City's cultural and historical heritage through providing place-based on-line education. It aims at fostering the promotion of Information Technologies in Gyumri schools, providing the new possibilities for the kids to get Education through Internet. While the program has been developed for the citizenry in general, the information has been targeted toward the school children and their teachers. The web site includes information sections of Gyumri history, Environmental Education, English language instructions and Emergency Preparedness.

Alongside with the web site CRC has organized a number of training for the teachers of Gyumri schools to provide them the necessary skills how to incorporate the Civitas On-line School as a tool and resource for their classes. Besides, CRC periodically organizes outdoor education classes on ecology (planting trees, cleaning of urban public spaces), history (visits to museums, walking tours by historic downtown, meetings with the historians and ethnographers); English language (visit to American corner in Gyumri, meetings with native speakers, film screenings in English).



South Caucasus Festival on peace and human rights 'Nationality Human'

The festival of peace and human rights «Nationality: Human» is the first festival of this kind in the South Caucasus. The idea arose in 2005 among partners and friends of the Open Society Georgia Foundation and the South Caucasus regional office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation. We have invited experienced South Caucasian specialists to serve as jury members. We have assured balance between the jury members, namely the representation of all the regions of the South Caucasus, as well as the «proportion» of film curators and human rights defenders.

The project is supported by the Open Society - Georgia Foundation (www.osgf.ge), the Heinrich Boell Foundation (www.boell.ge), the Open Society Institute (www.soros.org), the Black Sea Trust (www.gmfus.org), and the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia (www.eda.admin.ch).

Why we present foreign documentary films on peace and human rights? This is a difficult question.

Firstly, because we think they might interest you. Maybe in your village, town or city film screening has not taken place for a long time. Maybe you are tired of Hollywood blockbusters. Maybe you are interested to know what documentaries are currently being made in other countries. Maybe you will find something new for yourselves...

Secondly, our world is interconnected and the language of cinema trespasses all borders, therefore we are certain that Caucasian audience will «find itself» in the fates of people from other countries and will be able to sympathize with their struggle for peace and justice. We frankly hope that the festival will inspire lively discussions on complex issues.

Why is it a festival «on-wheels»? In our opinion, not all the residents of the South Caucasus are able to visit cinemas and watch good films, so the films have to come to them! The festival is not meant only for the inhabitants of large cities - the very idea of «a festival on-wheels» arose in order to show films to the inhabitants of villages and towns, who are unable to watch new films. This means that we are especially willing to visit you, dear villagers and townfolk!

We are extremely willing to organize the festival together with you! You know better than us whom to invite as a special guest, how to organize everything on the spot so that more people attend and what kind of accompanying program is interesting.

It is very important for us to know your opinion about the films, your ideas on the organization of the festival and the discussions.

As a part of a nonformal education CRC in partnership with Henry Boell Foundation invited the South Caucasus Film Festival for Peace and Humanr Rights 'Nationality: Numan' to Gyumri. In 2007 and 2008 Gyumri Art Style Galelry hosted the Festival on wheels for screening documentary films from different parts of world to address the issues of human rights, conflicts, peacebuilding. The screenings were followed by discussions, which helped to get a deeper insight into the issue and was a good experience for the school and university students in many senses: art education, ability to form and express one's own opinion, learning about peace, tolerance and human rights.



Film Club

Following the festival a film club affiliated to the CRC has been established where the school and University students interested in arts and filmmaking particularly had a possibility to get better understanding of arts, particularly in filmmaking, scenario development, shooting, etc. During the classes the students also get to expand their knowledge on various spheres: the world exploration, mankind values, etc. as well as learn to speak and listen to others. The students get the platform for expressing their creativity and deepening it whenever appropriate. One of the club members for example, has clearly states for herself a desire to study as a film director and started the proportional courses in the Art Academy of Gyumri.

