

ARMENIA



FROM TRAINEE

TO TRAINER

Please meet Hovsep Khurshudyan, President of "Free Citizen" Civic Initiatives Support Center NGO (Armenia). The NGO's main fields of activity are as follows: civic activism, training young and senior civic activists, civic and non-formal education, lobbying, and advocacy to urge the process of European integration of Armenia, on-line education, Facebook (virtual) office: daily blogging online, influencing the public opinion, etc. Target groups of the "Free Citizen" NGO are young people and seniors in Armenia and the Eastern Partnership ("EaP") countries.



INTEREST IN BECOMING A TRAINER

Since I am also a Coordinator of Working Group 4 ("WG4") of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum ("EaP CSF"), my area of responsibility includes education, youth, culture, and seniors. *Therefore, I attach a great importance to non-formal education. I regard trainings as one of the most efficient ways for providing such education.* I will continue to act as a trainer after I leave my position as the Coordinator of the EaP CSF WG 4.

THE TOT PROGRAMME OF THE PROJECT

After the “Training of Trainers” Programme (the “ToT Programme”) had started, the biggest surprise was to find out the low level of my skills as a trainer. Prior to my participation in the ToT Programme I could not even imagine this. However, in the course of the training sessions, I have learned a lot of new methods and tips for organizing trainings and teaching trainees in the most efficient way. Since I am going to focus on the topics of public speaking, debating, campaigning and PR in my future trainings, first of all I was gathering the information on these topics, including the teaching tools, format, content, techniques for delivering speeches, methods of learning, and consolidation of knowledge.

The network of like-minded friends and colleagues was another wonderful acquisition I got thanks to the ToT Programme of the Project “Civil Society Dialogue for Progress” (the “Project”). This network has already yielded practical results: as the initiator and coordinator of the EaP Youth Conference on Human Rights, which will take place on 27-28 October 2016 in Bratislava (Slovakia), I have already invited some of the ToT Programme graduates to be trainers and participants at this Conference.



DESIGNING A TRAINING PROJECT

Civic Initiatives and groups appear spontaneously to deal with specific urgent problems that a particular group in the society is facing, and to achieve concrete goals through the civil pressure on the authorities. Civil Movements “I am against” (2014) and “No to Plunder” - more known as “Electric Yerevan” (2015) - have shown that



such initiatives, which are practically not financed from the outside, and which operate on the basis of modest contributions of their members, turn out to be much more efficient and influential in solving specific problems than hundreds of CSOs that receive millions of dollars of funding from the Western donors to carry out seminars, workshops, monitoring, and research. Civic leaders, which appear during the public protests in the streets, undergo a natural selection because of their demonstrated leadership qualities and courage. They become the driving force of social and civic development, public opinion leaders, and change agents.



However, due to being "born on the street," these leaders lack skills and theoretical knowledge when organising civil resistance movements and managing them - the lack of skills in public speaking among civic leaders is especially conspicuous. This often leads to extremely negative consequences for these movements. I have often seen the most talented, honest and brave civil society activists, potential leaders concede the microphone/mega-phone/arena to less significant and sometimes - less independent - actors, only because the latter were known to have abilities and skills for impressive performances and speeches. That is how I came up with the idea of my training project "Public Speaking: How to Speak Publicly in a Convincing, Confident and Concise Style".



IMPLEMENTING A PROJECT

During the training, videos of the best examples of public speeches were shown to the participants, including the well-known speech “I have a dream” by Martin Luther King. All these examples were analysed, as well as a video example of a bad public speech. *For higher involvement in the learning process, during the training sessions, the participants were provided with opportunities to share their own experiences of successes and failures whilst preparing and presenting a speech.* It was very inspiring how some of the participants were able to repeat the Martin Luther King’s famous speech, while in the case of several other trainees it became obvious that they would achieve much better results after additional training.

It was equally important that after the training sessions the trainees had time for a closer acquaintance and communication, and a strong network was built, which would be useful for them in their future civic activities. Also thanks to this training project, I myself was able to find some genuine civic activists for participation in the upcoming EaP Youth Conference in Bratislava.



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