

# Armenia

## *Youth Leadership Program*



EPF has been implementing the Youth Bank program in the South Caucasus since 2007. Youth Bank empowers young people to effect positive change in their communities and lives through transparent community philanthropy. The program promotes cross-border sharing and learning among young people in the South Caucasus. In 2009, EPF expanded work in this area through the *Getting Involved!* Program, which is implemented in partnership with the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and Theodor-Heuss-Kolleg. Through *Getting Involved!* young Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians design and implement their own project ideas, acquire management skills and promote understanding among nations and youth engagement.

Young people from rural Armenia have particularly few opportunities for civic engagement. But, if provided with appropriate skills and tools, they have all the potential needed to bring fresh perspective, energy and solutions to long-entrenched problems. EPF's Youth Leadership program is designed to encourage young people to participate in decision-making and to address important issues in their communities. The values instilled as part of the project, such as volunteerism and civic activism, are essential to understanding and taking part in the democratic process.

### *Youth Bank*

Youth Bank is designed to encourage young people to address important issues in their communities. With guidance and support from EPF, Youth Bank committees consisting of five to seven young adults aged 16 to 25 manage small grants ranging from \$300-500 each for youth-led community development projects. Since 2007, EPF has formed nine Youth Bank committees in eight regions of Armenia and in Yerevan. Jinishian Memorial Foundation generously provided \$25,000 for community projects in 2009.

Through involvement in Youth Bank, young committee members develop an understanding of transparency, decision-making, accountability and good governance. They also acquire practical skills that they can apply in the workplace or in the community. Numerous other young people (who implement small grant projects funded by the Youth Banks) also develop valuable skills while implementing community projects. With support from Youth Banks, more than 60 small projects have been implemented by more than 500 young villagers, including community beautification projects, cultural and sporting events, trainings and workshops, ecological projects, book publications, talent contests and theatrical performances.

*Engaging Citizens,  
Empowering Communities*



**EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION**

## EPF MISSION STATEMENT

To empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity, through hands-on programs helping them to improve their *communities* and their own *lives*.

The Ararat Youth Bank funded a series of free debates on the themes of freedom of expression and political conflicts. The debates were attended by more than 200 young people from 11 villages. Interest was so strong that the group expanded the project to one additional community.

A project funded by the Vayots Dzor Youth Bank generated support from the Qaraglukh village chief and community members, who came together to clean and install drinking water in the ancient chapel Tukh Manuk. The group also plans to organize tree planting at the chapel, a famous local tourist destination, in spring.

These and other projects help the Youth Bank members and other young people boost their reputation and leadership skills in communities as well as allow them to take pride in the change they make in their villages.

The Youth Bank committee members competitively select, fund and monitor projects, and serve as consultants and mentors to the organizations implementing them. In this way, they become real leaders in their communities. Since EPF launched the program in 2007, more than one in three Youth Bank committee members have

“ Youth Bank was a chance to prove to my relatives and my Ezid friends that it is possible to stay true to your ethnic roots but also work with Armenians. Working in the Youth Bank gave me a chance to interact with my Armenian friends from all over Armenia, who also learned from working closely with members of the Ezid population like me. The Youth Bank made it possible for me to make important decisions – like how to handle money for projects. I am proud of this.”

ROSTAM BAQOYAN  
Yerevan Youth Bank,  
representative of the Ezid minority in Armenia

found new jobs or have advanced their careers due to the skills and experience they gained from their involvement in the project.

In 2010, the veteran Youth Banks will operate as mentors and establish new Youth Bank committees, leading the process of setting up the committees and mentoring the new members through the process of grant-making.

### Getting Involved!

Eurasia Partnership Foundation and Theodor Heuss Kolleg launched *Getting Involved!* in February 2009 to strengthen civic engagement among young people in the South Caucasus. The project provides participating young people a unique space and an opportunity to advance personally and professionally, take responsibility for improving their communities, and develop their practical management skills. Because the project takes place in a cross-border context, it also helps participants get to know their peers from neighboring countries and acquire cross-cultural communication skills.

Each year, five to eight Armenian youth aged 18-25 are selected through a competitive process to participate in program management training. The training focuses on how young people can shape their immediate surroundings by combining good ideas with the right tools. The training involves youth selected from all three countries of the South Caucasus. The participants are provided funds to implement their own initiatives - usually small-scale community projects, with an emphasis on cross-border sharing and learning. Working together, they carry out volunteer projects both in their home communities and in a cross-border setting. In this way, they become familiar with new forms of collaboration and enhance their project management skills.

**Partners:** Theodor Heuss Kolleg is a program of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, a German foundation managing the philanthropic request of company founder Robert Bosch, and MitOst, an international non-profit association founded by alumni of Robert Bosch Stiftung. The project is co-funded by the Zivik Programme of the German Federal Office and the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations.

*Vanadzor Youth Bank*

