



Uniting and enabling youth for positive change in Armenia!

Situation

Increasing, research internationally in diverse cultural and community contexts displays evidence that corporal punishment, emotional/ verbal assault and humiliation are detrimental and dangerous disciplinary methods. However, as in many parts of the world, in Armenia, hitting and shouting at children are accepted methods of discipline. While most adults and caregivers realize that these harsh forms of punishment are counter-productive, and even harmful, they believe such methods are necessary, especially since they lack alternative positive parenting skills.

Given the above sociocultural context, the need to create a public mandate against the use of abusive disciplinary methods was recognized by Save the Children Armenia. Awareness campaigns involving media, practitioners, adult caregivers and youth were conceptualized and are being implemented towards this end.

Action

As part of the Unite for Children, Save Futures (UCSF) project, Save the Children Armenia implemented a public awareness and education campaign on the use of positive discipline strategies. One minute public service advertisements promoting the importance of loving and nurturing parenting practices were aired on national/regional TV, reaching a large audience.

Another initiative aimed at empowering children in the South Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) is the 'Child to Child' (CtC) approach. This approach enables children to play an active and responsible role in the integration and development of their communities and themselves. To establish CtC groups, a three day CtC Training of Trainers was organized by Save the Children Armenia. Twenty eight participants became qualified master trainers which included Regional Children's Action for Participation (ReCAP) project, staff members from each country office, project partners from NGOs and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia.

The importance of Save the Children's work with youth is highlighted by Marlena's story. Marlena (age 15) was placed at an orphanage when she was 12 years old as a result of social and familial problems. This young, intelligent girl was one of the several child members who participated in the training on child protection in Gavar. Marlena said the training provided new information about violence against children and helped systematize whatever she already knew.

"One of the things that I didn't know is that child neglect is a type of violence too..." she said. Having participated in the child protection training, she is planning to conduct a similar session for her classmates. "Knowing what violence against children is will contribute to preventing violations by both children and adults," she says.

"We are the part of the society, and the latter becomes complete due to our involvement and contribution. I just want everyone to remember that human beings can do everything, but whatever we do comes back to us like a boomerang." - Child Programme Participant



Lessons learned

- There is a need to involve multiple stakeholders in creating and enforcing the mandate of child protection.
- Youth is a crucial and powerful change agent and an important partner for ensuring social change at the individual, community and societal level.
- Local media needs to be tapped and utilized to communicate, raise awareness and create a public mandate.

Impact

- Increased awareness regarding the positive disciplining strategies and inappropriateness of harsh and abusive practices.
- Increased involvement of multiple stakeholders such as media, development workers, professional, policy administrators and youth in promoting child rights and stigmatizing violence against children.
- Recognition and capacity building of youth as important, productive and contributing stakeholders.