



**“Armenia National Capacity Self Assessment for Global
Environmental Management”**

UNDP/GEF/ARM/02/G31/A/1G/99

**Assessment of Mass Media Capacities
for Provision of Public Awareness**

April 2004

Becoming a Party to the UN Conventions, Armenia has made certain commitments among which are the issues of public awareness and public participation in decision making. The provisions on education, training and public awareness are stated in the appropriate articles of the Conventions:

- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – Article 6;
- UN Convention on Biodiversity – Article 13;
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification – Article 19.

In 1998 the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted Decrees (N 115 and 620), which comprise the action plan and timeframes for implementation of commitments of Armenian under the aforementioned conventions. An action plan shall also be developed for the period of 2004-2008.

The analysis on *mass media activities* in Armenia in the sphere of environmental education and awareness provision on the issues of three global environmental conventions in the country was done based on the survey results.

Sample

40 environmental journalists from the following agencies were interviewed:

- 16- from TV companies (40%)
- 11- from newspapers (27.5 %)
- 8- from radio (20%)
- 5- from news agencies (12.5%).

All the newspapers are national published in Yerevan and are disseminated in the marzes in different amounts. As to the TV companies, 6 from five TV marz agencies (Noyemberyan, Alaverdi, Vanadzor, Gyumri and Gavar) have been considered besides the ones in Yerevan. As to radio- journalists, Yerevan, Vanadzor and Gyumri cities have been included.

The specialization of journalists for the coverage of environmental topics is emphasised. Environmental themes make more than one third of the entire work for 60% of respondents and for 7.5% - more than a half (Fig. 1).

Environmental education and specialized trainings for journalists are not organized in the republic on a regular basis. More than 53% of the journalists (22 people) have not participated in any course due to lack of such trainings, however all interviewed expressed willingness to have them (See Fig. 2.). Only 13 press people have had the opportunity of partaking in environmental training courses and only 6 of them to some extent have got environmental education in the university course, from which 1 attended a special course for environmental journalists.

Thus, most of the journalists covering environmental issues and events are “self-educated” and there is a real need for improvement of their qualification.

Moreover, from the above-mentioned 13 journalists only 7 took training courses during last year (Table 1).

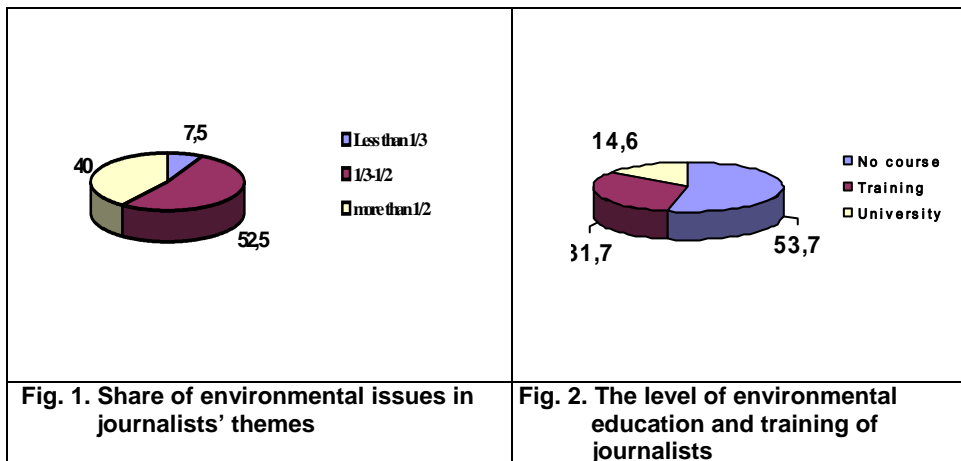


Table 1. Trainings organized in 2003

	Organizers	Number of participants from Armenia	Venue
1.	Water Resources Department	10 journalists	Tsakhkadzor (February)
2.	“Association for TV and Radio Development”, German Embassy in Armenia	20 journalists	Three-day seminar for TV and radio journalists, entitled “School of Eco-journalism” (May)
3.	European Environmental Summit	5 journalists	Kiev, school for journalists (May)
4.	TACIS (in the framework of action plan on Aarhus convention support)	1 participant	Likanj, Georgia (September)
		3 participants	Tsakhkadzor
5.	Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS Environmental Initiation/ UNDP, UNEP and OSCE	2 journalists	Tbilisi (November)

Several journalists took related courses at “Internews” Agency and one was trained in Germany.

An obvious fact is that very few journalists are involved in environmental trainings. From the list of participants attended the training courses, it can be inferred that at least one fifth of them do not continue working in the sphere of environment.

Given the fact that journalists evaluate their professional knowledge in the environmental sphere as sufficient (90%) and considering, however, that the 25%

of the interviewed journalists is actually unaware of UN environmental conventions, ***it can be inferred that journalists do not realize the gap in their environmental awareness.***

Among the events organized for journalists in 2003 were the two prize-awarding events – the first one was organized by the “Association for TV and Radio Development” under the funding of German Embassy in Armenia for journalists. The competition was summed up in September. The second one was organised by OSCE Yerevan office and implemented by “Ecosurvival” NGO. Prizes were awarded in three nominations (three prizes per nomination): TV, radio and press journalists.

Awareness on UN Environmental Conventions

The 30% of respondents stated that they are more or less aware of the conventions. From the 4 possible answers to this question, the first two (“not heard” and “partially heard”) provide evidence on insufficient awareness of journalists on UN Conventions. As to the third question – “a little aware” (chosen by 45% of respondents), again the inference can be made that journalists are not appropriately informed on the conventions. However, the journalists involved in this group are more or less aware of the conventions (in contrast with the ones chosen the second answer). Most of the journalists of this group are authors of different news articles. Thus, we may infer that 75% of journalists are aware of UN environmental conventions.

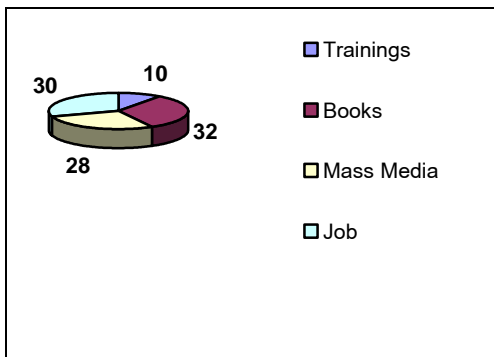


Fig. 3. The sources of information on UN global environmental conventions

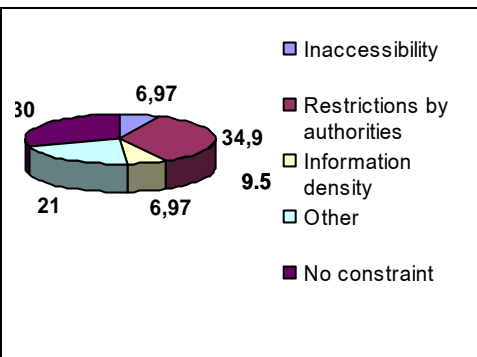


Fig. 4. Constraints for access to environmental information

The major source of information on UN conventions for journalists are books - 32% (brochures and booklets provided by international organisations and NGOs). The second main source is the professional experience information gained during press conferences and interviews. The 28% of respondents learnt about the conventions from other media sources, and only 10% were informed during trainings.

This also proves the fact that there is a lack for relevant trainings for journalists.

In 2003 journalists developed more than 870 materials on environmental issues in Armenia, of which 177 reflect the topics related to the UN Conventions. Number of publications greatly differs among journalists depending on their activities and work character. Major part of publications is developed by news agencies (the top one is the correspondent of “Armenpress” state agency – author of about 200 articles, whereas, the correspondents of certain newspapers and TV companies produce only 4-6 environmental materials annually, although, they perhaps might be of more significance and get higher public feedback.

Of the 177 articles mentioned above, only 50-60 were specially developed on the UN conventions. Certainly, such a volume of information is not sufficient for providing public with relevant awareness on the conventions; moreover not all of these programs and articles have been disseminated to the population with large audience holding media – TV and radio.

Constraints faced by journalists while elucidating environmental events

The most frequently chosen constraints were identified as those caused by authorities – 34.9% (Fig. 4), particularly on the local level, e.g. forestry staff¹, etc. According to the responses of journalists, the staff of the Ministry of Nature Protection is mentioned as not reluctant in providing information. 30.2% of journalists think that they don't face any particular constraints in their work. The rest of the answers (1/3) can be qualified as objective ones. There are several interesting notes among the “other” constraints:

- Political circumstances hold up the elucidation of environmental events. Very often the opportunity for commenting this or that environmental issue/event depends on the political status or party involvement of the interviewed official.
- Public interest towards environmental issues is rather insufficient, that is why the demand for the environmental information is reduced.

These two facts are important factors that should be considered when seeking ways for improvement of environmental news provision and public awareness increase.

77% of interviewed journalists constantly follow the activities of environmental NGOs and the identified actively working environmental NGOs (Annex 1).

Due to lack of access to internet for many media agencies both in marzes and in Yerevan, only the 32,5% of interviewed journalists mention Internet and web sites as source of information. The web sites mentioned by respondents are mostly of foreign origin (Russian or international NGOs), and they use only few sites of local NGOs. 1 respondent mentioned the web site of the RA Ministry of Nature Protection.

¹ A concrete case has been cited, when forestry staff in Dilijan once forbade a group of journalists to enter the forestry for film shooting.

According to the data of the survey conducted in 2001² 90% of population in Armenia, including Yerevan and marzes, prefers mass media as source of information, in fact, 58% makes use of mass media rather frequently. According to the analysis, the most widely used mass media is TV, -90%. The next priority is newspapers - 66% and radio - 43%. Based on these data, the inference can be made that any kind of campaign, including environmental one, should preferably be TV oriented. This is proved by another survey conducted by the same institution (see footnote 2) on the public awareness on the state of environment in the republic. According to the interviews, 36%-82% get environmental information from TV (the indexes differ among marzes). As to the use of other types of media as sources of environmental information, the rates again differ among marzes. Thus, the importance of radio varies from 10.5% (Yerevan) up to 2.3% (Lori), newspaper – from 28.2% (Gegharkunik) up to 2.2% (Kotayk) etc. From media considered in the survey, only National Radio and H2 (“Prometevs”) TV Channel had constant broadcasts on environmental issues, both - weekly. In fact, the radio program was closed down on January 31, 2004.

TV Companies

Neither public nor private TV channels have specially designed environmental programmes, except for the “H2” channel, which has a weekly broadcast program on environmental issues known as “Country-Paradise”. This program is developed and launched with the efforts and financial means of a single non governmental organization - “Foundation for Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets in the Nature Reserves of RA” (www.fpwc.org). In some extent the certain films of foreign origin can also be considered as a source of environmental awareness provision through TV although with less efficiency. Among these programmes is Sunday “Human being and nature” programme - broadcast through Public TV on weekly basis. The rest ones refer to environmental issues among general news. All the correspondents dealing with environmental issues are involved only in news services.

The analysis of interviews shows that marz TV companies are in more or less better situation. For instance, recently, comprehensive environmental programs have been produced at Alaverdi “Ankyun+3”, Noyemberyan “Kamut” and Gavar “Qyavar” TV studios. The first one, on pollution of the Debed River, has been awarded by OSCE prize. Recently a joint film has been shot on the current situation in Lori forests. In fact, capacities of marz TV companies, as well as their audience, are more limited than those of national ones, especially those broadcasted for all republic (Public TV, “H2” TV station, “Armenia” and partially “ALM” broadcasts in meter range). The Yerevan office of “MIR” International TV Company has broadcast several programs on the environment of Armenia.

² *Public opinion on the state of environment in the republic. State Service for Statistics of RA. The survey has been conducted at the end of 2001.*

However, the language of the program is Russian and that is why the audience is limited.

Local TV stations have been supported by different foreign donors in producing environmental programs. The donors included “Internews” organization, one of the goals of which is to support marz radio and TV companies. The “Ditak” program developed by this organization is broadcast by 21 marz stations through “Shant” TV channel. This program often covers the environmental issues (one third of broadcast), so it can be considered as a program with rather broad audience.

Below some data is provided on environmental programs broadcast by some TV companies. Those are approximate data based on interviews with correspondents and heads of their companies (of 10% precision).

Table 2. TV programs covering environmental and particularly UN environmental convention issues*

TV companies	Number of programs	
	General environmental	Covering topics on UN Conventions
Public TV (HH)	70	8
H2, including the “Country-Paradise” program	45	22
	20	12
ALM	10	
Armnews	35	0
Kentron	60	15
Internews **	35	2
Ankyun+ (Alaverdi)	30	5
Shant (Yerevan and Gyumri)	15	0

* Estimations based on answers of four active correspondents. The real number might vary, depending on involvement of correspondents.

** Broadcast in Yerevan and marzes.

It is obvious that the public TV surpasses the other mass media in number of broadcasting environmental programs because of its stronger capacities. However, these programs are informational and are mostly incorporated in the “Haylur” program and cannot be considered as serious environmental campaigns.

Newspapers

Newspapers are more seriously committed to cover environmental issues and relatively seldom reflect everyday events.

However the small number of the editions, 3000-4000 at most decreases the efficiency of newspapers.

The number of environmental publications in 2003 is presented in Table 3 (data are taken from evaluations of journalists).

Table 3. Number of environmental publications in 2003

Newspapers	Number of Articles	
	General environmental	Covering topics on UN Conventions
"Hayastani Hanrapetutian"	30	6
"Hayots Ashxarh"	40	5
"AZG"	50	15
"Aravot"	20	5
"Iravunk"	8	3
"Respublika Armenia"	14	7
"Golos Armenii"	35	4
"Novoe Vremya"	20	2

Environmental issues coverage in the newspapers fluctuate essentially, based first of all on policy of the newspaper. The state newspapers, such as "Hayastani Hanrapetutian" and "Respublika Armenia", pay relevantly less attention to elucidation of environmental issues.

Radio

Most of existing radio stations pay very little attention to elucidation of environmental issues, referring to them only in the section of news, except for the Public Radio and "Aniv" radio-program ("Internews"), which have specially designed environmental programs and are awarded by OSCE prizes. However, at the end of January, 2004, the "We and the Nature" program was closed down. *This proves the obvious fact that elucidation of environmental issues is not a priority for the leadership of the Public Radio and TV.*

Generally, it can be stated that radio capacities, compared with those of TV, are even more weakly used in terms of conducting environmental campaigns.

As a conclusion, efficiency of environmental news provision is evaluated as follows:

1. Mass media are covering environmental issues sufficiently, if refers to hot news;
2. There is a lack for practical steps on improvement of environmental campaigns and environmental awareness of population;
3. State news agencies (particularly the Public TV) are not much active in environmental news provision and practically are not conducting any environmental campaign;
4. Insufficient attention is paid to intergovernmental and regional environmental issues.

The list of environmental journalists (90% of specialized journalists) in Armenia is presented in Annex 2 of the document. It comprises also the names of journalists covering environmental issues with high professionalism and can be considered as top level professionals.

The role of the RA Ministry of Nature Protection in dissemination of environmental information is stated in the provision of the Regulations (26.08.02) and the following functions are stated:

- Relations with public and mass media;
- Publication of information and scientific-education materials on environmental issues;
- Methodical consultations on environmental issues.

Information provision within the RA Ministry of Nature Protection

Press Secretary of the Minister is committed to:

- provide mass media representatives with information taken from Ministry sub-divisions on completed, on-going and anticipated activities. Before providing the information, the press secretary consults on the information with the heads of relevant sub-division's for approval;

- submit the concerns of journalists' to the heads of relevant sub-divisions of the MNP. The head of Ministry sub-divisions in 2days period have to answer either in the written form or verbally depending on the request of the journalist. Verbal information provision is realized with participation of the Ministry press secretary and a protocol is being made;

- elucidate of urgent issues in mass media and the heads of relevant sub-divisions of the Ministry should provide him with information by at the earliest possible date;

The press secretary of the Ministry with support of "Information-analytical Centre" regularly publishes the press release of the Ministry in amount of 150-200 copies.

"Information-analytical Centre" State Non-Commercial Organization

The Centre has been established for collection of environmental information, establishment of an information data base, acceptance of reports from the sub-divisions of the Ministry, analysis and publication of the received information. It provides information to state bodies, non-governmental organizations and wide public. The Centre publishes environmental fact sheets and anthologies. In 2003 the Centre developed the National Report "The State of Environment in Armenia- 2002".

The Centre also provides the press secretary of the Minister with monthly, quarterly, and annual reports received from the sub-divisions of the Ministry. Information is provided through Ministry web site, e-holders and information booklets.

The press secretary of Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring Agency provides information on weather forecast and environmental monitoring.

Public Environmental Information Centre

The Centre was established in 2003 for efficient public awareness and information provision with the support of OSCE/Armenia and Embassies of a number of European countries. The "Information-analytical Centre" State Non-Commercial Organization and the press secretary of the Ministry provide the Public Environmental Information Centre with relevant information accessible for both non-governmental organizations and citizens. The Centre provides non-governmental organizations venue to organize relevant activities, applicants are enabled to use computers, internet (e-connection means), provides them with copy-making services for free, etc. Starting from 2003 the Centre is facing problem with allocation of premises due to transfer of the MNP to the new building.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of analysis, the following recommendations are made towards improvement of environmental mass media capacities:

Environmental issues should be integrated into priorities of state policy. Environmental issues and public attitude towards environment should be considered as important as “traditional” security issues of the country. This means that the state should have its own “*Environmental Campaign*”.

The state should develop a state strategy for environmental campaigns. It should base on intergovernmental and international commitments assumed particularly by ratification of the Aarhus Convention and UN global environmental conventions. An important component within the strategy should be the national approach towards the environmental issues and regional cooperation.

The policy towards the public mass media must be considered as important tool for the national environmental campaign. The state funding for environmental campaign has to be ensured by separate budget line. It is recommended to make an amendment in the RA Law on TV and Radio and add a provision on environmental campaign among the other functions of Public TV and Radio companies (Article 28). It is also recommended to add a detailed provision on involvement of public media in the process of the implementation of RA Law on “Environmental Education”.

The state should develop separate approach towards non state media companies for improving and promoting their activities aimed at environmental awareness raising.

The regular trainings for journalists on environmental issues have to be planned and organized.

The analysis of Ministry of Nature Protection activities on dissemination of environmental information proves the following:

1. Liquidation of former Public relations department under Ministry has significantly deteriorated the activities for effective provision of environmental information and public awareness on environmental issues. The press secretary alone is unable to ensure the steady outflow of internal information, since he is officially participating in ministerial consultations and very often he is simply being unable to meet the journalists and provide them with relevant information.
2. Moving to a new administrative building, where intranet is not functioning yet, has caused a serious problem to effective development and dissemination of information.
3. Lack of computers and other equipment for developing and dissemination of information provided by sub-divisions under RA MNP.

To ensure the efficient implementation of information provision according to the provisions of Ministry regulations is recommended to:

- a) Re-establish the Public relations department under MNP
- b) Reinstall and upgrade the Ministry intranet/ local net
- c) Improve and update the technical equipment of environmental information providing structures and organize staff training
- d) Ensure the regular publication of “Bnutiun” newspaper
- e) Establish “Green” telecommunication.

List of actively acting environmental NGOs (identified by journalists)

	Name	Mentioned
	Green's Union of Armenia	9
	Environment Public Advocacy Centre (EPAC)	8
	Association for Human Sustainable Development	7
	Armenian Forests NGO	3
	Union of Birdlovers	3
	"Vahagn 21" (Alaverdi)	2
	"Khazer"	2
	"Tapan"	2
	Regional Environmental Centre of Caucasus (REC Caucasus)	2
	"Verelk" (Noyemberyan)	2
	Helsinki Political Assembly ՔVanadzor	2
	Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)	1
	"Women-Sevan purity"	1
	Ecological Survival	1
	Fund for conservation of nature, fauna and cultural values in Armenia	1
	Aarhus Centre	1
	Union of Ecologists	1
	"Ecora"	1
	"Trichk"	1
	"Media Group"	1
	"Mankavarzh"	1
	Lori Development Centre	1
	Red Cross of Armenia	1
	"Environment"	1
	"Anaghart Lori"	1
	"Lori eco-club"	1
	"Childhood Planet"	1
	Association of Ecotourism	1
	Geo-fund	1
	Armenian Botanical Society	1

List of Environmental Journalists in Armenia

	First/Last Name	Specialization	Workplace	Course	High professional specialization
1.	Astghik Abrahamyan *	TV	ALM	+	
2.	Viktoria Abrahamyan	TV	A1+		
3.	Lilit Aghbalyan*	TV	Shant	+	
4.	Lusine Aramyan*	News Agency	Arminfo	+	
5.	Ruzan Amirjanyan	TV	A1+		
6.	Karen Arshakyan	TV	“Fortuna” Stepanavan		
7.	Ruzanna Arshakyan *	News-paper	Aravot		
8.	Astghik Avetisyan	Radio	Inter.connect ion, Vanadzor		+
9.	Hakob Badalyan	TV	AR		
10.	Artur Bakhtamyan	TV	Public		
11.	Robert Balayan *	Radio	Inter connection, Vanadzor	+	
12.	Edik Baghdasaryan *	Internet	Hetk		
13.	Hermine Baghdasaryan *	TV	Public		+
14.	Ruzanna Bisharyan *	News-paper	Golos Armenii *		+
15.	Hevine Buniatyan *	TV	Internews	+	+
16.	Hasmik Gevorgyan *	News Agency	Armenpress		
17.	Arevhat Grigoryan *	News-paper	Aravot	+	+
18.	Nikolay Grigoryan	TV	Artakarg Alik		
19.	Vahagn Dabaghyan *	TV	Kyavar, Gavar	+	+
20.	Karine Danielyan *	News Agency	AZG	+	+
21.	Grigor Dashtoyan *	TV	Kyavar, Gavar	+	
22.	Valeria Zakharyan *	News-paper	Novoye Vremya		
23.	Inga Zarafyan *	News Agency	Noyyan Tapan	+	+
24.	Vanik Elizbaryan	TV	“Luso Alik”, Charencavan	+	
25.	Anna Tamrazyan *	TV	H2		

26.	Ashot Khachatryan *	News- paper	Finances and Economy	+	
27.	Ruben Khachatryan *	TV	H2	+	+
28.	Marine Khachikyan	Radio	Public		
29.	Arev Hakobyan*	News Agency	Noyyan Tapan		
30.	Armen Hakobyan*	News- paper	Hayots Ashkharh		
31.	Artur Hovhannisyan *	News- paper	Hayots Ashkharh		+
32.	Larisa Hovhannisyan *	News- paper	Republic of Armenia		
33.	Hasmik Manukyan *	Radio	Public		+
34.	Alla Nahapetyan *	TV	Inter.connect ion, Vanadzor	+	
35.	Tigranuhi Nersisyan *	TV	H1		
36.	Shushan Shahverdyan *	TV	Inter.connect ion, Vanadzor		
37.	Mari Chakryan*	TV	Centre	+	+
38.	Hrachya Papinyan *	TV	Ankyun+3, Alaverdi		+
39.	Ruzanna Pepanyan	News- paper	Orinats Erkir		
40.	Grigor Petrosyan *	Radio	MIR		
41.	Armen Sargsyan *	TV	Internews	+	+
42.	Zaruhi Sargsyan	Radio	Public		
43.	Voskan Sargsyan *	TV	Kamut, Noyemberya n		
44.	Zara Safaryan *	Radio	Internews		
45.	Karine Simonyan	TV	Ankyun+3, Alaverdi		
46.	Anzhella Stepanyan	TV	ALT, Armavir		
47.	Liana Stepanyan *	News- paper	Respublika Armenii	+	+
48.	Zhasmen Vilyan *	News- paper	Iravunk		
49.	Nora Tonoyan *	TV	Armnews		+
50.	Hevine Kushkyan *	TV	Shant, Gyumri		
51.	Natalya Osyan *	TV	Ankyun+3, Alaverdi	+	+

* interviewed journalists



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