



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

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

**ASSESSMENT OF
MUSEUM CAPACITIES
IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

YEREVAN 2004

UNDP/GEF “National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management” project is executed by the Ministry of Nature Protection and implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under financial assistance of Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project started in February 2003 and is aimed at assessment of capacity needs for fulfillment of commitments of Armenia under the United Nations Conventions on Biological Diversity Climate Change and To Combat Desertification. The ultimate goal of the project is to develop a National Action Plan for capacity building in the cross-cutting areas which can ensure the synergetic effect.

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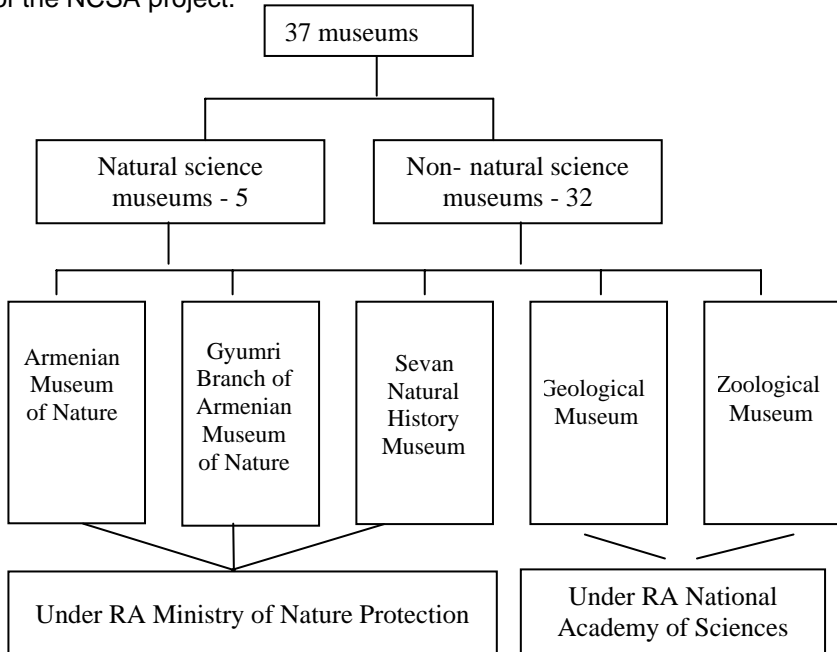
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ASSESSMENT ON MUSEUM CAPACITIES

Museums may greatly contribute to the development of environmental education of population, especially that of younger generation, as cultural and moral values. To that end, 5 natural science and 32 non-natural science museum capacities have been analyzed in framework of the NCSA project.



Scheme 1

Currently 5 natural-science museums do exist in Armenia (see the institutional affiliation of the museums in Scheme 1). They undertake concrete activities aimed at increasing public awareness on environmental issues and improvement of environmental education of younger generation. Actually, conducting environmental classes at museums is rather effective, since it is being combined with demonstration of materials. Furthermore, educational, cognitional and other events are being organized at natural science museums, such as exhibitions, excursions, classes, discussions, environmental games that encourage students' keen interest in existing environmental issues and promote deepening of knowledge gained at school on nature, flora and fauna.

The State Museum of Nature under RA Ministry of Nature Protection was dispossessed in 1991 and since then it has not been operational because of the lack of minimal housing conditions. The director and the staff did their best to conserve the exposition, thus, approximately 2000 sample items have been eliminated. At present the museum possesses 5.600 exhibits.

The museum was amongst eight museums in the former USSR possessing similar collections and the unique one in Transcaucasus and was considered as one of the main centres of environmental education in Armenia. The museum has been a hosting place for young geologists' "Obsidian", bird-lovers' "Krunk", dog-lovers' "Aralez", cat-lovers' "Vana Katu", aquarium-fans' "Sevan" and cactus-lovers' amatory clubs. Thanks to these clubs the museum has implemented various measures aimed at environmental education and awareness provision. Moreover, the museum has initiated and implemented city, national and all-union exhibitions, competitions, trips, etc. Special tours have been organized for young geologists' club of the museum to 33 cities of former USSR, as well as Hungary, Cuba and Finland*.

The museum has also hosted the "School of Nature" Club. It was open to membership for any school student. A number of environmental reports were conducted for the students, as well as the museum used to celebrate the Bird and Animal Protection Days**. The museum served as an educational basis also for students of higher educational establishments. The students of natural-science departments of universities used to have effective internships at the museum. During the previous years the museum failed to implement environmental education and awareness raising activities and projects due to lack relevant housing conditions and exhibition facilities.

The Yerevan planetarium was a branch of the museum and was closed in 1990s. The planetarium equipment was carelessly damaged. Whereas, the planetarium was a centre for environmental education and its rehabilitation would be good basis for ensuring progress in environmental education. Due to the lack of housing conditions and in safety purposes the museum had to conserve the main exhibits and, thus, temporary exhibitions were disabled.

* All the documents on clubs and their activities are kept in museum archives.

** All the documents on "School of Nature" and planetarium are kept in museum archives.

The Gyumri branch of the museum exists since 1991. It is the only natural science museum in the Shirak Marz. In 2003 the museum has had 4000 visitors.

The current building (total 420m²) was provided to Museum of Nature in 2002. The building has been renovated and equipped thanks to financial support of a benefactor from Teheran, Levon Aharonyan. The renovation of the first exhibition hall is now completed and ready for demonstrations. It provides general information on the geography of Armenia: climate, flora and fauna, land resources etc. Reopening of the museum in autumn 2004 will enable them to turn back to old traditions and become one of the important centres for environmental education in the republic. However, the new building still does not provide room for temporary exhibitions, lectures, as well as full storage of the exhibition fund. The museum is not sufficiently technically equipped.

The Geological Museum under the Institute of Geology of RA National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was established in 1937. The housing conditions are severely deteriorated as any renovation has not been conducted since its establishment. Despite the fact that many museums were renovated under the Linsy foundation project, however, no any natural science museum was involved.

Both the director of the museum and the staff has professional education and they provide lectures and trainings based on the museum capacity.

The museum has a rich collection of exhibits on Armenian landscapes, archaeology, maps, minerals, fossil fauna and flora – approx. 12.000 samples. 360m² area of the museum is allotted for stand exhibitions; however, it needs to be renovated. The demonstration facilities, including the frames, stands, as well as auxiliary materials, including diagrams, photos, models etc have gone out of fashion. The building conditions of the museum do not meet the modern requirements: there is a lack for a relevant room for temporary exhibitions; only a single additional room for conducting lectures does exist; storages are too small. Organization of exhibitions outside the museum is hindered by the lack of relevant frames, stands for exhibits, as well as financial means. Approximately 4000 visitors annually attend the museum, of which 90% are schoolchildren and students.

Every year in the period May-July and September-August the museum holds lectures for students of Yerevan State University, State Pedagogical University, Armenian University of Architecture and

Construction, Tourism College on the geological structure of Armenian terrain, its entrails, minerals, natural disasters, its consequences, eco- and historical-cultural tourism development perspectives and other environmental issues of Armenia.

Courses for schoolchildren of five age groups are being organized by the “World Surrounding Us” educational program of the museum developed by the director of the museum, A. Grigoryan. 16-17 topics are envisaged for each age group in conformity to school curricula on natural science. Based on the project, it is also envisaged to publish a handbook in the near future.

Based on the capacities of the museum a project on establishing an environmental educational centre is being developed.

The Sevan Museum of Natural History under RA Ministry of Nature Protection was established in 1996. Both the director and the staff of the museum have professional background. The museum is provided professional support by the Sevan water-biological station scientists and lecturers of Biology Faculty of Yerevan State University. The museum possesses a rich collection on flora, fauna and history of Sevan water basin - approx. 2.800 samples. The museum has a regular exhibition on 175 m² area and has been capitally renovated in 2001 by the support of “Save the Children” Organization. The museum often holds temporary exhibitions on Sevan environmental problem solution. It also organizes exhibitions at Marz schools. In 2003 the museum organized an exhibition of young naturalists’ works on “Flora and Fauna of Lake Sevan” at # 4 and #7 Schools of Sevan.

The museum is classified as a “Museum-school”, where regularly environmental measures are being organized. Scientific sessions on environmental issues are also being held in the museum.

In 2003 the museum organized a session devoted to the problems of wetland flora and fauna.

The Museum of Zoology under RA NAS Zoology Institute was established in 1970. Both the director and the staff of the museum have professional background.

360 m² of the museum area is allotted for regular exhibitions. Close to this exhibition hall there is a room for conducting lectures and organizing temporary exhibitions. The museum has approximately 2.500 exhibits representing the fauna of Armenia and about 7.000 samples of scientific collection of the Institute. Since 2003 the exhibition on

“Birds of Armenia in photos” of the head of the museum (M.Adamyan) has been on demonstration. The museum implements education and cognitive measures both for students and general public aimed at environmental education and awareness. Since 2003 the museum jointly with the “Bird-lovers’ Centre” NGO has been implementing the “Environmental Education on the example of bird study and conservation” grant programme awarded by the REC CAUCASUS and SDS international organizations. The museum organizes discussions, film watching and lectures, as well as photo exhibitions and children’s art-craft on environmental topics for different student age groups and their parents. The museum has set up bird-lovers’ clubs also in Kajaran and Lernadzore schools. Many bird watching trips have been organized to different regions of Armenia. Since 2000 the museum has been celebrating the Day of Bird Protection on March 17. On the basis of the Museum of Zoology, a project on establishing environmental educational centre is being developed.

Hence, all of the five natural science museums have specialists with relevant background, professional experience and skills to provide public awareness on three environmental global conventions. However, they are rather passively involved in public awareness campaign projects undertaken by state or private organizations on environmental convention provisions.

Due to the lack of modern technologies - computers, internet etc, four of the five natural science museums have appeared in a situation of information vacuum. In the past the museums used to receive methodical, scientific literature and journals from Moscow, however, at present the museum is deprived even from this opportunity because of the lack of financial means.

In contrast to natural science museums, the capacities of non-natural science museums are not used for addressing environmental issues and supporting environmental education provision, whereas, museums of all types and profiles can significantly contribute increasing public awareness on environmental education and ecological culture, as well as environmental issues in general.

An interview has been conducted with the representatives of both natural science and other museums. Museum involvement according to administrative regions, the names of museums and the number of visitors are briefed in Table 1.

Table1. Names of museums in the sample and approximate number of visits made to the museums in 2003.

N	Name of Museums	Number of Visitors
1	National Gallery of Armenia	-
2	Museum of History of Armenia	-
3	Museum of Literature and Art	200
4	Yervand Kochar's Museum	190
5	Eghishe Charents's Home-Museum	800
6	Museum of Middle East	200
7	D. Demirchyan's Home-Museum	40
8	Zvartnots Historical- Architectural Museum	600
9	Metsamor Historical- Architectural Museum	400
10	Museum of Nature of Gladzor University	360
11	A. Bakunts's Home- Museum	190
12	H. Shiraz's Home-Museum	100
13	A. Tigranyan's Home-Museum	-
14	Reserve Museum of Dilijan National Architecture	260
15	A. Isahakyan's Home-Museum /Gyumri/	110
16	Gyumri Museum of National Architecture and Household	300
17	S. Merkurov's Home- Museum	300
18	Kumayri Reserve-Museum	-
19	Jermuk Gallery	100
20	Earth-scientific Museum of Lori	150
21	Grigor Ghapantsyan's Home-Museum	30
22	Perch Proshyan's Home-Museum	37
23	Hrazdan Gallery	190
24	Historical - Earth-scientific Museum of Hrazdan	190
25	Museum of Russian Culture	100
26	Gyumri "Stil" Gallery	100
27	Karen Demirchyan' Museum	-
28	Vanadzor Gallery	200
29	History Museum of Yerevan	120
30	"Erebuni" Museum of Yerevan Foundation	600
31	H. Tumanyan's Home-Museum in Dsegh	265
32	Museum of Ethnography of Armenia /Sardarapat /	2200
33	Sevan Nature History Museum	600
34	Geological Museum	350
35	Museum of Nature of Armenia	-
36	Museum of Nature of Armenia, Gyumri Branch	340
37	Museum of Nature of Armenia, Ghovtavan Branch	-
38.	Zoological Museum	150
	Totally	9382

The aim of the interview was to find out the level and sources of museum staff awareness on three global environmental conventions.

The respondents evaluate their awareness on the three global environmental conventions as follows; representatives from the 5 natural science museums (100%) provided positive responses and the source of information was mentioned the professional literature (100% of respondents). 9.3% of respondents from 32 non-natural science museums verified their awareness on the conventions and as a source of information were mentioned convention publications. The 43.7% stated their little knowledge on the conventions, received the information from mass media, and the other 43.7% of respondents was completely unaware of the conventions.

Thus, it can be inferred that the awareness of non profile museum staff on the three environmental conventions is insufficient. None of the respondents has noted any NGO as a source of information on the conventions.

According to the responses provided by 90.7% of respondents, the resources of non-natural science museums can be used for provision of environmental education and public awareness increase. The 81.25% of the respondents stated that it is possible to organize exhibitions in their museums on conservation and wise use of environment. However, according to the responses, only 7 museums have organized environmentally sound exhibitions and events in recent years. For example, the collection of Armenian landscapes or the nature in the works of Armenian writers and composers (the collections of H. Tumanyan Home Museum, Aksel Bakunts Home-Museum, H. Shiraz Museum) of the National Gallery, expressions of worship towards nature in national culture (museum collections of ethnography, history and earth science).

Considering the fact that natural science museums play an important role in enriching environmental knowledge, the non-natural science museums can significantly contribute to the formation of moral attitude and development of environmental culture. The cooperation ways between museums and educational establishments is presented in Fig. 1.

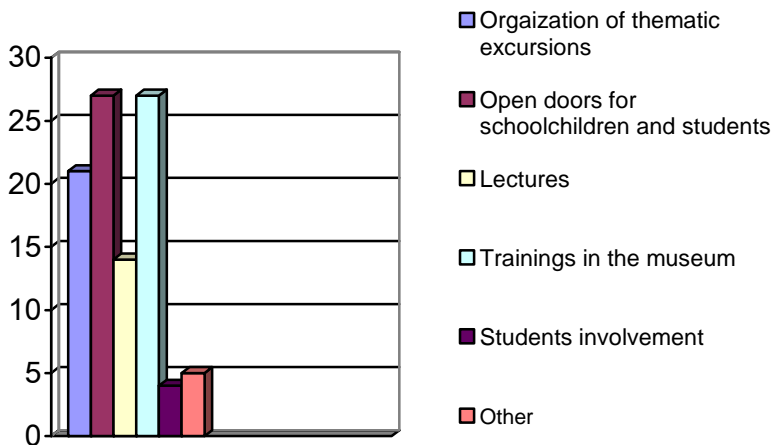


Fig.1 . Cooperation between museums and educational establishments.

Generally, the collaboration between museums and educational establishments is on sufficient level. However, a matter of concern is that still no cooperation is established with preschools. It is worth mentioning that despite the existing constraints, the environmental education providing activities for schoolchildren can still be evaluated as satisfactory, whereas, the same cannot be said for the general public. It is also obvious that the cooperation with environmental NGOs is still remaining very weak (See Fig. 1).

The conducted interview was also aimed at finding out the level of collaboration between environmental NGOs and museums. In fact, only two of the non natural science museums in the sample turned out to be cooperating with environmental NGOs (See Fig. 2)

From the mentioned natural science museums the Museum of Zoology is collaborating with “Bird-lovers’ Centre”, “Tapan”, “Burg”, “Association for Sustainable Human Development” and “Coalition for Green Areas Protection in Yerevan” NGOs. The Sevan natural history museum provided in its responses that it has participated in “Good will, good work and outcome” environmental project (See Fig. 3).

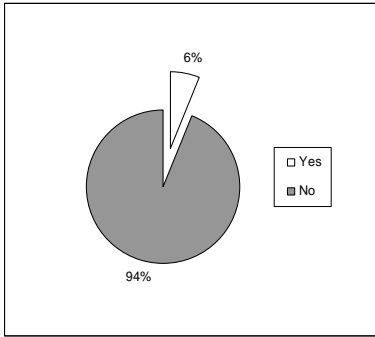


Fig. 2 Number of NGOs collaborating with non natural-science museums

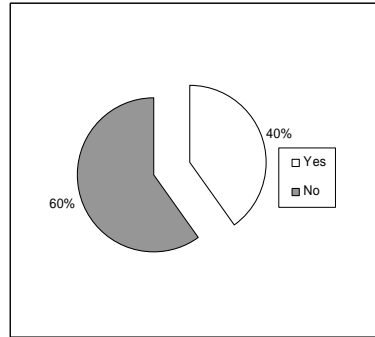


Fig. 3 Number of NGOs collaborating with natural science museums

Recommendations

1. Establish environmental educational centres on the basis of natural science museums and equip the museums with modern technologies and literature.
2. Organize training for scientific and administrative staff of natural science museums on the following topics:
 - New interactive methods of teaching;
 - Computer and Internet courses;
 - Working skills with international organizations, particularly, proficiency in grant projects developing.
3. Suggest the Ministry of Education and Science to incorporate organization of lessons at the natural science museums into academic programmes.
4. Promote the cooperation between environmental NGOs and museums.
5. Apply collections, building and human resources of non-natural science museums for increasing public awareness on environmental issues.
6. Organize information seminars for the museum staff on the issues of environmental conventions ratified by Armenia.
7. Based on collections of natural science museums establish a virtual museum of nature and entrails of Armenia, which will be available also for marz schools, connected to the internet.



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