



Ararat InfoTun Opens Its Doors to Community Residents

The Communities Finance Officers Association and partners marked the official opening of the new InfoTun (*Information House*) in Ararat on June 8. The Ararat InfoTun was established within the framework of the Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Representatives of the local government, civil society, media, USAID Armenia and implementing partners attended the opening ceremony.



Since 2011, USAID has supported the establishment of InfoTuns to boost media literacy and the use of new media in various corners of Armenia. The Ararat InfoTun is the seventh center of the InfoTun network after Vanadzor, Gyumri, Martuni, Armavir, Goris and Ijevan. Run by young activists, InfoTuns serve as information sharing hubs that engage in local community life. They organize activities ranging from media literacy trainings to film screenings and “flash mobs” that raise public awareness on issues of local importance. InfoTuns also initiate public discussions on local governance, human rights, youth, social policy, and public accountability at the local and national levels.

During the opening event, Naira Arakelyan, head of the Armavir Development Center, shared her experience of running the Armavir InfoTun for nearly five years. “The InfoTun is a place



where young people are given the opportunity to develop their skills; where they can invest their energy in their local communities to promote citizen participation in the reform process. This investment allows our youth to feel and act as initiators of change,” she said.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, three USAID-funded programs – CELoG, Media for Informed Civic Engagement, and the CSO Development Program – presented their project activities and avenues of collaboration with the InfoTun network. Representatives of the newly opened InfoTun also shared current community issues and near-term priorities.

The five-year Civic Engagement in Local Governance (CELoG) program works to increase civic engagement in decentralization and local self-government reform. It provides citizens with reliable information and strengthens civil society’s capacity to promote effective, accountable and participatory local governance. CELoG is implemented by a consortium of local organizations, led by the Communities Finance Officers Association (CFOA) in cooperation with the Information Systems Development and Training Center (ISTDC), the Yerevan Press Club (YPC), the Asparez Journalists’ Club (AJC), Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF), and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers-Armenia (CRRC). The program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).