

**COURT ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT IN
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

FINAL ACTIVITY REPORT

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This Report summarizes the major activities undertaken within the framework of OSI/IPF Armenian Court Administration and Management project during the period of September 2005 – April 2006.

This project period has been accompanied with the adoption of a New Constitution of the Republic of Armenia in November 2005. The New Constitution provided grounds for an independent judiciary which had favorable implications for my project, as a whole. It should be noted that donor community, particularly the OSCE and the Council of Europe had exercised pressure on the provisions related to the judicial branch and justice. The chapter on Judicial Power has undertaken substantial changes with respect to ensuring independence to the judiciary. The structure of the courts has also been changed. It is envisaged that the currently existing Economic Court will be abolished, and a new Court on Bankruptcy will be established. Moreover, the concept of Administrative Court is proposed and envisaged for establishment after the adoption of a separate Administrative Procedures Code. The German GTZ project is providing technical assistance in this regard.

The appointment of a new Chief Justice in summer 2005 has served towards initiation of wide reforms in the judiciary. A working group was established to initiate the legal drafting of a new judicial code and the judicial service legislation. Substantial research on international experience in judicial service regulation, guidance in the specific personnel policies, drafting separate chapter on Judicial Servant's Performance Appraisal has been contributed. Frequent meetings and consultations with the relevant specialists at courts have been held.

Professional Capacity-Building

In the beginning of April, I have attended the OSI/CEU Curriculum Resource Center (CRC) session, the objective of which is to provide a one-week training to university faculty members on teaching methodologies and techniques/standards in curriculum development. The session has focused on preparing academic and training courses on anti-corruption, both for university students and public officials.

During the month of April, I have also participated in the World Ethics Forum under the theme of Leadership, Ethics and Integrity in Public Life. The forum was held at Oxford University and was sponsored by various donors, including the World Bank and the International Institute for Public Ethics. Workshops and discussions on judicial and legal ethics, public sector reform strategies, strategies to fight against corruption, case studies on judicial reforms and the youth forum have contributed largely to the knowledge-base enhancement, sharing of experiences and becoming aware of factors that could further be examined in the Armenian context.

Further, I had arranged a study-visit to Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) in London. My request for a study-visit made in February, has received a positive feedback in March, which allowed me to combine the forum participation with the interviews at HMCS. I had a meeting with the Head of Innovation & Development, Customer Service Directorate, Malcolm Bennett. The HMCS running of courts and an overview on the work of HMICA has been presented. Particular areas of my interest for this visit, i.e. the accessibility and user-friendliness of the courts from the point of view of the public and victims - physical access, provision of information, training of officials to help public, leaflets and materials on the process, who gives advice on giving evidence, help desks, refreshments, etc. were discussed and benchmarks obtained. Upon recommendation, I also visited a Central London County Court to observe the customer service operation.

After the meeting, I continued communication with the HMCS and until now have been receiving useful materials from the Directorate, which included the Customer Service Strategy for 2005-2009, the public survey results on HMCS customer service standards, annual survey report of court users, etc.

At the end of April, I attended the IPF-organized Advocacy Training-Seminar for developing effective advocacy strategies for policy actions. The event was held in Budapest and provided opportunity to meet with the incoming fellows, discuss projects. The Democratic Governance working groups members had debriefs on past and ongoing activities with the group advisor; reviewed and discussed the specific project deliverables; discussed the subsequent advocacy plans – both for individual and group actions (in-country workshops or seminars to disseminate the project findings of the working group members, 12th IACC in November 2006 in Guatemala, World Ethics Forum in February 2007 in Canada).

Project Implementation and Outputs

- As described in detail in the progress report for September-December, I conducted a court user survey to measure the degree of public satisfaction with the courts. The survey was conducted in selected courts of various jurisdictions. The questionnaire primarily looked at the ease of accessibility and performance of courts. Survey findings were analyzed and incorporated into the research paper.

- The draft policy paper has been revisited with the group advisor during the Advocacy Training held at the end of April in Budapest. The feedback from the advisor regarding the style of writing, structure of the paper and other specifics for a policy paper (as opposed to a research paper) has been incorporated in May. The final draft has been sent to the advisor for final commentary and was uploaded on the website.

The Policy Paper, originally written in English, will be translated in June and published in the native language for dissemination.

- The empirical research paper has been prepared and is currently being finalized after the meeting with the group advisor during the Advocacy Training. The group members had a thorough examination on the structure and content of research papers. Peculiar features of an applied research paper were discussed in comparison with policy paper.

- As planned, a user-friendly Court Guide has been developed in native language. This guide has focused on the examination of civil case procedures only. The first draft of the guide was provided to a practicing lawyer for review, assessment and comments. Based on the feedback obtained, the structure and content are currently in the process of revision and finalization. The booklet will be published only in Armenian language during the month of June and will be disseminated to all stakeholders (as identified in the project proposal).

- All project deliverables (in English and/or Armenian) will be made available on the IPF website.