



Peace Bridges



Newsletter of Peace Education
Centers (issue #10, 2007)





Dear reader, November 2007 marked 10th anniversary of "Women for Development" NGO. Last year we were planning to entirely dedicate 10th issue of "Peace Bridges" newsletter to the history of establishment of the organization, its activities and success.

Unfortunately, life enforced us to change the plans...

This issue of "Peace Bridges" newsletter is entirely dedicated to Armine Mikayelyan, Founding President of the NGO; her life and professional activities. Newsletter also presents thoughts about Armine as a person, friend and a colleague, written by her colleagues, close persons and friends.

We express our gratitude to all those who responded to the announcement of "Women for Development" NGO and participated in the publication of the newsletter.



Armine Mikayelyan /Kirakosyan/ was born on January 2nd, 1954 in Leninakan. From her parents - Arshaluys Kirakosyan and Seda Abrahamyan, she inherited her best qualities - hard work, high sense of responsibility, being goal-oriented, grace, dignity, great communication skills, ability to establish great relations and to maintain those.

After graduating with honors from Leninakan school #23, she dreamed of becoming a doctor, to continue her mother's and sister's profession. Despite her dream did not come true, she adored natural sciences so much, that she entered the Department of Physics and Mathematics of Leninakan State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan in 1973 and graduated it with honors in 1977.

During her student years she got married and had her first baby. She very often recalled that her son Arman was born only 2 days prior to state examinations for graduation, and that she was studying even during the days spent at hospital.

Her great desire to work and continue her studies, to reach more, took her to the Institute of Geophysics and Engineer Seismology in 1978. While continuing to work there, she started her post-graduate studies at the RA Academy of Sciences, Department of Geophysics and she finished her studies in 1985. During her post-graduate studies her daughter Liana was born.

Armine could amazingly manage to dedicate herself to the family, work and studies, and she never complained.

Her candidate thesis was ready in 1988, and by chance, on December 7th she was in Yerevan for taking care of the final preparations for the defense. She heard about the earthquake when she was at the university, and, like she told later, she did not realize how she came to Leninakan to see her building completely ruined together with the school which her son and daughter attended. She succeeded to reach her parent's house, which did not ruin and found all her relatives alive.

But horrors of the earthquake did not make her surrender. In March 1989 she defended her candidate thesis and received her degree of Candidate of Geophysical Sciences.

Then there was work again, scientific papers, conferences, becoming familiar with international organizations, new cooperation and establishing new contacts, developing joint projects, etc.

Career growth from Junior Scientific Worker to Leading Specialist, Chief Seismologist of the National Survey of Seismic Protection to the Head of Public Relations Department - one of the most important ones.



Armine succeeded to take the works implemented in the sphere of seismic protection in Armenia to international level - highly due to her her hard work, strenght and being goal oriented.

Starting from 1997 she became the leader of "Women for Development" NGO, which was established by her, and combined public activities with her scientific work until 2004.

The results of her dedication to work were not long-awaited. Both the organization, and its leader very quickly gained international recognition. Armine Mikayelyan's experience became highly valued by international community, especially her knowledge and skills in the sphere of natural disaster risk reduction. As the result, she became a UN expert and was invited to participate in a number of discussions and conferences on disaster prevention and risk reduction:

- Istanbul, Turkey, 2001, "Environmental Management and Natural Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender Perspectives" (working group meeting)
- Honolulu, Hawaii, 2004, "Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction" (International Conference)
- Kobe, Japan, 2005, "Disaster Prevention" (UN International Conference)



Starting from 2002, Armine dedicated her efforts and skills to the implementation of an educational strategy of peace and conflict resolution education in schools. It was an innovation in terms of both training materials, and training of specialists.

There was a need to learn and to train others. The gap was filled by participation in different international training courses, summer schools and conferences:

- Brattleboro, Vermont, USA, 2002, summer school on "Peace Building and Conflict Transformation"
- Soethberg, The Netherlands, 2003, "Conflict Resolution in Schools, Learning to Live Together", International Conference
- 2004-2006, UNESCO/EURED "Human Rights and Peace Education in Europe" two-year teachers training course



- New York, USA, 2005, "From Reaction to Prevention; Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace" UN International Conference

Afterwards and during the mentioned period, there was a number of paper presentations at conferences, sharing achieved results with international colleagues, unlimited pride for success of her pupils and Armenians...

There are people, who carry out any kind of small or big tasks with the same spirit, sense of responsibility, love and dedication, who are able to share that love with their environment. Armine was one of them. She would do everything to be the first everywhere - both as a person, and as the President of the organization. Due to her activities, the organization became recognized in many countries of the world, together with her implemented projects and achievements.



"Women for Development" NGO

From the History of the Organization's Establishment



4-5 years passed after the disastrous earthquake of 1988. Those were very difficult years. It was psychologically very difficult to adjust to the new situation, to see people waiting for humanitarian aid everywhere, their eyes full of everyday problems, which seemed to be unresolvable. We had a job, and we weren't unemployed as a huge number of people, but that work was unsatisfactory for us in order to overcome the psychological difficulties. We needed to do something else, we wanted to "find ourselves", to use our potential and to support other women.



Finally, we had a convenient opportunity. It was April of 1996. We accidentally received information, that leaders of women's NGOs from Yerevan were going to visit Gyumri and that they wanted to meet Gyumri women and representatives of women's organizations. Jemma Hasratyan, President of the "Association of Women with University Education" was also present at the meeting. She presented her organization, which was established in 1995 and spoke about implemented activities and her willingness to establish a branch in Gyumri. She also suggested me and Armine Mikayelyan to become members of her organization. From that day Jemma Hasratyan became a teacher for us. Each meeting we had with her was a lesson for us: we were trying not to miss a single meeting, round table or training. We were literally trying to use this great opportunity and to learn, work and not to be afraid of the difficulties.



As Gyumri branch of the "Association of Women with University Education", we presented our first project to UNIFEM, which was entitled "Seismic Culture - a Look into the Future", which was targeted at training seismic protection skills to schoolchildren of elementary classes of 42 schools of Gyumri.



Remaining a member of the Association, in 1997 we established "Women for Development" NGO by recruiting several staff members with university education and similar views. Armine Mikayelyan became the President of the organization. We were working day and night in a small room, which was provided to us by Sergey Nazaretyan, Director of the National Survey for Seismic Protection.

Years passed, the organization had a great success and became known both in Armenia and abroad. Collaboration, implementation of joint projects, presenting organization's activities at different international conferences, trainings, experience sharing - this is only a short list of the direction of main activities, which were and are still being implemented by "Women for Development" NGO throughout past 10 years. Armine Mikayelyan had a great input in the activities of the organization and its international recognition. Due to her huge personal attraction, hard work, leadership characteristics, ability to establish relations and maintain those, we are continuing our activities in Armenia and abroad, and trying our best to represent Armenia on international level.

Gohar Markosyan
WFD NGO





Our Armine

One of the greatest said: "What you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God". Armine was one of those exceptional persons, who was generously gifted by God, and Armine was the person, who gifted the God with her great activities.

For her entire lifetime A. Mikayelyan strived to apply, enrich and use her natural talent. While studying both at school and at the institute, followed by her post-graduate studies, she was always very active and showed great academic results. After receiving a job offer from the Institute of Geophysics and Engineering Seismology of the Academy of Science of RA, she quickly requalified and became one of the specialists, who dedicated their research to studying scientific direction of earthquakes with tectonic breaks. The results of her research became the basis for her candidate thesis, which she successfully defended. But it was obvious that conducting scientific research in laboratory alone, or even together with her colleagues, was not her passion; what she really liked was communicating with wide layers of society and organizing mass activities. Her leadership skills in this sphere became obvious, and she was appointed the Head of Public Relations Department of the National Survey for Seismic Protection of RA. And then her activities, targeted at raising population's awareness on seismic culture and protection, began. This is a very important field which targets to reducing the number of disaster victims. It has been calculated that a person who received a training on effective behavior during earthquakes, is not only able to save his/her life, but also to help save others. It is clear that governmental assistance of a developing nation is not enough for undertaking such activities, and that in order to implement such ideas it is necessary to find other donors. A. Mikayelyan very quickly became familiar with the criteria for receiving funds from international donors, and many of her grant proposals received funding. The staff implemented huge and appreciated work under her guidance.

As the result, we had a large number of people trained on the skills of behavior during disasters, and, which is more important, we had a larger number of trained schoolchildren.

The results of the implemented projects were so impressive that several pupils trained by her received first prizes at different international competitions. Thus, in 1999 and 2000, works, which were expressing the results of her projects received prizes at the international photo and painting contest, announced by UN International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) Committee in Geneva. Gyumri schoolchildren had serious success and received diplomas at the international competition on reduction of earthquake losses, which took place in Tehran in 2005.



A. Mikayelyan's activities within international institutions and projects with the purpose of integration of Armenian state and public organizations are also worth mentioning.

Unfortunately, works of establishment and development of Gyumri museum, which, due to Armine's efforts, was included in the international network of earthquake museums remain unfinished. Due to A. Mikayelyan's hard work the voice of small Armenia was heard in many countries and international organizations.

Pain of Armine Mikayelyan's loss is huge, but what she has done throughout her short life as a leading specialist and organizer of activities in the sphere of spreading the ideas of seismic culture is difficult to value. She succeeded to complete her Human mission on the earth, thus gifting people and God.

*Sergey Nazaretyan, PhD
NSSP Director*

Armine Mikayelyan - a leader, a colleague, a person...



We were really shocked when we received the sad news about the sudden demise of Dr. Armine Mikayelyan. You have lost your president, advisor, wife, mother and we all have lost a great personality, expert and friend. For her family, friends, and all those who knew her well or enjoyed her expertise and dedicated work in the field of development, the tragic loss will certainly take a long time to be overcome. Especially for us, being in close working and personal relation with her over the last couple of years and having had the pleasure to profit from her experienced advice and outstanding personality, this

unexpected tragedy came as a real shock.

May we, along with all the friends in EED, express our sincerest deep-felt sympathy with those she left behind.

Caroline Kruckow

Head of Team for South-East-Europe/Caucasian Republics

Armine was a very understandable and professional partner easy and pleasantly to cooperate with. I appreciated her commitment to her work, her openness her capacities to make people understand the importance of non-violent human interaction. I feel so sorry, because I know she still had many plans and ideas she wanted to realize.

*Dr. Gerlind Melsbach
EED-Dialogue and Support
Service South Caucasus*



It is a big pain for us, we cannot understand how it happened. We all loved Armine and still see her wonderful smile, hear her voice.

We all will remember Armine, her dedication and hard work for peace, with love and respect.

Julia Kharashvili

IDP Women Association, Georgia

I met Armine Mikayelyan in 2000, when several NGOs were trying to form Peace Coalition. Throughout all the years of the coalition's activities, when we were closely cooperating with UNIFEM, I was always fond of her speeches. Armine was always concise, she had her own views and she would never hurt anyone. Many newly founded organizations are trying to enter the public organizations' field by opposing to the activities implemented in the past and claiming that everything starts with their establishment.



Armine was not that kind of a person and she never strengthened her positions by using others. Such kind of persons are very often described as "friends for difficult days". She would never deny any request for cooperation. Collaboration was a great value for her, and in this sphere she was very honest, and work was always the most important thing for her. She was always striving to present the activities of "Women for Development" - an organization established by her, to other organizations.

Two month prior to her tragic death I asked her to participate in our events organized in Aragatsotn and Kapan. As always, she was willing to participate, and she didn't let me know that she was ill... The news of her tragic death felt like a personal pain for me. I am sure that those who know Armine, will memorize this beautiful, kind and intelligent person for a very long time. Let's hope that person's work is truly eternal.

*Nora Hakobyan
President, Republican Council of Women*

It is difficult for me to write about her in the past tense.

For 29 years each morning I heard Armine Mikayelyan's nice response to my greeting (she used to come to work earlier than others)...

There are so many memories. But I want to be brief.
- Armine Mikayelyan was a lighthouse in my life, which keeps spreading light on the path of my life and directs me forward, towards something new, high and unreachable...

*Susanna Ghazaryan
Education Department Officer, WFD NGO*



I first met Armine in the Gyumri Branch of the National Service of Seismic Protection. We were implementing temporary works, kindly hosted by the Service. Armine and her staff were working very hard, just like bees. I immediately noticed Armine's leadership potential and features. She was demanding, and at the same time warm, transparent and honest, which was making her very understanding and close to people. She was extremely attentive and caring for her friends.

The office space hardly comprised 4 square meters, and it was quite impossible to move there freely. Nevertheless, Armine would always invite us for a cup of coffee and make these coffee-breaks memorable by her great sense of humour and kind words. Our relations became so close, that it seemed to me that we knew each other for a very long time.

Once, Armine requested me to create a logo for the organization, founded by her. I couldn't deny this request, as well as delay it. I think that I succeeded, because soon it started to appear on newsletters, business cards and service car.

A close and pleasant person, caring wife and mother, she was entirely dedicating herself to her life and work and was always creative...

*Aleksan Arzumanyan
Head of Department of Professional Readiness,
Gyumri Branch of Armenian
State Engineering University,
Assistant professor of Technical Sciences*

It is very difficult to speak about a person in the past tense. Memory is characterized by forgetting, however, interaction with good persons leaves deep traces in your soul and makes it warm.

Armine was truly a bright person, she loved life very much and she understood its meaning very well. She was aspiring to trust her as a person and to believe in her abilities. With her example of a scientist, civic activist, loving and caring wife and mother, she proved that in case a woman wants to, she is able to succeed in many spheres simultaneously.

Armine was able to spread her ideas among others, to create an environment of friendship and kindness around her, so that both the students and the pupils wanted to interact with her again and again and to learn to live without conflicts. By not saving both her time and energy, she hurried to live a meaningful life and was teaching others to do the same. Armine was not differentiating people by the level of their importance, their necessity and "simply others": she was working with everybody with love and appreciated the value of the knowledge.

A small staff of her colleagues, established by her, was working in a harmony, as one mechanism. Each goal, faced by the staff was always reachable, because its' members were working in an environment of mutual respect, understanding and assistance. She was not one of those leaders, who strive to manage everybody's work. She would discuss all the issues with her staff and not enforce her opinion to the others; every suggestion would gain appropriate attention. Armine created a kind atmosphere with her endless energy, working spirit and kindness.



*Nina Hovhannisyan
Head of the Department of Psychology
Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute
After M. Nalbandyan*



In the end of 90-ies there was a period in my lifetime, when I had the feeling that our town, which used to be sort of a cradle of intellectuals and full of great traditions, was losing its face step by step. Many clever people and scientists were leaving Gyumri, without seeing any chances for progress in their hometown.

And one day I came to school and found out that we had some guests, who wanted to meet my pupils and myself.

"Women for Development" NGO, which was implementing projects in our town, initiated a new one, entitled "Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools of Gyumri", and school #7 was also in the list of selected schools.

It was my first meeting with the project staff, and it was very impressive. Armine Mikayelyan was the President of the NGO and Project Director, and the one who gave spirit, mind and power to the project.

I was very happy, because Armine Mikayelyan and her staff were true professionals with great organizational skills.

There are people, who make our lives colorful and fulfill those. It is both easy and difficult to write about her. It is easy, because she was one of us. It was easy to communicate and to work with her. She was an extremely simple person, and being simple is a sign of greatness.

Pupils immediately felt Armine Ashotovna's caring and warm attitude. There were no "ignored" pupils for her. She would listen to everyone's opinion with love and would always give her positive feedback. And I would witness this and become surprised: her face was always kind and her eyes were always smiling.

Armine Mikayelyan - a scientist, public activist and a pedagogue, an honest person with high intellect, a professional leader and colleague - simply a Personality; without your smile there is always something huge missing in our life.

*Mari Soghomonyan
Teacher, School #7*

When some people pass away, it is painful not only for their relatives and friends, but also a huge loss for the society. Armine Mikayelyan was one of those people. During the hardest times for us her active personality was like a window to the world. Let your searching soul become a light.

*Grigor Harutyunyan
Principal, School # 20*

...Armine Mikayelyan always greeted her "bridges of peace" building pupils with a kind smile and warm words. Her heart was full of kindness and warmth. Her delicate soul was spreading a light of kindness. She would listen to everybody with unlimited patience, would teach to be peaceful, kind and to live without conflicts, not to argue, to be compliant, to respect human values and beliefs.

Armine Mikayelyan was an "apostle of peace". After each meeting with her, children were sharing their impressions about her with great enthusiasm. The kindness is what will save the world, and, as in the end of fairy tales, kindness will always defeat the cruelty.

Let your road to eternity be covered with white roses...

You are worth an eternal bright memory; you are an eternal light...

Pedagogical staff of # 26 school



I don't want to believe that I am writing in memory of a person, who was symbolizing life herself.

I have known Armine Mikayelyan since she was a student. From this young age you could notice her leadership potential, desire to achieve as much as possible in science. She was a great mother, an honest person and a strong base of her family.

Three years ago Armine and members of "Women for Development" NGO visited

our school. It was a real discovery for us. The organization and its president initiated a great project - to teach peace, to avoid conflicts and resolve those. It was not work for Armine, which she was obliged to do; it was her lifestyle, her essence. By her nature, she was striving to reach out for both elder and children.

Life is cruel sometimes, but it has such beautiful and bright sparks as was Armine Mikayelyan's personality.

*Nune Barseghyan
Deputy Principal, School # 40*

My memories of Armine Mikayelyan as a colleague and a person are numerous and bright. A person, who left an eternal mark in my memories as someone very caring, understanding, dedicated to her work and a professional leader. She was able both to teach, and to accept anybody's suggestion, to understand and value her colleagues. By having high human values and characteristics, Armine Mikayelyan was able to share her colleagues' joy and sadness, to give hope and support.

With great pain I am writing these words, while I realize that she is no longer with us and that we will never again see her kind smile.

*Haykush Mkhoyan
Vice-Principal, Meghrashat village secondary school*

When you are surrounded with people full of warmth and kindness, honesty and beauty, you become inspired yourself and continue the path of your life with confidence.

Armine Mikayelyan was one of those persons - kind, caring and peaceful. She would do everything to help the ones who were next to her, to fulfill their lives with love and beauty, to help them overcome the difficulties, to give them strength for living in peace and harmony.

She adored children, and they adored her. For her they were the seeds, who would blossom and make the life more beautiful, full of dreams and ideals just like the ones of their teacher.

Years will pass, her peaceful dreams will come true and her memory will always remain in our hearts...

Pedagogical staff of #30 school

My beloved Armine, my great friend...

Each time during lessons being conducted at Peace Education Center, it seems to me that the door will open and you will come in as usually, with your beautiful smile, kind and nice. You will start to speak gently and will tell about the conflicts and their resolution, will hear all the questions patiently and answer to all of them.

We loved you very much and were waiting for each meeting impatiently. You were a discovery for us, a symbol of kindness, an ambassador of peace. You walked your path with grace and you left us silently on a nice Spring day.

Your star will always shine. We will continue your projects and we will keep your beautiful image in our hearts and memories forever - as a symbol of light, kindness, honesty and human dignity.

*Emma Mirzakhanyan
Vice-Principal, School #2*



I met Armine Mikayelyan in September 2005 during a meeting with the school #9 administration. I was very impressed with how enthusiastically Armine presented the activities and mission of "Women for Development" NGO to us. Afterwards, when Peace Education Center started to operate in our school, I became convinced that her enthusiasm and dedication to work were not something that is necessary for a leader; it was her internal character, her great desire to achieve her goals and the love towards children. Her simple and open character were inspiring

people to join her projects with pleasure, to become her colleagues and to share her views...

In our memories Armine will remain such - full of life, kind and dedicated to her work.

*Gagik Grigoryan
Vice-Principal, School #9*

I met Armine Mikayelyan in 1993. I was working as a Vice-Principal of Gyumri Secondary School #2, and Armine was working as a part-time teacher of Geography. She was organizing her classes with a high sense of responsibility, she loved the subject she taught and the world of children. In a short period of time she managed to provoke great love and interest of pupils towards Geography. I was present at her classes for many times and I was always very satisfied.

She was very kind and friendly. She was beloved by both her colleagues, and the pupils. But then our ways split. Armine chose another career path...

We met again in 2005. I requested to include Gyumri Secondary School #4 in the activities of the project, being implemented by the organization. She did not deny, and with her usual warmth, promised to support us. She was a business woman, and she always kept her promises.

She knew about her deadly illness, but she wouldn't surrender, she was a very strong person and was not losing her optimism. She loved life very much, she had numerous plans and ideas, which, unfortunately, she didn't have time to carry out.

*Zarik Hambarzumyan
Principal, Gyumri School #4*

It is very difficult to speak about a person who was a sister, a relative, a colleague and a leader throughout my entire lifetime. She always tried to help me with her clever advice during the hard times. Due to her unlimited working spirit she was sparkling both during her student years, and in her work. She was inspiring her colleagues to be responsible towards the work, as well as honest. It is difficult to accept, that she is gone. I still speak with her and feel her presence... Shining stars never disappear; they always sparkle in the sky and light up our ways.

*Nune Abrahamyan
WFD NGO member*



Armine Mikayelyan was the person, who changed everything in my life. She was my beloved teacher, who became my second mother after my parents' death. She was always next to me, helping in all possible ways by giving important advice and never rejecting my requests or wishes. She was extremely kind and dedicated, and there was a space for everybody in her heart. It was Armine Ashotovna, who inspired me to continue to live and struggle, to be able to face all the difficulties. I have learnt computer skills with her support and found a job.

Like a caring mother she had an intuition, and would always call me and visit at the times when I was sick. She was already ill, but when she found out that I got sick and had high temperature, she immediately came to see me...

I cannot imagine that Armine Ashotovna, such a kind and opti-

mistic person, is not with us anymore. Advice, given by her will be with me for my entire life. I love and adore her...

*Anna Hakobyan
Former Pupil*



*The first conference of Armenian "Peace Coalition"
Tsaghkadzor, Armenia 2003*

*Caucasus regional meeting
Likani, Georgia 2004*



Participation in trainings, conferences, forums ..



*"European Studies" Conference
Leuven, Belgium 2003*

*First UNESCO/EURED In -Service teacher training
Course "Human Rights and Peace education in
Europe"
Brixen, Italy 2006*



*"Gender Equality and Disaster Risk
Reduction" international conference
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 2004*



*The 46 the Session United Nation Commission on the Status of Women
New York, USA 2002*



*"Circles of light" organization
Honolulu, Hawaii, 2004*



*Strengthening Policy and Practice workshop,
Practical Strategies for Agencies working in Areas of
Tension and Conflict. Responding to Conflict
Birmingham, UK 2003*



*Caucasian forum of Women Global
Fund grantees
Tbilisi, Georgia 2006*



*School for International Training Peacebuilding I Conflict
Transformation Across Cultures (CONTACT) Summer
Institute
Vermont USA, 2002*



Schlaining, Austria 2006

The First UNESCO/EURED In -Service teacher training two-year course "Human Rights and Peace Education in Europe" was a real discovery for the organization. The training which consisted of five separate topics/seminars, was held in Spain, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Austria during the period of 2004-2006. 34 teachers, trainers and representatives of various NGOs of European 15 countries and United States participated in it. During these two years warm relations were established among the participants of the training course.

They formed a real "European family".

Armine Mikayelyan's demise shocked everybody. She was one of the most beloved members of that "family"...

Responces from European UNESCO/EURED "family"

Words cannot heal the pain of losing someone dear.

People come into our lives... and leave us with sweet memories!

May Armine's thought light up our heart forever.

With deepest sympathy I attach a little prayer:

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change...
courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Indeed, she was a very nice and loving person, a passionate peace worker, full of great and fruitful ideas, love and peace and I will always remember her smile and warm-heartedness.

I will keep her in loving memory!

Birgit Scheffel (Austria)

It is very sad to hear this, of a loss for the whole community of peace friends. Death is I believe worse for the ones remaining in this world and particularly for you in this case, that will have to cope with the incredible work you have been doing together in these years. I wish you that Armine's remembrance and example will give you the strength to continue your very valuable and necessary engagement and that in this you will be not left alone.

The Italian nonviolent philosopher Aldo Capitini speaks of the co-presence of living and dead ones, an idea that I seem to understand now better thinking of our friend, of her spirit that is with us, because there is no other place than with beings - on this stage or on the other side of it - that share the same values. And I humbly dare to add that this is less a beautiful image than a truth we will soon or later better understand, a day I hope not so far.

Let us keep in contact, we have now one more sacred reason for that.

Francesco Pistolato (Italy)

As we all know, Armine was a wonderful person. She was kind, willing to help and she knew a lot about Peace Education.

For this reason she has offered a lot not only to the small EURED course but also to her country. Her experience was great and she knew how to share it with other people, who are waiting to learn from her and follow her steps in order to improve the educational system in Armenia. We are always remember her as a great person, with whom we have spent some beautiful days in

Magdeburg, Gernike, Budapest, Brixen and Stadtschlaining.

We hope that in the future many people in Armenia will follow her and will give us examples of Peace Education. I wish to you and your country all the best for the future.

Nikoletta Mantziara (Greece)



Gernike, Spain 2004



Magdeburg, Germany 2005

I was very shocked to hear the news of Armine's death. I had no idea that she was even ill. You are right, I respected Armine very much and admired how she was able to do so much in the cause of peace. This is a great loss as she still had so much to give. I know that she inspired and encouraged many others in Armenia and internationally and I am grateful for this though very sad that she should be gone from us so soon.

Diane Hendrick, Ph.D. (Austria)

I feel very sad about this tragic passing away of such a nice person and such a skilled peace maker. Armine was always so active and committed to peace education, and so proud on what she and her group achieved, which was so very impressive.

I wish you much strength, and hope you can continue in her spirit.

Janne-Poort van Eeden (The Netherlands)

This message is really hard to believe. When I remember your invitation to drink a coffee in your room and Armine read in the coffeecups our future....

We laught so much about the things she saw in the coffee. We had so much fun...!

My deepest respect and love. Armine I'll never forget you. In my hart you'll live for ever with your laughing.

Gerda Rui Keller (Switzerland)

Armine in the family



One day of Armine Mikayelyan's life in the memories of her colleagues

17 February 2006

Milan, Italy, airport waiting hall...

Writing a one-day memory about someone, whom I have known for more than 27 years, who was both my close friend and colleague, with whom I have shared both joy and sadness, successes and difficulties is easy and difficult at the same time. It's difficult, because I have the impression that I am writing about myself, about one day of my life; it's easy because I have known her even better than myself; I knew for sure what her next step was going to be, what her next words would be... One of our friends was often joking: "You are like twins, because you are answering the same questions in the same way without such intention"...

Work was occupying the major part of her life. During one of the training courses, there was an assignment for the participants to draw the parts of their days, which were occupied by work, family and rest. Her entire drawing was work, and her family and rest were included in the work. Sometimes I would say, - that's it, we are not going to work at home anymore, and we are going to rest on Saturdays and Sundays, but still, we couldn't manage to do it, because even our telephone conversations were transforming from everyday issues to work-related ones.

We could work everywhere - during lunch, in the car during our field trips or getting home after the work, in the airplane... In short, if there was a problem or an issue of our concern (and those always existed), then nothing could prevent us from working. In these terms, joint trips for attending various training courses and conferences were very efficient. We were able to effectively use every minute, every piece of new information, meeting, visit to a partner organization, etc.

In February, 2006 we travelled together to Milan, Italy for participating in a training course on Human Rights and Peace Education in Europe. We were very proud, because the training course was designed for European teachers, and we had the opportunity to not only learn, but also represent our experience - experience of Armenia and Gyumri. Yerevan-Amsterdam flight was delayed for 2 hours, and we had to catch the next plane, which would fly to Milan only in 8 hours. We have reserved rooms at a local hotel so that we could stay there for the night and relax before taking a morning train to Brixen (6 hours by train), where the training course was going to take place. We reached Milan at 11 p.m. and found out that we were late, and our rooms were already occupied (an international festival was taking place in Milan those days, and it was impossible to find a vacant room at another hotel).

An employee of Milan Airport reception desk informed us that we had practically no chance to find a free room for that night, and that it would be more reasonable not to go to the city at all since it wasn't very safe.



She suggested us to spend the night at the airport waiting hall. It was very large; we chose two armchairs and made us comfortable there. We still had long 9 hours to wait until the sunrise. To be honest, I wasn't thinking about myself, but was concerned about Armine, because only 2 weeks prior to that day she had finished another chemotherapy treatment. But she wasn't complaining neither about difficulties, nor inconvenience. We have chatted for a while, but we were too tired since we had been traveling for 16 hours already. We were not able to sleep, but still decided to take some rest until the sunrise.

I started to search the terminal in quest for an open cafe with hope of drinking hot coffee or tea, but all the cafes were closed.

As always, while travelling I carried all the appliances for making coffee in my handbag, so I decided to make coffee by myself. Thus, we drank Armenian coffee at 3 A.M. in the airport of Milan. Naturally, no matter where we were, our talks started and ended with the issues of our organization, projects and discussion of new plans and ongoing activities.

Now, when I open my notebook, I always pay attention to the notes I have taken in the airport. Armine always used to say: "Write, so that we don't forget in the future what we decided to do". I have entitled that part "Notes in the Airport in Milan"... plans, proposals to the principals of different schools, to the Rector of Pedagogical Institute, issues related to the new project, organizational questions, etc.

This is how she was - fully dedicated to the work and the organization until the very last moment...

Gohar Markosyan

I miss the day, when the members of our organization came to congratulate us for moving to our new house. We had a truly great time. Everyone was very happy. My father kept joking. The next day Armine Mikayelyan said: "I don't recall the last time when I laughed so much".

The years spent with Armine Mikayelyan were extremely interesting and impressive for me. Every time I talked to her, I used to discover something new for me. I can say that I gained my life experience and new skills for communicating with people. I wish everyone could have an example of a leader like Armine. She was both a leader and a very close friend. I could talk to her about anything and I could approach her with any kind of a question. She would always give a very valuable and correct advice. It was never boring with her.

Work was her passion; I would like to have her potential for working hard, her dedication to work and to achieving the goals.

Lilit Arzumanyan
WFD NGO member

I have met Armine during a business trip to Almaty. It is true, that you can fully know a person, only after travelling with him/her. I have never met such a decent person with a great sense of humour before. The entire trip passed as a big celebration, when you are pleased with every moment and assured that the person with whom you are traveling with is also calm and happy, just like you are. Armine was characterized by all these qualities - active, clever, and at the same time so modest and kind, warm and gentle. A person while interacting with you could be sure that she would never betray you and would always rush to help.

After this historic trip, there were many other trips and meetings. And there was always the feeling that you met a very close person, your relative. I think that we were relatives, indeed; our souls were close to each other.

To my opinion, everyone would enjoy being Armine's "relative" or a soulmate, because such bright persons are rare in our reality. We should be proud of such persons. And I am proud of the fact, that I have known Armine.

*Jina Sargizova
member of "NGO Center" CSDO
project manager, Yerevan*

Many years ago, in 2001, "Heifer" organization was implementing its first training series in Armenia, which were also attended by Armine - a nice woman from Gyumri, who was leading a women's NGO. The topic of the training - gender, was both very interesting and important for us. The methodology of the training was very contemporary, interactive role games were dominating which made the participants very close to each other. Armine was very special because of her sense of humour, and it was very natural for someone born and raised in Gyumri. Family role plays initiated by her were very bright and included a lot of artisticism, great pronunciation and rhetorics, specific for the citizens of Gyumri. She would fully dedicate herself to the role to make the character as real as possible...

We are also recalling our evening walks on the sand beach of Lake Sevan, when despite the cold weather, Armine would swim in the blue lake and then share her thoughts on the future of our country and peace.

Now, when she is no longer with us, all this is memorized with sadness and surprise at how calmly she would make her judgements by clearly expressing her attitude towards the questions of every-

body's concern; she would never overestimate her competencies, but at the same time she would always rely on herself.

Our last memories of her are related to several days, spent by us in Gyumri two years ago. As always, Armine was very organized, but at the same time very humanistic...

Beloved Armine will always remain such in our memories...



*Anahit and Knarine Ghazanchyan
Heifer Caucasus Region Program*



I cannot make great work; I can only do small one with big love.

Mother Thereza

It was cold and dark on that day. Cold wind was blowing, and it was raining. We were implementing a project at School #4 of Sevan town, and on that day fundraising action was going to take place for the first time. All the preparatory works have been completed: the community was informed, invitations were distributed and the cultural program was scheduled.

And we were waiting... Waiting for the invited guests and organizations...

When we approached the school, we noticed a car with "Women for Development" NGO logo. They came. They came, despite the bad weather conditions and difficult and tiring road trip. As always, Armine approached us with smile and warmth. And with her openness and willingness she started to walk around the school and become familiar with the implemented activities. She started to take notes, to ask questions and at the same time managed to share her own experience with myself and the team of Sevan School #4.

Fundraising action began. Participation of the representatives of Gyumri was a great lesson for the community members. They were not lazy, and came from a different city to help their school. The example of Armine Mikayelyan and her team was a reminder for everyone that you should never ask for whom the bell rings. It rings for everybody. You must have an ability to place the other's pain higher than yours in order to be able to hurry to assist the one who needs that most at that moment.

Today computer center of Sevan School #4 attracts many people. Armine Mikayelyan's organization has its small input in it. There are pictures on the wall of the community resource center. Armine Mikayelyan is smiling from one of them. This is how she remained in everybody's memory...

Anaida Alakhverdyan

"Education for Sustainable Development" Foundation

There are some people who always spread kindness in their environment. Armine Mikayelyan was one of them. I have known her for a long time; first as a representative of an NGO, and later as a member of Armenian Peace Coalition. Together with Armine I took part in numerous events both in Armenia and abroad. Her behaviour and clever speech were always inspiring for a huge respect towards her person. She was very active, always full of different ideas, she was the author of many new initiatives, a simple and caring friend who is always next to you when you need her support.

During one of our joint trips to a seminar, which was taking place in Tbilisi, me and Armine shared the hotel room. In the evening I suddenly had a problem with my heart. Since it was for the first time in my life, I got very scared and asked Armine to call first medical aid. At the moment, when Armine realized that I needed her support, she surrounded me with such care, that I forgot about my fear and calmly waited until the doctors would arrive. She sat next to me until they came, and then, after their departure, until she was sure that there was no more danger. I highly appreciate her support and express my gratitude to her family.

Rusanna Hakobyan
“Anna” social-psychological centre NGO



There are different formulas for success. Armine had the talent of full dedication to her work, which, to my opinion, is one of the best guarantees for success.

While working, I had many opportunities to meet Armine Mikayelyan, but I had the chance to get acquainted with her more closely back in 2005, when we were taking part in a five-day seminar in Tsakhkadzor. Before that, she was an ideal of a woman-leader for me - a strong personality, who was carrying the burden of the activities of her

organization, who never stopped on her achievements and always strived for better results, who was always full of new ideas and was seeking for the opportunities to realize these goals.

However, the mentioned meeting fully revealed Armine Mikayelyan as a person. I realized that the key of her success was warm attitude towards her environment, particularly, towards the members of her organization. I noticed a small digital camera in her hands, and I was curious about its parameters.

- I don't know - was the answer, - I rarely use this. It is mainly used by my girls.

Then, with a smile on her face, she explained:

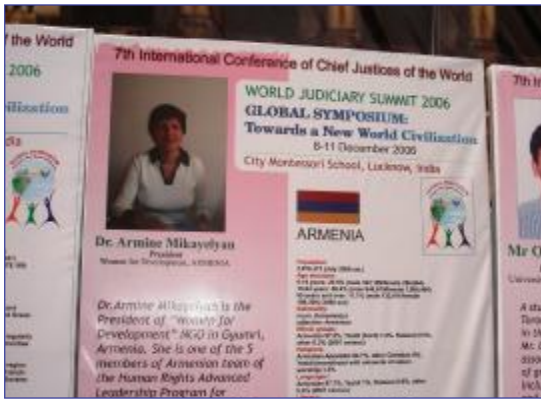
- I mean, by our office workers.

This small incident made me realize that she treated her colleagues as her close friends. I also realized this in 2006, when we took part in the external evaluation of the activities of "Women for Development" NGO. Organization's office was like a small family house, where each member had her responsibilities, which were directed towards achieving a common goal.

Armine would often repeat: "This organization is my child". And she would do her best to "raise" this child in a warm, family environment. Today the organization is successfully continuing its activities, and by seeing that, we can state that she succeeded to create that atmosphere of kindness.

Margarita Tadevosyan
Member of external evaluation of WFD NGO, Yerevan

The last summit...



**“Towards a New World Civilization”
international summit
Lucknow, India 08-11 December, 2006**



The opening ceremony of the summit



**The presentation of the participation certificate
of the summit to the WFD staff**



“Great Desire is the only Formula for Achieving Success”

Armine Mikayelyan's last interview to Gyumri "GALA" TV station's program "Good Morning" (with partial edits).

January 12, 2007



- It has been only several days since we entered 2007. I would like to know how you celebrated the New Year.

- I celebrated it as usual, just like everybody else. And, like all women of Gyumri, I was also busy with New Year preparations. I have not visited my friends and relatives for 4 or 5 years already, because I don't have the habit of going from one house to another. But this year I made another decision and I have visited quite many people. And January 2nd is my birthday, and, as always, my relatives and friends visited me. Despite New Year celebrations are quite tiring, I think that there is a rationale in this tradition, because it "enforces" you to see your relatives and forget about everyday problems.

- How did you come up to the decision of establishing an NGO?

- After Spitak earthquake we (together with Gohar Markosyan - Vice-President of our NGO) were undergoing a huge pain while watching suffering and crying women, especially the ones with higher education, who would only wait for assistance and did not want

to do anything. We didn't want to see that, and we decided to establish an organization, which would help to utilize women's intellectual potential with the purpose of implementing development programs in Shirak region. We wanted to assist women so that they would be able to do something instead of relying on aid, or waiting for someone to resolve their problems. And we established an organization, which first of all meant to assist women and children.

- By taking into consideration that women are the core of the families?

- Of course, women are the core of the families. As much as we love and adore our husbands, after all woman remains the core of the family. And I think that there should be caring and assisting women next to strong men.

- To your opinion, what are the specific features of an Armenian woman; which ones do you value and appreciate most?

- For me, an Armenian woman has always been strong, striving, hardworking and clever. Clever not only in the sense of science, but also in everyday life. We are not saying that a woman must be a leader and rule her family. No, a woman must be next to her husband and help him with her abovementioned characteristics. A woman is equally strong and weak by her nature, isn't she? It is very pleasant when husband supports his wife and is always next to her. It does not at all distract her from preparing meals, getting laundry done and taking care of the children, because very often there is such an opinion that an employed woman does not have time for taking care of her household responsibilities and is doing nothing. It is not true.

- You - Armine Mikayelyan, are an example of such woman

- I think, yes. And not only myself, but also our NGO staff members, whom I would consider heroes, because they have children and at the same time they manage to take care of their family members, to support their husbands and work a great deal for the sake of their town and their region; this is very important and valuable for me.

- I would like to ask you to speak about the activities of your organization, as well as your achievements.

- Our organization implements activities in the spheres of education, health care and human rights. Despite NGO is entitled "Women for Development", but during last 10 years we have been working equally for women, children, young people and men. Currently we are implementing a program consisting of two parts. The first one is the health care project, being implemented in 30 villages of Shirak region, which targets on raising awareness of rural women and men on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Simultaneously, we are conducting talks and trainings on family conflicts topics, which are related to the issues connected with family planning and reproductive health.

Second part is the educational project, in frames of which Peace Education centers were established in 9 schools of Gyumri and Meghrashat village school, where "Peace Education and Conflict Resolution" training course is being taught. Activities are also being implemented with youth. Peace Education center has been also established in Gyumri Branch of State Pedagogical Institute.

By reflecting on the achievements, I would like to emphasize the fact that we succeeded to provide rural women and men with knowledge, which will help them to take care of their health and to prevent family conflicts.

I also consider establishment of Peace Education centers as our achievement. It somehow helps the children to resolve the conflicts. Our goal is to integrate Peace Education as an



facultative subject into the school curriculum in the future. I would like to emphasize that I consider our work and cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of RA as our big success.

As each year, this year also our organization represented its activities and achievements at different international conferences, summits and forums. It is a big achievement, when the experience of Shirak region and Gyumri is being shared with international community. It is our main strategy - not only to learn someone else's experience, but also to share ours. Maybe I am too proud of my job, but I am really happy to realize that our organization represents Armenia on the highest level. I become very emotional when I hear the words "Armenia" and "Gyumri".

- I should probably congratulate you, because this year marks the 10th anniversary of your organization, and 10 years is a serious time-frame for implementing certain activities.

- Yes, we worked hard and completed many serious projects. I don't know what comes next, but we are planning to celebrate our 10th anniversary, which will serve as a sort of a report for our beneficiaries and the society. They will find out what we have accomplished throughout 10 years, what projects are being currently implemented, and this will be the year when our new programs will be announced.

- We spoke about the role of women, and if we try to analyze your life it becomes clear that you have already achieved big successes. Is there a formula for your success?

- The first and the most important formula is to have a great desire. The second one is my husband's support, because I got married when I was a student and I am very thankful to my husband for his continuous support and for being next to me all the time. Having two children, and at the same time undertaking post-graduate studies was very difficult, but my husband was always next to me. Still, the most important formula is the great desire, because if it is missing, you will never succeed even with the help of your husband and parents.

- I wonder, do you have any free time for your hobbies?

- My hobby is something almost impossible, because I love swimming, but not in a pool - I love to swim in the sea or ocean. It is very strange, but that is my hobby, which is impossible in Gyumri. I also like to play chess and I have a sports rank, but, to tell you the truth, I don't have time for that. Even when I get some free time, I dedicate it to my work.

- Was there a time, when you dedicated it for professional sports?

- Yes, volleyball.

- You have quite a wide range of professional activities, and you mentioned that you visited New York, Austria and India in 2006. In fact, you also dedicate a lot of time to travel...

- And I hope that I will continue to do so...

- I would like to know which country or city impressed you most and what would you like to bring to Armenia from there?

- I asked this question to myself for many times, and it is interesting that Geneva always comes to my mind, despite there are many-many cities, which also impressed me. I would like to bring cleanness, people's nice attitude and smiles, and the calmness, which is specific for Geneva. Whenever you decide to go outside, you always feel safe and protected there.

- Is there an ideal of a woman for you?

- For me, my mother has always been an ideal

of a woman - truly Armenian woman, who was a doctor and she was beloved by everyone. My mother was one of those women, who, despite being very busy, managed to take care of her house, children and to dedicate time for her hobbies. I would like to have the most important character feature of my mother - love towards people and willingness to help them.

- I would like to finish our conversation on this nice topic, although I would love to continue interviewing you, because it is extremely interesting. Honestly speaking, I always keep thinking what to wish our guests, and in your case it is a bit difficult for me, because you are a very interesting person with much success achieved. I wish you and your organization future success, and I wish you to remain the way you are, and what is most important - to remain young.

- Thank you very much for your invitation and for interesting questions. I would also like to thank our team, without which it would be impossible to reach all our success. I wish good morning to everybody, and let everybody be healthy, happy and successful.



Beloved Armine, in our memories you remain always young, kind, happy and smiley. Be sure, that you took everyone's love and respect with you.

Eternal memory to you...



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