



Internal management and development of an organization is often considered boring and tedious. CSO DePo's aim is to change the attitude to it and demonstrate that it is fun, adventurous, creative and effective. CSOs often do not have means to work on their internal development and sustainability, but also they are used to paying less attention to it, not appreciating what they may consider 'bureaucratizing'. But those who become the beneficiaries of CSO DePo, have a very different story to tell.

Arevik Petrosyan and Ashkhen Babayan are two young women, who decided to join Spitak Helsinki Group (SHG) to organize their efforts of defending Human Rights in Spitak and nearby communities of Lori region. Various donors supported the organization which worked on protection of the rights of women and children. While working on various projects and fundraising for the organization's mission, the small team of young women did not have time and resources to think about strategic growth and internal development. Questions such as how the organization will grow during the upcoming five years, how to have stronger communication systems to increase impact of the CSO, how CSOs conduct effective advocacy and many others were in the agenda but there was no clarity on how to address them.

When CSO DePo offered to support the organizational growth of CSOs, SHG did not miss the chance. At the beginning of 2015 SHG came by the [www.hkdepo.am](http://www.hkdepo.am) portal and applied to take part in the CSO Management School. After the school, SHG evaluated its capacities using **the Capacity Enhancement Tool (CET)** – a unique methodology for CSO consultancy developed by CSO DePo in order to identify the needs and priorities of civil society organizations. Based on the results, SHG applied to “CSO Sustainability Strategy” funding opportunity, and received support to implement study visits to various CSOs across Armenia, to learn from their experiences and adapt best practices in the areas of organizational policies, procedures and communication systems.

The internal capacity building towards sustainability is a long journey, and the results become visible only after a few years of dedicated work. At the end of 2018, when concluding the DePo-funded project, SHG registered its evolution: it had enlarged the scope of its activities; had moved from one small-scale project to having five ongoing

projects. It had a larger office and four staff members in addition to Ashkhen and Arevik. The organization had managed to build a countrywide partners' network while conducting the study visits, launched its website [www.spitakhelsinki.org](http://www.spitakhelsinki.org), and plans to start a social enterprise. In three years it has developed significantly as compared to the previous six years of its existence, when its growth had been stagnant.



Staff members of Equal Rights, Equal opportunities (EREO) CSO for people with disabilities say that [www.hkdepo.am](http://www.hkdepo.am) is the most commonly used by them resource for information relevant for CSOs. EREO benefited from various capacity building activities of DePo, including consultancies, Management School and evaluation through the CET.

“Anush Aslanyan, the President of the NGO states that: We launched our organization to bring people with various forms of disabilities out of isolation and protect equal opportunities for them. We used to rely on charity support for small contributions, but we knew well that we needed a stronger organization to sustainably address the problems of people with disabilities. Therefore, learning how to improve institutionally, how to attract institutional donors and improve our communication and visibility – became key priorities for us.

They decided to request support for the most urgent need – communication and visibility. EREO had its social enterprise – EREO Style, which employs people with disabilities to ensure their economic inclusion and certain income. They needed to improve the promotion of their products. As part of the grant support EREO organized trainings on graphic design, video-photo shooting and editing. Also, the organization acquired necessary equipment in order to be able to have in-house capacity and provide communication and visibility services to others.

“You might think that the DePo grant was small support, but it gave the confidence to hire two more staff members, which was a considerable step forward, *says Anush*. Additionally, we pursued other strategic goals - launched a crowdfunding campaign and managed to acquire our own large office – an important contribution to our sustainability. Now, we have more services and better promotion of the products of our social enterprise, which gives us “wings” to fly farther and try reaching more people who need equal opportunities.

In Hrazdan, Marine Yegoryan and her team recently opened the doors of Child and Family

Development Charitable NGO. Marine built the organization all on her own: when going through various challenges of bringing-up her child with special needs, she understood that many parents who face similar issues needed to be better informed and supported.

She started gathering children with disabilities around her, organizing regular events and charity campaigns. Within a year, Marine applied to CSO DePo for support to establish an organization with all policies and procedures in place, to ensure the trust of donors and community. Shortly after the launch of the project, Marine acquired a team of five staff members and eight volunteers, developed a strategic development plan, communication strategy for the next three years and started to apply to various donors.

The foundation organized a charity marathon, raising awareness on the needs of children with disability among people in their community. The fundraised amount was the first “capital of trust”. Within a few months the CSO started to cooperate with local authorities, and received an office space for fifteen years.

In Goris EPF supported Sose CSO, which promotes women rights, gender equality and reproductive health. People and families in Syunik are strongly attached to national traditions, which at certain point might lead to heavy patriarchy and violation of basic rights of women – leading to domestic violence and discrimination. There is a need for an organization that empowers women and creates a balance in the communities, so that the traditions nurture the best values for the society rather than generate violence.

Liana Sahakyan established Sose with the mission to empower young women and girls. Sose had occasional projects, mostly implemented by the voluntary efforts of the team. When applying for a DePo sub-grant, Liana described the development path at the end of which the CSO will have its office space, three staff members, many volunteers, and, most importantly, support from three more donors. Now, the staff regularly participates in trainings to improve their skills and expand the operations. Success is clearly

demonstrated on the website **www.sose-ngo.am**, which was also created thanks to the DePo grant. The grant included support to developing branding and communication strategy.

The number of CSOs that benefited from the DePo resources exceeds 300. They received support in the forms of training,





coaching, consultations, capacity enhancement and/or grants. Twenty-one organizations who received funding also received EPF's and other CSO experts' support to meet their strategic development goals, understand the developmental niches, improve their management and learn to look further than their day-to-day operations.

One of the biggest gains of the DePo is that beneficiary CSOs were able to tune away from a short-term survival mode to thinking large-scale and planning strategic development, in order to be able to reach more people, address more problems with effective projects and services and make the country a better place for each and every one. These achievements are there to stay, i.e. they are sustainable, because DePo provided them, as the adage goes, 'not with the fish but with the fishing rode'.



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