

**CASE 1: ARMENIA**

# Caring for nature: adopting a plastics free lifestyle in Kapan



**GRANTEE**

Urban Foundation  
for Sustainable  
Development



**COUNTRY**

Armenia



**LOCATION**

Kapan, Syunik region



**SGP CONTRIBUTION**

US\$49,658



**IN-CASH CO-FINANCING**

US\$24,018



**IN-KIND CO-FINANCING**

US\$7,384



**START DATE**

July 2013



**END DATE**

June 2014

**PROJECT CONTEXT**

The management of plastic waste is an unsolved problem in Armenia as there is no state regulation for the sorting and recycling of waste. This problem is compounded by the fragmented administrative division system of Armenia, despite the small size of the country. There are over 900 communities, more than 90 percent of which have a population of less than 5,000 people. The budget revenue generated locally is often too small to support municipal waste management services. As a consequence, municipal waste management is not provided in the majority of Armenian communities. Only ten towns in Armenia have established infrastructure for waste separation. There are no facilities for recycling plastic waste into secondary raw materials and the waste frequently ends up in substandard dumpsites. This project supported by SGP and implemented by the Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development (UFSD) aimed to reduce plastic waste in Kapan by improving municipal waste management and enhancement of public awareness and education. This project aimed at addressing the waste problem in a more effective way through better organization and institutional assistance.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Plastics make up about 40 percent of the volume of general waste and create immense environmental, health and economic problems. Plastic is not separated, recycled or processed as the recycling process is often not lucrative. Additionally, the plastic waste that is dumped in landfills will start to smolder and emit POPs into the environment. The project worked to improve waste management practices by increasing public awareness through education, decreasing the amount of pollution in nature, and enhancing Kapan municipality's technical capacity to collect, sort, and sell separated PET waste.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Kapan municipality and local recycling companies regarding the disposal of plastic waste. To reduce reliance on plastics a production team was established to make reusable shopping bags to replace plastic bags. Training sessions, seminars, round-table discussions, distribution of reusable shopping bags among local shops and supermarkets, regular coverage of the project, and public service advertisements on local television stations, special school events, leaflets and posters raised awareness among stakeholders and beneficiaries in the community. Additionally, the Kapan municipality waste management service providers trained teachers who dedicated time during their regular classes to encourage school children to adopt a plastic free lifestyle.



PHOTO: SGP ARMENIA



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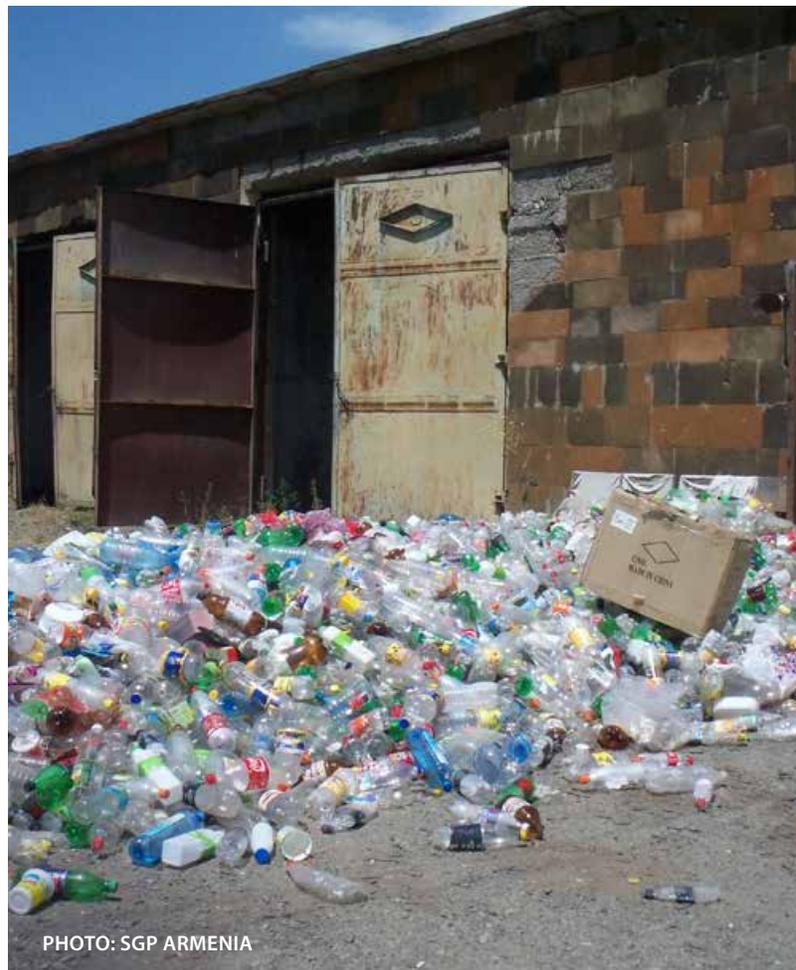


PHOTO: SGP ARMENIA

## RESULTS AND SCALING UP

The project established sorting of plastic bottles instead of throwing them in with general waste or disposing of them in nature. Ninety bins for plastic waste and forty-two bins for general waste were installed in Kapan, twelve spaces for placing waste bins were renovated, and a storage facility for collecting and pressing plastic bottles was renovated and equipped. The reusable shopping bags production team, comprised of 30 low income women who had sewing machines and the necessary skill to create reusable bags, proceeded with great enthusiasm and produced quality work. The reusable shopping bags were distributed among local shops and supermarkets, to raise awareness and enhance plastic free behavior patterns. While such efforts alone would not solve the problem of excessive harm made by plastic bags to the environment, the project helped promote the culture of reusable shopping bags in the community and greater awareness. The model is not complicated and replication should be feasible in most situations. Further success can be achieved with proper legislation in place and when the cycle of sorting, collecting, and recycling is complete.

The project has been scaled up. UFSD has started a new initiative funded by the European Union (Clean Alliance: Accessible Services for Goris and Sarnakunk Community Clusters). Within the framework of this project the Goris and Sarnakunk communities will establish storage for plastic waste, and obtain machines to press and bale plastic bottles for selling to recyclers. Eight Armenian communities (Gorhayk, Tseghuk, Sarnakunk, Spandarian, Karahunj, Verishen, Akner and Goris) will also install special bins for plastic collection. UFSD is also involved in an upcoming project – “Turning Environmental Challenges into Opportunities: Introducing Construction Materials from Plastic Waste” with the objective of creating opportunities in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions by introducing an innovative and affordable technology for production of construction materials from plastic waste.

## EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNT

The project demonstrated that close cooperation and mutual support between a local government and an NGO can yield results. The project also took into account the community's perceptions and applied confidence building measures to ensure successful implementation. The Kapan community initiated separation of the plastic waste from the general waste, while the city obtained the plastic collected from waste bins and provided a storage facility for pressing and storing plastic bottles. A study tour conducted to recycling companies in Yerevan resulted in signing of agreements with them, and became a start-up for further cooperation for collection and sale of PET waste resulting in further income for the community. Reusable shopping bags produced through a simple public-private partnership employing low-income women raised awareness about waste reduction and promoted a plastic free culture.

The project also found that better exposure and successful awareness raising can be achieved by involving the media and getting television coverage to reach more of the local

community residents. Additionally, SGP's support to the project managers on technical and administrative issues, consultancy, and regular monitoring of the implementation process facilitated ongoing activities in keeping with the context and helped achieve consistent progress.

In the course of implementation, the project faced a setback due to limited staffing and inclement weather, but this was solved through a no-cost extension granted for three months to allow the project to complete its planned activities. Another challenge faced by the project was the lack of supportive legislation and regulation. To address this UFSD developed legal recommendations about reduction of polyethylene shopping bags in the Republic of Armenia and presented it for consideration to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Agriculture and Environment and the Ministry of Nature Protection. While these have been positive steps, more significant changes will be required for the waste management legislation to address the problem comprehensively and make businesses reduce their plastic consumption.



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