

## **“Natural Disasters Youth Summit”(NDYS) International project**

We live in the country where natural disasters and cataclysms happen very often. That is why, the importance of participation in “Natural Disasters Youth Summit” project; <http://ndys.jearn.jp/eng.html> organized by Japanese Education and Research Network (jEARN, Japanese branch of iEARN organization) was stressed both by the students and their teachers. The goal of the project was to enhance awareness of natural disasters in families, schools and communities around the world. Through this project, students are expected to be NDYS Ambassadors who tell people about the importance of preparedness and share their knowledge of disaster management. During the Project students learnt past disasters and present states of disaster management in their communities, image problems when disasters occur, and think of measures for mitigation and preparedness. Specific measures for mitigation and preparedness are written by students on the map which is called community disaster safety map. The map of each school is joined in one Global Disaster Safety Map, through which students will acquire the knowledge and power to cope with unexpected disasters wherever they live: <http://ndys.jearn.jp/gsmap/top.htm>.

The project started 2 years ago. And each academic year a new group of students from more than 70 different countries join the International family to learn about causes and effects of Natural Disasters to be better prepared for tomorrow. Through PH representative Nunik Nahapetyan’s guidance and leadership, who has also been recognized as an international facilitator of the project, Armenian students had opportunities to join to the virtual classroom.

During 2004-2005 academic year, 8 schools from Lori and Shirak regions, which were mostly suffered from 1988 Earthquake in Armenia, took part in the international project, and after 6 months’ online discussions Armenian youth delegation summarized activities of Armenian group in Youth Summit in Hyogo, Japan. For more information visit the following web page: <http://www.ascp.am/en/news.html?l=en&set=all&id=262&type=1>

For this, 2005-2006 academic year 4 schools from Ararat and Vayots Dzor regions joined to the project to learn from collaboration. This approach was stressed in sum-up presentations organized by student-participants of the project for their respective communities. More than 80 teachers, 800 students and 550 community members participated in these informative events. Participants presented to their audiences in their communities the results of a several months’ intensive and productive work, the successes and challenges they faced during the project period. The presentations were in a format of mini- seminars, where the present audience got familiar with all types of disasters occurring all over the world and typical to Armenia, learnt about the causes, signs, prevention measures, overcoming of each type of the cataclysm.

“This project served as an informational and educational mean for all of us. During the months of the project implementation students got more information and knowledge about the natural disasters rather, than they would get in the one or two study years”, expressed her opinion Hasmik Margaryan, Regional Program Coordinator (RPC) of Vayots Dzor, who was responsible for project overview in the corresponding region.

Let’s have a retrospective look on how the NDYS project was carried out this year in 4 Armenian schools. Kanachut, Verin Dvin, Nor Kharberd Secondary schools from Ararat Region and Yeghegnadzor Secondary School #3 from Vayots Dzor region, Armenia, became a part of NDYS initiative in the fall, 2005. The schools worked in a unified manner, according to the action plans they created. The action plan determined several stages for the project to be carried out in order to fulfill project goals and objectives:

- ∞Preparatory phase (meetings, discussions, support from corresponding organizations and state bodies)
- ∞Choosing specific disaster types for further investigation
- ∞Material Gathering and Editing
- ∞Creating school Safety map
- ∞Creating Web Pages, Power Point Presentations, Booklets
- ∞Presenting their works and results to corresponding school community

After preliminary meetings and discussions, students in all participant schools used different informational sources: textbooks, encyclopedias and Internet to accomplish their. All participant groups graphed their school site-maps to be used in case of disasters; they created Web pages and booklets, summarizing the types and peculiarities of disasters, shaking the world and their particular region. The students tried to give a structured toolkit on how to behave in each case of cataclysm and how to overcome them. “As a result of this project, students became more informed and consequently, more prepared to Natural Disasters. In a country like Armenia, where these types of things often happen, this understanding is very important”, comments Fenya Yepremyan, Ararat RPC.

Students from Verin Dvin Secondary School, where students from national minorities study, in the preparatory phase of the program, visited the Emergency Management Administration in the region, where the Regional Head of the department conducted trainings for the student working group, making them aware about main types of cataclysm. Students were delivered handouts and printed materials on the topic, which were useful for further work.

Kanachut and Nor Kharberd Secondary Schools’ students initiated meetings with local Red Cross representatives, who visited the schools to deliver information about disasters and first aid actions. The thorough investigations made by the students are incorporated into meaningful web sites, and their experience, challenges and successes are summarized in a Power Point presentation to be presented to their school communities.

Another interesting approach was exercised by Yeghegnadzor Secondary School #3. After getting the project announcement, the working group of 8 students and 2 teachers, created a working plan, to guide them through project phase activities. The Yeghegnadzor branch of Red Cross assisted the students organizing a three-day workshop in the Internet Computer Center (ICC) of Yeghegnadzor Sec. School N3. During the workshop, students got information about and got acquainted with the prevention activities during the natural disasters, such as earthquake, tsunami, hail, volcano, landslide etc. At the end of the workshop, Red Cross representatives presented the participants with booklets and posters titled “Be ready to defend” and “Evacuation at school”.

Next phase was devoted to the creation of school safety map, which was presented to the judgment of school administrations. With the working groups’ suggestion, safety maps were attached to the walls of appropriate floors. Through false alarms several evacuations were implemented in each school to make sure that students were familiar with the safety map and know how to leave the building in case of emergency without panic, and learn about safe parts of the building in case evacuation is impossible.

In order to transfer the obtained systemized information to other students in other communities, the Armenia NDYS working groups created a web page and PPT presentation on the disasters under their study. These educational materials present unprecedented Armenian-based resources on natural disasters both in Armenia and all over the world. The web page can be found in the following URL: <http://projects.ascp.am/disasters/hm.htm>, and the PPT is available here: [http://projects.ascp.am/disasters/bnakan\\_axetner.ppt](http://projects.ascp.am/disasters/bnakan_axetner.ppt). “I hope the website will be useful for those

students who don't know or have few information about natural disasters. And in the case of any disaster they will be able to protect themselves and why not to provide first aid", mentioned the head of Education Department for Ararat region Anahit Hakobyan

During the project Japanese coordinators initiated several videoconferencings to discuss action plans (<http://ndys.jearn.jp/vc.html> ) and Armenian students communicated with students from other countries involved in the project, sharing their successes. On 1<sup>st</sup> of June Armenian working group summarized the project with the final presentation in Artashat Secondary School #4.

Detailed report of NDYS Armenian team activities is posted in Japanese Education and Research Network website: <http://ndys.jearn.jp/topics.html>

"The best way to prevent and survive a cataclysm is to thoroughly investigate their types, causes and signs", says the teacher of geography Tamara Manukyan. The project was a good opportunity to raise the awareness on the natural disasters in the students' circle, to empower them against Natural Disasters, promote global citizenship and sustainable lifestyles.