Community Impact Case Study FY21

Teach For Armenia: Building diverse leadership at all levels across Tavush Province

In Tavush, Teach For Armenia is an active force for collective leadership, encouraging growth and leadership development at various levels within the system, including within the regional government. Teach For Armenia is building up the Seroond Schools program, which aims to create an innovative school model while establishing a robust talent pipeline for future school leadership. The organization also facilitated Virtual Student Leadership Camps with students from various communities, equipping them to develop their own Community Impact Projects.

The Basics

Situated in the Northeast of Armenia, Tavush is known as a gateway to Armenia thanks to the main artery from Georgia passing through the region. Tavush is a rural region of many villages. The students who attend Tavush's 80 schools often imagine their futures outside of the region, with many moving to Yerevan or migrating abroad to find work. This contributes to a larger trend of depopulation of rural regions in Armenia. As students leave, schools in Tavush are being shut down or combined with others, leaving dying villages without the anchoring of the school as its main state institution.

Since launching in 2013, Teach For Armenia has placed Teacher-Leaders in nine of Armenia's ten regions – including Tavush – collectively reaching more than 15,000 students.

The Approach

In the region of Tavush, Teach For Armenia is working in close partnership with communities and the regional government to grow collective leadership throughout the region to reverse the trend of depopulation and diminishing aspirations among young people.

Teach For Armenia's approach is built on a foundation of close partnership with the regional government of Tavush. The organization is further contributing to the growth of collective leadership through a program in which fellows run community projects in their second year of teaching, a talent pipeline program to place alumni ambassadors within regional government roles to grow leadership throughout the system, and Seroond Schools, an initiative to establish a proof point school within the region that is built on principles of deep student, parent, and community partnership.

The Choices

Teach For Armenia's commitment to collective leadership and catalyzing impact-driven leadership has led the organization to invest in:

1 **Deep partnership with the regional government** in order to be able to both influence the system from the top-down and to build a bridge between grassroots and grasstops reform efforts

2 **Alumni-ambassador professional development** to ensure that those who remain in the region are prepared to take on opportunities across the region, both in government and school leadership

3 **Supporting the growth of institutional capability** within the regional education ecosystem by providing talent for the ministry and schools, and even supporting efforts to secure funding

4 **Establishing proof points** at the level of schools and communities within the region through the second-year community projects and the Seroond School approach

The Impact

Teach For Armenia's investment in collective action and multi-layered leadership development throughout the region is beginning to reap rewards. The organization has a strong working relationship with the regional government and is considered an active partner in education and systemic reform. This culminated in the 'Tavush Talent" program through which Teach For Armenia developed a pathway for 10 Alumni-Ambassadors to work in leadership roles throughout the regional ministry and in schools as part of the Regional Development Plan. More recently, the organization is also incubating an innovation school model named Seroond Schools, with support from Kizazi, in one of the isolated districts of Dilijan as well as Ijevan and Nerkin Karmiraghbyur.

Teach For Armenia's focus on diverse leadership also includes an explicit focus on accelerating impact and collective leadership at the student and community level with three different project tracks: student-led projects, community innovation projects, and Kaits (social incubators). Over a period of one year, Teach For Armenia supported the implementation of 50 teacher-led and student-led projects, receiving over 300 applications from student groups for student-led projects. They have since launched a website to showcase some of these projects and to grow community engagement: https://www.teachforarmenia.org/student-leadership.

In addition, Teach For Armenia has hosted a Virtual Student Leadership Camp two years in a row, reaching a total of 800 students thus far. Students from four communities participated in this experience, including attendees from three border communities where students logged in from bunkers as artillery fire was on-going during the conflict with Azerbaijan. By the end of the camp, students created video pitches for their own Community Impact Projects, and a total of 30 student groups will be receiving funding to implement these projects. This underscores Teach For Armenia's focus on catalyzing students' leadership and capabilities around concrete issues faced by their local communities.

The Insights

Teach For Armenia's approach and impact highlight three key insights related to community impact.

- System-level change requires investing in the development of leadership at all levels, from students themselves to government officials

- Galvanizing diverse stakeholders around a shared vision requires relationship-building at all levels of the system, from grassroots to grasstops

- Establishing proof points of impact can be a crucial lever in building momentum for change throughout systems and communities