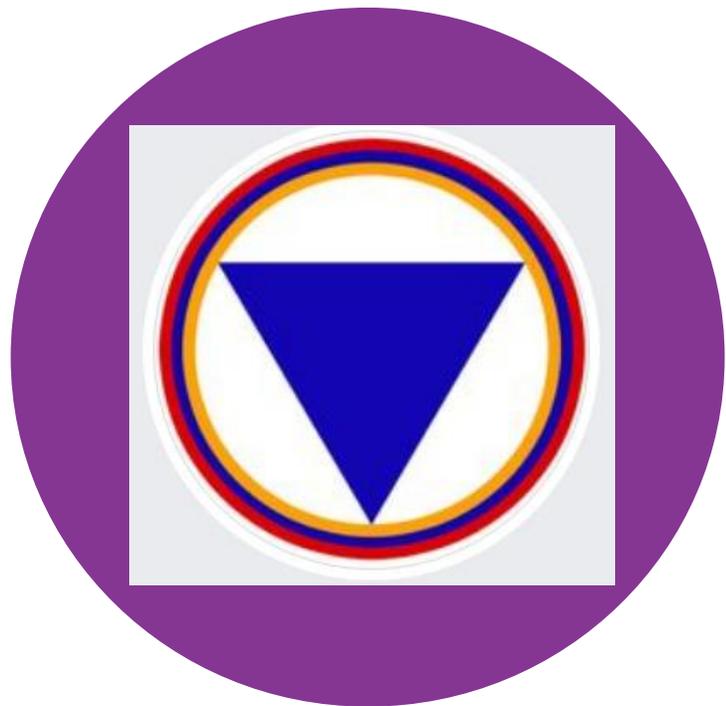


CASE STUDY: Armenia YWCA and the importance of safe spaces

This case study is about the importance of safe spaces for women to connect with each other, learn and develop their leadership skills

Safe spaces are important for women to be able to be honest and share what is important to them. Unequal power relationships between men and women make this necessary; it is common for men to take up more airtime than women in discussions and meetings - they say more and speak more often.

Women often let this happen for a variety of reasons: not wanting to be rude or arrogant; not wanting to single themselves out for attention; feeling their views are not as important; feeling sidelined, and so on. In a single sex group, these power dynamics shift which enables different types of conversation.



The creation of a “safe area” is an area, designed for women and girls, where everyone can be free to express their ideas, come up with their own ideas and get the opportunity to implement it. A lot of active, non active people, volunteers, young girls, community leaders, people with disabilities, and self-isolated people are a part of our projects, they are all on the same level and on the same surface, where everyone feels equality.

From the very first day, YWCA created opportunities for young women to develop their skills that will enable them to discover leadership skills to have a healthy, empowered community.

In the beginning, there were many problems on the way to the goal.

Women themselves were not even ready to make their voices heard, they thought they had no right to be in the places where decision-makers should be.

The problem was not that they could not, but that they had never thought about it. Stereotypes about leadership and "the role of women" prevented women from being the initiatives.

It was important to unite women around the idea, who were ready to make our voices heard with a united effort, not just to have a voice but to serve it for good, effective, community service.

The primary task of a leader, is to identify the women next to us, to show them the way, the opportunity to express themselves.

We must be responsive, willing to listen and share the problems of others. Being a leader does not mean that everything should be done as they see fit, but to be able to listen ,support and try to find solutions together.

We like to encourage women to be proactive, to contribute to the development of the community, to be able to trust their own strengths, to attract new people, to be caring for the people around them. As sharing is caring!!!

Many trainings and programs were organized and implemented for discovering and developing young women's skills. Many girls started implementing projects themselves, became trusted people, became examples for others. Thanks to the organization, young girls have participated in international meetings, which is a great opportunity to learn how to be able to use all the power they have.

Sharing experiences is very important for women, to educate them, to help them gain self-confidence, to share this successful experience with others, to show them this way too. And this chain will be continuous.

Thanks to these efforts, the young women are part of non-governmental organizations or just leaders in their communities. The community is ready to see women leaders taking the initiative.