



# PRESS RELEASE

## SECOND SUMMER SCHOOL FOR TOURISM STUDENTS

### Bridging the Gap between College-Acquired Knowledge and Employer Needs

**Yerevan, Armenia** – Tourism students that attended the Second Summer School of Tourism Studies, organized by the USAID Competitive Armenia Private Sector (CAPS) Project in cooperation with the American University of Armenia Extension Program, will receive certificates of participation at an official ceremony that will be held on Friday, **July 31, at 3:00 pm at the American University of Armenia** (40 Baghramyan Ave.) 4<sup>th</sup> floor. The event will be attended by the Deputy Minister of Economy, Mr. Ara Petrosyan, the Head of the Tourism and Regional Development Department of the RA Ministry of Economy, Mr. Mekhak Apresyan, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia Mr. Pegor Papazian, the Head of the Vocational Education Department of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Mr. Artak Aghbalyan, CAPS Chief of Party, Mr. Artak Ghazaryan, and others.

The interactive course, which ran from July 9-31, 2009, addressed CAPS major workforce development goals - enriching knowledge and skills of students and lecturers, improving the quality of tourism and hospitality education, promoting greater cooperation and understanding between academia and the private sector and contributing to a heightened awareness of practical tourism and hospitality issues.

Undertaken by CAPS for the second consecutive year, the course involved 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year Bachelor and Master's degree students from several leading institutions that offer specializations in Tourism – the European Regional Institute of Information and Communication Technologies in Armenia, Yerevan State Armenian-Greek College of Tourism, Service and Food Industry, Yerevan State College of Humanities, Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, State Linguistic University after V. Brusov, the Armenian Tourism Institute, Yerevan State University and Russian State University of Tourism and Service.

“Quite often newly-employed tourism graduates encounter serious hardship at the workplace because of a gap between the skills acquired in higher education and the needs of employers”, Anush Shahverdyan, CAPS Workforce Development Specialist stated, “By providing practical knowledge through such courses CAPS tries to bridge that gap and prepare young specialists for their future jobs”.

The training program was taught by CAPS staff members and representatives of the tourism/hospitality industry. Special guest lectures were delivered by representatives of the RA Ministry of Economy, the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia, and the American University of Armenia. During the ten-day, free of charge classes, kindly hosted by the American University of Armenia Extension Program, 38 students were familiarized with major tourism industry issues, including “Impact of Economic Crisis on Tourism Sector”, “Country Branding”, “Licensing of Guides”, “Tourism Destination Management”, etc. They also learned about the role of institutional capacity building in cluster competitiveness, competitive advantages of Armenia as a tourism destination, tourism industry needs, and other related subjects.

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The USAID-funded Competitive Armenia Private Sector (CAPS) Project provides technical assistance to the Armenian private sector to help them better compete nationally, regionally and internationally. CAPS is currently working with the growing Armenian information technology, tourism, pharmaceuticals and the engineering services clusters to identify globally competitive products and services, and to build robust companies around those products and services. CAPS technical assistance takes many forms and includes: firm level consulting, business association capacity building, policy research, public education, work force training and development of public / private initiatives.