Final report on the project «Internet Radio for People with Visual Impairments»

I. 1st stage of the project «Internet Radio for People with Visual Impairments»

1. History

In Soviet times, people with visual impairments was well provided for in terms of social security. The Armenian Society of Blinds (ASB) had significant resources. There were many shops where blind people could work and earn money. They were funded by the ASB, which generated income through these activities of blind and visually impaired people. The ASB was even able to finance the construction of key health care facilities such as the Republican Ophthalmological Center.

Currently blind people receive a small living allowance from the state and find it almost impossible to get a job in either the public or the private sectors. The private sector is the quickest to exclude blind applicants, often not even considering their qualifications. But if society rejects the blind, we cannot move forwards. The situation in the US and Europe, where the blind are given the same opportunities as non-disabled people, should be our target.

When the USSR collapsed, the entire system of ASB collapsed as well, because financial resources were generated through cooperation between the Soviet Republics and the goods produced by ASB companies were consumed and used outside Armenia. The ASB was left with only one opportunity — to offer up its premises for rent. Buildings thus either stood idle or were rented out and the overall situation was very sad. The decline in production led to a reduction in jobs for the blind, and a decline in social and cultural work as well.

In 2013, the Internet Society of Armenia received a grant from International Internet Society to create an Internet availability center for people with visual impairment in the Cultural House of the ASB. In parallel, the Armenian Internet Society and administration of the Culture House developed a concept of transformation of the Culture House into a rehabilitation center for people with visual impairments. Three main focus areas for rehabilitation were envisaged: sporting-recreational, cultural and informational. The grant project was successfully completed.

The opening ceremony of the center took place in April 2013. At the end of May 2013, the center was visited by the First Lady of Armenia Mrs. Rita Sargsyan. In September 2013, Mrs. Sargsyan invited the President of Armenians of the Russian Federation Mr. Ara Abrahamyan to visit the center. He got acquainted with the situation there and pledged to support the reconstruction and modernization of the building into a contemporary rehabilitation centre.

While the Internet Availability Center was in operation a group of visually impaired people came forward with the idea of developing Internet Radio.

They reported the idea to the ISOC Armenia, which wrote a grant proposal to the Internet Society. Happily the application was approved and work began in January 2016.

The list of electronic equipment and materials for recording studio was developed. The materials was very important as building's acoustic parameters were not corresponding to audio recording.
2. Construction works and equipment setup

2.1. The works on remaking of the room into the recording studio started in mid January 2016. The room has 30 sq. m. space and it was decided to divide it into 20 sq.m. recording studio and 10 sq.m. control room. Correspondingly the room was divided into 2 parts by a gypsum plasterboard with sound isolation. The walls and the ceiling was covered by styro-foam and a dense texture. The floor was covered by carpeting. A four-layered glass window of 60x160 cm size with isolation and a double door was installed (Pic. 1) between the studio and the control room.

![Pic. 1](image1.png)

The part of work finished in the second half of the March 2016.

2.2. By that time the audio recording electronic equipment was already purchased (Pic. 2 and 3).

![Pic. 2](image2.png)
The main part of broadcasts supposed the recording from one microphone by one completely blind person (who needed a minimal equipment). Two working places were created (Pic. 4 and 5) in the control room.

The computer for that channel (Pic. 5) was donated by ISOC AM.
As a result now there is a perfect recording studio providing a high level audio recording, i.e. simultaneous 8 channel recording with PreSonusOneSound device and the possibility of recording and livestream broadcasting to the direct air (Pic. 1 - 5).

2.3. Fiber optic Internet connection cable was brought to the building. A local network was set up, which included a router and 2 computers. One of them was intended for Internet radio programs (RadioBoss and Icecast programs) (Pic. 6), and the second - for web server (Pic. 7).

One computer was purchased and the second one as well as the router were donated by ISOC AM.

II. 2ndst stage of the project «Internet Radio for People with Visual Impairments»: Operation of the Internet radio

1. The authors of the idea called the radio Radio MENQ (meaning ‘we’ in Armenian). It is an internet radio station in Armenia made by blind and visually impaired people mainly for listeners in their own and other disabled communities. Broadcasts cover everything from Paralympic sport and discussions of the lives of Stevie Wonder and Louis Braille, through strategies for using public transport, dealing with stress and depression as a disabled person and winning big in games of chess.
Although the radio station only began working earlier this year, efforts to empower blind people in Armenia through use of the internet, chiefly through initiatives assisted by the Internet Society, have been going on for some time.

2. The group of authors the idea including Andranik Kocharyan, Sipan Asatryan, Rudolf Zabrodin, Yuri Avetisyan and their followers started working hard to develop the radio broadcast programs. Andranik Kocharyan was responsible for «Sport and We» radio program series.

He developed and recorded following programs:
  1. « Sport and We» №01 (Introduction to the history of the Paralympic Games)
  2. « Sport and We» №02 (Who can participate in the Paralympic Games. Several Paralympic sports)
  3. « Sport and We» №03 (Paralympic sports, swimming, boccia and goalball)
Sipan Asatryan was responsible for «You can» radio program series.

He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. «You can» №01 (The guest of the program was Alexander Zhuykov)
2. «You can» №02 (Ray Charles)
3. «You can» №03 (Louis Braille)
4. «You can» №04 (Nikoghayos Tigranyan)
5. «You can» №05 (Yerjanik Gevorgyan)
6. «You can» №06 (Ashugh Havasi)
7. «You can» №07 (Stevie Wonder part I)
8. «You can» №08 (Stevie Wonder part II)
9. «You can» №09 (Levon Karapetyan)
10. «You can» №10 (Diana Gurtskaya)
11. «You can» №11 (Program is dedicated to the deaf-blind scientist Alexander Suvorov)
12. «You can» №12 (The guest of the program was Rudolf Zabrodin)
13. «You can» №13 (The guest of the program was chessmaster Yuri Avetisyan, Director of the House of Culture of the Union of Blinds of Armenia)
14. «You can» The guest of the program was historian Abraham Tsatouryan.
15. «You can» №15 (The guest of the program was Arsen Grigoryan, 11-year-old musician.)
16. «You can» №16 (A program dedicated to the composer Simon Hovhannisyan.)
17. «You can» №17 (The guest of the program was a musician Hovhannes Hovhannisyan.)
18. «You can» №18 (The guest of the program was Gor Hambardzumyan, a 10-year-old musician.)
19. «You can» №19-1 (A program dedicated to the famous singer Andrea Bocelli, who enchanted the world with his voice. (Part 1)
20. « You can» (№19-2) A program dedicated to the famous singer Andrea Bocelli, who enchanted the world with his voice. (Part 2)

21. « You can» (№19-3) A program dedicated to the famous singer Andrea Bocelli, who enchanted the world with his voice. (Part 3)

22. « You can» (№19-4) A program dedicated to the famous singer Andrea Bocelli, who enchanted the world with his voice. (Part 4)

23. « You can» (№19-5) A program dedicated to the famous singer Andrea Bocelli, who enchanted the world with his voice. (Part 5)

24. « You can» (№21) The guest of the program was Andranik Kocharyan.

25. « You can» (№22) A program devoted to the 85th anniversary of the famous blind scientist Albert Mousheghyany.

26. « You can» (№23) The guest of the program was Artak Beglaryan.

Sipan Asatryan was responsible for «Toward Independence» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:

1. « Toward Independence» №01 (What is self-dependence)
2. « Toward Independence» №02 (The role of vision in human life and the consequences of violation)
3. « Toward Independence» №03 (Loss of vision and its consequences (Professional discussion))
4. « Toward Independence» №04 (The value of hearing in one's life)
5. « Toward Independence» №05 (The role of auditory perception and its proper use in the life of blinds)
6. « Toward Independence» №06 (White cane, Historical Overview)
7. « Toward Independence» №07 (White cane. Acquaintance with a cane, a professional discussion about the white cane)
8. « Toward Independence» №08 (The use of the white cane (part 1))
9. Toward Independence» №08 (The use of the white cane (part 2))
10. « Toward Independence» (№10) (The use of the white cane (part 3))
11. « Toward Independence» (№11) Dance, independence as a contributing factor.
12. « Toward Independence» (№12) Blinds and public transport (part 1)
13. « Toward Independence» (№13) Blinds and public transport (part 2)
14. « Toward Independence» (№14) Blinds and metro.
15. « Toward Independence» (№15) «Tiflotechnique" What facilities exist to support the life of blinds and visually impaired. (Part 1)
16. « Toward Independence» (№16) " Tiflotechnique " What facilities exist to support the life of blinds and visually impaired. (Part 2)
17. « Toward Independence» (№17) « Tiflotechnique " What facilities exist to support the life of blinds and visually impaired. (A discussion)
19. « Toward Independence» (№19) Special Education is still at the beginning of the 20th century. Opinions on the state and the full acceptance of persons with physical problems today. The physical side of the problem and its compensation. How important is a compensation on the way to independence. (Part 1)
20. «Toward Independence» №20 Special Education founded in the early 20th century. The physical side of the problem and its compensation. How important is a compensation on the way to independence. (Part 1)
21. «Toward Independence» №21 How to care a blind or visually impaired during the first year of a child's life. (Part 1)
22. «Toward Independence» №22 How to care a blind or visually impaired during the first year of a child's life. (Part II)
23. «Toward Independence» №23 How to care a blind child on the second year of life. What are the most important at this stage? How child's problems should be solved with the help of parents.
24. «Toward Independence» №24 How to care about the development of a blind child on the second year of his life. (Part 2)
26. «Toward Independence» №26 How to care about the development of a blind child on the second year of his life. (Part 4)
27. «Toward Independence» №27 How to care about the development of a blind child on the third year of his life. (Part 1)
28. «Toward Independence» №28 How to care about the development of a blind child on the third year of his life. (Part 2)
29. «Toward Independence» №29 Accompanying dogs. To what extent are these animals help parents:

Sipan Asatryan was responsible for «Problem and solution» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. «Problem and solution» №01 (What role can blind and visually impaired people play in the society)
2. «Problem and solution» №02 (The family as a factor contributing to the blind and visually impaired people finding their place in the society)
3. «Problem and solution» №03 (The role of education in the process of socialization of blind and visually impaired people)
4. «Problem and solution» №04 (Why do the blind and visually impaired people take a passive position in the society?)
5. «Problem and solution» №05 (The main problems of youth in Armenia)
6. «Problem and solution» №06
7. «Problem and solution» № 07 (A historian Abraham Tsaturyan presents actual problems raised in his articles)
8. «Problem and solution» №08 (People with disabilities as part of civil society (part II))
9. «Problem and solution» №09 Disabled persons, marriage, unwritten social laws.
10. «Problem and solution» №10 Persons with disabilities as part of civil society (Part 2)
11. «Problem and solution» №11 Labor market and a person with a disability.
12. «Problem and solution» №12 persons with disabilities as a group at risk of being trafficked. review existing laws.
13. «Problem and solution» 2016 year achievements and failures for people with disabilities.
14. «Problem and solution» №16 What are the expectations №16 2017. What are the plans we team radio.
15. «Problem and solution» №17 film or other artistic directions of the image of people with disabilities.
16. «Problem and solution» №18 people today to communicate with persons with disabilities.

Rudolf Zabrodin is responsible for «Psychology in life» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. «Psychology in life» №01 (Who is a psychologist and how he can help you?)
2. «Psychology in life» №02 (Disability, perceptions, stereotypes)
3. «Psychology in life» №03 (What’s a nogen thinking?)
4. «Psychology in life» №04 (What is psychosomatics)
5. «Psychology in life» №05 (How to use internal resources to achieve the goal)
6. «Psychology in life» №06 (Formation of social norms and their influence on the personality)
7. «Psychology in life» №07 (Discussion of a letter)
8. «Psychology in life» №08 (What are psychological barriers arising in the job search)
9. «Psychology in life» №09 (What is stress and how to become stress resistant)
10. «Psychology in life» (№10-1) How to improve self-esteem. (Part 1)
11. «Psychology in life» (№10-2) How to improve self-esteem. (Part 2)
13. «Psychology in life» (№12-1) What is acquired helplessness and how to get rid of it. (Part 1)
14. «Psychology in life» (№12-2) What is acquired helplessness and how to get out of it. (Part 2)
15. «Psychology in life» (№13-1) Premarital relations. (Part 1)
16. «Psychology in life» (№13-2) Premarital relations. (Part 2)
17. «Psychology in life» (№14-1) Targeting. What is the difference between a dream and a goal. To formulate objectives. (Part 1)
18. «Psychology in life» (№14-2) Targeting. What is the difference between a dream and a goal. To formulate objectives. (Part 2)
19. «Psychology in life» (№15) The communication of confidential
20. «Psychology in life» (№16) How to respond to criticism.
21. «Psychology in life» (№17) to overcome the difficulties of life.
25. «Psychology in life» (№19-2) Winners psychology. How to win: (Part 2)
26. «Psychology in life» (№20) beliefs and attitudes of Life հոգեբանություն:
27. «Psychology in life» (№21) How to communicate effectively.

Rudolf Zabrodin was responsible for «My universities» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. «My universities» №01 (The guest of the program was a Jurist, masseur Andranik Qocharyan)
2. «My universities» №02 (The guest of the program was a student of Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory Hakob Babayan)
3. «My universities» №03 (The guest of the program was a Philologist, Tiflopedagog, Armenian diaspora specialist Sipan Asatryan)
4. «My universities» №04 (The guest of the program was a pianist Levon Karapetyan)
5. « My universities» №05 (The guest of the program was a student at Yerevan State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan NareAlaverdyan)
6. «My universities» №06 (The guest of the program was Arev Melkonyan)
7. « My universities» №07 (The guest of the program was a classical singer Alexander Zhuykov)
8. « My universities» №08 (The guest of the program was a lawyer, masseur, PC instructor Giorgi Grigorian)
9. « My universities» №09 The guest of the program was violinist Lusine Harutyunyan (part 1).
10. « My universities» №10 The guest of the program was violinist Lusine Harutyunyan (part 2).
11. « My universities» №11 The guest of the program was Lusine Sargsyan and Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, Master.
12. « My universities» №12 The guest of the program was network specialist Vahan Sahakyan.
13. « My universities» №13 The guest of the program was Tigranuhi said.
15. « My universities» №15 The guest of the program was Artak Davtyan.
16. « My universities» №16 The guest of the program was singer V. Manukyan.
17. « My universities» №17 The guest of the program was the European Regional Educational Academy student Rafael Asiryan.

Rudolf Zabrodin is responsible for « News» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. News №01
2. News №02
3. News №03
4. News №04
5. News №05
6. News №06
7. News №07
8. News №08
9. News №09
10. News №10
11. News №11
12. News №12
13. News №13
14. News №14
15. News №15

Rudolf Zabrodin was responsible for « Program for children » radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:
1. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 1
2. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 2
3. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 3
4. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 4
5. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 5
6. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 6
7. Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince part 7

Grimm Brothers' fairytales
1. "The Frog King or Iron Heinrich"
2. "Successful trade."
4. "Mrs. snowstorm moaning"
5. "Seven Crow"
6. "son dishonest"
7. "Celestial talerner"
8. "omniscient doctor."
10. "Hansel and Gretel"
11. "three leaves of a serpent."
12. "Cinderella"

Hans Christian Andersen fairytales
1. "The girl and the matches."
2. "Silver Coin"
3. "The Princess and the Pea."
4. "The Butterfly"
5. "seashell and rose bush."
6. "Burdock luck."
7. "Bride and Groom"
8. "fuze"
9. "Thumbelina"
10. "The gardener and his owners"
11. "Wild Swans" (Part 1)
12. "Wild Swans" (Part 2)
13. "Mermaid"
14. "Spruce Tree"
15. "The Ugly Duckling"
16. "Nightingale"
17. "Story of the Year"

R.J. Palacio "miracle"
1. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 1)
2. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 2)
3. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 3)
4. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 4)
5. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 5)
6. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 6)
7. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 7)
8. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 8)
9. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 9)
10. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 10)
11. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 11)
12. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 12)
13. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 13)
14. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 14)
15. R.J. Palacio "miracle" (Part 15)
Yuri Avetisyan was responsible for «Learn to play chess» radio program series. He developed and recorded the following programs:

1. «Learn to play chess» (Introduction)
2. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 1)
3. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 2)
4. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 3)
5. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 4)
6. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 5)
7. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 6)
8. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 7)
9. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 8)
10. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 9)
11. «Learn to play chess» (Lesson 10)
12. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 11
13. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 12
14. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 13
15. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 14
16. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 15
17. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 16
18. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 17
19. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 18
20. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 19
21. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 20
22. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 21
23. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 22
24. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 23
25. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 24
26. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 25
27. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 26
28. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 27
29. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 28
30. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 29
31. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 30
32. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 31
33. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 32
34. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 33
35. «Learn to play chess» Lesson 34
Disaster risk reduction issues, №01

1. "Emergency situations". Natural disasters. The guest of the program was Zaruhi Tonoyan.

All programs were broadcasted, some of them repeatedly.

3. The experience gained during the operation of the Internet radio demonstrated that the Internet can serve as a point for startups for blind journalists, translators, programmers, psychologists, lawyers and freelancers in other professions. The Internet opens up new horizons for the blind and allows them to be full members of society. Today the labor market imposes greater demands on blind people, which is correct to some extent, as they must be able to work on a par with others. Blind people must believe in their own strength and abilities. After Radio MENQ went on air, many have started to want to try themselves out in radio either as a program presenter or a sound technician. Internet radio is becoming a path to new horizons and opportunities for blind people. Often there is a stereotype that the blind person can’t work on an equal footing. Internet work, whether in a freelance capacity or as part of a team, allows you to break down these stereotypes. The internet enables people to be who they choose, to develop for themselves, and as a part of their community.

4. More than 45 people have been invited as guests [on the radio] — a substantial number of whom had disabilities — including experts and scientists. The related blog receives up to 2,500 visits monthly. Currently Radio MENQ is hoping to develop an application for phones and tablets that will boost the average daily number of listeners from 10 to 60. Most important, however, is the work experience blind and visually impaired people have earned through the project. Among a number of examples, one blind man came asking to help him work as a sound engineer. He was trained and following training sessions he was fulfilling that role for the station. Many parents of children with disabilities, and students from various universities call Radio MENQ team, noting the importance of the radio in their lives, and especially "Psychology in life", “You Can” and “Toward Independence” programs. The blind community has reacted very positively to the fact that many blind scientists and artists are featured on the programs. And also, there is the opportunity for Radio MENQ workers to get experience from more famous radio stations like “Radio Van” and “National Radio” which have agreed to provide master classes for staff.
5. The archive of all broadcasts was created letting to listen to any broadcast that was on the air. It is very important that all developed programs are in the archive and can be accessed any time. The link to the archive is [http://www.radio-menq.am/ir/archive](http://www.radio-menq.am/ir/archive).

6. Totally about 200 radio programs were recorded and broadcasted in 2016. The main purpose of those programs was to raise questions concerning disabled people, and promote their self-reliance and empowerment. To achieve these goals the team of the Internet radio didn't limit itself to radio broadcasts only, but also organized workshops - seminars for orientation and the use of white canes by blind people. Internet radio has become a beacon of light, giving a hope to young blind people. One very inspiring individual story was that of Levon Karapetyan, a blind pianist who moved around with helpers. He managed to apply for a study period in France and study there. Listening to Radio MENQ's “Toward Independence” broadcast in France he was very interested in some of the tools for self-development mentioned on the program. When he came back to Armenia he visited the Culture House and asked the team to teach him how to use the white cane among other things. He received mobility training and a lot of things changed in his life. Radio MENQ team is going to prepare a special program devoted to his experience some time in the near future. Another story involved a young man who has no hands. After listening to the program “Psychology in Life” he became more able to deal with the psychological difficulties connected to his disability. He became socially active and free of complexes. It permitted him to communicate with people more openly. He started to look for a charity program that could provide him a job and found one in Germany. Our listeners often tell the team, “When I feel bad, I listen to your radio, and I get an incentive to overcome my difficulties”, or simply, “You are doing the right thing”.

7. Computer rooms and instructors have helped many blind and visually impaired to learn basic knowledge and skills of working on computers. Each month there were shows of movies with tiflo-comments. Internet radio team organized several shows with tiflo-comments. Participants were impressed by this opportunity to taste the essence of films. Many wondered how a blind person can watch movies. After watching the movies there were discussions. It positively affected the blinds, because they can sense the art, as well as feel the usefulness of the audience. It generally produces a positive attitude towards people with visual impairment.

8. The project opened new horizons and opportunities for the blinds. Among other benefits of the project was the jobs provided for young people with disabilities, as well as new opportunities for self-realization for the blinds. Good examples of it were Sipan Asatryan, Rudolf Zabrodin, Andranik Kocharyan, Vahan Sahakyan, Arev Gevorgyan, Levon Karapetyan and other young people who took part in the project and realized their potential. Having earned a good experience the team Internet radio plans for 2017:
• expand the Internet radio audience
• raise problems of not only disabled people but the youth also.
• attract youth as volunteers
• create social podcasts
• record Armenian audio books
• show about 12 movies with tiflo-comments with further discussions
• carry about 10 master classes on training on the use of white canes, sport life - showdown
• organize flash mobs
• conduct 10 training seminars for youth