



## Turning Swords Into See Saws and Swings



Photo: IESC

The playground built for the Boghossian Education Center signaled the birth of a brand-new industry in Armenia.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, businesses in Armenia fought to stay afloat. This was especially true of firms like the Magnon Company, which were manufacturers in the Soviet defense and space industries. Privatized in 1999, the Magnon Company was once a producer of mechanical, radio and electronic devices. The transition from a communist to a capitalist economy soon proved difficult for the fledgling company. The firm survived - but barely - by making small appliances and repairing TV's and radios.

Magnon's turnaround was the result of an idea by Sister Aroiusiag Sajonian, who wanted to purchase playground equipment locally for the Boghossian Educational Center instead of importing the equipment. With the help and encouragement of USAID, Sister Sajonian approached Magnon's owner to make the equipment. Magnon had never made playground equipment and, in fact, no one in Armenia made quality equipment. However, Magnon's owner agreed, and received assistance through a program funded by USAID, and administered by IESC. Robert B. Cook, a landscape architect from Stamford, CT, volunteered his time and worked with Magnon to build the equipment. Cook advised Magnon on playground design, production technology, the manufacturing process, and even U.S. safety standards.

In Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city, Magnon experienced a rebirth. The result of this collaborative effort was a magnificent facility and the birth of a brand new industry in Armenia that generated new employment and the smiles of many happy children.

Photo & Caption

