

Welcome to our new Assistance Newsletter!

Highlighting U.S. Government-sponsored Assistance programs' success stories, this newsletter will be released electronically twice a year.

If you have any comments, please submit them to: yerevanassistance@state.gov

ODC PROVIDES FIELD HOSPITAL TO ARMENIA'S MILITARY

The U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) provided a \$1.2 million Mobile Expeditionary Medical Support (EMEDS) Field Hospital and training to the Armenian Ministry of Defense. The hospital is equipped with a range of medical equipment that allows the Armenian military to conduct routine medical services as well as surgical procedures. The hospital's equipment can be deployed throughout Armenia and the rest of the world.

The opening ceremony of the Field Hospital was held in February 2007, following the completion of a week-long U.S. - Armenian training event. The training was held at the Armenian Ministry of Defense's military hospital in the Erebuni district of Yerevan for Armenian medical personnel assigned to operate the EMEDS facility. The training was led by a U.S. officer and enlisted instructors with varying medical specialties.



U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Anthony Godfrey and Deputy Defense Minister Arthur Aghabekian cut the ribbon at the opening of the hospital.

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FORENSIC LABORATORY RENOVATED WITH U.S. FUNDS

The National Bureau of Expertise, which operates under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, has been recently renovated and furnished with the support of the U.S. Government. The Bureau is a forensic laboratory intended for the use of all law enforcement entities of the Republic of Armenia. The U.S. Government invested over \$345,000 to complete renovations of the facility through the U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Office. The first phase of the renovations began in March 2005 and was funded by the Armenian Government. The lab sections that occupy the newly renovated building include Questioned Documents, Firearms and Ballistics, Fingerprints, Arson and Explosives, Drug Analysis, Trace Analysis, and Toxicology Units. The U.S. Government will provide training and equipment in all of these areas of forensic analysis. The building is equipped with an elaborate security system, which will ensure controlled access to the labo-

ratories and the security of the evidence. A second building will undergo a \$575,000 renovation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and will house a DNA Analysis Section among other units.



An Armenian Expert checks out newly installed forensic laboratory equipment



U.S. GOVERNMENT GRANTS VEHICLES TO ARMENIAN BORDER GUARDS

The Department of State's Export Control and Related Border Security Program (EXBS) granted four Chevrolet Nivas and nine Lada Nivas to the Border Guards of the National Security Service to help secure the borders of Armenia. U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Anthony F. Godfrey and Armenian National Security Service Deputy Director Major General Romik Harutyunian participated in the official transfer ceremony held on November 17, 2006, at the U.S. Embassy.

"Armenia's Border Guard Forces recognize the important responsibility they have to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other illicit materials," Godfrey said. "These sturdy vehicles are well-suited to the rough terrain of some of Armenia's remote border regions and will help the Border Guards achieve their mission."

The Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance Program, administered by the Department of State, has been operating in Armenia since the year 2000. The program operates in

more than 45 countries, and is designed to strengthen and secure borders by providing the latest in interdiction equipment, and by developing the enforcement skills of both the Border Guards and the State Customs Committee in the fight against worldwide terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and chemical and biological warfare.

The EXBS Program for Armenia continues to conduct formal training seminars both locally and in the United States in order to provide Border Guards and Customs Officers with advanced interdiction techniques necessary to identify sophisticated nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Over the last several years, the EXBS Assistance Program has equipped the Border Guards and Customs Services of Armenia with various types of inspection and detection equipment, including a radio-communication system, several types of border sensors, metal detectors, vehicles, computer equipment, cargo truck scales, and X-ray units.



FARM INVESTMENT HELPS SLOW MIGRATION



Around 40 farmers benefited from the project, and 17 million AMD cash was returned to families

Ttujur is a remote village located to the north-east of Lake Sevan near the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan, where agribusiness, as in many other remote villages, is the main source of life. Prior to establishment of the cooperative, the farmers were individually supplying milk to the local dairy processing company Ashtarak Kat LLC, but due to inadequate refrigeration and means of transportation oftentimes the milk spoiled prior to delivery,

and farmers endured financial losses. Due to CARD intervention, a milk collection center was established in the center of the village, a milk cooling tank and milk analyzer were purchased and installed. New tires were also purchased for the tractor that the cooperative members use to collect forage and gas tanks were also purchased and installed in the vehicle used to transport the milk. As a result of the project the cooperative

members consistently supply Ashtarak Kat with high quality fresh milk. During 2006, 175 tons of milk were produced, and production reached 1350 kilograms a day during peak season. Members jointly organized their forage collection and storage to maximize efficiency. The cooperative also has the privilege of being given the plant's lactoserum byproduct, which members can use for pig feed.

ARMENIAN WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Karine Ghukasyan's business in Vanadzor, in northern Armenia, grew quickly but not quickly enough for her to begin using the profits to help her community — something she had always dreamed of. The initial growth came after she applied modern packaging and branding techniques acquired on a U.S. study tour to her product, *narine*, a yogurt-like beverage popular with children. Her background as a physician and her previous work with a *narine* producer

in Yerevan helped her secure the special licensing needed for her company. Since *narine* is a highly perishable product with a short shelf life, Ghukasyan was uncertain how to approach new markets. She asked USAID's Micro-enterprise Development Initiative (MEDI) to help her devise a strategy to expand sales to neighboring regions. Presentations to key buyers, including

hospitals, municipalities, and retailers, revealed a need for consistent delivery schedules and careful product handling during transportation. To address this need, MEDI advisors linked Ghukasyan with a local supplier who provided customized boxing with small compartments. The project also helped Ghukasyan identify and organize key distribution channels in the Shirak, Tavush, and Kotyak marzes. To mitigate the risk posed to retailers by the product's short

shelf life, advisors helped Ghukasyan create a consignment sales scheme with no financial commitment from the retailer. Ghukasyan would take unsold *narine* back at no cost. This new strategy expanded her market share and tripled sales. "I have never experienced so much growth," Ghukasyan said. Business has grown to the point that Ghukasyan can now contribute



Karine Ghukasyan distributes narine to local orphans in her home

to her community by offering her product at a discount to local orphanages and nursing homes. "This is only the beginning," said Ghukasyan. "I am confident that one day I will have a much larger factory and a diverse product line."



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MUSHROOMING SUCCESS



A few years ago the supply of champignon or “button” mushrooms in Armenia was sporadic at best. Most of the producers were small family growers who could only supply the market irregularly and in small quantities. The situation took a noticeable turn for the better when Aroghj Sunk, or “Healthy Mushroom”, entered the market. Mr. Areg Azoyan, director of the company and an alumnus of a U.S. government-sponsored graduate study program, saw a market niche and decided to put his education and entrepreneurial instincts to work.

To get quality advice in launching his business, Azoyan requested USAID’s Armenian Small and Medium Enterprise (ASME) Market Development Project support. The project has succeeded in assisting dozens of business in unlocking opportunities in Armenia. Azoyan and ASME teamed up to identify the key challenges and opportunities to meeting his goal. As part of the investment plan agreed with ASME, Azoyan identified a first-rate expert in mushroom operations whom he had met during his graduate study in the United States. The specialist offered vital technical advice aimed at identifying ways to boost productivity and lower operational



An employee of Aroghj Sunk proudly shows off the impressive mushroom harvest.

costs. In 2005, a cost-share capital grant was provided by ASME to assist Aroghj Sunk with implementing the expert’s recommendations. Based on its market research, ASME also recommended introducing “out-grower” contracting, which was a new concept for the Armenian agricultural supply chain at that time. Out-growing, the procuring of agricultural products from an outside supplier in order to cut costs or increase volume, is a trend that is becoming more popular in the agribusiness sector. Azoyan welcomed the idea and began to work directly with many of the small growers who were once his competitors.

The out-growing model turned out to be a win-win situation for all parties. “Aroghj Sunk alone could not handle the growing market demand”, says Azoyan. “But by supplying our mushroom spores to small growers, we are now able to produce sufficient quantities of fine mushrooms to meet market needs.”

In 2006, Aroghj Sunk participated in a USAID-funded study tour and tradeshow in Europe, where Azoyan found buyers from neighboring Georgia who were eager to purchase his mushrooms. “The Georgian market contracts were a great boost to my business and enabled me to create more jobs in my company.” Job creation at the main production facility has grown from 5 to nearly 50 full-time employees. And out-grower contracts have also meant a steady source of income for small scale growers. Unknown to consumers just a few years ago, Aroghj brand can be found in every major supermarket and restaurant in Yerevan.

“The valuable assistance I received from USAID together with my knowledge enabled me to establish a mushroom market which I would like to think is benefiting both the out-growers and the end consumers”, says Azoyan. “I am grateful to USAID for helping me to translate my vision into action.”

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

IN THE MAJORITY OF UNIVERSITIES IN ARMENIA, THEORY PREVAILS OVER PRACTICE

For Siranouish Gevorgyan, a graduate of the Journalism Department at Yerevan State University, the study of journalism used to be limited to note-taking and infrequent discussions during lectures. As a future journalist, she had little knowledge of the practical side of journalism. “The classes were mainly based on the theoretical aspects of journalism”, says Siranouish. “To make matters worse yet, there was a lack of computers and cameras in the university.”

Fortunately for Siranouish and many like her, the USAID-sponsored “Introducing a Journalism Education Model” pilot program – a one year Master’s degree in Journalism – came at the right time. Siranouish, who had enjoyed an American high-school learning experience during a U.S. Government sponsored one-year study abroad program, knew this was the break she was looking for. Together with five other graduates, she commenced her studies in the hope that she would experience a different type of journalism.

A totally new world opened up for Siranouish: story writing, interview shoots, video editing, and website design were among the many course topics. “Most of the learning here takes place through doing”, says Siranouish. “We produce



Professor Karl Idsvoog guides Siranouish and her fellow students through the world of broadcast journalism

something – be it an article or a video clip – and at the end of the day that’s what counts.” While students in traditional courses simply listened to the lectures, Siranouish and her well-equipped team scoured Yerevan in search of material for their next broadcast. Furthermore, the International Center for Journalism assisted Siranouish in finding an internship to spend two weeks in Athens, Greece working in the daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Greece. All of Siranouish’s hard work paid off: she was recently offered a job at ArmeniaNow – a well-known on-line magazine – where she manages the “Today in Armenia” section, providing daily updates on major happenings around the country. “Now, with all my practical experience, writing is easy and enjoyable”, says Siranouish.

Together with her fellow graduates, Siranouish has also recently launched Faces monthly magazine, which highlights influential people and companies from both within and outside Armenia.



Siranouish and her fellow student interview a city policeman for their next broadcast



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



COUNTERPART

Newly equipped and furnished ambulatory in refugee village

Nor Artamet village has a population of 1,300 (520 households) that includes a sizeable internally displaced persons (IDP) community. The displaced families mostly reside in the houses constructed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Many families do not have permanent shelters and live in metal containers or trailers that are unsanitary and unsuitable for living. People are unable to receive basic medical services since the only village ambulatory -- recently renovated by USAID's Project Nova -- lacks primary medical supplies and equipment. **Counterpart Humanitarian Assistance Program/Armenia** has been donating clothing, boots, household items, bedding, school supplies and other necessary items since February of 2003. In summer 2006, CHAP took the initiative to collaborate with DOS funded partner organizations such as IRD, UMCOR, Rostropovich Foundation and SAE to launch a project in Nor Artamet. At an event on November 3, CHAP received one FEU container of Primary Care Kits, part of which was donated to the village ambulatory, while DOS Humanitarian Assistance partner organizations jointly distributed humanitarian assistance. UMCOR and IRD provided medicine and hygiene kits, ARDA Foundation distributed food, and SAE mobile medical team provided free medical check-ups and services for the entire village population.



Children provided with a home where they can feel safe and comfortable

IRD's Armenian office has been providing Nubashen Special School #1, a school for socially vulnerable and mentally disabled children, with supplies and clothing since 2002. Currently, the school hosts 117 children. About half of the students live at home with their families, only attending classes during the weekdays. The families of the other students cannot afford or unwilling to keep these children at home.

However, the conditions inside the building were terrible. The ceiling was cracked and spots of dirt and holes were everywhere. Windows were broken and the walls of the building were crumbling. The bathroom and laundry facilities were located in a separate building, which meant during the cold winters children had to run from the bathroom building after showering back to the main building. The staff felt it was time to do something and approached the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

Through the DOS Small Rehabilitation Program, IRD received US\$10,000 to supervise and conduct the renovation. One wing of the cafeteria was completely renovated. Windows were replaced and the ceiling and walls are now clean and dry; there are no more cracks or leaks. Disney heroes were painted on the walls to create a warm and cheerful atmosphere. The bathroom facilities, laundry and ironing rooms, and linen storages were moved to the main building near the children's bedrooms. The children can now avoid the harsh cold following their showers. The laundry staff now has a new laundry room with modern washing machines donated by LDS Charities, as well as an adjacent room for ironing.

In the summer of 2006 IRD/Armenia held a ceremony marking the completion of the long-awaited renovation. U.S. Embassy representatives, the Director of Humanitarian Assistance, EUR/ACE of the U.S. State Department, the directors of LDS Charities, representatives of MLSI, international NGOs, and local authorities all came to celebrate the unveiling.



U.S. Government officials distribute primary care kits at the opening of the village ambulatory



GREEK MEDICAL UNIT PROVIDES NEEDED CARE

During the visit of DOS Humanitarian Assistance grantee SAE Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) of the Greek Medical Fund "Hippocrates" to the mountainous village of Madan, Gagik Gevorkyan, a 45 year old patient with 5 children, spoke with the MMU doctor. He was complaining about pain in both of his forearms. According to the patient he sustained an injury 4 days prior the visit of the Medical Mobile Unit. Since Gagik did not have funds or transport facility, he had not visited a doctor. The MMU gave him primary medical assistance and transported him to the Greek Medical Fund "Hippocrates", Alaverdi, accompanied by the nurse of the Medical Mobile Unit. In the clinic, Gagik was examined by Surgeon Simon Zakharov who conducted an X-ray examination of both forearms. Gagik was diagnosed as having simple fracture in each forearm. Gagik was treated and released. Three months later, Gagik's arms had healed and he was able to assist with the construction of the medical ambulatory in the village Madan. He assisted with the project so as to express his gratitude to the doctors of "Hippocrates."

WATER BRINGS HOPE

Water, a vital gift of nature, is inaccessible to thousands of people because of poor, worn-out water distribution systems in the country. Areg village in Aragatsotn province is one of the many places that lacked drinking water for decades. "My family settled in Areg in 1994," says Roza Gabrielyan, one of the over 1,000 residents of the village. "To earn our bread, I taught English at the local school, but the salary was so miserable that, as every household in the village, we had to keep cattle and farm to meet our basic needs. Of the many hardships we experienced," Roza explains, "the most unbearable was the water shortage. The old water pipes in the village were corroded, blocked or damaged, and therefore we never had running water in our houses. The two water taps in the village were located hundreds of meters away from most of the houses. We had to carry water several times a day. Since my husband was busy with other things, either I or my children had to haul water. In the winter cold or the summer heat we had to spend up to three hours there waiting for our turn in the queue as the water flow was too low. We used the same water twice - cleaned the floor, watered the trees and so on. In these conditions it was very difficult to main-



tain hygiene and ensure health," Roza says.

In the summer of 2006 the drinking water pipeline of Areg village was involved in the Save the Children's Community Self-Help Fund program funded by the U.S. Embassy and USAID. The program helped construct a new pipeline passing through the residential areas of the village to allow people to have running water in their houses. Later the village residents confessed they hardly believed it would be possible to do it. "When the Village Mayor told us that the renovation work had begun we just smiled, thinking that it was a hopeless and unpromising initiative," Roza remembers. "But luckily there were people who believed in good results, and worked days and nights to achieve them. Their hard work inspired us to join our efforts and

strive for better results."

A couple of months later the new pipeline was laid and some of the residents installed taps in their houses. To the surprise of the people, the water began running from the taps. "It was such a happiness for our village!" says Roza with her eyes sparkling. "Running water brought hope to us."

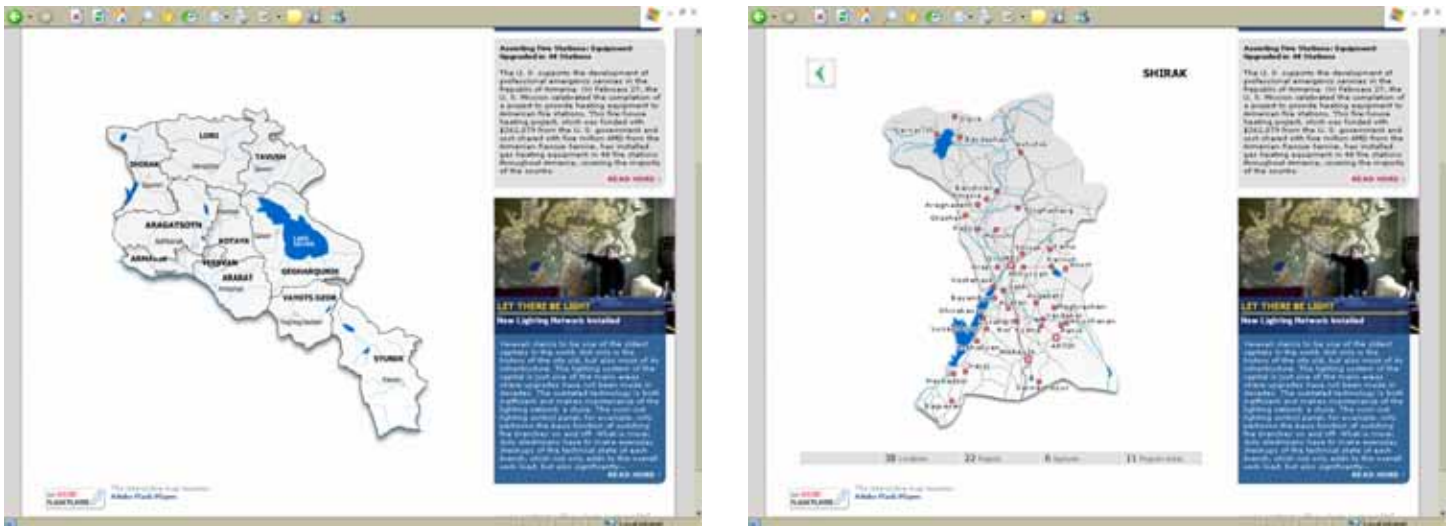
"I thank God for this project," she continues. "This is the best what could be done for our village."



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EMBASSY LAUNCHES INTERACTIVE MAP

The U.S. Embassy recently launched an innovative tool – Assistance Mapping Database – to help the public learn more about the extensive assistance program being managed in Armenia this year. Users can “click” on locations in any of the eleven marzes (regions) of Armenia to obtain detailed information about the projects and sites located there and to learn about the scope of U.S. Government assistance throughout Armenia. The new Assistance Mapping Database is capable of showing the number of locations in which a given project is being implemented – and, likewise, us-



ers can find how many projects (and in which sectors) are being implemented at a given location. The database includes approximately 1,000 communities in Armenia, allowing for accurate mapping of assistance projects throughout the country. The sample image is a screen shot of the map highlighting the locations where U.S. assistance is being provided. In the “live” version of the map, users can select a project and/or site to obtain further information. This screen shot shows that six U.S. Government agencies are actively working on 22 projects in 38 different locations in Shirak marz.

To date, the U.S. Government has provided more than \$1.6 billion in assistance to Armenia. To learn more, see: www.usa.am and click on “Assistance Programs.”

U.S. Government Assistance to Armenia Newsletter is published electronically twice a year by the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, producing Winter-Spring and Summer-Fall issues.

For more information about U.S. Government-funded projects in Armenia please visit our primary website at www.usa.am.

Please also visit individual programs websites:

USAID/Armenia www.usaid.am

USDA in Armenia www.usda.am