

Armenia's 'Child-to-Child' Groups Celebrate Advocacy



Save the Children has worked to support refugees in Armenia since 2008 through assistance from the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. The "Acculturation through Learning Program," which Save the Children is currently implementing in Darbnik, a village in Ararat province populated mainly by refugees from Azerbaijan and Iraq, is but one example.

One component of the program supports the integration of refugee school children into the local community and culture through the development of a supportive and inclusive environment. Save the Children uses the 'Child to Child' (CtC) approach, which enables children to play an active and responsible role in their own integration and development through their involvement in activities that both challenge and empower them.

Within the program, Save the Children has established seven CtC groups of approximately 20 school children each, and encourages the participants to design and deliver small activities. The activities are developed in response to community/in-school issues that the children identify themselves.

Children from diverse backgrounds are coming together with the support of Save the Children to tackle shared concerns

Last year, the children developed and implemented small projects related to environmental issues, solid waste management and gender-based violence. Through the program, children also gained a shared sense of purpose and were able to make contributions in real life situations.

For example, the school director's decision to dismiss a teacher — who was also the facilitator of CtC groups in Darbnik — caused quite a stir within the community. The children wrote a letter to the principal advocating for the reinstatement of their teacher. They described her professionalism, leadership, understanding and support of her students. They also stated that they would seek the support of their recently acquired contacts within Save the Children, the UN, local and national authorities. Within two days, the teacher was re-hired.



Armenian children – refugees from Iraq and Azerbaijan and locals -come together to deal with issues

"Now we know that we have the power to solve the problems we face as children."

- 15 year old Nairi

Kindergarten of Khachpar Village Community

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December 2, 2010, was an exciting day for the village of Khachpar and its children as Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch of the U.S. Embassy in Armenia and Mr. Ghazar Martirosyan, Head of Khachpar community, cut the ribbon marking the opening of the village's newly reconstructed kindergarten. Through a \$25,000 grant from the U.S. Department of State, Counterpart International was able to completely reconstruct the village's kindergarten.

Counterpart oversaw the implementation and management of the project, which began in September 2010 and just concluded in November.



Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch and Mr. Ghazar Martirosyan at the opening ceremony



Bedroom



Playroom

Over 98 percent of Khachpar's 2,700 inhabitants are refugees from Azerbaijan who settled in Armenia in the late 1980s. Approximately 30 percent of the residents still have not received Armenian citizenship. Mayor Martirosyan identified the lack of a kindergarten as one of the community's priorities. In the more than 20 years since the refugees' arrival, the community has not had a functioning kindergarten. Children either traveled to other villages or with their parents to Yerevan to attend classes while their parents worked.

In addition to USG support, Khachpar's mayor also donated furniture, school supplies and a playground.

In addition to providing a safer and more hygienic learning environment, the new kindergarten will facilitate teaching of the Armenian language, which along with early exposure to Armenian culture, will help the children become better integrated into Armenian society.



Medications Bring Great Relief to Vulnerable Families in Armenia



Since 2001, International Relief Development (IRD) has delivered almost \$62 million worth of medicine, medical supplies, and non-medical commodities to vulnerable populations in Armenia through the U.S. Department of State. In 2007, IRD Armenia expanded its pharmaceutical distribution program to include the village of Aragats in Armavir marz, a service welcomed by the villagers who are now able to visit clinics for free medicine. This includes those with chronic health conditions.

Two Aragatsotn marz residents currently benefiting from the program and receiving important medications free of charge include 75-year-old Mnatsakan Barseghyan and 83-year-old Nadejda Asatryan. Their stories are below.



Mnatsakan lives with his son, daughter-in-law, and four grandchildren. For the past 18 years he has suffered from bronchial asthma and high arterial blood pressure, relying on medicines such as salbutamol, prednisolone, aminophylline, and captopril to manage the symptoms. While he was employed, Mnatsakan was able to pay for his medicine. Now however, he only receives a small pension. He fears that his medical costs are a burden on the household's already limited budget



which is stretched thinly among other six residents.

Mnatsakan was relieved last year when IRD came to his village and began providing free medicines to the local clinic. He has since become a regular visitor and is grateful to be able to lessen the financial strain on his family.

“I am so thankful to IRD for noticing our village and for lending a helping hand to our needy people.” - Mnatsakan Barseghyan

Nadejda lives alone in a large house that belonged to her father. As a history teacher, she worked with children her entire life. With no immediate family however, she relies on her small pension of about \$80 a month to make ends meet. In recent years she has developed several chronic health conditions, including hypertension. She was one of the many villagers who welcomed IRD's pharmaceutical support to the village medical clinic.

“For a normal and decent life a person needs several conditions. Health is the most important one among those. What would I do without IRD medicines?! Please, continue your kind work to help me and people like me.” - Nadejda Asatryan



Nadejda with nurses



Armenian Scientists Receive \$35,000 in Grants From The 2010 Graduate Research Assistance and Support Program (GRASP III)

The Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Global, the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA), and the National Foundation of Science and Advanced Technologies (NFSAT), recently announced the results of the third Graduate Research Assistance and Support Program (GRASP- III). Together the science organizations awarded seven Armenian graduate students each \$5,000. These grants aim to encourage the most promising young scientists and engineers in Armenia to stay in the country to establish research careers, ultimately contributing to the development of Armenia's knowledge-based economy.

Grants were awarded based on a two-part international peer review: Individual proposals were first reviewed by a panel of experts, followed by a secondary panel of both Armenian and American scientists; the results were then compared and final funding recommendations were made. As in all CRDF Global and NFSAT competitions, applicants automatically received anonymous written peer review comments on their applications.

Funding for the 2010 GRASP III grants was provided by equal cost-sharing between CRDF Global and NAS RA. CRDF Global funds are made available by funding through the U.S. Department of State.



Awarding Grantees

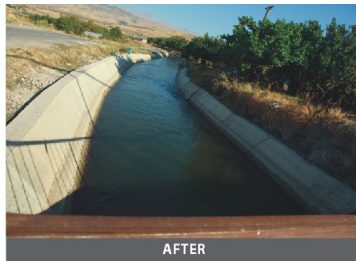


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Four Years of Partnership for Sustainable Development



September 2010 marked the end of the fourth year and the beginning of the fifth and final year of implementation of the MCA-Armenia Program. Through this Program, funded by the U.S. Government’s Millennium Challenge Corporation and implemented by the Government of Armenia, nearly \$180 million is being invested into the rehabilitation of Armenia’s vital irrigation infrastructure as well as to provide extensive technical and financial assistance to rural farmers and to the government irrigation entities that support them.



MCA-Armenia Program’s Infrastructure Activity is refurbishing portions of Armenia’s main canal systems; modernizing some of the most urgently needed pumping stations; introducing new gravity irrigation schemes; building new tertiary canals; and restoring sections of the Ararat Valley Drainage system. Major infrastructure accomplishments to date include:

- 20 km of lining completed in 6 main canals;
- 41 km of lining completed in 5 gravity canals;
- 231 irrigation structures rehabilitated in 6 main canals;
- 65 km of tertiary canals rehabilitated in more than 10 communities;
- 48 km of main drainage canals cleaned in Ararat Valley;
- 22 industrial irrigating pumps imported and ready to be installed in 17 pumping stations across Armenia.



Under the Water to Market Activity (WtM) the Program is training 45,000 farmers in improved agricultural practices, providing \$8.5 million in small loans to farmers and

strengthening the institutional capacities of irrigation system management entities such as Water User Associations (WUAs) and Water Supply Agencies (WSAs). Major training and technical support accomplishments to date include:

- Over 44,000 farmers trained in improved agricultural practices;
- Over 216 farmer demonstration sites established across Armenia;
- 212 enterprises/farmer groups assisted; \$8.5 million disbursed in loans to 840 farmers.
- Management Improvement Plans developed in all 44 Water User Associations (WUAs) and Water Supply Agencies (WSAs)
- Training, office furniture, computer equipment (including software) and mobile water measurement and management devices provided to all 44 WUAs and WSAs(WUAs and WSAs)



When completed in September 2011, the MCA-Armenia Program is expected to benefit over 420,000 rural residents in 350 communities across Armenia .



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AND THE GOLDEN KEY GOES TO...

On 28 September 2010, the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia (FOICA), through USAID support, organized the 8th Freedom of Information Annual Award Ceremony at Regineh Hotel in Yerevan. By FOICA tradition, those who made significant contributions to access to public information are awarded “Golden Keys” as a symbol of openness and transparency, while those who lack transparency receive a “Rusty Lock” as a symbol of secrecy and refusal for information sharing. Nominations were selected by an independent jury, comprised of nine local NGO representatives.

USAID/Armenia Mission Director Jatinder Cheema presented a Golden Key award to the Goris Municipality (represented by Goris Mayor Nelson Voskanyan) for being the most transparent institution. Golden Keys also went to the RA e-governance website (www.egov.am), “We Are the Owners of this Town” civic initiative, Aravot Daily journalist Aram Zakarian, Hakob Tovmasian (as the citizen that best exercised his right for information), and “Fourth Microphone” TV program (h2 TV channel). The Lock in 2010 went to the Mayor of Stepanavan, Sargis Gharakeshishyan, representing the institution that worst fulfilled freedom of information obligations as set by the RA law.

“The Freedom of Information Annual Award Ceremony strengthens civic oversight over state bodies, makes them work more transparently and be accountable to the public. For many institutions this is a motivation to improve their work, assess weaknesses and resolve them. At the same time, this event encourages the citizens, journalists and NGOs to be advocates of the right for information and be active users of the “Freedom of Information Law,” says FOICA president Shushan Doydoyan.



USAID/Armenia Mission Director Jatinder Cheema hands over the Golden Key award for to the Mayor of Goris, Nelson Voskanyan

OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE...

USAID works with civil society, alternative media, local government, women and youth, and the Armenian government to promote democratic governance. The new \$15.5-million **Civil Society and Local Government Support Program** aims to increase the level of organized civic activism at the local and national levels while promoting more participatory, decentralized, accountable governance toward a more democratic society.



Stephen Brager, Director of USAID/Armenia Democracy & Governance Office, welcomes guests to the official launch of USAID's new Alternative Resources in Media project.

As part of this effort, USAID works with municipal governments to increase their ability to plan strategically, consult the public, and develop local budgets that incorporate citizens' demands into their policies and the range of services they provide.

Bringing extensive international practice and local expertise together, the new \$4-million **Alternative Resources in Media** project will promote media pluralism and improve access to independent and quality news sources. In this effort, the project will support traditional and alternative media to embrace and utilize new communication technologies and will foster civic demand for alternative content. The project will also help address key issues affecting the media environment in Armenia and will work closely with media support organizations to foster an enabling environment for diverse and freer media in Armenia.

As part of the Mission's efforts focused on cross-border relations and regional cooperation, USAID's \$2.4 million **Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement** project is aimed at developing new business partnerships and regional professional networks, engaging civil society in alliance-building to further contribute to Armenia-Turkey normalization, as well as building a favorable environment for dialogue.

(USAID, cont.)

NEW BEGININGS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES



Beginning in 2009, USAID’s Small Scale Infrastructure Program (SSIP) has worked with Armenian communities, particularly those in rural areas, to address local infrastructure needs through small-scale public works projects. Projects aim to alleviate the impact of the global economic crisis and while also creating jobs and improving lives.

In fall 2010, USAID successfully completed four renovation projects in different parts of Armenia. In Sevkar, the extensive renovation of a village school enabled it to re-open after almost two decades. SSIP partner CHF redesigned and reconstructed the kindergarten by installing new windows, electrical, plumbing and heating systems, as well as refinishing walls, replacing the floor and roof. CHF also improved landscaping at the site.

The assistance also enabled the establishment of partnerships for the village: the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program supported the construction of a solar heating system for the kindergarten as well as solar accumulators that provide environmentally friendly energy to the system. SSIP partner Shen NGO (with support from Orange/Armenia), World Vision Armenia, and Bridge of Hope NGO provided furniture, kitchen appliances and a piano to the kindergarten.

As a result of this project, 100 community children now attend preschool. Moreover, 39 unemployed community members were hired for the construction phase and 15 people have obtained full-time jobs at the renovated kindergarten.

This was one of 11 projects USAID is implementing in Tavush marz and is among the nearly 50 priority water and gas systems, sport halls and kindergartens across Armenia that will be renovated with partners CHF and Shen.



USAID CELEBRATES MORE ACHIEVEMENTS

From 2007 to 2010, USAID’s \$3.2-million **Commercialization of Energy Efficiency Project** worked with private sector energy service companies and banks in Armenia to foster the establishment of a viable, self-sustaining energy market. USAID supported the installation of local heating systems at 20 institutions, including hospitals across the country, educational institutions, schools, charitable organizations and others with limited resources to improve their operational efficiency. The program improved energy services for over 30,000 people and secured 50% cost sharing from partners, demonstrating the importance of proper financing mechanisms and the benefits of switching to energy-efficient solutions.

From 2005 to 2010, USAID’s \$16.1-million **Primary Health Care Reform Project** supported the RA Ministry of Health to reform primary healthcare (PHC) management and practices and to increase the utilization of higher-quality PHC services in Armenia. Achievements include: introduction of a nationwide patient enrollment system with nearly 90% of Armenia’s population already registered with a health care provider of their choice; renovation, equipment, and furnishing of 175 rural health posts; introduction of a “quality assurance” system in 139 larger PHC facilities; and training of 500 rural nurses in family/community nursing.



USAID/Armenia Mission Director Jatinder Cheema and Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch visit a CEEP site in Tsakhkadzor

In the same timeframe, the \$8.6-million **Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) Project** provided a comprehensive package of human and institutional capacity development services, including needs, impact and performance assessments; identification of performance gaps, and monitoring and evaluation of capacity development processes.