



հայաստան համահայկական հիմնադրամ
The Armenia Fund



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Rural Development Program

DATE: 28 March, 2008
FROM: RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OFFICE
SUBJECT: WEEKLY UPDATE OF THE ARMENIA FUND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Another week has gone by. If we were to name it, we would call it a small projects week. With the parallel realization of three initiatives, this is quite an obvious choice, really. Read on our news in brief section to find out more. We will also talk about the village cultural projects and how you can your input in bringing new ideas and opening new horizons for the children in the border communities. In this week's video section we will ask you to answer one simple question: do they deserve?

NEWS IN BRIEF

- As part of the dairy production development initiative, this week we realized two small projects that saw two farmers in the border communities of Gorayk (Syunik region) and Sizavet (Shirak region) receive automated milking units. The project was realized in cooperation with the dairy producers association of Armenia and is part of a large scale project that aims at boosting dairy production in the border regions. Another component of this initiative is the establishment of a milk collection center in the Khashtarak cluster community of Azatamut.
- Speaking of Azatamut, this community will be the recipient of the third small project realized this week. The project will see the newly renovated library of the village receive a TV, DVD player and a variety of educational and recreational DVDs. We hope that with this project, the library will reclaim its place in the lives of people of Azatamut as a fun and interesting place to be and a viable alternative to their current activities. The initiative was made possible by Ms. Shakeh Havan who also gave us the idea for the article below.



A CALL FOR ACTION

Initiatives aimed at renovating schools, establishing gas lines, repairing roads and reviving defunct drinking water networks are essentials of any development program. These projects are called to address the basic needs of people and, naturally, the infrastructure amendment projects are one of the cornerstones of the Armenia Fund Rural Development Program.

Another cornerstone of the Program is the economic facilitation component that aims at boosting the economic potential of the border villages and helping people earn stable and dependable income. So, on one hand people will have the basic infrastructure and on the other - new financial possibilities. Will this solve the problems of the border communities? Our answer in this case would be – no, it will not, because an important element will be missing from the equation: culture.



The simple truth is that without strong cultural stimuli, without a real cultural connection with the village and finally, without the fun factor of living in the village, the efficiency of all the massive infrastructure amendment and economic facilitation projects will be diminished. There will always be a better road or a higher salary somewhere else and if a person does not feel the cultural bond with his village, nothing will stop him from leaving it.

What can we do? First of all, we cannot import culture. We must appreciate the distinct features of each village and find ways to help surface the potential of people living there. People need this as much as they need a functional drinking water network or a repaired road. For example, the

librarian in the village of Khashtarak has organized a student drama club, which, lacking a physical space to practice (the community center is in ruins), gathers in her house. The performances are few and far apart but always gather a large audience.



The village of Azatamut has an art club, where over fifty students gather every day to paint, although the supplies are scarce and hard to find. The children also do not have a qualified teacher who could give them guidance and assist them in developing their skills. We are now talking to a number of artists who have volunteered to conduct classes with the students of Azatamut. We see this initiative as a pilot to a larger endeavor that would reach all the border villages of Armenia.

What can you do? If you are a painter, a sculptor or any other art specialist and would be willing to share your know-how and ideas with the people living in the border communities, if you want to have your input in presenting a new vision and helping people discover and develop their talents, now is your chance to act! Please contact us and make a difference today.

