



հայաստան համահայկական հիմնադրամ  
The Armenia Fund



ԳՅՈՒՂԱԿԱԼ ԶԱՐԳԱՅՄԱԼ ԾՐԱԳԻՐ  
Rural Development Program

DATE: 15 FEBRUARY, 2008  
FROM: RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OFFICE  
SUBJECT: WEEKLY UPDATE OF THE ARMENIA FUND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

With St. Valentine's Day just behind us and the Presidential elections fast approaching, this week we are truly caught in the middle of the two great powers – love and politics. Nevertheless, we will resist the temptation to stray away and are determined to stick to our core topics. So, this week's topics are: the Rural Development Program working trip to Karabakh (with a little something extra) and yet another small project coming to life. In the spotlight of the meet the people section is Sevan Varteressian, who made the latest small project possible.

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM VISIT TO KARABAKH



On February 11, the Armenia Fund Rural Development Program staff made a three day working trip to Karabakh. The aim of the visit was on the ground assessment of the situation in some of the border villages.

The revitalization of the border villages of Karabakh is very much in the focus of the Rural Development Program and while the challenges we face are comparable to the ones we have in Armenia, the magnitude of the work to be done is significantly larger. Where in Armenia we are working on reviving the infrastructure damaged by the lack of maintenance and a turbulent transition period, in Karabakh we are dealing with places directly and painfully affected by an armed conflict.

While the capital Stepanakert is a rapidly developing, vibrant city, the rural areas still very much bear the heavy marks of war. The road through these villages is a powerful testament to the extent of the devastation. A lot has been done both by the governments of Armenia and Karabakh and organizations like the Armenia Fund yet the signs of war are not easy to



erase and there is still a long way to go to ensure the people of Karabakh a normal life.



As part of our trip we visited several border villages in Karabakh's Martakert region. The economic development and market access are serious issues that need to be tackled in these communities as the roads that are the lifelines of commerce are almost nonexistent: in the wintertime, these villages are virtually cut off from the rest of the world; all that the people there can do is hope that the winter will not last too long.

In the village of Mokhratagh we had a very personal experience of what it is like to try to get somewhere without a road. Our car (a Niva – Russia's (inadequate) answer to Jeep) was trying to make its way up a steep hill, which wasn't an attempt at extreme tourism but simply the road to the local community administration. For half an hour, the car was sliding, turning, getting stuck and performing all the associated actions except for moving forward. Only thanks to the help (and valuable advice) of the community members and the efforts of our driver (he should do off-road racing!) were we finally able to reach our destination point, (follow this [link](#) to catch a bit of the action for yourself). For us this was a one time occurrence, for people living here this is everyday life.

What really stays with you after the trip to the villages is the admiration with the people who live and try to build their lives there. Deprived of almost everything that is taken by us for granted, these people are full of resolve to carry on. Their spirit is unwavering and they have great hopes for a better future for themselves and their children. Our job is to do everything to make sure that their hopes become a reality.

## **YET ANOTHER SMALL PROJECT COMES TO LIFE**

The launch of the small projects by the Armenia Fund was met with a lot of enthusiasm by people from all around the world. This enthusiasm materializes into specific projects coming to life. The latest project will see Lori region's Dzyunashogh community library receive a computer and a printer.

The project was made possible by Mr. Sevan Varteressian from the US. With the funds already transferred, we were able to go on and purchase the



necessary equipment and will deliver it to the border village in the beginning of the next week.

The community of Dzyunashogh met the news with excitement. In fact, the community made the decision to undertake the reconstruction of the local library with their own resources. In a place where there are scores over scores of unsolved problems, this kind of a decision is a strong statement and an indicator of just how important this kind of projects are for the community.

The Dzyunashogh community school will also receive furniture as part of the Armenia Fund joint project with Hay Dproc Foundation.

### MEET THE PEOPLE: SEVAN VARTERESSIAN



This week, our spotlight is on Sevan Varteressian, who made possible the realization of the Dzyunashogh community library computer/printer small project. Mr. Varteressian and his wife Miganoosh have been closely following the progress of the Rural Development Program through our regular updates. This is what Mr. Varteressian told us in a short interview:

“My wife and I are glad to have been of help for a good cause. Once an Armenian is aware of the difficulties of his country people, it will take a cold heart to refuse help. Your reports are instrumental in providing vision of our country people.

From the three programs that you had offered, the computer program was most attractive as an informative, organizational and educational tool, especially for the children. I hope it will have Internet connection for the people to have an understanding of the world.

And why we chose Dzyunashogh? Since we haven't been to those villages, because it had the most beautiful and unique name. We hope the children will take advantage of our help to advance their knowledge and skills and become successful people and in turn to help others.”