



հայաստան համահայկական հիմնադրամ
The Armenia Fund



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Rural Development Program

DATE: 19 October, 2007
FROM: RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION OFFICE
SUBJECT: WEEKLY UPDATE OF THE ARMENIA FUND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This week our efforts were concentrated on Khashtarak cluster's Ditavan community's infrastructure and meetings with international organizations.

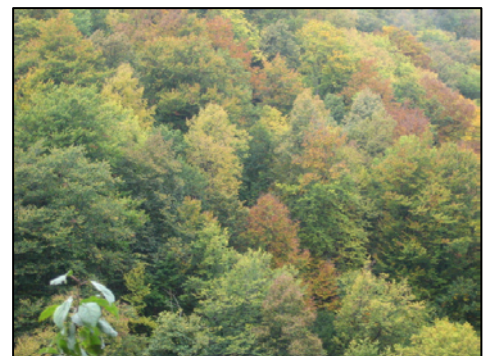
DITAVAN INFRASTRUCTURE



On October 16, 2007, the Armenia Fund Executive Director Vahe Aghabegians accompanied by the Rural Development Program staff and Armen Ekserciyan (Argentina) made a working trip to the Khashtarak cluster's Ditavan community. Mr. Ekserciyan has undertaken sponsoring the infrastructure component of Ditavan.

In Ditavan, the working group had a meeting with the mayor and community members. They also visited the school and a few village households. The aim was to hear a maximum amount of different opinions, discuss and determine the infrastructural priorities for Ditavan. The community's basic infrastructural problems are typical for all the border villages: no road, no gas, no water, etc.

While the opinions varied on the next project to be undertaken in the community, there was agreement for the provision of natural gas. With the winter fast approaching, the villagers will once again face the challenge of heating their homes and the school with wood which is equally labor demanding and damaging for the environment and the surroundings.





Thus, the building of a three kilometer gas pipeline to the village was singled out as the initial infrastructural project in the village. At the same time, both Mr. Aghabegians and Mr. Ekserciyan underlined that the development or renovation of one single branch of infrastructure is not a universal remedy for the villagers' problems. The solution lies in parallel infrastructural and economic development.

Only that approach can guarantee the long term success of the program. They also stressed the importance of the active participation of the community members in all the processes.

We contacted the "ArmRusGasArd": the organization responsible for the gasification projects in Armenia, to order the designs for Ditavan gasification project. It will take around 45 days to prepare the designs, which means that we will be ready to start the project implementation in the beginning of winter.

The next day, Mr. Ekserciyan visited the Alishan LTD food processing plant, which is preparing to contribute to the economic development component of the Program by providing a ready market for the produce grown in the Khashtarak cluster villages. Mr. Ekserciyan and Alishan LTD's Serjik Movsisian talked about the coordination of economic facilitation and infrastructure development projects.

COLLABORATION WITH THE ARMENIAN TECHNOLOGY GROUP (ATG)

The Armenia Fund Rural Development Program staff had a meeting with Armenian Technology Group Foundation: Armenia Executive Director Gagik Mkrtchyan concerning their involvement in the crop growing projects of the Program. ATG is an experienced player in the field and possesses the know-how needed to jump start some of the agricultural projects in the Khashtarak cluster.

During the meeting, we talked about the project of planting garlic on five hectares of land in Ditavan community as a demonstration site for the local farmers. Mr. Mkrtchian suggested sending a working group of ATG experts to the region, where they would look at the proposed land for the project and work out the technical details of the planting process. He also suggested overseeing the process in all the stages of cultivating process. ATG will also provide their expertise in the springtime, when around one hectare of the land for the pilot project will be used to plant different types of crops to find



out whether they can grow in the region and give the villagers the experience and knowledge to carry on the process by themselves.

We also talked about another project undertaken by the ATG. They have taken one hectare of land in the village of Khashtarak and are planning to plant six different types of wheat to determine the best sort for the region. The planting process will start by the end of this week.

Organizing vocational trainings for the farmers is another field where the Rural Development Program can collaborate with the ATG. As a first step of that collaboration, an ATG expert on chemical and pesticide use will conduct a seminar in Khashtarak cluster.

After the seminar, the community members themselves will have the opportunity to define what the topic of the next lecture will be via filling out questionnaires. Mr. Mkrtchyan says that the best time for organizing vocational trainings is wintertime, when farmers are not busy in the fields.

We will have a follow up meeting with Gagik Mkrtchyan after the ATG working group visit to Tavush region to discuss the results and define further steps.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Aghabegians had a meeting with the representatives of Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC) where they discussed the possible cooperation in improving the health care sector in the communities within the Rural Development Program.

AMIC is an international body of Armenian physicians called to create links between Armenian health care professionals throughout the world. Established in 1990, AMIC is a non-profit organization with its head office in Montreal.

AMIC expressed interest in providing expertise and know-how to create a model of an efficient mechanism which would serve the needs of rural areas often deprived of basic health care. In one case, it could be the establishment of a full health care point, in the other: the provision of a mobile health care facility. In any case the training of the existing medical personnel is considered of utmost importance.