

SUCCESS STORY: *Increasing Rural Employment*

ARDI PROGRAM (Advanced Rural Development Initiative)

- **COMMUNITY – ARENI, VAYOTS DZOR**
- **OWNER – DAVID SIMONYAN**
- **BUSINESS – B&B**
- **PROJECT – SMALL GRANT PROJECT**
- **YEAR – 2015**



ARDI is a five-year program funded by USAID. Launched in September 2013, the program aims to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development in select rural communities of Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Lori provinces of Armenia.

The program supports interventions in **three main rural economic sectors and value chains: dairy processing, fruit processing and rural tourism.**

David Simonyan is a young entrepreneur from Areni village – the home of the famous Areni grapes and wine. He was very young when his family moved to capital Yerevan, where he graduated from high school and enrolled in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Yerevan State University. At 24, David is a hard-working and spir-



ited young man, gifted with a business-man mindset. Forging good connections with various Armenian tour agencies and applying his family's unique talents, in 2014 he started to offer Areni visitors delicious homemade lunch (prepared by his mother), homemade wine (made by his father), and hiking tours around the historic and scenic sites of the village. Soon, lunch offerings expanded to include a set of agritourism activities, whereby visitors could engage in wine making, baking of the Armenian national bread *lavash*, honey straining and cheese making.

With the flow of customers, David soon came up with the idea of establishing a bed-and-breakfast. He decided to move back from Yerevan and resettle in Areni, renovate the parental house and furnish it, adding rural traditional and modern comfort to the place.

During this period, David participated in ARDI project's entrepreneurial training and successfully applied to the project's Small Grants Program with the desire to expand his rural hospitality business into a fully functioning B&B. He made a significant investment, including loans from microfinance organizations.

In 2015, 73 guests stayed at David's new B&B and 3,000 guests visited for lunch or dinner. David's "Areni Wine Art" company has already secured 13 connections with local tour agencies.

While advancing his business, David is also strong about forging new partnerships. Through ARDI, one of his neighbors had started a small business of dried fruits production. David has partnered with the neighbor and now offers dried fruits to his customers.

"I really hope tourism develops in Areni village. The opening of more hospitality centers will enhance our competitive advantage in the tourism market," says David.



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