The village of Shatin in the Vayots Dzor region is targeted by ARDI program for its great potential for the development of rural tourism. This conclusion was based on the results of the community competitiveness and value chain assessment conducted by the ARDI program. This region’s beautiful natural surroundings and rich history attract sizeable foreign and local tourists annually, but they don’t stay overnight because of the lack of suitable accommodations. The area is appealing because of its great hiking trips as well.

In 2014, three families were supported from the Shatin village to start a B&B business. Their homes were renovated and refurbished, and the families were trained on how to start and effectively manage their rural B&Bs, assisted with marketing opportunities and forward linkages. These newly renovated B&Bs named “Suzy”, “Alisa” and “Sofya”, are open and ready to host visitors. The owners provide additional services such as: pick up and drop off visitors from bus stations, guide them to nearby sights of historical interest, including Arates, Tsakhatic Kar, Smbataberd, Zorakan monuments, and the Jewish cemetery, provide homemade lunch and dinners for the excursions.

On March 26th, nine members from the Armenia’s Women’s International Network (WIN) group visited the B&Bs in Shatin. The women come from different parts of the world, including France, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Armenia. The owners of the Sofya B&B, who provided a delicious homemade lunch and served as tour guides, hosted the group and took them to nearby historical sites. The group also visited the ruins of the Basilica church and viewed the famous Bezoarian goats on a cliff next to the B&B. The international guests were enchanted by their natural surroundings, and commented on the drastic climate change, from sunny Shatin to snowy Arates, just 30 minutes away. “All guests were impressed by this area’s beautiful landscape, proximity of some archeological sites, as well as by the mountain goat observation point - the only one of its kind in Armenia. Our group visited all three B&Bs, and had a pleasure to meet with enthusiastic members of the three families that endured into this B&B business venture, eagerly waiting for future guests.” said Jelena McCoy, one of the WIN group leaders.

B&Bs FB Page http://goo.gl/dv5wo2
Contact phone numbers:
Sofya B&B + 374 (0) 94-697-316
Alisa B&B + 374 (0) 98-727-056
Suzy B&B + 374 (0) 93-241-241.

ARDI is a 5-year program funded by the US Agency for International Development. Launched in September 2013, the program aims to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development of select rural communities in the Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Lori marzes (provinces) of Armenia. The program will support interventions in three main rural economic sectors/Value Chains involving Dairy Processing, Fruit Processing and Rural Tourism.

The ARDI program is being implemented by the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia and Heifer Project International Armenian Branch Office.
Enhancing Cooperation Among Farmers

In February and March, the ARDI program organized a series of training on Cooperative Marketing Tools and Best Practices for nine new or existing farmers’ cooperatives in the target villages of Debed, Ahnidzor, Mets Ayrum, Shnogh, Arpi, Areni, Gndevaz, Aghnjadzor and Zaritap in the Lori and Vayots Dzor marzes. Five of these cooperatives, through program support, will be operating a milk collection center, collecting raw milk from cluster communities and selling it to dairy processors. Four cooperatives will be operating fresh fruit cold storage units, and will sell the stored fruits to local large markets and retailers during off season at higher price.


In Country Best Practice Exchange

On March 5th, the ARDI program organized an exchange visit for dairy cooperatives. Over 30 community and cooperative members and farmers from seven program areas visited three different successful dairy cooperatives in Agarak, Stepanavan and Gargar to learn from their experiences. The exchange visit was very productive and an exciting experience for the participants. Based on ARDI’s community competitiveness assessment and value chain analysis in these communities, the milk value chain has been identified as an advantage with great potential for development.

On March 11th, ARDI organized a similar exchange visit for six communities from Lori marz and eight communities from Vayots Dzor. They visited the cooperative in the village of Lukashin in the Armavir marz to learn from the experience of the local cooperative. The president of the Lukashin cooperative shared his knowledge and best practices of developing a fruit cooperative. It is interesting to note that apricot sales can increased 70% if the cold storage system is used.

On April 1st, the three B&B owners from Shatin visited Yeghegnadzor city for a best practice exchange visit. The host was Mrs. Gohar Gevorgyan with over 15 years of experience operating “Gohar Guest House” B&B in Yeghegnadzor. Mrs. Gevorgyan shared her knowledge and described the challenges and lessons she learned over the years.

Upcoming Activities

ARDI program will grant $1,500 to 50 successful applicants, mostly women and youth, to start their businesses.

Start the construction and/or renovation of:
4 Bed&Breakfasts
5 Milk Collection Units
4 Cold Storages for Fruits
3 Irrigation Projects.