**ARDI is a five-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.**
Partnership for Synergy

ARDI Program partners with different organizations to deliver synergy, add breadth and depth, leverage know-how and boost new and creative ideas aiming to achieve sustainable and effective results.

Since the launch ARDI program has had a long list of partners. During recent months the list had two more additions: AYWA (Armenian Young Women Association) and “My Armenia” of Smithsonian Institution.

Last year in Akhtala city of Lori region AYWA NGO re-established “Nurik” tourism development center with the support of USAID. The center is situated near Akhtala city’s Surb Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) church.

A good number of locals are employed or manage their own small businesses with the help of Nurik’s management. ARDI Program joined three of such businesses by making financial investments while AYWA provides training and ongoing support. All beneficiaries made their own financial investments for the projects. ARDI program values such co-financing as it enhances the responsibility of beneficiaries.

Arpenik Darchinyan from Akhtala city started traditional bread production in a brick oven right next to the center’s building in an open area. She is a professional cook and accumulated good experience in baking traditional bread. As the business location is very close to the church and is a touristic location, having an open area for bread backing actually attracts more visitors who cannot stay indifferent to the smell of freshly baked bread. Arpenik is also providing master classes for tourists/visitors. The bread is being sold at the center for visitors and tourists as well as in the grocery stores of Akhtala and nearby cities.

Anahit Kocharyan initiated a small pottery production at the “Nurik” center. Her big love for pottery making gives life and breath to clay and passes the positive energy to customers. Anahit sells her beautiful souvenir pottery at the center and provides master classes for tourists/visitors.

Another entrepreneur, Sona Shahkhyyan is weaving carpet/rug at the center and making souvenirs as well. The produce is sold at the center souvenir shop; she also provides master classes for tourists/visitors and local community members. ARDI program supported her to obtain a carpet making bench which was put to work right away.

Another cooperation that ARDI Program started recently is “My Armenia” project of Smithsonian Institution. “My Armenia” is a collaborative cultural sustainability and tourism program between USAID, Smithsonian Institution, and the people of Armenia. The organization harnesses the power of research, documentation, and storytelling to strengthen cultural sustainability through community-based tourism development. The project provides training and cultivates creative ideas on how to preserve heritage, make it a competitive advantage and attract more tourists. The first cooperation between My Armenia and ARDI Program was initiated in Rind community where beneficiary Anna Khachatryan with her husband is engaged in wood carving. For years they have been making cross stones, wooden wall watches, plates, wine bottle trays and more. They sell the products in souvenir shops near Noravank monastery. ARDI program supported the family to renovate and remodel the first floor of their house for the purpose of holding master classes. It serves both as a workshop area and showroom for their products. With the help of ARDI program now they have extended their services and provide master classes both for tourists and for community people, especially school children.

The Smithsonian Institution’s “My Armenia” project will help them in promoting and marketing of their business.

Completed Projects

- Milk Collection Unit - 7
- Animal Water Point – 53 in 16 communities
- Irrigation Water System– 14
- Bed & Breakfast– 9
- Fruit Cold Storage - 4
- Farmer Service Center - 1
- Dried Fruit Production - 1
- Laboratory - 1
- Seed Grant Project - 82

Upcoming Activities

Start the construction and/or renovation of:
- Bed & Breakfast - 4
- Seed Grant Project - 18
- Dried Fruit Production - 1
- Animal Water Point – 2
- Dairy Projects - 1
- Farmer Service Center - 2

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