
Armenia Fund launches Rural Development Program

Hayastan All-Armenian Fund
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September 19, 2007- September 18, 2007, was the official launch date for Armenia Fund's Rural Development Program. The event took place in Khashtarak village of Tavush region. It is one of the six villages included in the Rural Development Program first cluster. The other five villages are Aknaghbyur, Azatamut, Ditavan, Lusadzor and Lusahovit. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Vartan Oskanian, Armenia Fund Executive Director Vahe Aghabegians and the Regional Governor of Tavush Armen Ghularian.

Mayors and some of the inhabitants of all six villages involved in the Program gathered in front of Khashtarak School where the event took place.

"In the past, there have been many words but few deeds. The time has come for an initiative that will get the job done. We deeply believe that the Armenia Fund's Rural Development Program is that initiative", said Minister Oskanian, who is the Member of the Board of Trustees of Armenia Fund and the Coordinator for the Rural Development Program. "This Program enjoys the widest support of both the President of Armenia and the Diasporans. It truly has a strong potential for becoming an all-Armenian endeavor. Today, as we signal the launch of the first cluster of the Rural Development Program we are already working on establishing clusters in Lori and Syunik and expanding it to all of Armenia's rural communities."

Executive Director Vahe Aghabegians stressed the importance of the active involvement of members of all the communities concerned in the program's implementation.

"This is a quest we have to accomplish together. Together we must share the responsibility for the success of this enterprise. We need your involvement in all the phases of project implementation", said Mr. Aghabegians. "This Program has two fundamental components: infrastructure and economic development. Infrastructure alone cannot solve the problems that stand before Armenia's rural communities. We also need strong economic initiatives to truly revitalize our villages, to halt the immigration and bring people back home where they can live, work and prosper."

All of the villages included in the Program are located close to Armenia's border with Azerbaijan. Border communities are the prerogative of the Rural Development Program as they are in the most vulnerable position in a country which otherwise registers tremendous economic growth. At the same time, they are vitally important for the country's future for both strategic and economic reasons. The Government of Armenia addressed the issue by

developing the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Rural Development Program will act as a supplementary mechanism accelerating the process of economic and infrastructure development.

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