GYUMRI HOUSING PROJECT:

AFTER YEARS OF SUFFERING, A FRESH START

A BEAUTIFUL HOME FOR THE TALENTED SUKIASYANS

NATALYA AND THE MIRACLE OF STARTING A NEW LIFE
In 2014, when we first visited the Erzrumyan family, in Gyumri, the contents of their refrigerator consisted of a bowlful of raw potatoes and some apples. That was a good thing, because the kids wouldn’t go hungry that day. The family—grandmother Rosa and her two sons and three daughters, including Narine, a single mom and her two young girls—lived in a hovel, also known as a domik, that used to be a car garage. Rosa suffered from epilepsy, and one of her sons had undergone a series of surgeries after being severely burned in a house fire. Conditions inside the rickety hut were unsanitary, with a leaky roof and an utter lack of the basic amenities most of us take for granted. The family scraped by with minimal government assistance and Narine’s meager earnings as a seasonal farmworker. The Erzrumyans’ request for state housing assistance had been turned down. Their future looked increasingly bleak.

One year later, our team, headed by Armenia Fund Projects Department director Vardan Partamyan, once again visited the Erzrumyans. We told them benefactors in America had heard of their plight and were ready to be of help. Meanwhile, we said, we had brought them a little present in a sealed envelope. As Narine’s daughters, Lucine, was handed the envelope and opened it, she revealed a key. “This is the key to your new home,” we explained. Narine and her mother were in tears. Within an hour, the family was taken to its new apartment, a comfortable, freshly renovated space that was fully furnished and featured a complement of appliances. With a big smile on her face, Lucine, an outstanding student who also draws, sings, dances, and hopes to be a doctor one day, said she will decorate the walls of her new room with her latest drawings. The Erzrumyans’ old hut has since been dismantled and a tree was planted on the site.
The Erzryan family in front of their old hut. The first time we visited them, the contents of their refrigerator consisted of a bowl of raw potatoes and some apples. And that was a good day, compared with others. The optimist claims that nothing at all is wrong; the pessimist believes that nothing at all is right; and the person with a balanced view—well, that’s difficult to find these days. But we are hopeful, and we believe in the power of positive thinking. We want to help the Erzyrians and other families like them who are struggling to make ends meet. Armenia Fund provided the Erzryan family with a newly renovated, completely furnished apartment in Gyumri’s North 2 neighborhood. For members of the family, the prospect of living with dignity was an overwhelming experience that delighted them at their new home.
The Ercmaryans, including Rosa, her three daughters, and two granddaughters, inside their new apartment after years of languishing in inhuman conditions, the indescribable joy of having things like a modern kitchen with hot and cold running water, appliances such as a stove and a refrigerator, and invaluable comforts such as a heating system.

BEFORE

A BEAUTIFUL HOME FOR THE TALENTED SUKIASYANS

The Sukiasyans were among Gyumri’s forgotten: struggling on the margins, surrounded by dreadful living conditions, barely scraping by. Such circumstances make their story even more amazing, considering that Anahit Sukiasyan, the mother of the family, has been able to raise four exemplary children, despite the odds.

The Sukiasyans have lived in domiks ever since the 1988 earthquake. After years of enduring the abusive behavior of her alcoholic husband, Anahit divorced him in 2011 and eventually rented yet another domik, which she moved into with her children. It was a cramped, battered hut, lacking even the most basic amenities and human comforts, such as a heating system or an actual kitchen. Anahit’s health has declined severely due to decades of being exposed to the cold, dampness, and unsanitary conditions of such hovels. Yet the single mom has always worked extremely hard, washing dishes at restaurants or cleaning houses, determined to help provide a better future for her children.

Anahit’s eldest daughter, Ani, studies at Yerevan’s Agrarian university and is an accomplished singer. The second daughter, Nadejda, has received a scholarship to study at the Fine Arts Academy, also in Yerevan. Anahit’s oldest son, Andranik, is a multiple-award-winning weightlifting champion who now serves in the army, in Artsakh’s “Yeghnikner” regiment. The family’s youngest, Narek, is an extraordinarily bright child, but almost missed out on school because Anahit couldn’t afford to...
For decades, Anahit Sukiasyan has endured life in cold, damp, and unsanitary domiks. Devastated, she could hardly bear to live there. But with guidance from Armenia Fund, she received assistance from Gyumri’s social services, and Narek was not deprived of his education after all.

By 2016, with Anahit’s three older children away studying or serving in the army, only she and Narek were left in the domik. The family’s monthly income consisted of $2 — at best. Anahit was three months behind on her rent and had received an eviction notice. Soon, the entire family would become homeless. Only a miracle could end their plight.

That miracle arrived in late 2015, when representatives of Armenia Fund visited the Sukiasyans at their hut, bringing with them a secret envelope. The honor of opening it was given to Narek. It contained the keys to a new apartment. Yes, after a lifetime of unimaginable suffering, the Sukiasyans were to have their own home.

Later that day, as they were taken to their new residence, tearful family members excitedly took turns to express their joy and gratitude. What they were experiencing, room after room, was a bright, newly renovated, and fully furnished apartment that featured a complement of amenities, including appliances. The freezing cold and dampness of those wretched domiks were now to be a thing of the past.

Anahit would no longer have to grapple with the awful, unsanitary living conditions she had been stuck with most of her adult life. And, as importantly, there was plenty of room in the apartment to accommodate the entire family.

There are hundreds of struggling families in Gyumri, just like the Sukiasyans, who are still waiting for the wonderful day when they’ll leave the indignity of homelessness behind, and be given a fresh horizon to live for.

With your generous support today, we can make their dream come true.
Like a boy in a toy store, Narek couldn’t believe his eyes when he was taken to this sunny, brightly painted room—one of his new home’s many amenities that would give him the chance to grow up like a normal kid. / Narek couldn’t believe his eyes when he was taken to this sunny, brightly painted room—one of his new home’s many amenities that would give him the chance to grow up like a normal kid.

After years of living with his mom in the terrible conditions of their cramped, rickety hut, Narek marvels at his new surroundings, which feature brand-new furniture, a TV, home appliances, and all the comforts one could wish for.

In Armenia, a country known for its deep cultural roots and strong family values, the ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children is crucial. This initiative, supported by a local NGO, aims to create safe spaces for children to grow and thrive.

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NATALYA AND THE MIRACLE OF STARTING A NEW LIFE

It seems incredible that Natalya Struk was able to raise her family in a ramshackle hut, known as a domik, which lacked even the most basic of human comforts. For 16 interminable years, the family endured the indignity of living in the cramped hovel, without an actual kitchen or restroom, and without any of the utility services most of us take for granted. The Strucks were just another statistic in Gyumri’s ongoing homelessness crisis. Born in Moldova, Natalya married her husband, Artur Hoshanyan, and moved to Gyumri in 1993 where they started their family. They moved into their domik in 2000. Despite extreme poverty, and despite the unsanitary, downright inhuman conditions of their crumbling hut, Natalya raised three wonderful, bright children there. Her eldest, Michaela, now 23, works at a retail shop, Arashes, 18, is studying to become a chef, and Diana, 17, is training to become a fashion designer. The family’s latest addition is Natalya’s grandson, three-year-old Aley.

Natalya herself looks after her grandchild or works at a farm whenever possible, while her husband works in Russia. Yet given their meagre income, which amounts to about $150 a month, the family could not possibly rent—let alone buy—a decent home. But they never lost hope.

In 2016, the Strucks received the surprise of their lives when they had a visit from Armenia Fund representatives as well as benefactors Harout and Rita Mesrobian of Los Angeles. During that unforgettable visit, Harout, a cardiologist, and his wife Rita, a pharmacist, presented the Strucks with an extraordinary gift: the keys to a new apartment! Later that day, as the Strucks were taken to their new home, they were deeply moved by not only the kindness of their benefactors, but the prospect of starting a whole new life—in a bright, newly renovated apartment that was fully furnished, had a charming balcony, and featured all modern amenities, including appliances.

Now with access to a full-fledged kitchen, Aley could hone his cooking skills at home. Diana would be able to focus on her creativity in one of the apartment’s spacious, comfortable rooms; and with hot and cold running water, along with an extensive complement of amenities, little Alex would grow up in a clean, safe, and warm environment.

There are hundreds of struggling families in Gyumri, just like the Strucks. Spring is arriving for the marvelous day when they’ll leave the indignity of homelessness behind, and be given a fresh horizon to live for. With your generous support today, we can make their dream come true.

OLD ADDRESS:
Domik No. 214/058, near the new Police Station

NEW ADDRESS:
Mush 2, 7th Street, Building 2/1, Apartment 6
The thrill of having a refrigerator for the first time: Michaela, little Alex, and Natalya familiarizing themselves with their new, beautiful surroundings.

The image depicts two women in a kitchen setting, one of them is holding a young child. The scene suggests a moment of introduction to a new kitchen, possibly after a move or an upgrade. The kitchen appears modern and well-equipped, indicating a significant change in their living conditions. The expressions of joy and curiosity on the faces of the women and the child highlight the significance of this event in their lives.
GYUMRI-VANADZOR
TELETHON
Sunday, June 25 | 4pm to 11pm

Help us give a homeless family the key to a new apartment.
Donate by visiting ArmeniaFund.org or call 1-800-888-8897.
Let's end the scar of the earthquake once and for all.

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։ Զեկուցիչ, պատված հավասար գրավում քաղաքային հեռուստաընկերության մեջ ապրվող ընտանիքի համար անձնակերպատեր համար:
Համարժեք կատարելով ArmeniaFund.org կայքում հեռախոսահամարը 1-800-888-8897:
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