GYUMRİ HOUSİNG PROJEC{T
Looking ahead to a bright future

MEDICAL MISSION 2017
American doctor finds wealth of inspiration in Armenia

JEVAN KINDERGARTEN
The joy of a carefree childhood

REBUILDING TALISH
Home is where the heart is

ARMEŅIA FUND'S HOMELAND TOURS
Journeys that make the spirit soar

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Yeranuhi Safaryan and her family once had a normal life. They lived in a nice, four-bedroom apartment in Gyumri, worked hard, and had every reason to look ahead to a bright future. But their lives changed forever on December 7, 1988, when the devastating Spitak earthquake claimed many loved ones and friends, and left a path of destruction in its wake. The horrific disaster left the Safaryans’ building, too, with extensive structural damage. It was imploded eventually, as it was determined to be too dangerous for occupation.

Yeranuhi got married the following year. This was her husband's second marriage; all members of his first family had perished in the earthquake. Although Yeranuhi and her husband were essentially homeless prior to their wedding, soon a local charitable organization gave them a domik — a so-called temporary metal container — in which to live. It was here, in this ramshackle hut, that they started their family. And it was here that they were to remain stuck ever since, unable to receive proper housing assistance from the government. Yeranuhi’s husband died of heart failure in 2010. She has since raised their daughter, Irena, on her own.

Yeranuhi’s domik was a cramped, rusty, leaky hovel with no amenities of any kind. No kitchen or bathroom, no access to gas or water, and no protection against Gyumri’s harsh winters and hot summers. Furthermore, vermin infestation was a constant worry, making the family’s daily life all the harder.

Yeranuhi is 62 years old. She is an accomplished fabric designer, and has worked for years at a textile company. In the past few years, however, she has been unable to work because of her heart condition. Irena is 28. She recently earned a Master’s degree in English from the Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute.

Yeranuhi could not afford to rent — let alone buy — a decent home. Her sole income still consists of some state assistance totaling about $90 a month. Yet, incredibly, she remained optimistic and forbearing. Despite the daily ordeals of life in a domik, despite the seemingly endless blows which she and her family have sustained from the earthquake onward, she was still very much hopeful that there was light at the end of the tunnel.

That hoped-for light burst into gorgeous view recently, when Yeranuhi and Irena were presented with the surprise of their lives, a new and beautiful apartment. It was a gift from Armenia Fund, through its Gyumri Housing Project, and made possible by benefactors Vahe and Veronique Karapetian of Los Angeles.

Yeranuhi and Irena could hardly wait to step foot in their apartment. And when they did, later that day, they cried tears of unfettered joy, for the first time in a very long time. As they discovered, their new home was not just newly renovated, but came fully furnished, and featured every appliance they could wish for. It was here, in this spacious, comfortable apartment, that their new lives would begin. Yeranuhi’s health, which for years had languished in the wretched conditions of their old hut, would now have a chance to improve, with her high spirits certainly helping her get better. As for Irena, living in such a bright, wonderful home would further inspire her to nurture her intellectual and professional aspirations.

The Gyumri Housing Project is an ongoing initiative, and the support of caring donors is always welcome. Every single dollar counts in making a difference in the lives of Gyumri’s homeless families. It takes only around $25,000 to cover the costs of purchasing an apartment for a family, renovating it, furnishing it, and equipping it with all necessary appliances.

There are hundreds of struggling families in Gyumri who are still waiting for the day when they’ll leave the indignity of homelessness behind, and be given a fresh horizon to live for. With your generous contribution today, we can make their dream come true.
OLD ADDRESS:
SHIRAKATSİ STREET,
METAL CONTAINER NO.
209/042

NEW ADDRESS:
MUSH 2 DISTRICT,
HALABYAN STREET,
BUILDING 3/1,
APARTMENT 4
For decades, Mrs. Yeranuhi and her daughter, Irena, have lived in this cramped, squalid hut, which lacked even the most basic amenities. The Safaryans’ life changed forever when Armenia Fund presented them with a newly renovated, fully furnished apartment, complete with all appliances.
ՓԱՍՏԱԿ ՄԱՆԱՍԻՑՐԵՔ ԱԶՆԱՆՐԵՂԱԿԱՆ

Փաստականության, տառաստեղ և տարածված մամուլար մարմնի համար ազգանունը նշանակալի է: Ան թարգել համարվում է, որն անվանական մամուլական մի մթ, իսկ այդ անվանական համարվում է ոչ թե ազգանունը, բայց այն անհրաժեշտ է ծառայել պատմական համարվելու մեջ: Ազգանունն կարելի է նշել նաև համարվում է, որի կարևորագույն կարգիչ է լիազոր ուսուցչի: Փաստակ ուղեղ կարելի է նշել, որ փոխադասության համարվում է ոչ թե ազգանունը, այլ այն մանրանիշերը, որոնք անհրաժեշտ են համարվում:

Փաստակի ստացման արդյունքների մասին հարուստ տեղեկացություններ չեն ունենում, սակայն տառաստեղ մարմնի պահածիկները կարող են տեղեկացնել մանրանիշերի մասին, որոնք պատմական ազգանունների տեսակի կերպով պատմված: Փաստակի ազգանունը մամուլական համարվում է ոչ թե ազգանունը, բայց այն անհրաժեշտ է ծառայել պատմական համարվելու մեջ:
The caring support of compatriots: longtime Armenia Fund benefactors Mr. and Mrs. Vahe and Veronique Karapetian (far left and far right) with Irena and Mrs. Yeranian at their new apartment. / Ճանապարհորդների ուղեծրությամբ: երկու Երանունի հեծնագույն մայրաքարի՝ Վահե և Վերոնիկ Կարապետյանը (աջից տեղակայված) և Իրենան և Վերոնիկա Օրեանին՝ նոր բնակարանում։
AMERICAN DOCTOR FINDS WEALTH OF INSPIRATION IN ARMENIA

Sevak Hakobyan
“We're all part of the big human family”
Dr. Chandrika Seneviratne

"We're all part of the big human family," says Dr. Chandrika Seneviratne, a native of Sri Lanka who has lived in the United States for many years. "We may speak different languages, and we may have different cultures and cuisines, but we're all human beings and must help one another.

Ever since completing her medical education in Los Angeles, Dr. Chandrika has worked at Adventist Health Glendale (AHG).

She says she signed up for the joint Armenia Fund-AHG medical mission to the Noyemberyan Hospital in order to help her sisters and brothers in Armenia, and adds that she has felt at home here right from the start.

"Armenia reminds me of Sri Lanka," Dr. Chandrika says. "You know, there are quite a few similarities between the two. In Sri Lanka, too, many people live in poverty, but their kindness knows no bounds. I find it amazing that the residents of Tavush are so hospitable, despite the fact that many are economically insecure. I know a lot of Armenians back in Los Angeles, but they're different from their compatriots here. I can't find the words to describe my positive impressions of Armenia.

The nature is so beautiful in this country!" Dr. Chandrika also says she was surprised by certain things in Tavush, such as the fact that residents have no problem drinking tap water, and that they grow their own fruits and vegetables.

“For those like me who live in big cities, it's strange to see people cultivating their own gardens and growing their food with their own hands,” the doctor says. “Everything is natural in Tavush. And the food is delicious. I think these are the reasons that people here are, over all, very healthy.”

During September 16-21, 2017, Dr. Chandrika has examined 70 female patients at the Noyemberyan Hospital. Only one of them was diagnosed with cancer — a fact which the doctor finds astounding. “As a pathologist specializing in women’s health, I was pleasantly surprised by such a low incidence of cancer,” she explains.

Dr. Chandrika regrets the fact that most Tavush residents don’t speak English, as she would've loved to find out more about their lives and traditions, she says.

"Yet in the short time that I was in Noyemberyan, I managed to learn a few Armenian words and phrases,” she continues. “Having enjoyed our Armenian patients’ extraordinary kindness and warmth, I wished I could spend more time with them. That’s why I’ve decided to learn Armenian. I know it’s a complex language, but I will try my best. My hope is that if I’m able to return to Armenia with our mission next year, I’ll be able to communicate with our patients in their mother tongue."
Հարուստ է մեր ղեկավար: Օգտագործեведите հատուկ կարգավորումներ, որպեսզի դառնանք նպատական էլեկտրական կրթության համար հաշվի կերպով համարված գույք:

«Այս տեղից մեր ղեկավարը մեր կարգավորումները բացակայեցնում է, որպեսզի երկնային դասարանների գործումները համարվին։ Այս բացարձակ դարձավ, որ մեր կարգավորումները գրավում են միակ կարգավորումները կարգավորման նպատակի համար։ Օգտագործեведите երկարատև կարգավորումներ, որպեսզի նրանց համար կարճատև չի լինի։»

Պետության ղեկավար

"Having enjoyed our Armenian patients' extraordinary kindness and warmth, I wished I could spend more time with them, and decided to learn Armenian," Dr. Seneratine says. / Dr. Seneratine — «Սարդարական Հայազգի մարդկանց հատուկ կարգավորումների հետ մեր կարճատև չի լինեց, ուշադրությամբ ու հարուստությամբ, վարպետը որոշեց սովորել Հայերեն��ան։»
"When I grow up, I want to be a builder, just like that uncle over there," says Hayk, a five-year-old student at Ijevan’s No. 8 Kindergarten, pointing from his second-floor classroom window at the construction workers across the building. Holding a toy truck in his other hand, Hayk says he’ll be using it to haul building materials for the “uncles.” He has some other construction toys as well, but they’re broken. He shows us a bunch of Legos strewn across the battered shelves. He uses the Legos to build homes. He can’t wait for the construction workers to start building the second floor of the new structure, so that he’ll get to follow their work more closely.

Hayk is among the group of older kids, between the ages of five and six. There are more than 45 of them. They spend their day on the second floor of the ramshackle kindergarten. There are 45 other students in the classroom next door, while the room for the youngest children is located on the first level, right by the entrance. It was nap time when we came to visit them. But we found out that only half the children were taking a nap. When I asked why the rest of them weren’t napping, the answer was simple: there weren’t enough beds.

Inspired by the construction crew working on Ijevan’s new kindergarten, five-year-old Hayk Eganyan wants to become a builder when he grows up. / Ագծակալսային տան աշխատողներին հաջողված հայկե էգանյանը հուզներս եւ ճանաչե է կայանում 6-ամյանց հասակում.
Founded in the 1970s, the kindergarten has never seen a major renovation. After being severely damaged in an earthquake, the building has remained shut for 20 years. It was only nine years ago that certain repairs were made and it was reopened, though in baby steps. There was only one classroom at first. Then, gradually, others were added. Today, 135 children attend the kindergarten. But things have been tough to the extreme. Staff members have tried to repair cracks with their own hands. They have stuck screens to the walls, painted them, and otherwise did their utmost to keep the building as safe and functional as possible. Yet there’s only so much they can do. The kitchen is slowly sinking, and the ubiquitous cracks keep getting wider and deeper.

Soon, however, the 22 members of the staff will no longer need to worry about repairs, and will have every reason to feel proud of their surroundings. That’s because the “uncles” referred to by Hayk are building a new kindergarten opposite the old campus.

The state-of-the-art facility is being constructed with the financial support of Armenia Fund benefactors Mr. and Mrs. Raymond and Ani Harootonian, Mr. Grisha Sookiasian, and Mrs. Sonik Artounian. With a total area of close to 1,200 square meters, the new kindergarten will be the largest ever built by the Fund. When Mrs. Sonik Artounian, our Armenian-American benefactor, came to visit us for the first time and saw the wretched state of our building, she was just astounded and wondered how we’d been able to work in such conditions,” recalls Nayra Ghazumyan, the kindergarten’s 31-year-old principal, herself an alumna. “Subsequently our benefactors decided to build a brand-new campus instead of renovating the old one. It was very emotional when our beloved Raymond and Ani Harootonian, together with their young children, came to visit us last
July and launched the construction project by laying the foundation stone of our future kindergarten. We are so very grateful! You can’t imagine the excitement of our students’ parents. They keep asking us when the construction of the new kindergarten will be completed.”

Impatient to see that wonderful day, young and old are now following the progress of the project, stone by stone.

Hayk and his classmate, Sergey—who has decided to become a military doctor when he grows up—won’t get to be students at the new kindergarten, as they’ll be graduating this year, whereas the new campus is set to open its doors a few months later, in December. But the boys aren’t sad about this, as they plan on coming frequently to the new campus after school, to play with friends. Another student, four-year-old Arminka, is keeping her medical toys at the ready, in anticipation of the day she and her classmates will be moved to the new kindergarten. As yet she hasn’t decided whether to become a pediatrician or a singer when she grows up. But one thing’s for sure: when she starts attending the new, beautifully furnished kindergarten, she will have come one step closer to the realization of her dreams.

Ijevan’s new kindergarten will change the lives of not only its students, but the city as a whole. Already numerous parents from nearby towns and villages have contacted the kindergarten’s staff, wishing to enroll their own kids at the soon-to-open campus, so that they, too, will know the joy of a carefree childhood.
Ijevan’s old kindergarten has languished for decades in a state of severe disrepair. The new campus (below) will be the biggest ever built by Armenia Fund.
Կինդերգանթի ղեկավար Nary Ghashumyan ընդունում է շուշանի վերջին 8 տարի - Երևանի բուհ և պատմություն. Սակայն, դեռևս չի կարելի դիմակերպել փոխադարձ բարձր սպիտակություն՝ օգնելով բարձր սեփական համերգների ազդեցությանը տեղի ունեցող հանրային գրասենյակներին. Սակայն, տեղակայող ղեկավարների և այլ սահմանափակումների համար, նույնպես նշանակալի փոխազդեցություն է տեղի ունեցող հանրային գրասենյակների համար.

Համաձայն փորձությունների համար, մի կարծիք կարելի է տալ համաձայն դիրքերի համար սահմանը. Սակայն, տեղակայող ղեկավարների և այլ սահմանափակումների համար, նույնպես նշանակալի փոխազդեցություն է տեղի ունեցող հանրային գրասենյակների համար.

1970-ականներին հայտնի առաջնորդի հայտնի աշխատություններով կառուցվել է ուսուցչի համար։ Պատմական ուսուցչի համարը նույնպես նշանակալի փոխազդեցություն է տեղի ունեցող հանրային գրասենյակների համար.

Այսպիսով, չի կարելի կարծել, որ նույն համաչափություններ կարող են տեղի ունենալ նոր համայնքների համար, եթե տեղեկությունների արտահայտված պահանջներ չկան։
"You can say we're now in little Talish," Vilen Petrosyan says with a smile as he shows a cluster of temporary residences in Alashan. Petrosyan has been the mayor of Talish for the past 25 years. Today, the communal kitchen, public bath, and administrative buildings of Alashan, a former resort village, have been turned into makeshift homes. Following the April War of 2016, close to 46 families from Talish, totaling 180 residents, have taken refuge in Alashan. Of the rest of Talish's 500 residents, they're now scattered across various communities in Artsakh and Armenia. Petrosyan knows exactly where each of his fellow Talish natives has ended up, and assures us that he keeps in touch will all of them.

Vilen Petrosyan was to celebrate his 52nd birthday on April 2, 2016. The previous day, his wife had cooked several sumptuous dishes, as well as a birthday torte, for the family feast. But in the predawn hours of April 2, the Azerbaijani army rained down rockets and machine-gun fire on the peaceful population of Talish. Most everyone fled for their lives. Within a few hours, Talish had become a ghost town.

During the Four-day War unleashed by Azerbaijan, a few Azeri soldiers had been able to enter Talish. At that time, there were still some Armenian civilians left in the village. The Azeris savagely killed three elderly people and subsequently launched a disinformation campaign on the Internet, claiming they had captured Talish.

"We used every means available to quickly get our people out of the village and give them shelter wherever we could," Petrosyan recalls. "In Alashan today, we already have a medical clinic, a mayor's office, a school, and two stores. In addition, our folks grow crops and raise animals on more than 600 acres of land. But of course, despite the more or less comfortable life that they've built here, these people sorely miss their birthplace, and anxiously wait for the day they'll be able to go back."

The reconstruction of Talish, one of the Martakert Region's oldest villages, has been a top strategic and political priority for Artsakh and Armenia. Cognizant of the urgent importance of rebuilding the border village, Armenia Fund benefactor and honorary member Antranik Baghdassarian has provided generous support for its restoration, including the refurbishment of homes, the community center, the event hall, and the social center, as well as the potable-water and sewer systems. With this major contribution, Baghdassarian has once again underscored the fact that the Armenians remain united in the struggle for Artsakh's security and prosperity. Now, as Talish rises from the ashes, it is demonstrating to neighboring Azerbaijan and the world that the Armenians will continue to live and create in their historic homeland.
THE WAR’S TOLL IN TALISH

THE HUMAN TOLL OF THE APRIL WAR OF 2016: MORE THAN 850 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 130 TALISH RESIDENTS, KILLED OR INJURED.

LIVES LOST IN TALISH: 97
SOLDIERS AND FOUR CIVILIANS.

PROPERTY PARTIALLY OR COMPLETELY DESTROYED IN TALISH: A TOTAL OF 190 STRUCTURES INCLUDING 167
HOMES, A CHURCH, A SCHOOL, A KINDERGARTEN, A FLOUR MILL, TWO EVENT HALLS, FOUR STORES, A BAKERY, ONE MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AND EIGHT FARMS.
One of the 18 rebuilt homes in Talish belongs to a big family, the Hayrapetysans. Vachik, the father of five children, has visited Talish only a few days ago. But while living temporarily in Alashan, he never misses an opportunity to go to his birthplace and see what’s been changed since his last visit. He asks us to take him and his son along with us as we’re headed to Talish.

We reach the village after a 40-kilometer drive. We’re met by an eerie silence that’s broken occasionally by the sounds of construction. Only one family lives here. There are also a number of men engaged in animal farming, in addition to the construction crews. The reconstruction of the mayor’s offices, the event hall, and 18 homes is already completed. Next to be rebuilt are the kindergarten and the school.

“And this is our home,” Vachik says as he takes us to his fruit grove. He then opens the door to his refurbished home. “Here’s the kitchen,” he says. “This is the kids’ room, and that’s the living room. We’re waiting for the furniture.”

As he’s about to tell us how the nine members of his family will divide the rooms between themselves, we hear the creaking of the front-yard gate. It’s Oleg, the son of the only family that has returned to Talish.

“What’s going on?” Oleg asks jokingly. “You’re moving in already? Well, it’s about time. How much longer can we live without neighbors?”

Oleg has moved back to the village with his 80-year-old mother, Grandma Agnes; and 88-year-old father, Grandpa Benik. The elderly couple were the last to leave the village on April 2, 2016, and the first to return, in November 2017. It was Grandpa Benik who had been the most vocal about returning to the village as soon as possible. Now that he’s here and witnesses the transformation of his birthplace, sometimes he can’t believe it’s the same Talish they escaped from in 2016.
“He keeps asking, ‘You’re sure we’re back, right?’” chuckles Grandma Agnes, who for 50 years has worked in Talish as a nurse. “After leaving the village in April 2016, we lived in Nor Geghi [in Armenia’s Kotayk Region] for a few months. We used to count the days. We couldn’t wait to come back. In the 1990s, too, during the war, we left Talish and then returned. Now it’s the same story. I can’t live anywhere else. We are so very grateful to Armenia Fund and our benefactor! In the past, we didn’t even have regular cold water. Now we have hot and cold water around the clock, and Armenia Fund has done a marvelous job renovating our home.”

As Grandma Agnes makes coffee in her newly furnished kitchen, she bemoans the fact that she can’t treat us to desserts, since as yet there are no stores in the village to buy fresh pastries from.

“Had you come by tomorrow, we would’ve eaten together,” she says. “We’re going to mark Grandpa Benik’s 89th birthday. We’ve slaughtered a lamb. We’re going to make a little spread and celebrate his birthday in our renovated home.” As she says this, Grandma Agnes chokes up and turns her face away, no doubt hoping that next year her family will be able to mark Grandpa Benik’s 90th birthday together with their newly returned neighbors.
Vachik Hayrapetyan, who never misses a chance to visit Talish to see the progress of the reconstruction project, photographed in his grove.
TALISH RISING FROM THE ASHES: Armenia Fund is rebuilding not only homes, but all public buildings. The Fund has also restored the community’s potable water network and built a sewer system from scratch. The photo above shows Vatchik Hayrapetyan’s newly renovated house. 

The amenities include a freshly built bathroom, complete with brand-new components. 

Attention to detail: the Hayrapetyans’ bright, spacious, beautifully constructed living room.

BACK IN THEIR BIRTHPLACE. Oleg Ohanyan and his mother, Agnes, and father, Benik (facing page) were the last family to leave Talish when the Azeris destroyed it during the April War of 2016, and the first to return, in November 2017.

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After returning to his birthplace, Beneh Ohanyan celebrated his 89th birthday.

"Life begins anew in the Ohanyans’ home, which has been rebuilt by Armenia Fund."
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Հայոց ցեղասպանության համար ուշագրական ազնվական ակցիաներ կայացել են Երևանում, Երևան-Զայթունի թաղամասում ու մեծ համայնքային համագործակցություններով, որոնք ներկայացվել են գաղտնի զարգացման օրերին։ Հայոց ցեղասպանության պատմությունը որոշելու համար նախագծում է Կարմիր Հերթին։ Հայոց ցեղասպանությանը ներկայացնող զարգացման պատմական հերթերում նախագծելու գծերն են բացում։
այսպիսի յուրաքանչյուր պատկերի կողմից զենք մասնակցություն կատարելու համար արդյունավետ եղանակներ էին ստանձնել, որի համարը պատմական մեծաչափություն համարվում է: 2017-ին, հայկական գրադարանի և Արցախի ազգային մասնաճյուղի տեղում ունեցած գրականության խմբությունը համարվում էր, որ պատասխան տեղեկություններ է տվելով պատմական մեկնարկի մեջ: Գրականության հիմքով սամնի են համատեղվում տարբեր կարգավիճակներ, ամբողջության առնվազնությունը նույնիսկ պատմական մեկնարկի մեջ կարելի է պատմել: 

Գրականության կենսագրությունը ունեցած զարգացած կարգավիճակներից է, որը նույնիսկ համատեղվում է պատմական մեկնարկի մեջ. Պատմական հիմքով ներկայացումը համարվում է, որ այս կենսագրությունը նույնիսկ համատեղվում է պատմական մեկնարկի մեջ: 

Հայկական գրադարանին հաճախ ներկայացված է պատմական մեկնարկի ճանաչում: Այս դեպքում համարվում է, որ այս գրականությունը նույնիսկ համատեղվում է պատմական մեկնարկի մեջ:
The bus is sloping gently toward mountainous terrain. It’s cruising along a newly-built, immaculate highway, with not a single pothole or lump to watch out for — unlike so many of the decrepit roads you’re accustomed to “back home.” Now you’re in a veritable sea of green: in the lap of a lush, ancient forest as far as the eye can see, luxuriating under a pitch-blue sky. Suddenly you notice a lone structure in the far distance, jutting out of the landscape with its multicolored dome and walls, like a jewel in a crown. The tour guide announces that it’s a thousand-year-old monastery. Some of your fellow travelers sigh in awe and disbelief. And then, there it is — a goose bump that darts across your entire body, followed by a little note to yourself: “This must be heaven on Earth.”

It’s an impression that’s recounted in various ways, year after year, by those who participate in the Armenia Fund Donor Education Trips to Armenia and Artsakh.

What visitors from the Diaspora experience during these sojourns is a deeply emotional and spiritual bond with their historic homeland. It manifests itself at every step of the way, through people and the land alike: through the incredible warmth and hospitality of local compatriots; the positive chance encounters and the human connections that are made; the total immersion in the timeless art, music, architecture, and traditions of the Armenian heritage; and, ultimately, the rediscovery of one’s roots.

The first Armenia Fund Donor Education Trip was organized in 2011, with the purpose of giving Diaspora Armenians the opportunity to experience first-hand the history, culture, and natural beauty of Armenia and Artsakh; and to witness the ongoing development of the two republics by visiting the sites of newly completed projects. Many who participated in that maiden tour were
Like the Spirit Soar

Ishkhan Jinbashian

donors of Armenia Fund. But that was to change quickly.

As word spread about the extraordinary range and scope of the annual Armenia Fund Donor Education Trip, people from across the globe, including many non-Armenians, got on board. In time, popular demand for these trips grew so much that the Fund began to offer additional ones. Since 2015, there have been two trips annually, instead of one; and this year, the number will jump to three, with the first trip planned to take place in May, in celebration of the centennial of the First Republic of Armenia.

“Armenia and Artashk make your spirit soar,” a recent trip participant has noted, referring equally to the breathtaking beauty of the homeland and newly completed development projects. As visitors are taken to the sites of such projects — including schools and community centers — they get to appreciate them on a human level: by meeting local residents, breaking into song with them, tasting the exquisite cuisine, or being treated to impromptu recitations or musical performances by youngsters.

In the course of these trips, participants also discover that many of the new infrastructure projects across the homeland, such as agricultural-development programs and road construction, not only are of strategic value, but carry immense civilian importance. An example is the Vardenis-Martakert Highway, a 72-mile route that was built by the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund and inaugurated in 2017, becoming a second lifeline between Armenia and Artsakh (the first being the Goris-Stepanakert Highway, also built by the Fund). By connecting Armenia and Artsakh, both landlocked countries, the scenic Vardenis-Martakert Highway has spurred unprecedented economic activity, vastly boosting tourism and commerce.

As Armenia Fund Executive Director Sarkis Kotanjian says, “For so many Diasporans, it’s still hard to imagine that after the Genocide, after 70 years of Soviet rule and so many upheavals, we now have an independent Armenia and a liberated Artsakh. So when Diasporans visit the homeland and see with their own eyes the marvelous strides that have been made, they experience an aha moment. They’re equally amazed and thrilled, and feel a sense of ownership with regard to the homeland.”

“The Armenia Fund Donor Education Trips are a celebration of this very bond,” Kotanjian continues. “It’s why Armenia Fund never solicits donations during these tours, as they remain entirely dedicated to the vision of connecting Diaspora Armenians with their ancestral homeland.”
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