



Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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FINAL STAGE OF THE STAGE II PROJECT



CARD foundation, along with its Georgian partners, CARE International in the Caucasus and CiDA, two and a half years ago launched a project titled "Poverty Reduction and Confidence-building in Border Areas of Georgia and Armenia by Strengthening Civil Societies in Sustainable Rural Development" (STAGE II). This project was successfully completed at the end of October 2011.

The project's aim was to support sustainable rural development in border areas of Georgia and Armenia through the strengthening of civil society and enhancing the partnership between civil institutions and local government, as well as offering platforms for confidence building between ethnic Armenians and Georgians and increased cross-border cooperation. The project covered the regions of Shirak, Lori and Tavush in Armenia and Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli in Georgia. The target groups of the project were ten Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and local governments (LGs) from the areas mentioned above, that would contribute to the development of the local rural communities.

Within the framework of the project, different activities contributing to the aim of the project were organized. Among them special attention was paid to building organizational capacity with training and workshops conducted both for the CSO and LG representatives. Joint conferences, study tours and agricultural/cultural fairs were organized in Armenia and Georgia, bringing together target groups, representatives from the central and regional government, as well as international and national organizations. Discussions held during those meetings aimed at highlighting existing potential and issues that complicate cross-border cooperation between the two countries, in the non-profit and business sectors, as well as in government.

Armenian and Georgian experts were hired to study the Free Trade Agreement between Armenia and Georgia, particularly the application and implication of the agreement among farmers and the business sector. The situation in rural border areas was highlighted and difficulties along with opportunities for local development were considered. This document served as a basis to further initiate an advocacy campaign on the procedures for crossing the Armenian-Georgian border. The document is available for all stakeholders and interested persons.

For the closing ceremony of the STAGE II project, a conference was held in Tbilisi, Georgia in October 2011. Opening speeches, special remarks and presentations were the key components of the conference. Special focus was given to the small grants implemented in both countries. In Armenia three projects were carried out effectively in five rural communities. The "Shirak Competitiveness Center" established a

"Community Center" in Jrapı village, to serve as a meeting venue and training center for the community members. In Noyemberyan, the main irrigation channel was rehabilitated by Yerevak NGO resulting in reviving the vineyards and a rich harvest this year. "Spitak-Farmer Association", the other target CSO, has established bio-humus bases in Spitak, Lernants, and Saramej communities in order to promote organic farming in the above mentioned communities with a hope to expand later to other communities as well. Women's groups from Lernantsk and Saramej are engaged in this project giving it additional value.

In addition to the small grants implemented by the Armenian CSOs, a joint project was carried out by Armenian and Georgian organizations. The project aimed at bringing together Armenian and Georgian children to spend time together playing and from that building cooperation and friendship in the bordering areas. The children in the project were very happy to be given an opportunity to get to know people from the neighboring country and to develop friendships with them. When leaving the camp, children expressed their gratitude and their hope to get together in the coming year as well.

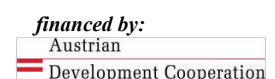
In summary, the STAGE II project had a large impact on the CSOs, LGs and communities involved in the project. All the activities carried out had positive impacts in terms of the relationship between the target groups and their respective communities. Firstly, the training for the target LGs and later for the target CSOs contributed to professional knowledge de-



velopment among the participants. Furthermore, cooperation has been established and strengthened between the local CSO and local government. The target CSOs on both sides of the border discussed and implemented joint projects and activities.

Above all, the project team worked in a professional and friendly environment which proves once again, that when there is an interest, a will, a commitment, and a wish to work jointly, the results will be greater than expected. Summarizing the above, the project served its main purpose; that is, it "contributed to strengthening civil society institutions and local authorities and increased cross-border cooperation for sustainable rural development".

"Poverty Reduction and Confidence-building in Border Areas of Georgia and Armenia by Strengthening Civil Societies in Sustainable Rural Development" (STAGE II) The project is financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation and Cooperation with Eastern Europe (ADC) (for more information please visit: www.mfa.at/adc, www.ada.gov.ge), implemented by CARE Österreich and CARE International in the Caucasus, along with the partner organizations – Civil Development Agency (CiDA) in Georgia and Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) in Armenia.



INTERNATIONAL COURSE ON TRANSBOUNDARY DISEASES (ICTAD) AT PLUM ISLAND, NEW YORK



The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) organized the International Transboundary Animal Diseases (ITAD) training course from September 17 to October 1, 2011. This course involved two weeks in the classroom and laboratory, and featured lectures, facilitated discussions, and simulated Foreign Animal Disease Investigations (including experimental reproduction and modeling of infectious diseases, clinical and microscopic examinations, and necropsy of infected animals).

The course was provided to a number of veterinary specialists from the U.S.A., Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic, Italy, Serbia, Croatia, Haiti, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, India, China, Kenya, Senegal, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

Armenia was included for the first time, and the selected candidate to represent the country was Sergey Chakhmakhchyan, who is the Technical Assistant of the Cooperative Biological Engagement Program from the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) Foundation.

The training covered epidemiological aspects of infectious diseases, including information about infectious agents, geographic distribution, history of the infectious diseases, methods of transmission, clinical manifestation, differential diagnosis, immunity, control, and prevention.

The training was accompanied with visits to the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL), Plum Island, which is the only facility in the United States where many infectious foreign animal disease (FAD) agents are studied. Scientists at the FADDL are devoted to diagnosing foreign diseases of animals. They partner with scientists of the Department of Homeland Security and the USDA's Agricultural Research Service which is also located at Plum Island.

Sergey Chakhmakhchyan found that the "ITAD Course was interesting and very productive. It was a unique opportunity to improve the skills and knowledge in the sphere of Veterinary Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases. Through artificial infection and disease modeling, each participant had an opportunity to follow the natural course of the disease, the dynamic development of the clinical signs and the manifestations of pathognomonic symptoms. While studying each disease, necropsy was done and the gross changes were studied thoroughly. All the participants of the ITAD Course had a chance to work with the infected materials, and to do the necropsy and sampling of the animals according to the Biosafety and Biosecurity international norms."

In addition, Armenia's participation in this training was important as from November, 2011, in collaboration with Austria, a new project titled "Animal Health Management in Cross-Border Areas of Armenia and Georgia" will be launched which is based on the principles of the Transboundary Animal Diseases Control. This program will attempt to improve the control of infectious diseases; identify and reduce infectious disease threats on the borders in order to enhance safe agricultural trade, and strengthen emergency response preparedness in Armenia.

Special thanks to the USDA; USDA Training and Trip Coordinators, Instructors S. Goldman and Benjamin S. Williams; Minister-Counselor at the US Mission to the European Union, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Peter Fernandez; Professor and Associate Dean of Public Policy, College of Veterinary Medicine of Cornell University Alfonso Torres; and all the others who ensured the smooth course of this training.

POTATO SEEDS ARE BETTER, THAN TUBERS



CARD Foundation launched a pilot project in 2010 to produce potato tubers in Kapan, Syunik region. Potato seeds were imported from "Bejo Sheetal Seeds Pvt. Ltd," – one of the leading Indian companies in the vegetable seed sector.

The seeds were provided as a grant to the "Khapan Small Farmers' Association" NGO and were distributed

amongst farmers in Syunik region for trials. These farmers include Marat Artemyan from Kapan, Spartak Avetisyan and Lamara Aleqsanyan from Tcsav community, and Marine Baghdasaryan and Ashot Hakobyan from Tandzaver community. On the trial plots in these communities, the seedlings were produced in June, 2010.

In April 2011, on a 500 square meters experimental plot Marine Baghdasaryan planted tubers produced from the potato seeds in 2010. To increase yields, agro-technical activities that included weeding and loosening, control of fungal disease and Colorado potato beetle, and top-dressing with micro-nutrient-fertilizer were carried out. The plot was watered seven times. At the last visit in the beginning of August 2011, the canopy was dense and a rich harvest was expected.

Ashot Hakobyan planted 1000 seedlings on a 150 square meters trial plot which was watered, weeded, loosened, and fertilized with biohumus, and fungal disease and pests were controlled. The harvesting took place in October 2010. From the experimental plot, 60 kg of superior tubers were

harvested and in spring 2011, they underwent light hardening and were planted on 200 square meters. During the vegetative stage, weeding, loosening, watering, nutrition, and disease and pest control activities were performed. In September, 1000 kg of superior quality potatoes were harvested.

Also in 2011, Ashot Hakobyan planted 3000 seedlings on a 500 square meter plot. Harvesting was done in October. The tubers produced will be used as potato planting stock in the coming year.

The results were better than expected. Moreover, farmers from the communities involved showed a great interest in buying tubers, and in the near future actual potato seeds will probably be imported, instead of tubers, as this is easier and less expensive.



Supported by



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