



National Accelerator and Workforce Development in Armenia



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Laidlaw LiA Background in Armenia

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to complete a Laidlaw Leadership in Action (LiA) Experience in the Republic of Armenia, which brought together many of the facets of my Cornell education in Global Development – including sustainable development, gender, business development, environment, and agriculture. Not only did I learn a lot about how United Nations Development Program (UNDP) projects are implemented, but I also experienced the rich Armenian culture. As an Armenian American, the time I spent in my father's homeland was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity to connect with my heritage. During the week, I would work on various projects with community partners, and on the weekends, I explored the countryside.

Armenia is recognized as the first Christian nation and while there, I was able to visit many Armenian Monasteries. I also got to participate in several Armenian barbecues, where we ate traditional Khorovats (grilled meat and mixed vegetables served with Lavash, farmers cheese, and herbs).



Armenia is also recognized as one of the oldest countries for winemaking production. Brandy is incredibly important to Armenia and I was able to learn about the entire brandy making process from start to finish at the Ararat Brandy Factory Museum and by visiting a working orchard to learn about their sustainability practices.

One of the most profound moments of my entire LiA was visiting the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum, Tsitsernakaberd. It was incredibly emotional and although I had grown up hearing stories about the Armenian experience, I learned so much more about the Genocide and history of Armenia. An eternal flame burns in memory for the 1.5 million Armenians killed in the Genocide, including my great-great grandparents.



Armenian Workforce Development Activity Meeting with Stakeholders

Project One: Womens' Upskilling

The main leadership project I contributed to this summer was working on a UNDP project promoting women's economic empowerment within remote regions of Armenia. Our goal was to train roughly 250 women to be able for completely remote and digital jobs. This is so that they can receive higher wages than they normally would in a remote region of Armenia. I did extensive research on different freelancing websites, collecting data on how much an Armenian worker typically makes on the various platforms, their education levels, and the most successful jobs to freelance for. We determined that the best job to train women for is in digital marketing because it would teach them many skills that they could then use to acquire freelancing jobs. I also researched what types of training programs would be best and determined a set of different programs and rated them on their success and sustainability. We then used those training programs to inform our own program's design.

UNDP is now hiring a consultant to implement the program based in part on my program design work, and training will continue to happen through December. After December, the Impact AIM team will be able to evaluate training results, including possibilities for finding funding to sustain the program.



Project Partners at ImpactAIM, Narek Manukyan and Anna Daghlaryan, in front of a map of Armenian UNDP projects

Project Two: Women Led Start Ups:

IMM Trainings



The UN Sustainable Development Goals in Armenian at the UN House in Yerevan, AM.

The second program I contributed to was ImpactAIM's Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) trainings. The goal of the trainings were to train female led startups in the Eastern European/West Asian region to align their startups' goals with the UN sustainable development goals. They were also trained in how to pitch their startups and how to measure their startups' impact on their community of interest. I helped create surveys so that we could gauge what the participants learned from each of the sessions, and helped with reports on the project's successes. While my particular cohort's data has not yet been made publicly available, they have asked ImpactAIM to do another round of trainings, so I view that as a success.

I loved working on this project because I got to observe a specific community of people: female startup owners. As a business minor, I not only learned a lot for my own education and growth during the trainings, but I really enjoyed being in a community of vastly different women who were all alike in their shared mindset when it comes to business.



One of our impact trainings with UNDP ImpactAIM and the Women led Startups. These trainings were led by Project Partners, Tatevik Markosyan and Lilit Yeghoyan.

Project Three: Childcare for Ages 0-3

The third project I worked on with my community partners was conducting research for the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs on different models and policies for childcare for children aged 0-3 years in countries similar to Armenia. Armenia currently has a stronger policy for childcare than the USA, providing free childcare from age 3. This work was for the Women's Resource Center of Armenia and their policy development division. The research I completed will be used to help inform a policy recommendation for the Armenian Government. The goal of providing childcare earlier is to help women/mothers get back to work sooner.



Artak showing Virab's cover crop demonstration plots.



Cows graze in the fields to provide natural fertilizer.



The field directly in front has not had any additional water (no water besides rain water) and the perennial cover crops have grown back in year 2.

Project Four: Sustainable Agriculture

During the summer, I also had the opportunity to visit one of the farmers I had worked with last year during my research on soil health. Virab Manukyan is now in his second year of growing cover crops and has increased the land that he has planted with cover crops. He participates in a field demonstration program to share his results with farmers in Armenia, and there are now a total of 4 different demonstration plots throughout different regions of the country. It made me incredibly happy and proud to see this and I was truly moved by his commitment (and early adoption) of sustainable farming practices, like cover crops. All of the photos are from Virab's farm in Pokr Vedi in the Ararat Region.



Artak translates that Virab uses a solar powered electric fence to keep the cows in specific areas.



The plot of cover crops Virab planted this year.



Artak and Virab discussing the drought conditions.

Cover crops provide weed control.



Fields without and with cover crops.

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