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## **International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education**



### **REPORT**

On trip to the USA for establishing relationship with potential donors and supporters

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## Background information

The long-term financial sustainability of ICARE/ATC depends on establishment of an endowment fund: a widely accepted method for educational institutions to assure continued financial support. The InnovATE Armenia project explores the possibilities and legal frameworks for establishing the ICARE endowment fund. The project also explores possibilities for increasing scholarship and other funding. The Armenian Diaspora is viewed as an important potential contributor for ICARE thus, active communication and relationships is needed with the Diaspora members.

During the period of May 8-20, 2015 the ICARE Director visited several cities in the USA to establish new relationships with potential donors and supporters and strengthen the existing ones. The trip was planned in the scope of InnovATE Armenia project *Activity 2: Increase the Capacity of ICARE/ATC to Increase Revenue and Decrease Costs*, in particular in line with sub activity *2.2 Establish Endowment Fund* and *2.3 Establish and Expand ATC Alumni Network*.

## Goal and objectives of the visit

The main goal of the visit was to strengthen the connection with existing donors and supporters of ICARE in the USA and establish relationship with new donors and supporters.

May 8-11, 2015

Washington DC

## Activities and Outcomes

The main activities in Washington D.C. were connected with the National Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide Centennial events. During May 6-10, 2015 thousands gathered in D.C. to commemorate the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide. The majority were representing Diaspora organizations from all over the USA. This was a great opportunity to establish linkages with the Armenian Diaspora people and organization. My attendance for some of the events was possible thanks to the efforts of **Ms. Anahit Gevorgyan**, Program Coordinator at DAI, who was an active member of the organization committee of the Centennial events. With the help of Anahit several valuable contacts were established during these events. In particular, I got introduced to **Mr. Aram Hamparian**, the executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America and his colleagues. Aram is well known among the Diaspora organizations and it was agreed that Aram will provide a reference when needed in the process of establishing connections with relevant people and organizations.



During the events I met with **Ms. Nancy Kricorian**, an American author of the novels *Zabelle* and *Dreams of Bread and Fire*. Nancy is a board member at the Armenian Tree Project and also agreed to

act as a point of reference for ICARE. She was impressed learning about the success and achievements of ICARE. She proposed to introduce me to **Mrs. Carolyn Mugar**, the founder of ATP, a philanthropist and supporter of many initiatives in Armenia, but unfortunately Mrs. Mugar didn't attend the Centennial events.

During the reception I met with **Dr. Bedros Nersessian**, Managing Partner of Provian LLC, formerly a USDA employee, who was a professional in animal health and food safety. Bedros was preparing a mission to Artsakh to support in the development of agricultural cooperatives in Chartar village. He was delighted to know about ICARE and promised to visit us in Yerevan. He was open for possible joint development activities in Armenia and Artsakh.

During the Centennial events I was accompanied by **Dr. Angela Neilan**, InnovATE Armenia Project Director, who was very supportive during my whole stay in D.C.

On May 11, we visited USAID office and met with **Dr. Clara Cohen**. A short overview about the ICARE activities in the scope of InnovATE Armenia project has been presented; the promotional materials and video clip were shared with Clara and her team members. Then I met with **Mr. J. Erin Baize**, Farmer-to-Farmer Program Analyst. The VISTA Plus is implementing the FtF program in Armenia. ICARE regularly hosts FtF experts as a guest lecturer when applicable.

After a meeting at USAID we had another meeting at USDA FAS. **Mrs. Aida Sijercic**, Senior Program Coordinator arranged the meeting. **Mr. Fred Johnston**, Eurasia Coordinator was present as well. During the meeting ICARE promotional materials and the video-clip was shared with the participants. Aida informed that soon she will move to another position in the USDA but will let ICARE know if a potential opportunity for cooperation is available. Aida was very supportive during the whole period of the ICARE-USDA FAS cooperation. We had lunch with **Mr. Michael J. McGirr**, National Program Leader of the USDA NIFA Center for International Programs. I informed Mr. McGirr about ICARE achievements and success stories and he promised to support when potential funding opportunity comes up.

My next meeting was at the Armenian Embassy in the USA, with the Ambassador of Armenia to the USA. This was a very important meeting as the Ambassador, the former prime minister of Armenia, **Mr. Tigran Sargsyan** was aware of ICARE's activities and supported in the establishment of ICARE's Master of Agribusiness Program. A part of the start-up fund of the MAB program has been provided by the Government of Armenia, due to the kind support of Mr. Sargsyan. I informed the Ambassador about ICARE's initiative and need for Endowment Fund. He understood the situation and promised to provide a reference/support letters for ICARE and contacts of Armenian-American businessmen who support various initiatives in Armenia. He suggested staying in touch with the DCM **Mr. Hrach Tashchian** who will be ICARE's contact point at the Embassy.

Before my departure from D.C. I met with **Mr. Artavazd Hakobyan**, who was coordinating the Global Food Safety Program at World Bank, based in D.C. Artavazd previously worked at USDA

MAP before moving to the World Bank Yerevan office and then D.C. He is very well aware of ICARE/ATC activities and achievements. He was open for cooperation and suggested that if ICARE becomes interested in food safety certification schemes, as well as food safety education he will be very helpful and supportive.

**May 12-13, 2015**

**New York**

### **Activities and Outcomes**

In New York my targets were the Carnegie Corporation and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). I met with Vice President of Carnegie Corporation **Mrs. Deana Arsenian**. She visited ICARE a few years ago and is well aware of the ICARE's activities. She learnt about our idea of endowment fund and agreed to provide names and contacts and introduce me to potential supporters. After our meeting Deana introduced me to the President of Carnegie Corporation, **Mr. Vartan Gregorian** and we had a short visit. It was a great honor and pleasure to talk to this man who is a living legend. He is a holder of Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the American Academy of the Institute of Arts and Letters' Gold Medal for Service to the Arts. In 1998, President Clinton awarded him the National Humanities Medal. In 2004, President George W. Bush awarded him the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civil award. He was the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the Brown University.



My next meeting in New York was at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). I met with **Mrs. Karen Papazian**, Director of Development and Outreach and **Mrs. Anita Anserian**, Director, Central Board Programs and Administration. I briefly presented the ICARE activities, shared the video and promotional materials and explained the idea of establishing an endowment fund and general fundraising initiatives. They were very impressed about ICARE's achievements and promised to visit ICARE during their next trip to Armenia. Karen Papazian made an e-mail introduction with **Mr. Vasken Yacoubian**, AGBU Armenia Coordinator, who expressed willingness to visit ICARE and to learn more about our activities. We are currently working on arranging the visit of Vasken Yacoubian to ICARE.



**May 14-16, 2015**

**Boston**

### **Activities and Outcomes**

In Boston I was hosted by **Judy Saryan** and **Victor Zarougian**. This couple supports ICARE and the solar system the ICARE is having is due to their generous support. Judy and Victor have been at ICARE several times and they are supportive to ICARE's new initiatives, especially the EVN Wine Academy. Judy Saryan also attended the Centennial Events and during the events she introduced me to several potential supporters. One of them was **Mr. Garo Armen**, the founder and chairman of the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF). COAF was established in 2000 and is dedicated to the positive development of the children and youth of Armenia. Since its inception, COAF has raised \$17 million on projects. There is one ATC alumni working at COAF. Garo Armen knew about ATC and expressed his willingness to visit ICARE and learn more about our activities. He was especially eager to learn more about our solar system.

In Boston Victor and Judy arranged several meetings for me. I met with **Jack and Eva Medzorian**. Jack (President – JM Associates) and Eva (Founding President – Armenian International Women's Association) were helping Armenia for ages by sending medical equipment, medicine, computers, etc. Currently they work with the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and target remote villages near Azerbaijan border. Jack, learning about the student wine lab of ICARE/EVN expressed willingness to source and send chemistry lab tools and equipment for the student wine lab. Such equipments are very expensive and this will be a very valuable support.

I met with **Mr. Vahan Sarkisian**, an owner of Construction Company from Milford, MA. Johanna Cricenty, the program coordinator of InnovATE introduced me to Vahan. Vahan took me to the office of the Armenian Tree Project in Boston where we met the newly appointed Executive Director **Mrs. Jeanmarie Papelian** and deputy director **Mr. Jason Sohigian**. The meeting was interesting and informative. Jeanmarie will visit Armenia soon and promised to visit ICARE. She also promised to



introduce ICARE to **Mr. Khoren Avedissian** who founded a school which is the first certified "green" building in Armenia. The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center in Yerevan's Malatia-Sebastia district is the first international LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building in Armenia. Mr. Avedisian is planning to establish greenhouses on the roofs of the school and grow vegetables for the school

children. Soon he will visit Armenia and a meeting at ICARE will be arranged by Jeanmarie Papelian.



In Boston I met with **Ms. Arlette Yegumians** and **Ms. Karina Demurchyan** at the Armenian Business Network, based in Boston. Arlette is the executive director of ABN and very well connected with Armenian-American business people in Boston area. She provided wonderful insights on how to organize fundraising campaign, how to approach to these business people, etc. She suggested organizing a small event/reception in the fall, by invitation only, and inviting 10-12 people who might be interested in supporting ICARE initiatives. It was agreed to work on that idea and try to organize that event in the fall.

In Boston I met also with former USDA and ICARE employees **Mr. Levon Gyulkhasyan** and **Ms. Tatevik Zohrabyan**. Levon is a freelance consultant now (formerly - Agricultural Specialist, USDA CADI Program in Armenia) based in Watertown and Tatevik is a graduate student at MIT (formerly – ATC graduate, ICARE researcher and instructor). They also expressed a willingness to act as ICARE’s ambassadors and introduce ICARE/ATC and its achievements to potential donors and supporters.

**May 17-19, 2015**  
**Orlando, Florida**

### **Activities and Outcomes**

In Orlando I was hosted by **Dr. Hayk Kachatryan**. Hayk is a graduate of ATC and currently is an Assistant Professor at the University of Florida. In Orlando the plan was to make a presentation at the St. Haroutiun Armenian Church for local Armenians and visit the university. I did the presentation on May 17<sup>th</sup> right after the church service. About 30 people attended. I presented the ICARE activities, the success stories, achievements and cooperation opportunities. I also showed the video which was

received very well. The member of Church Parish Council, **Mrs. Lusine Harvey** was very supportive. She gave valuable insights on how to work with local Armenians in the context of fundraising. It was agreed that Hayk will stay in touch with Mrs. Harvey and present ICARE to potential donors and supporters. At the

**Announcements**

**Celebrant:** This morning **Rev. Fr. Mampre Kouzouian**, from Boston Massachusetts will be the celebrant and preacher.

Following the service Fr. Mampre will be giving program on Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

After the program by Fr. Mampre there will a Presentation given by Dr. Vardan Urutyun, Director The International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE).

There will be lunch available in the Khatchadourian-Tchobanian Cultural Hall sponsored by Hayk and Armina Khachatryan and Family.

**Sunday School:** Sunday School class is being held today. .

moment only 2 families might be interested in supporting ICARE. They live outside Orlando and when they visit church Hayk will meet them and present our activities.

I visited also the University of Florida, the InnovATE project partner. At the university I had a short visit with **Mrs. Sandra Russo**, International Center Director and InnovATE Project representative at the University of Florida.

At the university Hayk introduced me to **Dr. Spiro Stefanou**, Chair of the Food and Resource Economics Department. We explored ways and approaches for academic and scientific cooperation between ICARE and the Food and Resource Economics Department.

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