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Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia



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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

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SDC NEWSLETTER



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FORWARD MESSAGE



Dear readers,

Reflecting on my first months in Armenia, I have been truly impressed by the resilience and determination of the Armenian people. Visiting all our projects, I have heard empowering stories from beneficiaries all over Armenia, particularly in areas such as vocational education, refugee integration and small business promotion. Their experiences highlight the profound impact of our initiatives and reinforce the importance of SDC's mission in Armenia and the South Caucasus Region.

With major efforts of the IC team in the last years, our project portfolio is renewed and well on track. This year, an impressive number of around 20,000 Armenian women and men from rural and remote communities engaged in local decision-making processes, contributed to the sustainable management of natural resources or improved their livelihoods. Specifically, more than 3,000 refugees from Nagorno Karabakh have been supported through humanitarian cash assistance and socio-economic integration. Total expenditure for bilateral and multilateral aid in Armenia in 2024 amounted to around CHF 4.3 million (equivalent to around EUR 4.6 million).

In that context, the Swiss Parliament approved the International Cooperation Strategy 2025–2028, allocating approximately CHF 11 billion for humanitarian aid, development cooperation, economic development, and the promotion of peace and human rights. A significant focus of this strategy is the fight against climate change, with CHF 1.6 billion earmarked for climate-related initiatives. The Strategy renews the commitment Switzerland places on fostering stability and sustainable development in the South Caucasus and this year, the Swiss Cooperation Programme South Caucasus 2026–2029 will be elaborated.

In today's unpredictable world, flexibility and adaptability has become even more indispensable. The SDC not only renewed its support for the socio-economic integration of the refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, it reacted very quickly to the severe flooding that caused significant damage in the Lori and Tavush regions in May 2024. The deployed specialists from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit made a thorough assessment of structural damages and proposed recovery efforts with additional Swiss funding of CHF 0.5 million, which are still ongoing. The Swiss engineering expertise was highly useful and appreciated by the Armenian Government as well as the UN and EU country offices.

All the milestones in this newsletter are a testament to SDC's and its partners commitment and the strong partnerships we've cultivated. As we look ahead, I am confident that our continued collaboration will lead to even greater achievements in Armenia's development journey.

Stay in touch with the Embassy and the SDC in Armenia by visiting our [website](#), as well as by following us on the following social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#).

Ursula Läubli

Deputy Head of Mission / Deputy Head of Regional Cooperation South Caucasus

MAJOR PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENTS

Mid-term review of the Cooperation Programme 2022–2025



In April 2024, the team of the Regional Cooperation Office South Caucasus conducted a mid-term review of its Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus 2022–2025 in Georgia. The event brought together cooperation teams from all three South Caucasus countries, alongside the Swiss Ambassadors to these countries, to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the ongoing initiatives.



A key focus of the review was aligning the Programme's priorities with the dynamic context and needs of the region. This included recalibrating approaches to enhance economic resilience, address climate change, and promote inclusive governance. The sessions also highlighted the importance of partnerships with civil society and international organizations to amplify the impact of Swiss-funded projects. By reflecting on achievements and lessons learned, participants identified the priorities for future international cooperation, ensuring its continued relevance and alignment with the evolving priorities of the South Caucasus countries.

Ongoing implementation and exchanges with projects



"2024 was an important year in terms of forging partnerships with diverse institutions and their representatives, including a leading [Swiss research organization](#), a coalition of [Armenian non state organizations](#), a [global powerhouse](#) of promoting participatory policymaking along with strengthening the traditional cooperation with governmental partners." – Hamazasp Danielyan, Senior National Programme Officer for Governance and Climate Change



"Witnessing the positive impact we're having on the lives of Armenians across the nation is truly inspiring. A significant milestone in 2024 was the landmark adoption of the new VET law, which lays the foundation for a transformative shift to work-based learning and promises to empower youth." – Artur Pokrikyan, Senior National Programme Officer for Inclusive Economic Development



"I'm proud to oversee six new initiatives that focus on youth and women empowerment, inclusion, and co-creation. These projects, selected for funding through a highly competitive and thorough process, create meaningful opportunities for youth and women, empowering them through collaboration, artistic expression, and civic engagement." – Vardan Janazyan, National Programme Officer / Media and Communications Officer

Project on reforming vocational education in agriculture achieves major milestone

On May 22, the Armenian Parliament adopted a new Vocational Education and Training (VET) law, a major milestone achieved through a Swiss co-founded vocational education development project. The law introduces reforms like work-based learning, sectoral qualification frameworks, and stronger partnerships between schools and businesses. It focuses on gender-sensitive, inclusive education, ensuring equal access, improving skills for jobs and entrepreneurship, and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. The project is a collaborative effort between local and international actors, led by the SDC, aiming to create a modern, labor-market-oriented vocational education system with a focus on agriculture and sustainable development.



Switzerland Supports Agroforestry Innovations in Armenia through FORACCA



At Armenia's first agroforestry conference held, on October 22 as part of the preparatory phase of the FORACCA project, which will focus on forest restoration and climate change adaptation, experts and officials discussed how agroforestry can boost environmental and economic resilience. Through supporting the work of Forest Alliance Coalition of NGOs, the project empowers communities to adopt climate-resilient practices and supports research to integrate agroforestry systems. This initiative reflects Switzerland's commitment to strengthening forest management and promoting sustainable agriculture in Armenia.

Since the launch of the project's preparatory stage in early 2024, the geographical focus of the intervention was concretized, including five communities that will pilot agroforestry practices, identifying over 1'000 hectares for forest landscape restoration.

Innovative Capacity and Participatory Policymaking in Armenia report

By the end of the year, the OECD—acting as a partner in a democracy advancement project in elaboration—concluded and published a comprehensive report titled Innovative Capacity and Participatory Policymaking in Armenia. Drawing on insights from surveys of over 2,500 public servants and civil society representatives, the report was compiled under the DIPPA project.

This initiative aims to strengthen democratic institutions and participatory governance by engaging government institutions, civil society, and independent media to foster inclusivity and citizen engagement in policymaking across Armenia.



LILA Project Published in Rural 21 Magazine



An article about the Living Landscapes for Market Development in Armenia (LILA) project has been published in Rural 21, an SDC-supported magazine and website focusing on rural development in the Global South.

The article explores LILA's innovative approach in promoting sustainable rural development. It highlights the project's efforts to enhance market development while fostering environmental resilience and empowering communities in Armenia. Additionally, it highlights some of the challenges and opportunities encountered throughout the project's implementation.

We encourage you to read the article to learn more about LILA's transformative impact and share your impressions if any. Please see the excerpted article attached and the full magazine issue [here](https://www.rural21.com/english/current-issue.html).

SWISS ASSISTANCE TO THE REFUGEE INTEGRATION



To strengthen efforts to integrate refugees from Nagorno Karabakh into the Armenian society and enhance social cohesion and economic opportunities in remote rural areas, Switzerland has launched the “Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees in Armenia” (SEIRA) project. Implemented in collaboration with the UN World Food Programme and the Strategic Development Agency NGO, the project aims to support 1,500 refugees and vulnerable local households, focusing on sustainable development and transitioning from humanitarian aid to long-term resilience.

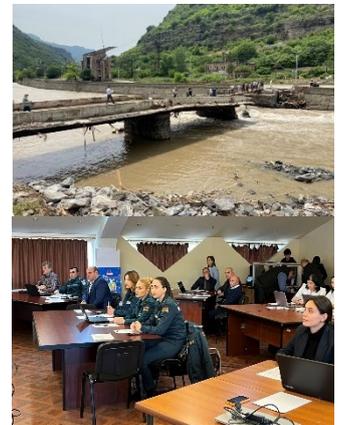
Additionally, for over a year, Switzerland has supported the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator by seconding a Swiss communication and coordination specialist. This critical contribution, recently extended until May 2025 has been instrumental in facilitating the refugee response plan and fostering dialogue with the government for a coordinated long-term transition strategy.

SWISS HUMANITARIAN AID FOR FLOODS RECOVERY

Heavy rainfall in May caused flooding in Northern Armenia, causing casualties, the temporary displacement of 2'400 persons, and considerable damage on public and private infrastructure. Responding rapidly, Switzerland deployed specialists from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit to assess the situation and earmarked up to CHF 500'000 to support efforts on the ground.

Based on the assessment, it was decided to support Armenia's early recovery efforts with reconstructing three pedestrian bridges in Saratovka, Ayrum and Alavardi communities, conducting an event analysis and providing engineering advice and capacity building.

While construction of the pedestrian bridges and the event analysis are ongoing, a River Engineering Workshop was held in November, in partnership with the State Academy of Crises Management of Armenia and ArmHydromet.



OFFICIAL MEETINGS & VISITS

PM Pashinyan visits a Swiss funded Citizen Office



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Citizen Office (CO) in Araks municipality, which was established with Swiss and German funding by GIZ Armenia, in collaboration with the Government of Armenia. During his visit, he learned about the services provided at the CO and the digital tools that allow access to these services across the enlarged municipality. Over the past nine years, 75 COs have been set up across Armenia, serving 86% of the population outside Yerevan, with more than 1.6 million citizens accessing over 60 services both in-person and online through the Municipal Management Information System (MMIS). Since 2014, the SDC has contributed CHF 16.4 million (USD 19.2 million) to support territorial reform and local governance in Armenia.

CULTURE

Promoting Contemporary Arts and Social Inclusion: 4 new cultural projects launched

Switzerland, through its "Regional Arts and Culture in the South Caucasus" project, has selected four initiatives to specifically address critical issues of inclusiveness and societal cohesion in Armenia.



The "Armenia in Braille" project focuses on inclusivity by creating a tactile wooden map of Armenia. This innovative artwork allows visually impaired children to explore their homeland through touch, providing a multi-sensory experience that combines accessibility with artistic expression. It serves as a reminder of the power of art's capacity to bridge social divides.



The project "Gortsaran.fm: An Art and Music Residency for Contemporary Creation", combines Armenian electronic music with digital arts through a YouTube-based radio and residency program. It provides free education in digital design and music production, training up to 20 specialists in 3D modeling and music. By blending traditional Armenian heritage with modern digital innovation, the project fosters collaboration and creative growth.



The "SEROZHIK" project documents the complexities of rural life through a documentary film exploring the experiences of a teenager in Martuni village. The story depicts the interplay of hope and hardship in rural communities, offering a heartfelt glimpse into the challenges faced by vulnerable populations while celebrating resilience and humanity.



The "Architecture Ghostly Past and Unrevealed" initiative explores ways to repurpose neglected Soviet-era architecture of the Jermuk Cultural Palace by transforming it into vibrant artistic spaces. In collaboration with curators, artists, and local communities, the project examines the integration of art within architectural contexts. This research will culminate in a documentary film, fostering dialogue and redefining perceptions of abandonment through creativity.

SHORT-TERM PROJECTS

Switzerland continues to support Armenia through targeted short-term initiatives that empower the civil society, —particularly women and youth—while addressing pressing societal needs. In 2024, SDC has selected two new transformative projects led by youth- and women-focused NGOs. These initiatives align with Switzerland's priorities of fostering democratic engagement, improving economic resilience, and promoting social inclusion.



The "Youth Empowerment Through Civic Tech and Participation" project, by the Youth Development Center of Armenia NGO, focuses on empowering young people to participate actively in democratic processes using digital tools and fostering civic participation. Through training sessions, a hackathon, podcast series, and collaborative activities, the project equips youth with skills to address societal challenges, advocate for inclusive decision-making, and enhance democratic governance in their communities.



The "Empower and Engage: Neet Pathways" project by the DUAL NGO introduces a comprehensive Youth Empowerment and Career Counseling Program designed to support 150 marginalized and forcibly displaced young people. By providing employability skills, personalized career guidance, and work-based learning opportunities, the initiative aims to strengthen social inclusion and economic resilience —creating avenues for vulnerable groups to thrive in Armenia's evolving job market.

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