

# ARMENIA: RURAL TOURISM TO RECEIVE INVESTMENTS



A new development program focused on 60 rural regions in Armenia has been launched in the UN Office in Yerevan. Titled “The Development of Integrated Tourism” the aim of the project is to develop areas not often visited by tourists and decrease the poverty of locals.

86% of tourists visiting Armenia either stay in Yerevan, the capital city, or visit places that are closest to the capital like Garni, Gerghard or Etchmiadzin. As a result, the inhabitants of other Armenian regions do not get any benefit from the tourism inflow to the country.

In an effort to resolve the issue, the UN Nations Development Programme took the initiative to implement the project in Armenia. **The aim is to develop rural tourism in the country.** Its authors hope that within three years, towards the end of the project, poverty will be reduced significantly in sixty Armenian villages. Other than that, tourism should be also boosted.

“We believe that rural tourism is the market, whose development will promote the economic development throughout the country,” said the permanent representative of the UN Development Programme, Bradley Buzetto, during the presentation of the project in the UN Office in Yerevan.

According to him, the key to the project’s success is active cooperation of the government of Armenia with foreign partners involved in its implementation.

The cost of the project is 3 million dollars which will be paid by the Russian government. The deputy director of the Department of International Organizations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dmitry Maksimichev said: “The programme is aimed at assisting the commensurate development of the rural regions and the creation of favorable environment for the development of villages. As a part of the project Russian experts will cooperate with Armenia.”

Incidentally, the Russian government has already been implementing a project worth five million dollars in villages of the Tavush region in Armenia. Its aim is rural development, agricultural production, and reduction of poverty. The project started in 2015 and is scheduled to be completed in 2019.

**The project beneficiaries are 60,000 rural inhabitants.** In the rural tourism development programme presented today in Yerevan sixty Armenian villages will be involved.

Experts will first of all examine tourist possibilities of the villages. Afterwards they will create business plans for small agribusinesses.

About one million dollars will be allocated for the improvement of rural infrastructure and water and gas supply systems. Without these, tourists are unlikely to stay in the villages.

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