

THE CATTLE PROJECT (CT2006) IN PROGRESS



The Cattle Project started in 2006 based on established unique practice of Heifer Project International of "Passing on the Gift" continues to contribute to the agricultural development of the region essentially changing the lives of the families involved. This practice of "Passing on the Gift" ensures project sustainability, develops community and enhances self-esteem by allowing project partners to become donors. The detailed assessment before the project implementation showed that the region had good prerequisite for such project and the most important thing was the communities high interest in the project and the willingness to take part in it. Just after the very first meeting with the families willing to be part of this agricultural development project more than 140 families from Berdzor - the administrative center of the region and close and far villages applied to become potential beneficiaries of Heifer project. The commitment of the participants even increased when they learned the goal of the project which intended not only to help the families become self-sustainable, but also gave them an opportunity to help others in the community through the pass-on of the animals. The project budget was estimated in anticipation of 30 pregnant cows to begin with, but as a result of a good assessment and bidding of ani-



mals the number of the animals increased and 43 pregnant cows were purchased and delivered to 43 families.

The project requires a continuous monitoring of the cows given to the beneficiary families and their calves, based on specified monitoring and evaluation system. It is a time-consuming process of a visit to each beneficiary family to check the barn the cow and the calf are kept in, their health and hygiene condition and nutrition. In 2015 17 more families received pregnant heifers and cows making the total number of the families involved in the Cattle Project 137. The 7 of the cows were bought and delivered to the families and the 10 heifers were passed-on by the families to new beneficiary families in different communities in and around Berdzor.

The village of Vardut is relatively new. Most of its families are refugee families from Getashen - a village in Shahumian region of Artsakh (the pre-soviet name of Karabagh) which is now occupied by Azerbaijan. The community was established in 2007 right after starting the Cattle Project. When the Governor of Kashatagh asked Project AGAPE director how they could help the families in the newly established village the answer were 9 cows delivered to all the first 9 families of the village. In 2010 they passed one offspring of the cow they received from Project AGAPE to new families moving to this village which has a wonderful location at the bank of a fast mountainous river. In 9 years the families grew the herd of their cows to an extend that they were able even to sell some cows. Project AGAPE bought several cows from them to give to other families willing to become the beneficiaries of the Cattle Project in Berdzor and some other villages of Kashatagh region.

"I am so grateful to all those who helped me to get this cow", says Alvard Grigoryan, "They are true Christians, as they feel my pain even not knowing me." Hearty thanks from all those families to all the United Methodists who help them to survive and continue in life, for changing their lives and giving HOPE ...



THE NEW - CHICKEN PROJECT (CT2016)



Ten years after launching the first development project of helping the families with cattle, Project AGAPE started a new project called **Chicken Project** to help the needy families in Kashatagh region of Karabagh which has the highest concentration of refugees both from the war of 1992-1994 and the recent war in Syria. Over the years, Project AGAPE has helped the people of Karabagh to become more self-sustaining with humanitarian aid, many educational and health care projects and development projects like the House Renovation project and the Cattle Project. After talking with the government officials, the local veterinary who assists Project AGAPE in its agriculture endeavors, and the farmers in the region Project AGAPE found out what other projects could be implemented to help them more. The top response was raising chickens. The Project AGAPE Board approved the Chicken Project at their May 10th Board meeting.

The importance of this project was especially big on the background of the new customs regulations concerning the import of food items to Armenia starting from 2015, which requires special safety procedures, so North Carolina United Methodists are no longer able to send food from the United States unless there is a Food Safety Certification from the factory where the food has been processed. Project AGAPE started to look at beginning new ventures such as private or community gardens, the purchase of food from Armenian outlets, and, finally, the new Chicken Project.

The three to four critical steps are listed below:

1. Building a pen on the Project AGAPE Christian Education Center property to house the chickens. This will include posts, fence, lumber for a chicken house, etc.
2. Helping the recipients of these chickens to furnish their own areas for the chickens.
3. Building of cages for transportation of the chickens.
4. Purchase of the chickens.
5. Food for the chickens

A chicken farm at AGAPE Center was built and chickens bought to give to socially vulnerable families. The best time to start delivering the chickens to families turned to be a week in September when a joint team which represented Project AGAPE Board members from both NC and WNC Conferences visited Armenia and Karabagh. 10 families received chickens and also 4 cows have been bought and delivered to four families while the team was in Karabagh. 5 more families received chickens and 4 more cows were bought and delivered later.

The logistics of the project is the following:

1. The cost of a chicken is \$7-\$10 depending on the age, the breed and how many eggs the chicken produces a week.
2. We feed them wheat.
3. We got the first 50 chickens from a farm not far from Yerevan and transported to Berdzor. But we have found out that there are some people in Kashatagh villages who also sell chickens and better (organic ☺) than the ones in the farms in Yerevan, so we bought 105 more chickens locally and are going to buy the rest from the families in Kashatagh. It will also help the local economy.
4. They are given to families around the 20 week of age.
5. The socially vulnerable families who have children facing food deficiency are the ones who get the chickens. Among them are also those families who have applied for a cow: they are asked whether they would like to get chickens instead and they get those in the case of a positive reply.
6. One family receives 10 chickens, a cock and a starting amount of wheat (100 pounds) to feed.

7. 15 families have already received 10 chickens each and 100 pounds of wheat. They will also get a cock.

Before giving the chickens to the families they are treated with needed medication which the veterinarian prescribes. The veterinarians at the vet. office are working on some important information on how to keep the chicken to produce more eggs and even raise more chickens. This information in the form of a brochure will be passed to families along with the chickens. The families are encouraged to raise more chickens, so that we buy chickens from them and give to other families.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all the United Methodists of North Carolina! Thank you for all the blessings the people of Kashatagh have received through your sharing and love! Wishing you a season of abundance in the things that matter most: HOPE, PEACE & LOVE! Have a festive and joyful Thanksgiving. May your blessings multiply as you face another season of sharing and giving. You give so much of yourself to so many. We wish a joyful and abundant Thanksgiving to YOU & YOURS!!!

OUR BEST WISHES FOR A VERY HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!