



BUILD TRAILS MAKE HISTORY

Trails For Change NGO

2021 Annual Report

Prepared by Ashot Davtyan, Program Manager,
and Ashkhen Mesropyan, Office Manager

Trails For Change NGO, Annual Report, 2021

We believe that trails can increase tourism, create more jobs and make a difference in Armenia. Trails For Change is still the only professional organization in Armenia that plans, designs and builds hiking, running, biking trails to promote tourism in Armenia partnering with various donors and organizations, individuals and experts, state institutions and private sector. As a professional trail builder, the owner of Los Angeles-based Bellfree Contractors company and Trails For Change NGO INC., I decided to make a contribution to my ancestral homeland by building trails and installing the trail building culture in Armenia.

Hans Keifer, Founder of Trails For Change NGO

BACKGROUND

Trails for Change NGO (TFC) is a non-profit organization funded by grants and donations with the mission to develop the tourism and outdoor recreational infrastructure throughout Armenia, by designing, building, and maintaining a network of trails throughout the country. The TFC team came together when International expert Hans Keifer, a professional trail builder from California with decades of experience, was brought in to provide training and guidance for the Transcaucasian Trail (TCT) project in 2017. During the trail-building process, Hans saw huge gaps in Armenia's sports and recreation infrastructure and decided that the best way to improve these problems was to start the TFC nongovernmental organization (NGO).

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

The broader goal of TFC's trail building is to develop opportunities for rural communities to see the economic impacts as a result of an increase in tourism and to promote rural tourism ventures. The organization has the objective to diversify tourism opportunities in Armenia, making the rich nature and diverse landscapes more alluring to foreigners and locals, promoting healthy lifestyles and adventure tourism. Through the sustainable trails that TFC constructs, maintains and restores, tourists and locals alike have an easier and more appealing way to explore the regions, wander in the breathtaking mountains, visit historic cultural sights, connect with the locals, and have unforgettable experiences.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

	Hans Keifer Founding Director	
	Tsovinar Hakobyan Creative Director	
Ashot Davtyan Program Manager	Marianna Eroyants Project Manager	Ashkhen Mesropyan Office Manager
Arthur Karapetyan Trail Crew Leader	Garnik Gevorgyan Trail Worker & 4x4 Driver	Armen Manukyan Trail Crew Leader
Arman Azoyan Trail Worker	Hovhannes Ghandilyan Trail Worker	Roffi Petrossyan Trail Worker
Gohar Karapetyan Trail Worker		Hrach Manukyan Trail Worker

2021 PROJECTS AND RESULTS

Let's do something! Developing and Marking Regional Hiking Trails project funded by USAID

Project Supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected Outcome: Marking and maintaining 10 trails in 10 regions of RA

Timeline: March–April 2021

The project was funded by USAID in partnership with Management System International and the RA State Tourism Committee. The project aimed at marking and maintaining hiking/biking trails in 10 regions in Armenia, with a focus on community involvement and development around the hiking destinations and the impacts of trails on them. It commenced in 2020 but was interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Nagorno-Karabakh war, only resuming from March to April 2021. The intended trail development and marking works included trail brushing, lopping, stone/rock clearing, bench cutting, signpost installation, trailhead billboard installations, blazing, GPS track creation for the final trail, and photo shooting on the selected trails.

The team consisted of 3 people (1 crew leader, 1 assistant crew leader, and 1 trail builder) from TFC and 2 locals from each region on the trails. The blazing process was carried out in accordance with RA State Tourism Committee guidelines.

Below, the completed blazed trail sections with maps are presented:

- Aragatsotn region: Byurakan-Orgov (6.3 km)
- Armavir region: Metsamor-Armavir-Sardarapat (33 km)
- Ararat region: Garni village-Azat reservoir (12.2 km)
- Lori region: Tsater vil.-Kobayr-Tumanyan town (7.5 km)
- Gegharkunik region: Kalavan-Drakhtik (16.6 km)
- Kotayk region: Geghashen-Petroglyphs-Gegard (46.7 km)
- Vayots Dzor region: Vernashen-Spitakavor mon. (5 km)
- Tavush region: Hovq - Aghjkaberd (16 km)
- Shirak region: Sarapat-Trchkan waterfall (7 km)
- Syunik region: Sisian-Shaki waterfall (9.4 km)



Photo collage #1: Let's do something

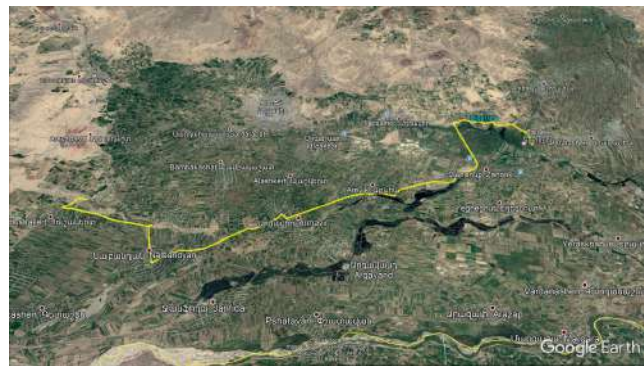
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Photo collage #2: Let's do something



Map#1: Aragatsotn: Byurakan-Orgov



Map#2: Armavir: Metsamor-Armavir-Sardarapat



Map #3: Ararat: Garni village-Azat reservoir



Map #4: Lori region: Tsater vil.-Kobayr-Tumanyan town

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Map #5: Gegharkunik region: Kalavan-Drakhtik



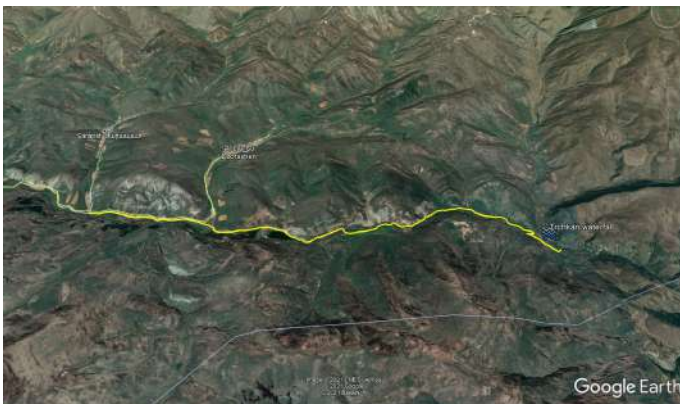
Map #6: Kotayk: Geghashen-Petroglyphs-Gegard



Map #7: Vayots Dzor: Vernashen-Spitaavor mon.



Map #8: Tavush region: Hovq - Aghjkaberd



Map #9: Shirak region: Sarapat-Trchkan waterfall



Map #10: Syunik region: Sisian-Shaki waterfall

“Legends Trail” project funded by People In Need

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: TCT main route development in Syunik region

Timeline: March - April 2021

The project was funded by the “People in Need” NGO in partnership with *Cartisan.org*, the “Transcaucasian Trail Armenia” NGO, and the RA State Tourism Committee. The importance of this project is that most of the trails run under the TCT main route in the Syunik region and in the past years many trail development projects had been completed by TCT and TFC resulting in the establishment of a high-quality trail network which now is connected to the Legends Trail. The project was divided into two segments due to the Nagorno Karabakh war: the 1st segment ended in September 2020 finalizing the work in Goris, later the 2nd segment’s trail development and marking works started **from March 22 to April 18, 2021**, from the Kapan area to Mt. Khustup. The crew consisted of 2 people from TFC (1 trail crew leader and 1 project coordinator) and local laborers and volunteers from the villages. The intended work included blazing, markings, directional signpost installations, trail maintenance in some parts, rerouting, lopping, small branch cutting, and brushing. The 2nd segment of the trail network was divided into 16 stages, the distance of which in total was 111.9 km:

- Tatev-Tandzatap, 3.11 km **(Stage 9)**
- Tandzatap-Bardzravan, 12 km **(Stage 10)**
- Bardzravan-Tandzaver, 10 km **(Stage 11)**
- Tandzaver- Verin Khotanan, 14.5 km **(Stage 12)**
 - *Verin Khotanan-Shrvenants*, 4.5 km **(Stage 12.1)**
- Verin Khotanan-Tavrus, 3 km **(Stage 13)**
- Tavrus - Okhtar, 2.5 km **(Stage 14)**
- Okhtar-Vanek, 2.5 km **(Stage 15)**
- Vanek-Dzorastan, 3.3 km **(Stage 16)**
- Dzorastan-Arajadzor, 3.5 km **(Stage 17)**
- Aradjadzor-Shgharshik, 8 km **(Stage 18)**
- Shgharshik-Vahanavanq, 3 km **(Stage 19)**
 - *Shgharshik-Baghaberd*, 8 km **(Stage 19.1)**
- Vahanavanq- Bekh, 8 km **(Stage 20)**
- Bekh-Bekh Anapat, 3.5 km **(Stage 21)**
- Bekh Anapat- Verin Vachagan, 4 km **(Stage 22)**

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- Verin Vachagan- Baghaburdj, 4 km (Stage 23)
- Baghaburdj- Mt. Khustup, 14.5 km (Stage 24)



Map #11: Legends Trail, 2nd Segment

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Photo collage #1: *Legends Trail*

“Youth For Change 2021 Dilijan” project funded by US Forest Service

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan, Ashkhen Mesropyan

Expected outcome: Provide the youth of the regions of Armenia with education, training, and further opportunities for employment in nature conservation and trail building

Timeline: June - August 2021

The project was funded by the USDA Forest Service in partnership with the “Transcaucasian Trail Armenia” NGO, Dilijan National Park, and the RA State Tourism Committee. The main objectives of the YFC program were met: to provide gainful employment for 18-35-year old male/female participants in impoverished communities and to assist the local youth in the development of their tourism businesses/startups. The

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volunteer program had 45 volunteers (24 females and 21 males), with more than 33% of the participants involved in trail-building activities and employed in trail development-related positions. The technical crew consisted of 2 people from TFC (1 trail crew leader and 1 trail crew assistant) and volunteers from the program. The project area was located in Dilijan National Park of Tavush province, and the developed trail was part of a long-distance hiking route of the more than 3000 km long Transcaucasian Trail. Specifically, the 1,5 km route has been developed from Haghartsin Monastery to Dilijan city and a 1-km long Hidden Waterfall has been maintained in the period from June 28 to August 13.



The volunteering program consisted of 2 segments: online meetings on business and tourism-related topics and field camps. The first session included topics, such as Introduction to the Program/Financial Literacy, Tourism Product Development, Sustainable Tourism, and Environmental Impact, Marketing Basics, and Hiking Tourism and Trail-building Introduction. The second phase of the project was in the field camp and lasted for a total period of 6 weeks (a week for each group). The training sessions had topics of practical trail construction, camp management, first aid, and safety.

The volunteering program was followed by two intensive practical training on crew leadership and trail construction. The final selection of the participants was based on the feedback of the TFC technical crew and was followed by the trail assessment by two members of the TFC technical crew, who were the supervisors of the training.

Newly developed trails funded by Hike Armenia

- **Aparan Reservoir Loop Trail**

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: Develop new trail in Aparan reservoir

Timeline: May-August 2021

The project was funded by Hike Armenia in partnership with “Transcaucasian Trail Armenia” NGO and the RA State Tourism Committee. The total distance is 5.4 km. The crew of 3 people (crew

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leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC. The intended work included blazing, markings, signposting, trail maintenance in some parts, rerouting, lopping, branch cutting, and brushing.

- **Aghveran Loop Trail**

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: Develop new trail in Aghveran

Timeline: From 01.09.2021-11.09.2021

The project was funded by Hike Armenia in partnership with “Transcaucasian Trail Armenia” NGO and the RA State Tourism Committee. The hiking loop trail from Aghveran (start point is Arthurs Resort) to the top of the mountain is marked and available to hike both in summer and winter seasons including the extension to Tsaghunyats lake. The total distance is 10.2 km including the extension to the lake. The crew of 3 people (crew leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC. The intended work included blazing, markings, signposting, trail maintenance in some parts, rerouting, lopping, branch cutting, and brushing.



Map #12: Aghveran Loop Trail

- **Antarut vil. to Amberd Fortress Trail**

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: Develop a new trail in Antarut village

Timeline: From 13.09.2021-16.09.2021

The project was funded by Hike Armenia in partnership with “Transcaucasian Trail Armenia” NGO and the RA State Tourism Committee. The 7.1 KM trail extends between the village of Antarut

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and the legendary Amberd Fortress, a 10th-century fortress located 2,300 meters (7,500 ft) above sea level, on the slopes of Mount Aragats. The crew consisted of 3 people (crew leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC. The intended work included blazing, markings, signposting, trail maintenance in some parts, rerouting, lopping, branch cutting, and brushing.



Map #15: Antarat vil. to Amberd Fortress Trail



Photo collage #1: Funded by Hike Armenia

“Linking Cultural Tourism and Heritage with Sustainable Development in the Lori Province of Armenia” project funded by US Embassy Yerevan

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: To integrate cultural and nature-based tourism and sustainable local development in Ahnidzor, Atan, Shamut, and Lorut village communities of the Lori province

Timeline: From 01.10.2021-30.09.2022

The project is a partnership between “Trails For Change” NGO, the “Armenian Society of Biologists” NGO, and the “Hrant Matevosyan” Cultural Benevolent Foundation, and is funded through a Department of State Public Diplomacy Section grant. The project contains four implementation phases (Oct-Dec 2021, Jan-Mar 2022, Apr-Jun 2022, Jul-Sep 2022). During the first implementation phase, which took place from October to December 2021, key activities included tourist preparational meetings with stakeholders and site visits, participatory planning, the creation of a network of hiking trails connecting the Ahnidzor, Shamut, Lorut, and Atan communities, and the preparation and installation of media content (audio, video, photo, 3D, etc.) on the newly developed hiking trails through augmented reality technology (AR Trails).

The goals of the program’s first phase were preparational meetings with key stakeholders, site visits to the targeted communities, participatory planning for the creation of the hiking trails in the area, and preparation of media content for the augmented reality technology app on the hiking trails. The main activities covered to achieve intended goals were team



meetings, stakeholder meetings, site visits, reports, trail scouting, content development, etc. The goals were met by tracking the performance of any event, meeting, and visit on the communication plan according to the calendar of each month. An online platform was used as a project management tool for scheduling and task management. Each month of the first

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phase started with an overview of the lessons learned from the previous month and ended with the planning for the next month according to the calendar of the required activities, also conducted an evaluation, internal reports preparation, and monitoring by the board members of the organization.

Trchkan Waterfall Bridge Construction

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: To build a connecting suspension bridge from Sarapat to Trchkan Waterfall

Timeline: June 2021

The project was initiated and funded by Country Water Partnership scientific, ecological NGO. The project was initially scheduled for 2020 but due to the pandemic, it was delayed until 2021. Also due to the pandemic material pricing had a huge increase during that time, that's why we started [a campaign](#) for Trchkan Waterfall Suspension Bridge Fundraiser, and raised \$890 of the initial \$1600. Total amount of the budget spent is \$5000. The suspension bridge is 18m. The technical team consisted of 7 people. Photo reports from the construction process and the completed bridge are followed:



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Photo #1: Trchkan bridge construction process



Photo #2: Trchkan bridge completed photos from summer and winter hikes

“Janapar Trail” fundraising project

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan, Ashkhen Mesropyan

Expected outcome: To provide financial support to the accommodation owners located on the Janapar Trail in Artsakh

Timeline: June 2021

The fundraising project was initiated by Trails For Change NG after the war in Artsakh. The fundraising platform used for the donations is on [our website](#). We raised \$17,344. There are 18 families that were located on the Janapar trail, who need our support, such as: warm clothes, housing and essential house repair, food, medical needs, transportation, animal food for winter, utility and wood. The families listed on the trail are followed:

Sahak’s Family, Albert’s Family, Armen’s Family, Vahram’s Family, Zhenya’s Family, Arto’s Family, Ararat’s Family, Mariam’s Family, Astghik’s Family, Irina’s Family, Anahit’s Family, Artur’s Family, Lusine’s Family, Petros’s Family, Arevik’s Family, Avetisyan’s Family, Vladimir’s Family, Henrik’s Family. We donated to 11 families this year.

Events and workshops

Event name: EuropeDay2021

Event participant: Ashot Davtyan

Timeline: 11 May 2021

The panel discussion in the framework of the EuropeDay2021 at the COAF smart center. The main theme was about rethinking tourism in Armenia.



Photo #1: Events: EuropeDay2021, Yerevan Tourism Expo

Event name: Yerevan Tourism Expo

Event participant: Ashot Davtyan, Ashkhen Mesropanyan

Timeline: 25-25 May 2021

Tourism Expo organized by the State Tourism Committee of RA in Yerevan, where we presented our products with other partner organizations working in the extreme tourism industry.

Event name: “Volunteering for Nature”

Event participant: 4 volunteers from the Youth For Change program

Timeline: November 15 - 20, 2021

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From November 15 to 20 the Trails for Change NGO's group of volunteers participated in the "Volunteering for nature" short-term volunteering project implemented by the Ministry of Environment of Armenia and the "Armenian Society of Biologists" NGO. The maintenance and assessment works were carried out on the trails of Medieval monasteries, Whispering Waterfall, the King of the Forest and Parz lake-Gosh in Dilijan National Park.

The program is implemented within the framework of the US Embassy in Armenia Graduate Grants Program, aimed at strengthening the connection between volunteer engaging organizations and environmental organizations by implementing volunteering projects.

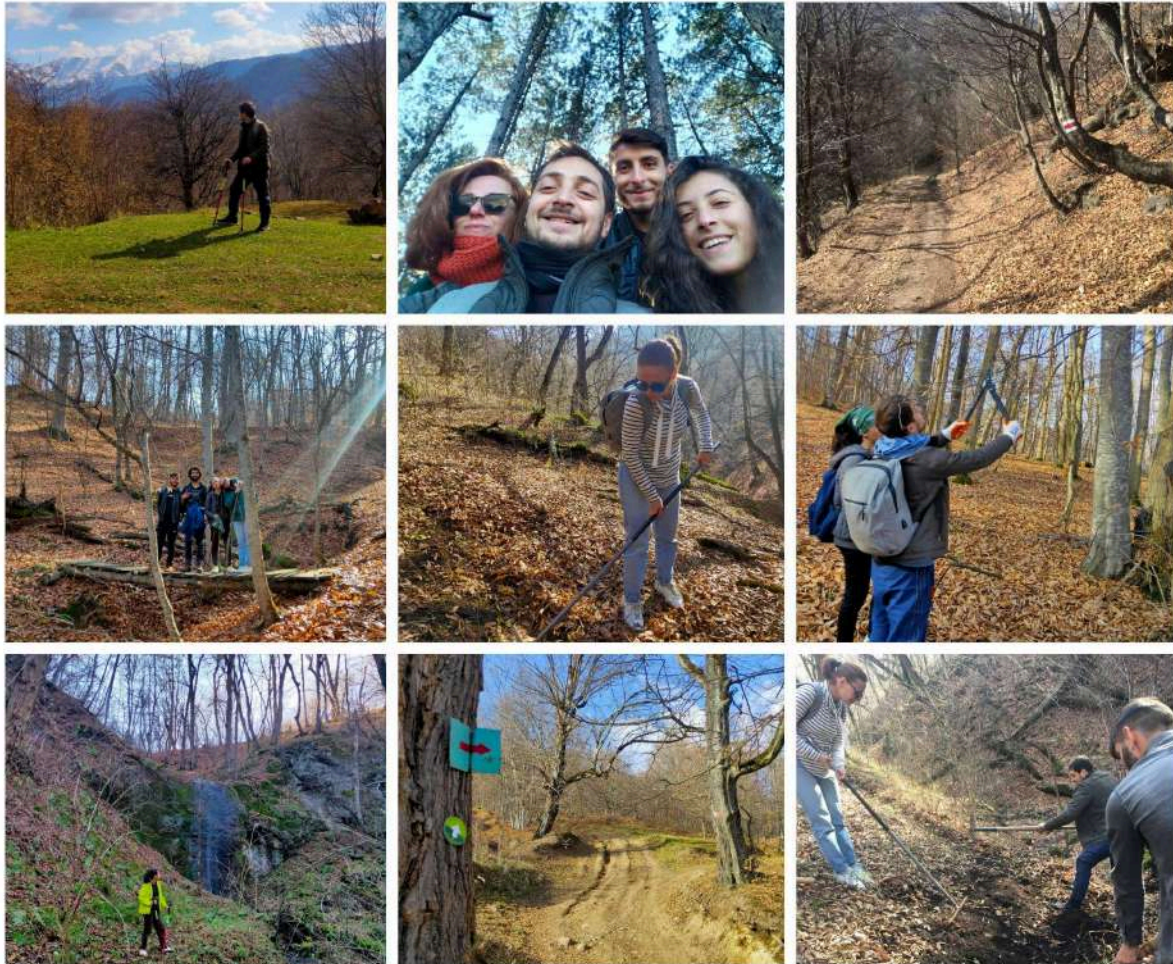


Photo #1: Events: Volunteering for Nature

Collaboration results

Hike Armenia maintenance work

Vayots dzor

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: Trail maintenance, marking, and blazing routes in Zaritap community including the areas of Gomk, Artavan, and Martiros villages.

Timeline: From 03.05.2021-23.05.2021

The trail network under this project includes the following trails:

- Old Martiros Loop, 0.5 km
- Old Martiros to Zaritap village
- Old Martiros to Waterfalls
- Old Martiros to Gomk, 2 km
- Gomk to Kapuyt, 0.3 km
- Gomk to Artavan via Bazalt Arch, 1km
- Berdakar Loop, 1km
- Artavan to Karmir lake-Andranik's fortress (incl. Nare waterfall Trail)
- Mountain Goat Trail
- Iron Age Trail

The project was in the frames of funding by The Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia. The intended works included blazing, brushing, glass clearing, signposting, trade clearing, lopping, tred widening, and small branch cutting. The crew consisted of 3 people (crew leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC.



Map #16: Zaritap community trails

Tavush

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: trail maintenance, marking, and blazing routes in Dilijan National Park.

Timeline: From 18.06.2021-27.07.2021

The trail network under this project includes the following trails:

- Dilijan-Drunken forest Trail, 3.2 km
- Parz lake to Dilijan Trail, 14.1 km
- The Medieval Monasteries Trail, 3.5 km
- Gosh to Parz lake Trail, 7.1km
- Gosh to Gosh lake Trail, 4.2 km
- Gosh lake-Khachardzan Trail (New-built section), 1.1 km

The project was in the frames of funding by The Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia. The intended works included blazing, brushing, fallen tree cutting, glass clearing, signposting, trade clearing, lopping, tred widening, and small branch cutting. The crew consisted of 3 people (crew leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC.



Map #17: Dilijan National Park trails

Lori region

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: trail maintenance, marking, and blazing routes in Lori region.

Timeline: From 28.07.2021-20.08.2021

The trail network under this project includes the following trails:

- Dsegh-COAF smart center Trail, 6.3 km
- Dsegh Loop Trail, 11.22 km
- Dsegh-Tsater Trail, 4.8 km
- Giqor Trail, 3.8 km
- Tsater-Tumanyan Trail (incl. Kobayr mon. ext.), 8.7 km
- Odzun-Kobayr Trail, 8.1 km

The project was in the frames of funding by The Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia. The intended works included blazing, brushing, fallen tree cutting, glass clearing, signposting, adding new signboards, trade clearing, lopping, tread widening, and small branch cutting. The crew consisted of 3 people (crew leader, assistant crew leader, and trail builder) from TFC.



Map #18:Lori region trails



Photo #1: Hike Armenia, Maintenance

Yerevan Trail Club

Project supervisor: Ashot Davtyan

Expected outcome: a free club for hiker lovers

Timeline: From June 2021 to present

The project is a continuation of the partnership between Hike Armenia and The Transcaucasian Trail Armenia NGO. Yerevan Trail Club is a free club for hikers and nature lovers. Its coordination and events are organized by the Hike Armenia team through the Facebook private group, which has almost 100 members. The TFC team provides technical advice on the trails, tools, materials, as well as, designs the training programs included in the hiking events. The members of the club participated in 5 different hiking events and explored 5 trails of Armenia, such as the trails in Gnishik, Noravanq, Arpa protected area, the “Cosmic Trip” Trail in Byurakan, new trail scouting in Antanut, the Dsegh Loop Trail, and the Aparan Reservoir Trail. Besides hiking, each event includes special training, such as first aid, markings, trail evaluation, trail maintenance works, hiking with paper maps and compasses, etc. The hikes are seasonal and are planned to start from March 2022. Photo reports from the hikes are below:



Photo #1: Photos from the “Yerevan Trail Club” hikes

2022 Outlook

We closed the year of 2021 with lots of collaboration opportunities and potential projects upcoming. For 2022 we are planning a hybrid fundraising trip in July through Armenia (hybrid means a mix of cultural trips and hikes). International tourists will be able to visit the cultural monuments of Armenia and hike the famous trails that were built by TFC in 10 days.

As a continuation of the partnership between Trails For Change NGO and Transcaucasian Trail Armenia NGO, it is planned to start trail-building works in Arevik National Park, Syunik region. Having the successful example of the “Youth For Change Dilijan 2021” program funded by the US Forest Service, it is established to expand the partnership in 2022 as well.

THANK YOU!!!!