

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



TRAILS FOR CHANGE NGO

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Trails For Change NGO



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).

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





Trails For Change 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.



BUILD TRAILS MAKE HISTORY

2022 PROJECTS AND RESULTS



TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND MARKING

REGIONS: SYUNIK, VAYOTS DZOR, GEGHARKUNIK, TAVUSH, LORI

BUDGET: 16000 USD

APX. 300 KM OF TRAILS IN TOTAL INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING TRAILS:

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: HIKE ARMENIA

Vayots Dzor region:

- Gomk to Artavan
- Arch Trail (Gomk to rock arch)
- Berdakar Mountain Loop
- Kapuyt Loop Trail
- Hayeli Lake Loop
- Gomk to Martiros Trail
- Martiros Waterfall Trail
- Old Martiros Loop
- Gomk - Kapuyt Trail
- Artavan Waterfall Trail (Nare Waterfall)
- Connection Kapuyt Loop Extension to Artavan Trail
- Andranik's Fortress Trail
- Gomk to Akhta Trail
- Mountain Goat Trail
- The Iron Age Loop Trail
- Zaritap to Martiros
- Gnishik-Noravank
- Noravank Trail
- Gndevank Monastery Trail
- Vernashen to Spitakavor

Gegharkunik region:

- Kalavan-Drakhtik

Syunik region:

- Tatev-Devil's Bridge

Tavush region:

- Parz Lake to Dilijan Trail
- Gosh Lake to Goshavank Trail
- Goshavank to Parz Lake Trail+Bridge
- Whispering Waterfall
- King of the Forest (Dilijan)
- Parz Lake Loop Trail
- Khachardzan to Gosh Lake Trail
- Three Hawks Trail
- Medieval Monasteries
- Haghartsin Monastery to Hovk Village trail

Lori region:

- Sanahin to Haghpat Monasteries
- Odzun to Sanahin
- Kobayr to Odzun
- Kobayr-Tumanyan-Tsater
- Tsater to Kurtan
- Dsegh to Tsater via Dzoraget (Karasun Mankants)
- Giqor Trail
- Dsegh Loop Trail
- COAF to Dsegh

Bridges:

- Hidden waterfall trail bridge full renovation,
- Parz lake to Gosh trail bridge full reconstruction and
- One new small bridge construction on Parz lake loop trail.

THE MAINTENANCE WORKS ALSO INVOLVED LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE PAID JOB POSITIONS.

RESULTS

During March-June period TFC team worked on the trail maintenance and marking in 5 regions of Armenia, including bridge maintenance and construction in Dilijan National park area:

2022



YOUTH FOR CHANGE CONSERVATION CORPS SYUNIK, AREVIK NATIONAL PARK

REGIONS: SYUNIK
AREVIK NATIONAL PARK

BUDGET: 14000 USD

DURATION: 2 WEEKS:

PARTICIPANTS: 12 (7 FEMALES AND 5 MALES)

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: YEREVAN, SHIRAK,
SYUNIK, TAVUSH, VAYOTS DZOR, ARTSAKH

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS: THE TRANSCAUCASIAN
TRAIL, CAUCASUS NATURE FUND, US FOREST SERVICE,
DONATIONS

YFC 2022 in the Syunik region started in June 2022, in Arevik National Park, the most southern border of Armenia and Iran (Megrit town) where more than 12 participants (conservation members) with 7 TFC staff members participated in a 2 weeks summer trail building camp.

The crews were working on the section of the Transcaucasian Trail stretching from Megrit town to Khustup mountain peak inside the Arevik NP. The participants also had wilderness medicine and camp management training. Unfortunately the 2nd phase (planned for Sep-Oct 2022) has been postponed to 2023 spring because of the state border conflict.



Assessment and Designing Phase:

By cooperating with Zangezur Biosphere Complex SNCO and the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Armenia, with technical support from the Transcaucasian Trail NGO, assessment work has been done in the Arevik National Park (near Apkes and Alvank villages) by Trails For Change NGO crew members for the YFC Syunik 2022 Program. For assessment purposes to build, mark and maintain a trail in the specific area, field scouting and research were implemented to identify actual requirements. A trail marking and signage system was designed to meet internationally recognized levels of functionality and recognisability to visitors.



YOUTH FOR CHANGE CONSERVATION CORPS SYUNIK AREVIK NATIONAL PARK



First aid training was the most crucial part of the educational segment of the project. Covered topics were types of snakes and their geographical diversity (due to the region), emergency care, and injuries, emergency transfer, types of bandaging, bleeding, musculoskeletal system injury, external signals effect on the organism, urgent transfer of affected using the stuff around and barrows, etc.

The camping equipment register had 5 segments included: camping equipment (tents, mats, sleeping bags, etc.), kitchen equipment and the grocery, industrial goods, domestic goods, and trail equipment. It is notable that the document management was based not only on the last year's YFC program gained experience, the project's lessons learned register but also on the Transcaucasian Trail's international camp management in 2017 and the Pacific Crest Trail Association's camping organizational documents of the youth programs.



2022

EDUCATIONAL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT IN YEREVAN BOTANICAL GARDEN

LOCATION: YEREVAN

BUDGET: 7000 USD

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS: H. HOVNANIAN FAMILY FOUNDATION, YEREVAN BOTANICAL GARDEN, HIKE ARMENIA

In collaboration with Yerevan Botanical Garden and with the financial support of the H.Hovnanian Foundation and Hike Armenia, TFC has marked and signposted an educational short walking trail (1.5 km) inside the Botanical Garden of Yerevan. Besides the 50 directional signposts, 30 educational boards with information about plant and tree species, and 2 trailhead information kiosks have also been designed, manufactured and installed inside the park.



2022



LINKING CULTURAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LORI PROVINCE OF ARMENIA

BUDGET: 51 000 USD

PROVINCE: LORI

VILLAGES: AHNIDZOR, ATAN, LORUT, SHAMUT

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS: ARMENIAN SOCIETY OF BIOLOGISTS NGO, HRANT MATEVOSSIAN CULTURAL CHARITY FOUNDATION, US EMBASSY OF ARMENIA

The main goal of the project was to integrate cultural and nature-based tourism and sustainable local development in the target communities of the Lori province, by creating a network of hiking trails connecting the Ahnidzor, Shamut, Lorut, and Atan communities, as well as the “Tumanyan-Matevosyan ” cultural trail (Ahnidzor-Dsegh). The network of the trails connects the cultural and natural sites of the Ahnidzor, Shamut, Lorut, and Atan communities. In addition, the “Tumanyan - Matevosyan" cultural trail for long-distance hiking between Dsegh and Ahnidzor also has been created. The Dsegh community is the birthplace of famous Armenian writer Hovhannes Tumanyan. Within the activity, the assessment of the potential routes has been done and afterward, the crew of the TFC implemented trail building, blazing and signposting activities.



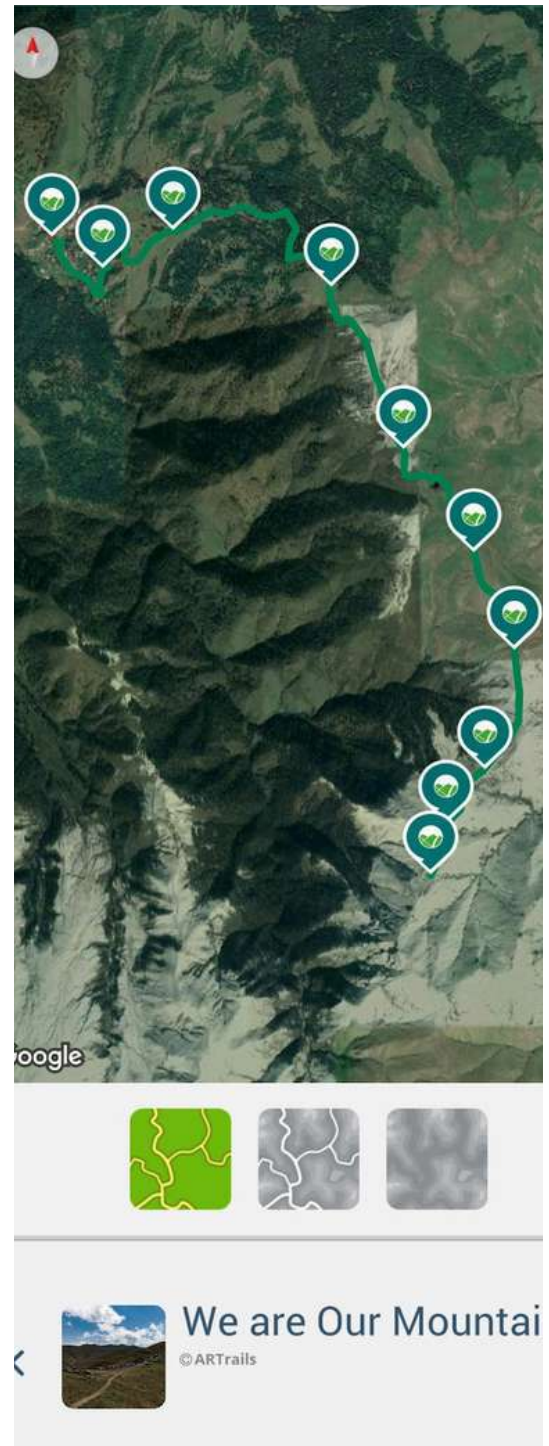


2022

LINKING CULTURAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LORI PROVINCE OF ARMENIA

Within the project:

- Designed and built 45 km long hiking trails, creating a network linking cultural and natural heritage in the target villages.
- The trails are installed on the AR Trails mobile app with their accordant historical and cultural information. The purpose of the activity was to provide an innovative experience for visitors by introducing augmented reality technology. Using this technology, we will be able to present the rich culture and history of Hrant Matevosyan's heritage.



2022



LINKING CULTURAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LORI PROVINCE OF ARMENIA

Within the project:

- Established and renovated **5 guesthouses** and **2 campsites** in the targeted communities.
- Organized and conducted training for **56 participants** /14 women, 42 men/
 - Principles of the work of the guesthouses and campsites
 - First aid training for non-medical staff/Hiking guides
 - Mountain guiding and safety course
- Created **5 cultural** and nature-based tourist packages.
- Short promo video production
- FAM trip to the area for tour agencies and guides

The project was implemented together with the “Trails for change” NGO, “Armenian Society of Biologists” and “Hrant Matevosyan” Cultural Charity Foundation.



2022



LINKING CULTURAL TOURISM AND HERITAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LORI PROVINCE OF ARMENIA

On October 28, the FAM trip of the project "Linking cultural tourism and heritage with sustainable development in the Lori Province of Armenia" took place in the Tumanyan community of Lori Province.

🏠 During the event, visits and acquaintances were made to newly created campsites, guest houses in Ahnidzor, Atan, Lorut Shamut villages, and Hrant Matevosyan's house.

📱 During the event the Hiking packages on AR trails mobile applications were presented and tested. The mobile application helps to visualize historical and cultural information via modern technology.

🏔️ Also, the newly created and marked trails network was presented, which will connect the above-mentioned communities to the already existing trails of the Lori region, ensuring the flow of adventure tourism lovers. There were also established acquaintances with the mountain guides who took special courses within the framework of the project.

✅ The five newly-developed tourism packages were presented which the tour companies and individual guides can use while organizing visits and enjoying rural experiences.

✅ The closing event was also attended by David Matevosyan the director of Hrant Matevosyan Cultural Charity Foundation, representatives of the "Armenian Society of Biologists" NGO, "Strategic Development Agency" NGO and WWF-Armenia, tour operators, community leaders, and local media representatives.



2022

DESIGN AND INSTALLATION OF TRAIL ADAPTED FOR TOURISTS WITH DISABILITIES

BUDGET: 48000 USD

LOCATION: TAVUSH PROVINCE, PARZ LAKE

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS: GIZ ARMENIA, ACCESSIBLE ARMENIA NGO

Within the tourism component of the EU4Business ITTD project a specific goal is to support the development of better tourism offers to lead to good jobs and sustainable businesses for transformative and inclusive progress in the three northern regions of Armenia (Lori / Shirak / Tavush).

In this context, the Project supported Accessible Armenia NGO with the help of TFC NGO to improve the part of the Loop trail of Parz Lake (700-1000m.) aiming at enhancing the infrastructure of the Parz Lake area and adapting it to the needs of people with disabilities, especially people using wheelchairs, as well as families with children carrying prams. In this context, TFC was contracted as a local and professional organization with proven experience in trail design, trail building, trail development, and trail construction to adapt a part of Parz Lake Loop Trail to the requirements of people using a wheelchair and construct a viewpoint for the people using a wheelchair according to international safety and security standards. The project is still ongoing and will be finished in April 2023. A large part of the groundwork has been completed by the TFC technical team.



2022

HIKING TRAILS DEVELOPMENT IN THE VILLAGES OF DEBED CANYON OF LORI REGION

BUDGET: 36000 EUR

RIGION: LORI

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: CHILDREN OF ARMENIA CHARITABLE FUND (COAF)

The project's objective was to build, construct and equip 20 trails for hiking, biking, and other activities which represent the optimal combination of existing connections and new routes which would provide the best possible trail user experience. The implementation started in August 2022 and has been completed by the end of December 2022.

The main results are:

- Maintenance of existing footpath (brushing, rock removal, tread widening, fallen tree removal, drainage structure installation, retaining wall reconstruction, trash cleanup, etc.)-58 km
- Design & construction of new trail-400m
- Installation of 50 sign poles with 135 signboards on junctions of trails
- Installation of 12 new trail information kiosks and boards
- Drainage channel construction 85 meters
- Hazard warning sign installation-3 items

During the project TFC team also involved local workers and YFC participants from the Lori region as well as did trail design and construction works in BOO mountain park in Vanadzor.



2022 WORLD TRAILS CONFERENCE IN SKIATHOS

On September 26-30, Trails for Change NGO's programs manager Ashot Davtyan participated in the World Trails Conference in Skiathos, Greece. Among the other participants, there were 118 international speakers from 6 Continents. Ashot Davtyan presented Youth For Change Conservation Corps program during the special educational session. Several opportunities to collaborate with other organizations and conservation corps members were achieved during the conference. The World Trails Conference is a global gathering of trail experts, land managers, trail builders, enthusiasts, and academics, who meet once every two years to share knowledge, experience, and network.



TFC'S 5TH ANNIVERSARY

On December 8, the TFC team gathered to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the NGO. The founding director of the organization, Hans Keifer, made an opening speech. The 2017-2022 programs, achievements, and future plans were presented to the invited guests, former team members and partners. At the end of the event the partners and employees of the organization were awarded with special nominations for cooperation and support.

