

TRAILS FOR CHANGE NGO



2024

Annual Report



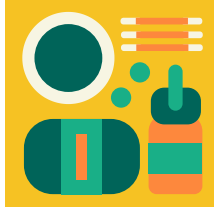
Yerevan, 2024

What's Inside

Who
We Are



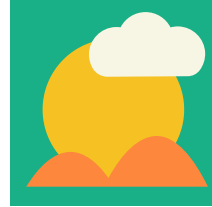
What We
Achieved



Our
Financials



What We
Envision



Contact
Us



Who We Are

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 invited to provide training and guidance for the Transcaucasian Trail (TCT) project in 2017. During the trail-building process, Hans identified huge gaps in Armenia's sports and recreation infrastructure. He decided that the best way to address these challenges was to establish TFC, a nongovernmental organization (NGO).



FROM THE FOUNDER

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

Hans Keifer, Founder of Trails For Change NGO

Our Vision

The benefits of expanding the outdoor recreation economy in Armenia can bring much needed economic relief. Trails both drive tourism and boost physical activity.

Our Mission

We are on a mission to develop a network of trails which spans all across Armenia.

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



Our Programs

In 2024 we focused on two main directions: **trail infrastructure development and outdoor education.**

What We Achieved

Our Year in Pictures

Trails for Change NGO has made significant strides in the past year, achieving notable success in its mission to develop and enhance the tourism infrastructure. Through strategic partnerships and dedicated efforts, the organization successfully completed trail maintenance and marking projects in various regions of Armenia. These projects not only improved existing trails but also opened new routes for visitors to explore, contributing to the overall promotion of hiking and ecotourism in the country. The TFC's strong commitment to stakeholder engagement, evidenced by collaborations with national parks and environmental foundations, has further solidified its impact on the conservation and sustainable development landscape.



Our Impact in Numbers

30 km
New Built
Trails

As part of various programs different in 2024, TFC professional crew built approximately 30km of new trails in Lori, Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions. These newly built sections serve either as connectors, or a part of long-distance trails, such as the Transcaucaian Trail, the Legends Trail and the Armenian National Trail. Additionally, our team carried out maintenance on 521 km of trails.

In 2024 we generated income from different grant programs and service contracts totaling \$306,000. These funds were allocated to infrastructure development and maintenance, educational programs, international exchanges and on administrative support. The majority of the funds were reinvested into the tourism and rural economy.

\$306K

Raised in Funds

30

**New Partnerships
Forged**

Over the past year, we successfully established 30 new partnerships with organizations and stakeholders in the fields of trail development, ecotourism, and outdoor education. These collaborations span various sectors, including local governments, environmental NGOs, educational institutions, and private enterprises.



Construction Projects

In 2024 we added and restored various types of trail infrastructure across different regions of Armenia enhancing the safety and experience of hikers.



Trail Maintenance

Program partner:
HikeArmenia

With funding from the Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia we have successfully implemented annual trail maintenance from March to July. The trail maintenance projects took place in Lori, Tavush, Vayots Dzor, Aragatsotn and Syunik regions of Armenia with a total of 240 km of trails maintained. Specific trail projects carried out such as tread repair, widening, fallen tree clearing, brushing, blazing, trailhead kiosk installation, and trail improvement. These efforts enhanced accessibility and usability, ensuring the trails remain open and available to visitors.



Trail Maintenance on Armenian National Trail

Program partner:
HikeArmenia

Trail maintenance of the recently built Armenian National Trail was initiated and funded by The Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia. The main reason were the floods on rivers in Lori region which damaged roads, trails and bridges in June. The maintenance work covered all segments from Akhtala to Atan, totaling 150 km. Specific trail projects carried out such as tread repair, widening, brushing, signpost installation, trailhead kiosk maintenance and trail improvement.



Hiking Bridge Construction and Maintenance

Program partners:
HikeArmenia, SDA, USFS

2024 was a significant year for adding new trail bridges, maintaining the existing bridges and even getting international experts on training and construction of bridges. The Foundation for the Development and Promotion of Hiking and Ecotourism in Armenia/Hike Armenia funded the construction of a new bridge over the Marts River in Lori region measuring 23.7 meters in length and 90 cm in width. Another new bridge was constructed in Aragatsotn region on Byurakan-Orgov trail. A small footbridge was installed on Lorut-Ahnidozr trail in Lori region funded by Strategic Development Agency. In October, in collaboration with USFS international experts a new wooden beam bridge was constructed on Haghartsin-Hovk Trail in Dilijan National Park. Additionally, the existing bridge on the Hidden Waterfall trail was renovated.



Trail Development in Lorut

Program partners:
SDA, WWF-Armenia

In the framework of funding under "Living Landscapes for Market Development in Armenia" LILA Project we implemented a new trail construction, marking and existing trail maintenance project in one of the new developing touristic areas in Lori region. During the implementation of the field phase, it became necessary to construct a short bridge as recent flooding had damaged part of the trail crossing the river, making it wide and dangerous to cross. A total of four interpretive signboards about the biodiversity were installed in collaboration with WWF-Armenia. After building the 15,8km trail section, all villages are now connected with each other and a trail loop is complete for 1-2 day hiking trips. The target villages are Lorut, Atan, Shamut and Ahnidzor in Lori region.



Wheelchair Accessible Trail Maintenance

Program partner:
Accessible Armenia NGO

As an important part of the project implemented in 2023 we took on the responsibility of returning to maintain the first wheelchair-accessible trail in Armenia subcontracted to us by Accessible Armenia NGO funded by the European Union and GIZ. The accessible trail is 1/3 of Parz lake loop trail in Dilijan National Park in Tavush region. The area is the most visited part of the NP and has well developed infrastructure including parking lot, toilets, restaurant, adventure services, etc. The accessible trail also includes a section of boardwalk and a viewpoint overlooking the lake. The trail has been marked and benches were installed.



Sevan Dream Peak Trail

Program partners:
Embassy of Poland in Yerevan, Sevan Hiking Club

This year we had our first collaboration with the Embassy of Poland in Yerevan and our continued support to Sevan hiking club. The project, funded by the embassy, aimed to maintain and extend the existing trail from Sevan Botanical Garden to Sonasar peak in Gegharkunik region. During the project a beautiful bench was installed at the viewpoint on Sonasar Peak from where hikers can admire the beauty of lake Sevan and surrounding mountains. The newly built section ends in Sevan National Park and has the potential of extensions making a trail network next to the town of Sevan. The trail development included sign installation, trailhead kiosk installation, bench installation and 6,6 km trail building and maintenance.



Dream Trails Development

Program partners: Bellfree Contractors, Trails For Change NGO INC.

In 2024 we continued to invest funds and time developing our own projects. One of them is our founder Hans' Dream Trail in Tavush region which starts from the Haghartsin Monastery Complex and leads to a rocky peak within the forest above. As Hans tells it this is where his dream of trail building in Armenia began. This year a new trail design was completed and 2.2 km of new trail construction and 2.6 km of maintenance work has been carried out. With our crews working even during the snowy season. The project is still ongoing, and we hope to open the trail in 2025.

Another TFC project is the Apakeqar Trail extension which again we worked on this year and built more than 2 km of new trail in the forests. In 2025 we plan to open this new section of the trail for hikers.

During summer we initiated another new 4.5 km trail maintenance in Artavan village area, Vayots Dzor region. The trail runs through juniper trees and will become a loop at the end.



Tumanyan Loop Trail

Program partner: Tumanyan Foundation

Tumanyan town is located in Lori region and is surrounded by rocky cliffs and forests. Our local partners in Tumanyan Foundation trusted us to maintain and mark a 5 km loop trail which will provide an opportunity for locals and visitors to hike and enjoy beautiful views. We also involved the local community in the process, allowing them to join and learn how trails are maintained and marked. While the trail is operational, it still requires further development and some parts of the trail should be changed or fixed, to ensure the best experience for hikers. The trail is part of the largest hiking trail network in Armenia situated in Lori region which includes the Debed, Marts, and Dzoraget canyons and connecting more than 20 settlements.



Trail Design, Assessment and Planning

Program partners: BellFree Contractors, Transcaucasian Trail, Hike Armenia

New trails need proper design and assessment. Our founder Hans Keifer visited Armenia in the spring to provide training on trail design and assessment. The new section of the Transcaucasian Trail and the Armenian National Trail, connecting Dilijan town to the Haghartsin Monastery, was properly designed, although it was not possible to build this section this year.

Throughout the year, our team conducted several assessment hikes for both the Armenian National Trail and the Transcaucasian Trail to evaluate existing conditions, assess trail marking, and gather information for future trail development projects. The total length of scouted, designed, and assessed trails is 147 km.

Additionally, another trail assessment and planning training was held by Tom Allen, trail expert and founder of the TCT in Armenia.

Educational Projects

During 2024 we have organized and held several educational projects including international exchanges visits and hosting experts.



Capacity Building Training Program for the Crew

Program partners: Sparta Survival NGO, Chanaparhord Hiking Club, BEM NGO

In the winter of 2024, we organized a capacity-building training for our crew to enhance their technical and soft skills. The program included sessions on first aid, geography, mapping, leadership, communication, problem-solving, and English language. Hands-on mapping using Caltopo and online biodiversity training were key highlights. Participants also visited the NAS RA IGS Geological Museum for practical learning. These sessions equipped our team with essential skills to excel in their roles and contribute to TFC's mission. The winter season remains an important time for reflection, growth, and preparing for the active months ahead. This initiative strengthened teamwork and encouraged knowledge sharing among crew members.



Youth For Change Conservation Corps

Program partners: US Forest Service, Yerevan State University, Lore Adventure Center

The Youth for Change Conservation Corps program (YFC) is a collaborative initiative funded by the US Forest Service and implemented by Trails for Change NGO (TFC). The program aims to empower youth in Armenia's regions by offering education, training, and employment opportunities in nature conservation, trail building, and tourism. In 2024, we implemented several outdoor camp format weeks involving more than 35 participants from all regions of Armenia. The first phase of YFC was held in the spring, dedicated to camp managers, to teach new skills and how to manage camps. The other phases during the summer and fall concentrated on trail building and nature conservation. Students from the faculty of Geology and Geography of Yerevan State University were involved in a specially tailored program, as TFC began focusing on university collaborations and engaging talented youth in our programs. These projects helped the participants gain valuable insights into environmental conservation, trail building, sustainable tourism, the camping lifestyle, and related experiences.



Caucasus Conservation Corps

Program partners: US Forest Service, Transcaucasian Trail Association

The Caucasus Conservation Corps (CCC) program is a multi-year effort to develop a regional Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program in the South Caucasus. The CCC connects and inspires young conservation leaders through outdoor work and training, collaborating with communities and partners to build a more sustainable future for the Caucasus. This project started as a partnership between Trails for Change NGO and The Transcaucasian Trail Association, supported by the U.S. Forest Service. The CCC program serves as both a source of motivation and a targeted goal for both TFC crew members and YFC participants, marking the next stage in their conservation corps "careers."



Caucasus Conservation Corps

In 2024, the CCC program served as a platform for TFC's crew members' professional development, featuring Crew Member exchanges between Armenia and Georgia. Four participants from each country were selected to participate in both indoor and field training sessions for 100 days. A special graduation ceremony was held on September 21.



Trail Maintenance Training in Gavar

Program partner: AFRAT

This project represents a successful collaboration between Trails for Change NGO, AFRAT, and Gavar Municipality, aimed at enhancing trail infrastructure, promoting environmental stewardship, and empowering local youth through practical training in Gavar, Gegharkunik region. The core objectives included improving the accessibility of the Ttujur trail, instilling conservation values within the community, and providing a total of eight participants with essential skills for trail maintenance.



Wildfire Prevention and Response Training in Urtsadzor

Program partner: USFS, FPWC

From September 10-13, two TFC crew members and a teammate from TCT Georgia joined over 40 participants in Urtsadzor for the Wildfire Prevention and Response training, organized by the US Forest Service and FPWC. The training covered wildfire theory, fire behavior assessment, firefighting gear, and emergency simulations.

We thank our partners for this valuable opportunity, helping us strengthen our ability to protect Armenia's forests and respond effectively to wildfire threats.



As part of the USFS-funded program, TFC requested professional assistance from the USFS to guide the technical crew in footbridge construction. The program expanded, with USFS partners offering additional training on chainsaw usage, leadership, trail maintenance, prioritization, and classification, and the economic benefits of trails. Two trainers were sent to Armenia from the USA to provide training.



The training sessions took place from October 28 to November 1, with a total of ten TFC crew members (three females and seven males) participating. Apart from acquiring valuable skills, a notable achievement was the newly built footbridge. Following the training, TFC Program Managers hosted the USFS experts on a cultural tour. This included experiencing Armenian cuisine, baking traditional Armenian gata, learning Armenian traditional dances, learning about the country's history, trying on traditional Armenian costumes—taraz—and exploring key sites in Dilijan, Yerevan, Garni, and Geghard.

**YFC Special Project for
TFC Technical Crew**

Program partner: USFS

Events & Visits

During 2024 we have organized and held different kinds of local and international events, as well as visits to United States.



Study Tour to Arizona, USA (CCC Program)

Program partner: USFS, TCT

TFC staff members Ashot Davtyan and Meri Grigoryan participated in a study tour in Arizona, hosted by the U.S. Forest Service to support the Caucasus Conservation Corps (CCC) program. As part of the planning for the program's expansion, Ashot and Meri joined core TCT team members from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to learn from similar programs. They met with USFS staff and other conservation corps programs, exploring community and economic initiatives related to trails.



Fundraising event in Los Angeles

After the Arizona trip, Ashot Davtyan and Meri Grigoryan participated in a special fundraising dinner in Glendale, California, organized by Hans Keifer and Telma Altoon in support of trail development in Armenia.



**"Discover Armenia"
Tourism Annual
Expo/Conference**

The TFC team participated in the tourism exhibition "Discover Armenia," organized by the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. Ashot Davtyan was invited to talk during the panel discussion in the Domestic Tourism Conference.



**TOT Program and Smokey
Bear's Visit in Mitarbi,
Georgia**

TFC Crew Leaders Gohar and Artur, along with Meri, TFC's Educational Programs Manager, attended the second round of the Training of Trainers (ToT) program in Mitarbi, Georgia, from April 22-26, as part of the CCC project. The training focused on comparing camp management styles between Armenia and Georgia for the international exchange program. A highlight was Smokey Bear's visit to celebrate his 80th birthday and raise wildfire prevention awareness, with CCC leaders and USFS staff demonstrating safe campfire practices.



TFC's 7th Anniversary

In 2024, the entire TFC team came together to celebrate TFC's 7th anniversary. A special two-day event was organized including a photoshoot, hiking, and team-building activities. Team members had the opportunity to share their experiences and vision for the future, strengthening the sense of unity and commitment to the organization's mission.



TCT Fundraising Hike

TFC supported the operation of the Transcaucasian Trail Fundraising Hike in Lori and Tavush regions. These kinds of tours are the best way not only to raise funds, but also to show hikers how important the connection between trails and communities is.



Legends Trail Hike

Another hiking event was organized in collaboration with People in Need NGO to guide EU representatives and embassy workers along a section of the Legends Trail in the Syunik region. This was a great opportunity to discuss potential collaborations and strengthen connections while hiking a trail funded by the EU in 2020.



Experience Exchange and Training with Bellfree Contractors

Ashot Davtyan visited Los Angeles for a one-month training program at Bellfree Contractors. As an operations officer, Ashot also learned new aspects of operations management, visited worksites, and was introduced to new types of infrastructure planning and construction.

Our Financials

Transparency establishes trust. In this section, we summarize our organization's income and expenses for the past year.

	12/31/2023	12/31/2024
	AMD	AMD
Revenue		
Income related on donation	44,026,297	72,050,032
Income/Project name-Hike Armenia Maintenance	6,352,500	22,007,556
Income/Project name-Hike Armenia Lori	1,400,000	
Income/Project name-Lori Building	44,550,555	
Income/Project name-Hike Armenia Tavush	458,411	928,469
Income/Project name-Accessible Armenia	3,960,000	
Income/Project name Tavush Trailhead		2,436,610
Income/Project name SDA Project		5,400,000
Income/Project name POL Sevan 2024		3,841,650
Income/Project name WWF signposting		183,040
Income/Project name Lori Maintenance and Bridges		12,210,770
Income/Project name People in need		384,325
Income/Project name Gavar		1,445,927
total Income	100,747,763	120,888,379
Expenses		
Operations		
Rent		
Rent- transport	6,598,200	11,861,800
Rent-tools	310,000	0
Salaries & wages	38,403,070	45,883,757
Travel and accomodation	1,756,000	3,780,457
Other expenses	39,031,335	37,896,807
Fuel		99,000
Project Accounting fees	1,320,500	1,817,000
Insurance Employee	799,380	570,564
Food&Fuel& Coordinator	4,561,126	7,700,281
Total Operations	92,779,611	109,609,666
Finance & Administration		
Director salary	3,448,662	5,911,992
Office rent	2,582,000	3,020,000
Domain services/Phone	127,084	143,437
Audit and Accounting fees	1,440,000	1,440,000
Bank charges		67,693
Insurance		
Legal fees		45,000
Losses from currency revaluation	23,918	237,720
Difference of exchange	370,405	517,088
Profit tax expenses	366,660	473,130
Other Expenses		
Expenses on reimbursed assets	8,500	382,224
Total Finance & Administration	8,367,229	12,238,284

What We Envision

Looking Ahead: 2025 and Beyond

As we reflect on the achievements of 2024, we are reminded of the collective power of collaboration, determination, and shared vision. The trails we've built and restored this year are more than just paths through nature—they serve as bridges connecting people, communities, and a deeper appreciation for Armenia's landscapes.

Looking ahead, in 2025, we look forward to new opportunities to deepen our impact. Our focus will be on expanding our trail network, expanding outdoor education initiatives, and forging partnerships to amplify our reach. We are committed to engaging even more local communities in sustainable development and strengthening Armenia's position as a destination for ecotourism and adventure seekers alike.

The challenges ahead may be significant, but so are the possibilities. With your continued support, whether as a partner, donor, volunteer, or advocate, we are confident that the coming years will bring transformative growth and enduring connections. Together, we will continue building not just trails but also a legacy of stewardship, resilience, and hope.

Our readers and stakeholders can look forward to exciting developments in trail infrastructure, immersive educational experiences, and innovative collaborations that support our mission of fostering a deeper connection to nature and a sustainable future.

Together, we have demonstrated what is possible when passion meets purpose. With your continued support, we are ready to chart new paths—both literally and figuratively—and create opportunities that benefit our communities and landscapes for years to come.

Build Trails. Make History!

With gratitude and anticipation,

Ashot Davtyan

Chief Operating Officer

Trails for Change NGO



Contact Us

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