



The "ARDA" Vocational Education Center

Training and Employment towards self-sustainability

In recent years, the vocational education sector in Armenia has been at the center of public attention. Vocational training is an important catalyst for the maturity of individual, economic, and social life in Armenia. Vocational training combines practical "Hands-on" learning enabling students to acquire knowledge and skills towards a self-sustainable model in the labor market giving hope to the hopeless in the quickly emerging country of Armenia especially in outlying villages surrounding the three most populous cities of Yerevan (Capital 1.1 million pop.), Gyumri (112,000 pop.) and Vanadzor (75,000 pop.).

The ARDA Vocational Education Center (VEC) implements the following educational programs in Armenia:

1. Handicrafts, which include weaving, knitting, crocheting, sewing and creation of artisan crafts.
 - a. *Class Duration 3-3.5 months /48-56 sessions.*
2. Web Programming,
 - a. *Class Duration: 3-3.5 months /48-56 sessions.*
3. Construction training, which includes plumbing work, plastering work, interior design and construction of homes named "Homes of Hope" with innovative cold formed steel that can be raised (framing) in 3 days.
 - a. *Class Duration 3-3.5 months /48-56 sessions.*

The ARDA VEC is a collaboration between the private sector and the Armenia education system, which together establishes a high level of engagement in training students' in practical skills development.

In addition to the development of professional skills, students are engaged in "On the job training" offering both short-term and long-term demands of private businesses who are facing scaling challenges.

The Keys to Success in Vocational Education

Vocational education inherently calls for joint responsibility by both the private as well as public sector. Intentional participation and employment awareness in the private sector provides a guarantee of quality training and standards in accordance with the existing requirements of the economy and labor demands in Armenia.

The Vision of the ARDA Vocational Education Center: *Learning in Two Environments*

Students are engaged in classroom training as well as on the job training where our students acquire the technical and social skills necessary to present themselves in the workplace as qualified professionals in accordance with the Labor Code of Armenia.

Currently, work is being carried out by the ARDA VEC to register the activities of the Center in the non-formal education sector of the government so that citizens who complete a training certificate may receive an income tax refund of a maximum of 100,000 dram (\$270 – Almost a month's salary for most entry level trade jobs) per year for tuition.

Staff Qualifications

The success and quality of the vocational education system is upheld by the administrative and lecturing staff who are professionals in education and have practical experience in the field of education they are teaching.

Vocational Education Test in Armenia

For the first time in 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia organized five long-term courses for students together with private companies in the Vaic Dor, Tavush, and Shirak regions. ARDA's response is to align and build on Armenia's realization of the importance of vocational training.

The inception and desire to expand the "ARDA" Vocational Education Center to the impoverished region of Vanadzor.

During the last 10 years of operation of the ARDA Vocational Education Center, we have joyously educated 450 graduates in sewing, knitting, web programming, and construction professions, 148 of whom are in Vanadzor, which is the target for our current development of a permanent Vocational Education Center (we currently rent a facility).

Vanadzor is Armenia's third largest City which was impacted the most significantly after the fall of the Iron Curtain and Armenia's subsequent independence (1991) coupled with the devastating earthquake of 1988 that killed ~35,000 in the once bustling region full of factories which infamously stand today in rust and ruin.

During the last three years of the ARDA VEC 97% of graduates have been employed with practical skills for employment.

Students consistently testify that before applying to the ARDA Vocational Education Center, they sought other academic institutions but regrettably were not satisfied with the curriculum and quality of instruction. It is common for students to travel 1-2 hours by bus one-way for an ARDA class session.

ARDA Students Well Being

The ARDA Vocational Education Center attributes great importance to students' proper behavior, tidiness, attendance at courses and the seriousness of their endeavor. ARDA is acutely intentional in the preparation of qualified and knowledgeable professional lecturers, and their ongoing contact and interest with our students and graduates.

The VOC places great emphasis on the care and overall well-being of our students. Each semester 4-5 sessions concentrate on "Work Psychology," These classes are taught by a licensed psychologist that discusses the work environment, personal and social maturity, conflict resolution and a strong work ethic.

The ARDA Vocational Education Centers in Armenia has modern building facilities and uses the latest resources for vocational education.

ARDA computer programming instructor, Lianna Galstyan, has conducted surveys of where students have heard about our classes. The overwhelming majority of applicants to the educational center learn about the courses from the Facebook page:

The chart below exhibits the results of how ARDA's students heard about the VEC

Year	Facebook	Instagram	Word of Mouth
2022	65%	24 %	11 %
2023	72 %	28 %	10 %
2024	67 %	18%	15 %
2025	75 %	15 %	10 %

Special Training for soldiers and families of the 44 day war of 2023

A special training course was organized by "ARDA" for 10 construction students who were soldiers of the devastating 44-day war in the Spring of 2023. Knitting and sewing classes were held as well for over two dozen widows, daughters and mothers of fallen soldiers. This special session in the Vanadzor "Incubator" facility was an essential event for the population of Vanadzor, and neighboring towns and surrounding villages. Students came from Spitak and the surrounding villages, Pambak, Gargar, Antamut and other villages.

Our students proudly testify that the knowledge they gained during the ARDA courses guided them to earn money, increase their family income, and make clothes with unique designs for their family members, children, and grandchildren and stay in the local labor market and not being forced to leave their beloved town to seek employment in Russia.

ARDA's student families are being held together!

Below are the number of students that complete their course work in Yerevan as well as the new incubator in Vanadzor.

Trade	Number of Annual Students in Yerevan	Number of Annual Students in Vanadzor Incubator
Sewing and design	12	12
Knitting	72	60
Web Programming	80	60
Construction	24	30

Our facility in Yerevan and the new venture being incubated in Vanadzor in a rented facility coupled with our instructor's readiness is staged to increase the number of our graduates 3-4 times!

Demand and average wages for the labor market in the following trades are as follows:

**Note: ARDA is prepared to encourage all its students by marketing their products within allowable laws in Armenia and the USA*

Trade	Monthly Minimum Wage	Monthly Maximum Wage	Market Demand
Stitching / Alterations and Clothing design	100,000 AMD \$260	180,000 AMD \$471	Good Demand / *Need to establish client base if working independently
Knitting / Crocheting	75,000 AMD \$196	120,000 AMD \$314	*Good Demand / Need to establish client base if working independently
Web Programming	150,000 AMD \$392	350,000 AMD \$916	High demand *Requires investment in the labor market to sign contracts and clients
Construction	150,000 AMD \$392	350,000 AMD \$916	High demand *Requires investment in the labor market to sign contracts and clients

Some of our most qualified graduates who have completed construction courses at ARDA remain in the VEC as lecturers.

An excellent example is Electrician Vardar Baptchian, who has founded a company for the installation of solar photovoltaic stations in parallel with lecturing at the vocational education center called "Solar Master".

Ariak Simonyan, also a former student now lecturer, is the head of housing construction by ARDA in the 4th district of Taron 4 in Vanadzor where ARDA is building cold formed steel home neighborhoods for Armenians who have lived in shanty villages since the earthquake in 1988.

ARDA is currently negotiating with local self-governing bodies, such as the Municipality of Vanadzor and the social departments of the Pambak Municipality, to inform and educate the beneficiaries of socially vulnerable groups and to provide humanitarian assistance from the ARDA Charitable Foundation in general.

The Vision

The vision for the ARDA Vocational Education Center is to spread the vocational training initiative not only to the three populous regional centers of Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor but to reach outlying villages where thousands of impoverished and hopeless Armenians are offered a dignified and caring education towards self-sustainability.

ARDA's fifty-year history has blossomed from providing Relief through humanitarian aid to building a strong model of Development for our beneficiaries. ARDA strives to reduce its need to provide humanitarian aid by developing its beneficiaries into responsible self-sustained individuals with dignity and hope for the future.

We are deeply thankful for your consideration in scaling our efforts especially in our Incubator Training center in Vanadzor to help the thousands of people in hopelessness to find hope for the future, God first.

With Gratitude for your consideration to bring hope:



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