



MILLENNIUM  
CHALLENGE CORPORATION  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE  
ACCOUNT - ARMENIA



## Water More Precious than Uncultivated Land

*This is the principle message of the farmers and the community leader of village Ginevet in Ararat Marz (region), one of the 4 communities benefiting from the construction of the Aygezard gravity system*

**Resettlement viewed positive:** After almost 20 years of privatizing the lands owned by the Soviet State around 400 hectares of land are still unutilized in the area where the Millennium Challenge Corporation funded Aygezard Gravity system will be constructed. The answer to the why question is one and simple-in this part of the fertile Ararat valley people cannot farm because of the lack of irrigation water. Probably this is why farmer Sara Alishanyan from Ginevet told us she did not mind a bit the taking of her 315 square meters of land. Instead, Sara hopes that very soon she will be planting apricot orchards on her 5000 square meters of privatized land that was never farmed before. Sara received around \$400 in compensation for giving up her land permanently and considers the market value plus 15% of market price rate more than fair. Sara used the money to buy the much wanted rug for her sitting room, but she, alongside with her fellow farmers, may benefit in one more way from the compensation that the Government of Armenia paid to the village of Ginevet to acquire around 1.5644 ha of community owned lands. Misak Santoyan, the village mayor, proudly asks to let the American donor know that the \$ 7000 dollars will be used to co-finance the community's request for the rehabilitation of the tertiary canal system.

**Easy for the affected farmers but not for the officials:** When asked whether they experienced any inconvenience from the tedious process of land valuation, ownership transfer or registration of contracts, farmers look clueless and baffled. Most of the time they do not realize how much effort and prep work went into the whole process before they went to the notary office to put their signatures on the contract. The answer is entirely different from the village mayor or Mr. Artavazd Ordoyan, the rep-



resentative of the regional administration responsible for coordinating works under the Resettlement Action Plans (RAP) implemented by Millennium Challenge Account-Armenia and Ararat Marzpetaran, and funded by the government of Armenia. The last four months were tough on them as they negotiated with the individuals affected by the project, clarified land ownership issues with the State Cadastre or worked with the State Treasury to make sure that all the compensation funds were transferred and paid timely. As both of them jokingly mentioned, MCA-Armenia staff would not leave them alone until they made sure every small aspect of the RAP and GoA regulation is followed and all the affected parties are paid the compensation to their satisfaction. But they did not complain. What matters to them is the hope that in a year or so the water will be there and their commitment to make this happen is strong enough to overcome all the red tape or the need to patiently explain to the farmers why their land is taken and what they get in return.



**The many facets of the success:** The success of this endeavor is in so many things- for the first time ever complete RAP in compliance with World Bank / MCC standards were implemented in Armenia; the Government of Armenia committed funds to RAPs and made sure the works were well coordinated on all the levels-from community to regional to central; the contract for the construction of the gravity schemes was not delayed as all the RAP actions were completed in time, and last but not the least this was one of the rare cases in a bureaucratic process like this when the burden of processing documents and dealing with different authorities was simplified so much that the common people did not know or care how things happened.