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**ARMENIA**

## SUCCESS STORY

### New Craft Markets Provide Income for People with Disabilities

**USAID is helping to employ people with disabilities.**



*People with disabilities in Chambarak are trained to become self-employed.*

***USAID works to improve state outsourcing to social services NGOs and enrich employment active measures programs within State Employment Services Agency (SESA). The small grant projects are pilot initiatives to be continued by the SESA.***

High unemployment in Chambarak, a border town with primary employment is agriculture and Military defense offering no employment opportunities for people with disabilities. “Astghatsolk” Public Organization is very active in the town, working with the local government and businesses to improve employment for disabled individuals in the region. Using government funds this NGO organized woodcrafts and hand crafts trainings for 11 disabled individuals. The trainings assisted these individuals to develop crafts skills and become self-employed. “Using the grant funding we improved our craft designs and marketed new wooden crafts, next step is to create the website and exhibit our wooden crafts”, explains Irina.

USAID SPSS Project jointly with MLSI State Employment Services Agency awarded a small grant which provided crafts skills training in production of woodcrafts targeting individuals with disabilities. “With small grant funds we were able to purchase materials and equipment for woodcrafts and start crafts production,” says “Astghatsolk” PO director Irina Hovhannisyian.

The NGO started marketing these wooden crafts within the touristic region, most importantly the NGO established new networks within four tourists regions in Armenia: Sevan, Tsakhkadzor, Dilijian and Jermuk. The four town municipalities and small souvenir shops in tourist regions placed orders for woodcrafts. “We will provide samples for sales and hope to get more orders,” says Irina. Irina Hovhanissyan the director of “Astghatsolk” PO strives to open new markets for people with disabilities, creating a sustainable income and employment for these individuals. “We trained eleven individuals and will be working to provide self-employment for our beneficiaries.”

USAID Armenia Social Protection System Strengthening Project promotes social protection and proactive labor market policies through reforming social insurance, creating employment programs, introducing occupational safety standards, and promoting services to reduce vulnerable citizens’ dependence on public support.