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COMPETITIVE ARMENIAN PRIVATE SECTOR

SUCCESS STORY

CAPS Promotes Domestic and Regional Tourism

Tourism contributes to the economic growth of the country and enables that growth to spread to the poorer regions outside the capital.



[Insert Photo Credit]

"The tourism sector is a field which provides a direct opportunity to present Armenia to the world. One peculiarity of the sector is that it may immediately stimulate an improvement of the quality of life in the marzes." Nerses Yeritsyan, Minister of Economy of Armenia said at the opening of Country of Talking Stones (CTS'08), the eighth International Tourism Fair.

Through the CAPS project since 2006 and with previous projects, USAID has provided assistance to foster tourism development in Armenia. The approach to tourism development is largely focused on building capacity across all stakeholders of the industry.

At the beginning of November 2008, and for the second consecutive year, CAPS supported the organization of Country of Talking Stones (CTS'08), the eighth International Tourism Fair. Held annually by the Armenian Association of Travel Agents (AATA), with cooperation of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) Armenian Chapter and under the patronage of the Ministry of Economy of the republic of Armenia, the event is designed to promote incoming, regional, domestic and outgoing tourism in Armenia, improve the image of the country as a tourism destination worldwide, and enhance public awareness about the tourism field in Armenia.

The organizers attached particular importance to the involvement of the tourism industry's professional business associations in the organization of the event. They also cited better participation from Armenian regions at the exhibition via incentives such as free and discounted booths to tour operators, hotels and educational institutions from outside Yerevan.

Overall, 64 organizations, including 13 travel agencies and operators, one airline, 17 hotels and rest homes, two insurance companies, and others participated in this year's exhibition.

Talking at the official ribbon cutting ceremony of CTS'08 Nerses Yeritsyan, the RA Minister of Economy, stated that the tourism sector is a field which provides a direct opportunity to present Armenia to the world. In his words, one peculiarity of the sector is that it may immediately stimulate an improvement of the quality of life in the marzes.

This year marzes were better presented at the exhibition; there were representatives from Vayots Dzor, Shirak and Kotayk marzes and from Karabakh. CTS'08 has been particularly effective promoting the incoming and regional tourism. Participants from Georgia, Finland, Uzbekistan, Romania and Turkey, as well as journalists, attended a familiarization tour to the Armenian tourist attractions.

With consultancy from the CAPS Business Association Specialist, and with upgraded promotional materials, professional associations representing the Armenian tourism industry (the Armenian Restaurants Association, Armenian Hotel Association and the Guild of Armenian Tourist Guides) played a key role in organizing and facilitating the trip. Their support included presenting the unique Armenian tour products to the foreign visitors and providing quality lodging, tour guiding and food services.