

# TREES FOR LIFE

ATP plants nearly  
720,000 trees in 2006

SEE STORY ON PAGE 4

## Inside

- 2 Executive summary of ATP's 2006 accomplishments
- 3 Environmental education expands into schools and villages
- 4 Nursery and tree planting programs increase capacity
- 5 ATP working on sustainable forestry program with Yale University



## Some of Our 2007 Objectives...

### 500,000 Trees Pledged to UNEP 'Billion Tree Campaign'

ATP has joined the worldwide tree planting campaign launched by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). As part of the "Billion Tree Campaign," ATP pledged to plant 500,000 trees. This will be part of Armenia's contribution to the UNEP goal to plant at least one billion trees worldwide during 2007.

"ATP is honored to be a part of the Billion Tree Campaign," stated Executive Director Jeff Masarjian. "In 2007 we are expecting to plant 60,000 fruit and decorative trees from our Karin and Khachpar nurseries, 230,000 tree seedlings from our backyard nursery program, and 210,000 pine and other reforestation seedlings from our nursery in Margahovit."

"We were inspired by the announcement by Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai at the UN meeting on climate change in Nairobi, and we were the first organization to join the Billion Tree Campaign with a pledge from Armenia," added Masarjian. "We are proud to join this international effort to plant trees to fight climate change, which is worsened by rampant deforestation around the world."

### Planting Hrant Dink Memorial Forest

Soon after the tragic death of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, a group of donors contacted ATP expressing interest in planting a special forest in his memory. Armenians from Istanbul to Glendale were shocked and grief-stricken to learn of the murder of Hrant Dink, the editor of the Istanbul-based Agos newspaper.

The killing led to international outrage and expressions of sympathy, and over 100,000 people in Turkey joined Hrant Dink's funeral procession.

Hrant Dink named the newspaper he founded Agos, which in Armenian means furrow. "A furrow is for planting and with the encouragement of donors who have already come forward with initial funding, we will plant a forest as a tribute to Hrant Dink," said ATP Executive Committee member Nancy Kricorian.

## From the Director's desk...

Jeff Masarjian, Armenia Tree Project Executive Director

It is with great pleasure and profound gratitude to each of you that I can report new and significant milestones achieved by Armenia Tree Project in 2006. Our mission to reforest Armenia, while providing jobs, environmental education, and community development was advanced on many fronts. Your donations are having a significant impact on the lives and landscape of Armenia. Over 500 people there, including 70 dedicated staff members, received income through jobs and opportunities created by ATP.

We planted nearly 720,000 trees in 2006, more than we planted in the last 12 years combined! This brings the grand total of trees planted and rejuvenated by ATP to nearly 1,500,000—one tree for every victim of the Armenian Genocide. This was made possible by our partnership with over 300 family farmers who grew trees in their backyards, as well as our Karin and Khachpar nurseries and our new Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery in Margahovit. Our trees also produced a harvest of over 240,000 pounds of apricots, apples, peaches, plums, and cherries for the benefit of local communities.

Education on environmental issues is critical to empowering Armenians to take responsibility for creating a sustainable future. As such, we integrate education in our tree planting programs, and we conduct trainings at our Michael and Virginia Ohanian Environmental Education Center. In addition, our environmental curriculum was accepted by the Ministry of Education for implementation in Armenia's public schools, and we began the process of training 5,000 teachers on how to use it.

In order to enhance public awareness of the extremely serious environmental challenges faced by Armenia, we co-produced, with several partner organizations, a series of documentary films that are being aired on Armenian TV. These are available to you from our office in Watertown.

ATP believes strongly in the value of collaborating with all groups and organizations as a means of strengthening our impact. As such, we co-founded a new consortium of organizations called EcoArmenia, dedicated to stopping illegal logging and conserving Armenia's rich biodiversity. We are taking bold new measures to research and document the issue of illegal logging as our first step in stopping it forever.

EcoArmenia has been involved in the struggle to save the environment around the village of Teghut



Six-month old maple trees in a family backyard nursery in Aghavnavank, Armenia

from an ecological disaster that is likely to occur if Armenian Copper Program is allowed to proceed with a large scale strip mining operation there. ATP acknowledges the need for economic development in Armenia, however it should never be allowed to compromise long term environmental integrity or the survival of future generations.

To build support for our reforestation efforts, our Watertown office works on a number of public outreach and fundraising initiatives throughout the year. For example, the Boston Globe published an article that I co-authored with our founder Carolyn Mugar about the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, to coincide with a visit by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai hosted by the Boston Urban Forest Coalition in October.

ATP was awarded a grant by Conservation International and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund in Washington to partner with Yale University's Global Institute for Sustainable Forestry. In addition to creating a model demonstration forest, we will develop the first ever manual on sustainable forestry in Armenia, which will be offered to forestry professionals and people living adjacent to the forests.

Without the support and encouragement of thousands of donors who believe that Armenia's future is intimately tied to a healthy and sustainable environment, we could not have achieved these amazing results and helped so many in Armenia participate in revitalizing the land.

As you read the program reports and personal testimonies in this newsletter, you can be assured that your donations are well managed for the most positive impact. Please see our Web site [www.armeniatree.org](http://www.armeniatree.org) or call me directly for more detailed information. Thank you!

# Education Programs Nurture New Environmental Ethic

**E**nvironmental education programs are a vital component to supporting ATP's mission to reforest Armenia. Enhancing awareness and concern about environmental issues on the part of the general public, and in particular, the youth of Armenia, will help ensure that our investments today will continue to bear fruit in the future.

As such, each of our divisions, including the Nursery Program, Rural and Mountainous Development (RMD) Program, and Community Tree Planting (CTP) organize trainings for thousands of youth, professionals, and rural residents.

In 2005, ATP's "Plant an Idea, Plant a Tree" curriculum was developed as a manual for the science teachers of Armenia's public schools. It was officially presented to the public at the Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus, and was approved by the Minister of Education and Science, Levon Mkrtchyan, for implementation in the public schools.

The manual was in great demand after its release, and was reprinted with support from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). "Nature protection is a cornerstone to ensure prosperity, stability, and security of the people," said Jeannette Kloetzer, OSCE Economic and Environmental Officer in Armenia.

The manual was distributed to all schools in Armenia and Artsakh with assistance from the National Institute of Education. Other organizations including the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD), Shen NGO, and the Peace Corps also helped with its distribution.

ATP organized "Training of Trainers" courses in 2006 to provide instruction to teachers on implementing the curriculum, which is written for students in grades 4–9. Trainings were conducted in the local branches of the National Institute of Education in Syunik, Lori, and Kotayk.

In Lori, ATP Executive Director Jeff Masarjian awarded teachers certificates of completion and expressed gratitude for their contribution to the promotion of environmental education. Representatives from the Ministry of Education expressed confidence that the participants were well prepared to train other teachers.

"We were pleased to see the teachers so excited to participate in the training. Their readiness to pass the knowledge to the young generations inspired us to extend the program," said ATP Environmental Education Program Manager Gayane Ghukasyan. "It is our intention that the curriculum will eventually be used by all 5,000 science teachers in Armenia."

Environmental education was also expanded when our CTP staff created a 10-page manual describing planting techniques and tree care standards. CTP

monitors conducted trainings with a total of 2,602 community members at every planting site in 2006.

In our RMD Program, environmental education is being provided for youth groups and farmers in rural villages. Organic agriculture and environmental protection courses were conducted for the residents of Aygut and other villages. A total of 179 students participated in 18 trainings in 2006, and the Youth Club in Aygut, supervised by ATP staff, won first prize in a regional competition on environmental issues.

Programs at the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Environmental Education Center at Karin Nursery involved 210 participants from public schools who learned the basics of environmental protection, herbarium preparation, and sowing evergreen seeds. In addition, 186 students from the State Agrarian University and Yerevan State University were instructed in agricultural techniques and irrigation methods.

ATP's Environmental Education Curriculum:  
<http://www.armeniatree.org/whatwedo/eea.htm>



ATP provides environmental education lessons to thousands of children and adults.

## Children Become Stewards of the Environment

*By Dalar Messerkhanian and Arpi Paylan, ATP Volunteers*

**W**e visited the Getik River Valley to learn about people's experiences with environmental education programs established by ATP. We met schoolchildren who were well-informed and excited about the environment, and an entire community that had been affected by the program. The students had lessons at school and from ATP's agriculture specialists, and they were well-versed in tree care and the natural world.

Siranoush, a small and serious 13-year old, explained her favorite game to us. There is the bear, whose behavior is controlled by three different teams: shelter, water, and food. As Siranoush explains, the purpose of this game is to understand what would happen to an animal like a bear if one of these things was lacking.

Andranik, a 12-year-old boy with a face that speaks of a difficult life, tells us that before meeting the Peace Corps volunteer who implemented ATP's lessons, he didn't know much about caring for nature. When we asked Andranik and Siranoush what they liked most about environmental education, they told us their favorite part was being outdoors and being active participants in the lessons.

ATP's work in Aygut has had a big impact on the children in the village. They spoke enthusiastically about keeping garbage off the streets, about their knowledge of insects, and about the care of trees. One girl, Lillit, told us that she has taken it upon herself to stop people from littering. Another explained how she got over her fear of spiders when she learned that they are helpful in pest control.

The lessons taught in Aygut have helped schoolchildren better understand the world around them and become stewards who care for and protect it. At the end of the interview, the children took us to the edge of a cliff, where a valley full of trees stood before us. Lillit, our very own "litter police," suddenly said "if we didn't have these trees to rescue us, all the pollution would be in the air and we'd breathe that."

The children are enthusiastic and well-informed about their natural surroundings and they act as ambassadors of ATP's mission, thereby affecting the entire community.



# ATP Plants a Record 719,625 Trees in 2006

## Nearly 1,500,000 Trees Planted and Rejuvenated Since 1994

In 2006, ATP expanded our large-scale reforestation program and restored over 662 acres of degraded forest land in the Getik River Valley of northeastern Armenia. A record 543,750 trees were planted in the hills surrounding the neighboring communities of Aygut, Dprabak, Dzoravank, and Chiboughlu.

“We found a large plot suitable for reforestation near Chiboughlu village, adjacent to Aygut in Gegharkunik. For the first time in our history,” stated ATP’s Yerevan Deputy Director Mher Sadoyan, “ATP initiated and signed a five party contract with the United Nations Development Program, Armenia’s Ministry of Finance, the Municipality of Gegharkunik, and the administration of Aygut village, in a unique program to support community development through reforestation and poverty reduction. We are planning to continue our cooperation in 2007.”

“There are families with no means for buying clothes for their children. Even essential food products were unaffordable for many. Years ago young people started leaving the Getik River Valley to support their families by working abroad. If it were not for ATP, the people of Aygut would not have any hope, but your program motivated and inspired us,” said Mekhak Eghiazaryan, a village resident and supervisor of the forest area.

Over 400 residents of the four villages were employed by ATP to collect seeds, grow trees in backyard nurseries, and plant them in the mountainous territory. Under sometimes wet and cold conditions, Getik’s population planted trees to restore their forests working seven days a week for several weeks at a time during the planting seasons in April and November.

“We are planting trees to provide a green and healthy environment for our children. All of us hope to live on rich and productive land and we are thankful to ATP for involving us. This reforestation program has improved villagers’ livelihood and beautified landscapes,” said Arevik Kirakosyan from Aygut. “I have four children whose ages range from 7–20, and they should be fed and dressed warmly for winter. But my husband’s pension is only 25,000 drams (\$71). We could never cover our household expenses with this amount. Thanks to income provided by ATP, we were also able to acquire a cradle and other items for my new granddaughter.”

“A large number of families pay their expenses because of ATP. There are people out there who earn income by selling wood and even exporting timber, but I am opposed to logging so I got involved in forest restoration. And not only to provide income and improve the ecological situation in the country,



ATP worked with residents to plant hundreds of fruit and decorative trees in Spring 2006 at the Settlement of Hope established by the Diaconia Charitable Fund

but also to create a beautiful place where at the end of the day I can relax and forget about life’s problems,” said 26-year-old Nver Manucharyan, who moved to Dprabak village when his grandparents were relocated there from Azerbaijan.

The establishment of the Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery, located in Margahovit village between Dilijan and Vanadzor, allowed ATP to substantially increase our capacity for growing trees. The nursery will soon produce more than a million seedlings annually.

ATP staff maintained close relationships with schools, community leaders, and residents to build a stronger sense of responsibility for the orchards that ATP established as a means of enhancing food security and reducing poverty. We plan to expand our reforestation initiatives to new territories and involve more people in 2007.

ATP’s Community Tree Planting (CTP) Program, which has been our flagship operation since 1994, organized and conducted planting initiatives at 129 community sites in every region of Armenia in 2006,



Over 500,000 seedlings purchased from families or grown in ATP’s reforestation nursery were planted in the Gegharkunik region in 2006

including Artsakh.

Many orchards in Armenian villages were no longer producing fruit because the trees were too old. In response, ATP began planting fruit trees in rural communities in the regions of Kotayk, Armavir, Shirak, Ararat, Aragatsotn, and Tavush. The success of this project has encouraged ATP to expand to new villages, with the vision of rejuvenating and revitalizing orchards and gardens.

The total number of trees planted this year by



## ATP Receives \$100,000 Grant from Conservation International to Partner with Yale University's Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry

CTP was a record 175,875. The trees are regularly checked by ATP staff, who work with local officials and residents, and we provide training on planting techniques for the community. The 2006 survival rate at community sites was near 90 percent despite the summer drought, and the communities harvested 240,500 pounds of fresh fruit from trees planted by ATP.

### Karin and Khachpar Nurseries

A total of 344,636 trees and shrubs have been grown in Karin and Khachpar nurseries since the Nursery Program was launched in 1996. These two state-of-the-art nurseries produce 53 varieties of indigenous shrubs, evergreens, and fruit trees to supply the CTP program.

Currently there are nearly 150,000 seedlings under propagation, using techniques that are substantially different than those used in our reforestation program. Trees are typically cultivated for 2–6 years before being transplanted to community sites, whereas the reforestation nurseries produce small saplings with a much quicker rate of turnover (6–18 months).

Several methods of plant propagation are being utilized after having undergone experimentation trials. These include plastic and glass greenhouses, sunken cold frames, and different types of containers. Throughout the year the nurseries utilize various irrigation systems for watering plants in the fields and greenhouses.

Experimenting with various irrigation techniques was completely new for Armenia. Moreover, natural fertilizers developed by Armenian scientists were tested and successfully applied on trees and bushes. Graduate students from the Agricultural Academy and from the Biology department of Yerevan State University conducted their internships in Karin Nursery. Numerous foreign and local students from secondary schools, colleges, and universities participated in lessons on environmental education at the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Environmental Education Center and had open-air practice in the nurseries.

“Along with producing saplings, the nurseries employ 26 refugee families and provide others with work in both Karin and Khachpar villages. The residents of the villages, who moved to Armenia from Azerbaijan, have grown to love and care for the environment and started planting trees in their backyards and along the neighboring roads,” concluded Nursery Program Manager Samvel Ghandilyan.

**A** new partnership between ATP, Yale University's Global Institute for Sustainable Forestry, and Conservation International will bring international “best practices” of sustainable forestry to Armenia. The joint venture, “Evaluation and Implementation of Sustainable Forestry Models in Northern Armenia,” involves conducting a state of the art analysis of the forest ecosystems in the Lori region with the aim of producing the first sustainable forestry training manual tailored to the specific needs of Armenia.

The severe degradation of forested areas in Armenia necessitates a new and bold approach to forestry practices. With Yale's expertise in sustainable forestry, ATP along with Armenia's leading academic and government forestry officials will collaborate in a partnership to bring cutting edge forestry training to Armenia. It is our hope that the project will literally reshape the nation's landscape and ensure a sustainable future for its population.

The goals of the project are to evaluate the condition of the forests in northern Armenia, paying particular attention to the factors that are limiting the ability for regeneration. An assessment will be made of plants, herbs, and other non-timber products that may be sustainably harvested for generating alternative income for residents living in close proximity to the forests. Trainings on rotational grazing will be held with livestock owners to prevent soil erosion and further degradation of forests.

A model forest will be planted to serve as a training site, and paired with a sustainable forestry training manual specific to the unique environment of Armenia. This manual and demonstration plot will serve as the focal point for future trainings with foresters and residents from around the country.

This project is being funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), a joint initiative of Conservation International, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Global Environment Facility, the Ministry of Finance of Japan, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. A fundamental goal of CEPF is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.



A partnership with Yale University and Conservation International will help ATP conduct an analysis of the forests in the Lori region and produce a sustainable forestry manual for Armenia



# Public Outreach and Advocacy

## *Empowering Armenians to Protect Precious Resources*

Armenia is suffering from a broad range of environmental problems such as deforestation, degradation of urban green spaces, air pollution, destructive mining practices, and loss of biodiversity. ATP has begun to take steps to mitigate these problems, beginning with formal and informal public education on environmental issues.

In addition to promoting awareness in Armenian print and broadcast media, ATP is co-funding a series of 11 documentary films produced by Vem Media Arts highlighting some of the most pressing environmental problems facing the country.

ATP co-founded the newly formed “EcoArmenia Consortium” with the Environmental Conservation and Research Center at the American University of Armenia, World Wildlife Fund, and Armenian Forests NGO to take on the very complicated issue of illegal logging. The formation of this consortium was inspired by the success we had collaborating together in 2005 to organize a broad based civil society campaign, with support from the Diaspora, to save the pristine Shikahogh Nature Reserve from being bisected by a highway.

We have jointly commissioned two research projects to determine the public’s awareness and level of concern about illegal logging, and how much wood is poached and how it is exported from Armenia illegally. This factual data is needed to replace anecdotal information before we build a strong case to be pre-sented to the government and the public.

Teghut village in northern Armenia is the site of an open pit copper-molybdenum mine planned by Armenian Copper Program (ACP). Their plans include clear cutting 1,500 acres of forest and stripping the top layer of soil to search for metals. The damage that will be caused by the loss of the forest and the process of dumping mine tailings (waste) into nearby gorges will be enormous. In addition, ACP’s dismal record of emitting toxic wastes from their copper smelter in Alaverdi will only be intensified with additional smelting of ore.

The government’s approval of the mining plans disregards a number of Armenian laws on environmental protection as well as several international treaties signed by the government. The majority of violations (over 70 altogether) are identified by the Armenian law on “Environmental Impact Assessments.”

International treaties that Armenia is bound to uphold include: UN Convention on Biodiversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus), Convention of Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Convention on Landscapes, and Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage sites.

The EcoArmenia consortium has sent a letter to President Robert Kocharian to outline these concerns and ask for his intervention on behalf of Armenia’s environment, since approval of ACP’s mining plans makes a mockery of these treaties.



Children from Quality Schools International of Yerevan participated in a walk-a-thon and other activities to support ATP’s mission to reforest Armenia

## International School Helps Restore Armenia’s Green Zones

ATP’s Community Tree Planting (CTP) Program has been collaborating with Quality Schools International (QSI) of Yerevan, which offers education in English for students from ages 3-13. CTP Program Manager Anahit Gharibyan was invited to be a member of the panel of judges at the Science Fair held at QSI, along with representatives from other NGOs and embassies in Armenia.

Fourth grade student Tigran Avetissyan presented an award-winning project on “How Carbon Dioxide Affects Plants.” He experimented with boxwood plants to observe the effects of different levels of carbon dioxide and concluded that plants grow better when left in their natural habitat. During the event the children sponsored a small fundraiser in support of ATP.

A memorable celebration of Earth Day in April was accompanied by outdoor eco-lessons for QSI students conducted by ATP staff, and students made a follow up visit to ATP’s Karin Nursery where they planted seeds and sang songs outdoors.

Also in April, QSI organized a walk-a-thon at the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial Park. For every 200-meter lap they completed, the children received a pledge amount from their parents. The number of laps ranged from 10-30, and 90 students raised \$2,000, which far exceeded their expectations. “I am very happy to do this for the environment, especially for the trees,” said seven-year old Dazie Brown, who was extremely proud to complete nine laps.

Later in the month, QSI students visited an orphanage supported by SOS Kinderdorf International of Austria, to perform tree planting with ATP and the youngest residents of the village. Very soon the empty territory was transformed into a beautiful orchard.

Rose Beale, a parent of three students at QSI, remarked, “This is fantastic in terms of raising awareness about ecology and trees. Here children are able to gain the whole experience—first when putting a seedling in the soil and then while taking care of it as it grows. I am sure the kids will remember this day for the rest of their lives.”



# ARMENIA TREE PROJECT

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## Our Vision of Armenia

A secure and independent Armenia with a tree-filled and healthy environment, flourishing economy, and vibrant society.

## Our Mission in Armenia

To advance Armenia's economic and social development by mobilizing resources to fund reforestation and community tree planting.

## Our Pledge to Armenia

We will use trees to improve the standard of living of Armenians and to protect the global environment. We will promote self-sufficiency, aiding those with fewest resources first.

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## OUR MISSION

**A**rmenia Tree Project (ATP), a Diaspora-supported non-profit organization based in Watertown and Yerevan, conducts vitally important environmental projects in Armenia's impoverished and deforested zones and seeks support in advancing its reforestation mission.

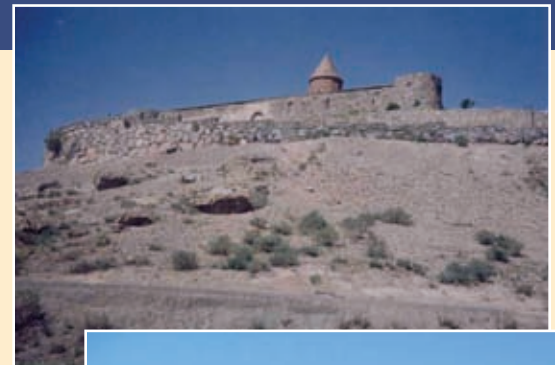
Since 1994, ATP has made enormous strides in combating desertification in the biologically diverse but threatened Caucasus region. Over 1,500,000 trees have been planted and restored, and hundreds of jobs have been created for Armenians in seasonal tree-regeneration programs.

ATP works to further Armenia's economic and social development by mobilizing resources to fund reforestation. These vital new trees provide food, wood, environmental benefits, and opportunities for economic growth.

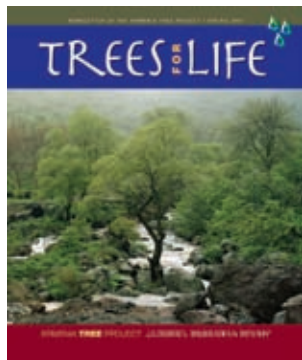
Our goal is to assist the Armenian people in using trees to improve their standard of living and protect the global environment. In so doing, we are guided by the need to promote self-sufficiency, aid those with the fewest resources first, and conserve the indigenous ecosystem.

### ATP works on three major program initiatives:

- 1) Planting Trees at Urban and Rural Sites
- 2) Environmental Education and Advocacy
- 3) Community Socioeconomic Development and Poverty Reduction



Khor Virab before ATP began planting there in 2001 (top), and the same site in 2006



The image on the cover of our newsletter was taken by Garo Lachinian in 2004 at Geghard Monastery in Armenia. The entire photograph is featured on page 8.

ATP has a staff of 70 in Armenia. The Yerevan branch manages two state-of-the-art tree nurseries and a large-scale reforestation nursery, partners with villagers to create tree-based micro-enterprise opportunities, creates urban green belts for public use, restores degraded forest lands, and employs hundreds of part-time workers to restore forests from stumps.